



## WEATHER

TOMORROW'S FORECAST:  
Partly cloudy with a chance of  
thunderstorms  
HIGH: 85      LOW: 68

## Computer viruses abound

A&M campus not immune to infection

By KEVIN M. HAMM  
Of The Battalion Staff

Viruses have been infecting computers at Texas A&M for at least two years and computers across the country for many more than that, a programmer in the Computing Services Center said. It is, however, a problem without a simple solution.

"This is obviously one of those problems that's going to be around for a while," Bill Hobson said.

Although viruses have existed for a number of years, one of the first instances of the problem the media reported was in November 1988 when a virus spread through the Internet system. The system is a network consisting of university, military and commercial computers, of which Texas A&M is a part.

The virus found a weakness in the network's security and completely shut some systems down.

Texas A&M recently has had problems with the Ping-Pong virus, which affects personal computers such as IBMs, and WDEF, an Apple Macintosh virus.

"This is obviously one of those problems that's going to be around for a while."

— Bill Hobson, programmer

"A computer virus is any program that spreads itself secretly," Hobson said. "It may be destructive, a prank or even intended to be helpful, but it does spread."

He said Macintosh viruses are more prevalent than personal computer viruses, but PC viruses do more damage. Additionally, many viruses are not intended to be harmful, but turn out that way because they are written sloppily, he said.

Hobson said "it's almost inevitable" that any public-access computer lab will have an outbreak of viruses at least once.

The Graphics Lab in the Teague Research Center requires students scan their personal diskettes with an anti-virus program before they can use them in the lab, he said.

According to information Brad Epps of the ACC provided, there are two types of viruses: boot sector viruses and program viruses. BSVs are loaded into the computer's memory as soon as the computer is booted up and subsequently infect any program run until the computer is turned off.

Program viruses infect executable files and are loaded into memory when an infected program is run.

Viruses spread by two methods. They can stay in the computer's memory and infect any program run, and they can seek out new files to contaminate once an infected file has been run. Eventually a virus will spread to a computer's hard disk, Hobson said.

Most viruses spread from one computer to another via infected floppy diskettes.

"Scanning floppies is probably the most effective thing that you can do to slow down the spread of viruses," Hobson said.

In addition to viruses, there are programs that pretend to do something useful, but actually produce a harmful effect when run. These programs are called "Trojan Horses." Unlike viruses, they do not infect other programs.

Some viruses and Trojan Horse programs might contain a "time bomb" intended to destroy programs or data on a specific date or when a condition has been fulfilled.

The "Sunday" virus, which has infected some computers at Texas A&M, is an example of a virus with a time bomb, Epps said. This virus causes a computer to display the following message on Sundays:

"Today is Sunday! Why do you work so hard? All work and no play makes you a dull boy! Come on! Let's go out and have some fun!"

This virus also can destroy parts of programs.

The information provided by Epps also corrected common misconceptions people have about computer viruses:

- A virus cannot spread from one type of computer to another, for example from a Macintosh to a PC.

See Virus/Page 4

## Heavy rain, winds take CS by storm



Before and after

(Above) Photo by Scott D. Weaver  
(Left) Photo by Jay Janner

A student makes his way down Asbury Street during the sudden thunderstorm early Tuesday afternoon. The picture was taken with a 50mm lens from inside a car. Compared to the A&M student, there is nothing artistic about this house after Tuesday's storm. The flood waters reached the windows of the garage. Patsy Williams, a staff assistant for the nuclear engineering Department, lives alone in the house. No one was injured.

By CHRIS VAUGHN  
Of The Battalion Staff

The normal April showers turned ugly Tuesday night as storm clouds dumped almost five inches of rain in parts of College Station and spawned one possible tornado near Southwest Parkway in College Station.

The airport recorded 3.62 inches of rain Tuesday night, but across town at College Station's central fire station on Texas Avenue, 4.48 inches of rain were recorded. Residents of Caldwell were attempting to dry out from more than 12 inches of rainfall in a mat-

ter of hours.

Emergency vehicles stayed busy during the heaviest part of the storm, approximately 6 to 8 p.m., responding to downed power lines, trapped vehicles, car accidents, a gas leak and a reported tornado.

No major injuries were reported in College Station, but one person involved in an accident on Tabor Road in Bryan was transported to St. Joseph's Hospital with back injuries.

The tornado, which was unconfirmed by emergency personnel, was reported to the College Station Fire Department at approxi-

mately 7:20 p.m., Capt. Tim Fickey said.

Fickey said firefighters discovered a storage shed on Laura Lane off Southwest Parkway completely destroyed in addition to blown over fences, tree limbs in the road and debris in the area.

The College Station Fire Department also responded to a natural gas leak near the east bypass and the Emerald Parkway exit. The gas line, reportedly four inches in diameter, took more than an hour to shut off because a contractor dumped a load of dirt on the shut-off valve, Fickey said.

