

New computer system to replace drafting tables for some students

By Todd Riemenschneider
Staff Writer

A new computer system acquired by the civil engineering department at Texas A&M will allow students to produce professional work without getting their hands dirty.

"It is a wave of the future," said Dr. Jim Earle, a professor in the civil engineering department, referring to the Hewlett-Packard computer system acquired to aid students with drafting.

"We spent about \$400,000 on the system," Earle said, "and that is approximately half-price, because Hewlett-Packard gives A&M a discount."

The system will take the place of drafting tables and has some advantages over pencil-and-paper drawing.

"It makes for greater accuracy, improves storage of drawings and makes work easier to convey and communicate from one geographic site to the next," Earle said. "It enables people to change and edit drawings easier than it would with an eraser."

Earle said the computer also will help students who do not draw very well.

"It seems to be a means for people who have difficulty drawing," he said. "They seem to adapt and do better."

Dr. Richard Skowronek, an associate professor in the engineering graphics department, agrees the computer is very valuable.

"It allows a person to produce very professional documentation, regardless of how well a person draws," Skowronek said.

"Changes can be made to a set of drawings already created very quickly, as opposed to manual drawing where you would have to do some cutting and pasting and start all over again," he said.

The computer will be used in Engineering and Design Graphics 105 and ENDG 407.

The freshman level course is comprised of 40 percent to 50 percent computer work.

The senior level course familiarizes students with sophisticated computer-aided design.

"It gives us the opportunity to expose every freshman student to current technology and computer-aided design," Skowronek said. "This will give us one of the most outstanding graphics capabilities of any university in the nation."

Skowronek said the department

has been looking at the system for a few years.

"We started looking at the system four or five years ago," he said, "and getting it into the graphics curriculum, we felt, was the wave of the future."

"To get out on the cutting edge of technology, you have to keep up with it. It is a good investment — period."

Earle believes this system will help students in their careers.

"A lot of people in the industry are anxious to move in this direction and someone who has a little expertise will be thought of as an asset," he said.

"Computers in the past have been burdensome," he said. "Now they make a lot more sense; you can use them as a productive tool."

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School's use of lie detector riles parents

HOUSTON (AP) — Some parents of high school students are upset that Houston school officials had students take lie detector tests in attempts to resolve the theft of a purse containing about \$4.

Milby High School Principal Claude Brinkley said Monday the tests were given after parents signed consent forms, but he wouldn't say if they were advised of their children's rights or of possible legal ramifications.

Yolanda Pena, mother of a 16-year-old Milby student, said she was stunned to learn that her daughter and four other students were threatened with the polygraph tests if one of them did not confess to theft of the purse.

Pena said her daughter came home Dec. 16 tired, confused and frightened after being questioned at length by a Milby assistant principal about the alleged theft.

Pena said Assistant Principal Sarah Smith told the students they would have to take the polygraph test and that the guilty party would have to pay the \$50 administration cost.

Pena refused to permit the test and immediately called the Houston branch of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Cold weather diminishes nutritional value of grass

By Kimberly Motley
Reporter

The sudden cold weather that swept across Texas this month has caused summer grasses to remain dormant, which diminishes their already poor nutritional quality for beef cattle, Texas Agricultural Extension Service experts say.

The importance of the beef cattle industry to the Texas economy brings with it concern over quality pastures and rangelands, TAES Director Zeile Carpenter said.

Dr. Neal Pratt, a TAES specialist, said the summer grasses stopped producing nutrients because of the cold weather. This could endanger the state's beef cattle industry if ranchers cannot provide adequate nutrition for the cattle.

To counter the negative effects, Pratt suggests that farmers and

ranchers plant winter pastures, which are foliage pastures that grow in the winter and are high in nutritional value.

Although the cold weather was anticipated and some farmers did plant winter pastures, Pratt said the pastures did not get much of a chance to grow. The warm-season perennials (grasses that grow all year) kept producing nutrients because of late-season warm weather and took over the winter pastures, Pratt said.

Also, he said, some ranchers did not plant winter pastures because of expense. Pratt explained that winter pastures cost \$100 or more per acre each winter including labor, fertilizer and equipment such as tractors.

"Winter pastures have to be planted every year," he said. "They don't just come back with cold weather the

way summer grasses come back with warm weather."

Pratt said 68 percent of the value of beef cattle comes from the pastures. Even if a cow were raised in a feed lot, its mother was probably raised on pasture, he said.

Because of its poor nutritional value, summer foliage can barely support a cow, Pratt said. When cold weather hits, the summer pastures become dormant and other nutritional support is needed. Pratt said winter pastures are 20 percent to 24 percent protein.

The extra nutritional support that winter pastures provide is worth the expense, Pratt said, because it improves the beef's quality. But providing it when cold weather hits can be difficult. The problem, he said, is knowing when the cold weather will come.

Man who shot police officer was diagnosed schizophrenic

DALLAS (AP) — A homeless man who shot a Dallas police officer to death once lived in his family's stately North Dallas home, but spent his last night in the Union Gospel Mission downtown.

Carl Dudley Williams, 34, was an accomplished high school athlete who was voted most handsome of his class, but his family twice sought to have him committed for mental help after he was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic.

Williams saw visions, heard voices and believed he was being persecuted by his family and prevented from succeeding, court records show.

On Saturday, he shot and killed Officer John Chase, 25, with the officer's revolver, police said.

As a child, Williams struggled with schoolwork, but was an avid athlete who seemed eager to succeed, friends and records say. He was picked as a promising athlete and student leader and as most handsome boy in North Dallas High School.

His father, Carl L. Williams, is a middle school principal. His mother, Marie Williams, is a Blue Cross-Blue Shield employee.

"He was very easy to get along with — very motivated, very inclined to do well," classmate Charles Long-

Law officers attend funeral

DALLAS (AP) — Thousands of law officers, their badges masked in black, ringed a Baptist church and packed a sanctuary Tuesday to mourn a policeman shot three times in the face by a deranged transient.

"We're hurting this morning, O God," Sgt. Carroll Pruitt prayed. "We don't understand the tragedy of this man whose life was taken from him because of the uniform he wears."

Meanwhile, thousands of Dallas residents offered a silent show of support for the beleaguered police

department Tuesday as they drove to work with their headlights on. A group of homeless people marched Tuesday afternoon to back police, while other citizens scheduled a candlelight vigil for Tuesday night.

Chase, 25, died Saturday in a downtown parking lot when a man who lived on the streets wrestled his gun away and, ignoring the officer's pleas for mercy, shot him in the face.

Carl Dudley Williams, 34, then walked away, firing a shot at two pursuing off-duty officers, and was killed in a hail of return gunfire.

UT consultant warns Capitol of fire hazards

AUSTIN (AP) — The century-old Texas Capitol is a fire hazard, a University of Texas management consultant has warned the State Preservation Board.

Terrell Blodgett, who teaches at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, said the following observations were based on talks with the state fire marshal, Austin Fire Department, and a consulting restoration architect, Joe Freeman of Austin.

- Electric transformers are in poor condition.
- The electrical system needs complete rewiring.
- The fire detection systems need replacing.
- False ceilings and voids above them can help spread fire.

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