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# Program gives career options

By Jennifer Palter  
Reporter

High school seniors from around the state are using Texas A&M resources to examine career options in the natural sciences as part of a new nationwide project called the Young Scholars Program.

The National Science Foundation funded 68 of 355 project proposals from across the nation that provide an opportunity for outstanding high school seniors to get a close up view of career choices in a particular science field.

A&M's departments of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences and Chemical Engineering received two of the six proposals approved in Texas.

Dr. Clark Adams, associate professor in the wildlife and fisheries department, help arranged the program.

"In April we sent out 254 applications to students who had already expressed interest in the

department," Adams said. "Within a few days I had calls from parents."

Students were chosen from a pool of 66 applicants from around the state; participant selection was based on grades, commitment to the biological sciences and involvement in school activities, he said. Because of low minority representation in natural science-related jobs, gender and ethnicity were also important criteria, he added.

Students' activities include exposure to the research environment, problem-solving techniques, discussion of career directions and consideration of philosophy and ethics in the natural science field, Adams said.

Among facilities being used are two on-campus genetics laboratories, one for fish research and the other for wildlife.

Staci Tucker, from Katy High School, said, "I was already interested in wildlife ecology, and the program specified certain opportunities. I

want to be either a wildlife veterinarian or a life geneticist."

Tara Barton, from Benavides High School, enjoyed the lab work. "I liked the karyotype (chromosome evaluation) and DNA work," she said.

Students have access to the Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection beneath Sterling C. Evans Library, the largest vertebrate specimen collection in Texas. Also available is the Aquaculture Research Center, outside of town on Highway 24 with 24 earthen ponds, a several-acre pond and 150 indoor glass aquarium.

The program's goals, as specified by the NSF, are four-fold: to build interest in careers available in the natural sciences; to improve career planning through discussions with professors and visits to research facilities; to offer opportunities for participation in on-going research; to increase awareness of the pre-college preparation necessary.

## Report: Buildings may effect learning

By Kelly Chapman  
Reporter

Declined learning capabilities in American students may be directly connected to the actual structure of the school building, according to a study being conducted by Texas A&M educators.

"The Interface Project," originated by Dr. H.L. Hawkins, director of education and administration at A&M, is designed to determine the effects that school building structures may have on student learning capabilities. This research, conducted by Hawkins, began with a consideration of the high academic record of Japanese students.

"We observed three Japanese schools, and found that there are, in fact, many differences between the school building structures of America and Japan," Hawkins said. "The Japanese tend to focus on student needs by appealing to their sense of responsibility, and then planning the building's structure accordingly."

"For instance, in Japanese elementary and high schools, the class

presidents are given their own office space from which they work."

In addition, the Japanese emphasize the school's outer beauty while the inner appearance often includes only desks, chairs, a chalkboard and plain white walls, according to observations in the "The Interface Project." Hawkins said the colorless interior allows the students greater concentration during class time.

"The outer beauty allows the students to enjoy their time away from class, so they are more attentive while learning," he said. "Many of the schools are beautiful, landscaped with fully equipped baseball and soccer fields as well as outside basketball courts."

Documented on film, "The Interface Project's" observations will be available for continuous studies. "These videos will be able to communicate to people that there is value in this type of study," Hawkins said.

"The interest level of Americans may be raised when they realize the direct correlation between the structure of the Japanese school buildings and the increased learning abilities of their students."

## Attorney requests low forgery penalty

SAN MARCOS (AP) — Attorneys for a Houston political consultant and his firm, both convicted of forgery on presidential ballot petitions, asked jurors Thursday for leniency in sentencing.

But prosecutor Casey O'Brien called for stiff sentences that would carry a message of, "We the people won't tolerate it. We don't like dirty politics."

The six-member jury on Wednesday convicted Rocky Mountain and Southern Political Consulting Inc., of Houston on 38 misdemeanor forgery charges in connection with phony signatures on the petitions that put Pete du Pont on the March 8 Texas GOP primary ballot.