The Bryan Fire Department made 14 runs

from 6 to 10 p.m., which officials called a very high number. Bryan police said officers were called in early and made to work overtime to cope with the number of calls.

Fickey said the College Station Fire Department made 15 runs during the evening, but he said it was a low number for the severity of the storm.

"We had less calls than what we've had for some storms of less severity," Fickey said. "We didn't have near the problems of some past storms. And this storm is one of the worst we've had in a long time, too."

## Research, not teaching receives top priority

By DEAN SUELTFUSS  
Of The Battalion Staff

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is the second of a four-part series focusing on undergraduate education. Part three will be a question and answer session with Texas A&M President William Mobley.)

It seems like an age-old question: Does a university's research mission interfere with its ability to properly educate undergraduates?

Some people say yes. Others say no. And many say the issues that are involved run much deeper than just "research versus teaching."

One thing is clear: Texas A&M is no longer simply an institution designed to teach undergraduate students. Research, graduate education, community service and a host of other goals attest that A&M's mission involves much more than simply filling the heads of eager young students with information.

Many people at A&M believe education is no longer even the main concern of this and other universities. The cause of the decline in education, some say, is a system that places prestige, rewards, recognition and emphasis on research and relegates teaching to a role of secondary importance.

A faculty member in the Department of History, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said teaching is sometimes discouraged at A&M.

"The system is geared to promote research," the faculty member said. "The system works against effective teaching in that, I think, in many subtle ways it tells teachers who are putting too much time in on their teaching, 'You're going to suffer for this,' or 'You're not really a good scholar. That's why you're putting so much time into your teaching.'"

Dr. Clinton Phillips, associate provost and dean of faculties at A&M, disagreed.

"I really question that assumption," Phillips said. "It's put forth, I suppose, by some teachers who don't do research and use this as an excuse, that if they did research they wouldn't be able to teach as well. I think that's more of an excuse than an explanation."

## Professor shares opinions, says A&M misuses money, neglects education

By DEAN SUELTFUSS  
Of The Battalion Staff

Donald R. Smith is an associate professor of industrial engineering at Texas A&M whose views might be unpopular with some.

Too much money is wasted at A&M, good teaching is not properly encouraged by the administration, and education — the original mission of the University — has been neglected, he says, adding that some colleges and departments are exceptions to that rule.

But Smith, who is quick to point out that many other state universities are encountering the same issues, is not alone in his assessment of A&M's problems. Professors in other colleges at A&M have similar opinions. Others say teaching is rewarded well.

Smith, the recipient of a teaching excellence award from the Association of Former Students, said good teaching is not adequately rewarded at A&M.

"We've gone too far in one direction," he said. "We have left our teaching mission off on the side and taken it for granted. Now, the question is how do you circle back to it."

"But I would argue that under the present philosophy, those people who do a good job teaching and advising and spending the time with the students — I guarantee you they will get the lowest pay raises. Now, what speaks louder? Actions or words?"

Responsibilities such as conducting research and getting articles published sometimes take precedence over a professor's teaching duties, Smith said.

"Within A&M there is little or no reward for spending a lot of time working with students," he said. "If you

always say good things about teaching," he said. "But if you're around them you see what their priorities are."

"The simple truth is that at an institution like this, deans get ahead by bringing in the best researchers, because it's research that gives you a national reputation."

The professor said the size of the University and the emphasis on research make it difficult for profes-

sors to work with students as much as they should.

"Nevertheless, I know of no one in this department who doesn't keep their office hours and isn't accessible," he said. "The question is whether they really think much about teaching, and the answer to that, I think, is 'No.'"

He said the growth of A&M, coupled with decreased teaching loads in some departments, has made

larger classes a necessity at A&M. Large classes and limited interaction between professors and students has affected the quality of undergraduate education, he said.

"I have numerous students who come into upper level classes who have written almost not at all in their years at A&M," he said. "Well, that's pathetic, just pathetic. If you can get to be a junior or senior in college and you haven't written, then you haven't been forced to form ideas and formulate opinions, and that's tragic, because that's not an educational system."

Larry Hickman, a professor of philosophy, said teaching and research are not mutually exclusive.

"I'm not one of those people who says that one can either do teaching or research, that they're inimicable, because they're not," Hickman said. "They're complementary. But the point is that we all have a finite amount of time."

Hickman said research often is emphasized more than teaching.

"I would say that when it comes time for tenure, for promotion, that teaching comes in a poor second to research," he said. "It's a problem all over academia, because there's more and more pressure to publish."

The solution is not to decrease emphasis on research, Hickman said, but to make teaching more important.

Another faculty member, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said some administrators are at least partly to blame for the dominance of research over teaching.

"Administrators seem very good, in general, at saying the right public relations things to make it look like they're concerned about students," the professor said. "And, like I say, I think they are (concerned) up to a point."

"By a point, I mean they don't like

See Teaching/Page 5