

Student testifies on field trip

The Battalion

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — A field trip to the Bexar County Courthouse turned into a trip to the witness stand for a high school senior who was called to testify in a criminal case.

Melissa McÉlroy, an 18-year-old senior at Lackland High School, was with her government class watching a trial when she recognized a woman in court and took the witness stand to challenge her credibility.

"It was really weird," McElroy said after testifying Wednesday. The 26 members of her class were attending a

jury trial before 290th District Judge Sharon Mac-Rae in which a man is charged with aggravated sexual assault of a child. The students picked the trial at random.

McElroy, who is not involved in the case, recognized the alleged victim's mother as someone she had worked with at a fast-food restaurant earlier this year, teacher David Merrell said.

When the mother testified she had not worked since 1985, it struck the student as wrong. And when the woman testified she had not seen a key witness for quite some time, McElroy said the key witness had worked with the mother at the fastfood restaurant.

"Melissa was angry about it, and she said, What should I do?" "Merrell said. "I told her it was a moral dilemma for her and she'd have to decide what to do. I think she was just compelled to do what was right.

Defense attorney Emil Holiner was told during a break in testimony that the student wanted to testify

said. "I don't know how to convey the surprise of it all. This is a real civics lesson for the class, and

enough time to get to their bus and return to school

Merrell's government class takes a field trip to the county courthouse every year.

they always want to go to criminal cases or something exciting," he said.

College of Engineering faces budget cuts, loss of accreditation

are concerned about the accredi-

tation review. "I think we should be alarm-ed," said Dr. Raymond Flumerfelt, head of the chemical engineering department. "There are definitely some needs. If they are not met, it may result in some negatives down the way."

An example of one of the college's outdated labs is an electrical machinery lab in the electrical engineering department. A teaching assistant in that lab estimates that the equipment has not been updated in more than 10 years.

"It's hard for students to work in this lab," said Harinderbal Singh. "It's frustrating for them because they do not get good re-sults in the lab because the readings are haphazard."

A microprocessors lab and a digital design lab in the electrical engineering department are other examples of shoddy equipment in many labs, he said.

Flumerfelt said it is just these types of problems that need to be addressed now.

"We're putting up a red flag that maybe we're starting to lose some ground," he said. "We haven't had those problems in the past, and we don't want to have them now. We want to make sure we're in good shape."

ABET, an affiliation of several engineering societies, will examine the strength of the faculty, arrangement of curriculum, lab equipment, library facilities, admissions policies and support areas like math and science.

Continued from page 1 was last accredited in 1986 for small the last few years." the maximum six-year time period. If ABET finds some areas of the college lacking next year, it can put them on probation for three years to allow for im-

provement. Dr. John Weese, head of the engineering technology department and a former ABET commission member, said about 20 percent of the universities who get into trouble with accreditation have lab deficiencies.

Hall said some departmental labs, like mechanical, petroleum and aerospace, are better off than electrical and others because they recently received new buildings

Flumerfelt and Weese believe that the labs are a symptom of the problems associated with declining state funds for universi-

The chemical engineering department has built, maintained and upgraded its labs solely from industry donations, Flumerfelt said. But, obviously, it still is not enough.

"We're an outstanding school, but we're losing some ground because of no funding from the University or state," he said. We find ourselves scrambling for funds."

Weese said it is fortunate that A&M has received so much support from industry and alumni, but the college has to rely too much on it.

"Virtually everything you get has to be from industry, especially for laboratory im-provement," Weese said. "State The College of Engineering support for us has been very

Hall said he believes there is a limit to how much industry will give A&M and the college probably has reached it.

'They (industries) don't mind donating equipment, but they think the University could at least maintain it," he said.

Both men said the enormous cost of educating engineering students, about \$800 per engineering student per class, has put a large burden on departments to recruit donations. University President William

H. Mobley, however, said he agrees the state should bear a greater burden in the College of Engineering but said that these are tough budget times.

"We enjoy good support from industry, and we've invested heavily in engineering the last few years, but staying abreast in engineering is an expensive un-dertaking," Mobley said. "We're operating at 1985 levels in real operating at 1985 levels, in real dollars, with considerable growth: Everyone is operating inder tight levels."

Mobley said his office will wait for the Legislature to pass a budget before making any decisions. He said if A&M's budget gets cut, he will have to make some tough decisions about the College of Engineering and every other A&M college.

Engineering administrators, however, have not resigned the college to losing its accreditation.

"A school like A&M has every opportunity to maintain its accreditation, and we will do everything we can to assure that," Weese said.

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Law allows testimony concerning past violence

AUSTIN (AP) — Gov. Ann Richards signed into law a bill to allow a murder or manslaughter defendant to submit testimony about family violence inflicted in the past by the murder victim.

Currently, testimony about "battered wife syndrome" is not admitted in some cases, according to lawmakers.

The measure by Sen. Eddie Bernice Johnson, D-Dallas, would permit the defendant to offer relevant evidence about being a victim of family violence, and expert testimony on the situation.

Richards signed the measure Thursday.

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