Mountain faced a maximum punishment of one year in jail and \$76,000 in fines. The company faced a maximum fine of \$380,000.

The defendants on Thursday turned down the prosecution's alternative offers of a \$20,000 fine for Mountain and \$100,000 fine for the firm, or a \$10,000 fine for Mountain and \$200,000 fine for the firm, lawyers in the case said.

Both offers included a one-year, probated jail term for Mountain.

Company president Kevin Burnette testified he earned less than \$18,000 last year. Mountain said he made \$14,000 and lives with his parents in Houston.

"I'm terribly sorry about what has happened," Mountain testified Thursday, adding that his future is uncertain.

"I've been on the front page of papers for about six months. With a name like Rocky Mountain people don't forget that too easy," he told jurors.

Joe Bailey, Mountain's lawyer, said his client should not be jailed.

"Do we continue to destroy the man?" Bailey asked.

Mountain testified Tuesday that he ordered the forgeries only because he had been pressured by a du Pont official. He said he never intended for the du Pont campaign to submit them.

Mountain staged what prosecutors called a "forgery party" at his office Dec. 19 after legitimate efforts to collect signatures for the former Delaware governor failed.

## Fitness center closings may test spa reform

AUSTIN (AP) — The closing of two Austin fitness center chains in recent months may provide the first major test of a 3-year-old state law designed to reform the health spa industry.

But the experience of dealing with the failure of the Supreme Court Racquet Club and Dynafit Family Athletic Clubs already has convinced Attorney General Jim Mattox that the Health Spa Act of 1985 needs to be strengthened to protect consumers who join clubs in good faith, the Austin American-Statesman reported Thursday.

Thousands of Austin-area residents with memberships are owed refunds that are likely to total more than \$100,000, but the best they can hope for is a partial refund, said attorney general staff workers.

The health clubs are either closed or under new ownership, which is not obligated to honor prior memberships sold by previous owners.

In one case, officials estimate 200 advance memberships — costing \$500 to \$1,000 each — were sold to a

proposed fitness center that was never built.

To cover some of the money owed to those consumers, Mattox's office is laying claim to \$40,000 in letters of credit posted by Dynafit with two financial institutions.

The posting of letters of credit, bonds or other insurance is intended to protect consumers from the closing of a health spa under the new law.

"We are assuming the bond is not going to be sufficient to cover all memberships, and people are only going to get a partial refund," said Clyde Farrell, chief of the consumer protection division in the attorney general's office.

"We don't like that one bit," Farrell said, "and that's why we're asking that legislation be tightened up and strengthened."

Mattox's staff tentatively has proposed several changes to the law, including prohibiting the sale of prepaid memberships to patrons before a fitness or health center opens to the public.

## National Briefs

### LTV negotiates pension obligations

NEW YORK (AP) — The government can't force the financially ailing LTV Corp. to take back more than \$2 billion in pension obligations simply because a new labor contract restored previously cut benefits, a federal judge ruled Wednesday.

U.S. District Judge Robert W. Sweet said he couldn't uphold a decision by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp., which insures the pensions of some 30 million American workers, to restore the pension plan obligations of LTV's steel unit, Cleveland-based LTV Steel Co.

Sweet said the agency had done so without an exploration of all the relevant facts and adequate procedures for factfinding and notice.

Since the agency's decision is not sustainable on the administrative record, the appropriate remedy is to vacate the restoration decision that gave back responsibility for the pensions to LTV, Sweet said.

"We're very pleased," said Lewis B. Kaden, an attorney for LTV Corp. who called the ruling "a complete victory."

But Sweet concluded in his 126-page opinion that although the PBGC didn't provide enough documentation that LTV can afford to take back its pension obligations, the federal agency might be able to do so at a trial. The judge sent the issue back to the PBGC for further consideration and told both sides to arrange a conference with him on further proceedings.

"While the court recognized PBGC's authority to restore terminated plans, it did not immediately enforce restoration of the LTV plans," said PBGC spokesman Jane Hoden.

"Instead, the court required additional fact finding by the PBGC on LTV's ability to fund the plans," she said. "The PBGC is pleased that the court recognized our authority to restore plans, but we are disappointed that the court required additional proceedings." Reading from a prepared statement, she said the PBGC is now considering other legal steps to resolve the issues in this case and relieve the uncertainty faced by retirees.

### Bank bailouts may drain FDIC fund

WASHINGTON (AP) — The fund that insures deposits in commercial banks could decline by as much as 10 percent — the first drop in its 54-year history — after the completion of three large bank bailouts in Texas this year, the chairman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. says.

L. William Seidman, in the text of a speech to be delivered Friday to the Oregon Bankers Association, said the fund should start growing again in 1989 after First Republic Bank Corp. of Dallas, Texas American Bancshares and National Bancshares Corp. are rescued.

When Seidman announced a \$1 billion infusion into First Republic Bank in March, he noted the fund, which had \$18.3 billion at the end of 1987, could decline this year for the first time since it was established in 1934.

But the Oregon speech was the first time he said the loss to the fund, which expects revenue of more than \$3 billion this year, would likely be limited to 10 percent.

In 1987, the fund posted a small \$50 million gain last year despite a post-Depression record of 184 bank failures.

Failures are continuing at about the same pace this year and the FDIC is dealing with large institutions.

The agency hopes by mid-September to find a private investor to help in its rescue of First Republic Bank.

The congressional General Accounting Office says preliminary estimates of the ultimate cost of the bailout range up to \$2 billion, which would make it the FDIC's largest ever, but it said the final initial outlay could be even greater.

Seidman said widespread weaknesses in the oil-drilling states of Texas, Oklahoma and Alaska will continue to be a significant burden for the FDIC, at least for the short run, but the FDIC fund is sufficient to deal with the problems we can foresee at this time.

### Economic growth spurs new forecasts

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy grew at a 3.6 percent rate in the first three months of 1988, prompting the Reagan administration on Thursday to make what was once considered a too-rosy forecast even rosier.

After the October stock market collapse, many private economists expected a slowdown or even a recession this year. They criticized as unrealistic White House projections saying the economy, as measured by the gross national product, would grow at a steady 2.9 percent pace, the same as in 1986 and 1987.

But booming growth in the last three months of 1987 and continued strength this year sent analysts scrambling to revise their forecasts upward until the administration estimate began looking pessimistic.

On Thursday, Beryl Sprinkel, chairman of the president's Council of Economic Advisers, boosted the administration's GNP forecast for all of 1988 to 3.5 percent. At the same time, he predicted that consumer price inflation would hold steady at 4.3 percent.

The administration is looking for a sixth straight year of economic expansion, the longest in peacetime since the Civil War, to bolster the chances for a Republican presidential victory in November.

Sprinkel said the expansion gives every indication of continuing into next year.

is doing better than even we expected."

Private analysts said Sprinkel's growth projections now are off target, but that his inflation forecast should be higher because of the expected effect of the widespread drought on food prices.

"He's certainly right about better growth... but the rest is pie in the sky stuff," said Michael K. Evans, head of a private economic consulting firm in Washington.

"We're not going to have double-digit inflation, but a reasonable private sector forecast of consumer inflation would be 5 to 5.5 percent," he said.

Meanwhile, the Commerce Department reported that an export-led manufacturing boom and a surge of investment spending by businesses kept the economy growing at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 3.6 percent in the January-March period.

The GNP, the broadest measure of economic health, grew a seasonal and inflation-adjusted annual level of \$3.915 trillion, a \$34.6 billion increase from the fourth quarter of 1987.

The latest figures represent a modest downward revision of previous estimates of GNP growth in the first quarter. A month ago the government put GNP growth at 3.9 percent. However, in April the initial estimate was a much lower 2.3 percent.

The revision showed a bigger dip in federal spending, mostly because of a decline in purchases of surplus farm commodities.