

FORECAST

Friday
Partly Cloudy
High near 90

LIFESTYLES

Kerrville Folk Festival

Camping getaway provides regional music galore

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INSIDE

Civil Rights

House approves Democratic anti-discrimination bill that Bush promised to veto.

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The Battalion

Vol. 90 No. 149 USPS 045360 6 Pages College Station, Texas "Serving Texas A&M since 1893" Thursday, June 6, 1991

A&M employees take classes, receive high school diplomas

By Melinda Cox
The Battalion

Texas A&M students are not the only group spending time in University classrooms in pursuit of an education. University employees also can continue their studies by enrolling in the General Education Development (GED) program sponsored by A&M's Human Resources Department.

The GED program allows employees who do not have a high school diploma to continue and finish their education

without giving up their jobs, said Ann McMullan, GED's training and development manager.

McMullan said employees who are nonprobationary, full-time and budgeted are eligible for the program.

"Employees need to get permission from their department head before beginning the program because classes are attended during the day," she said.

The program allows employees to obtain a certificate equivalent to a high school diploma in five different areas. Classes cover social science, literature,

math, writing and science.

McMullan said the program's costs are funded by the University, so employees do not have to pay any tuition.

There is no starting date for the courses because the program is a continuous process, McMullan said.

Classes are based on self-paced instruction. McMullan said some people learn faster than others, depending on the level of instruction the person had before leaving school and how long that person has been out of school.

She said a university environment is

the perfect place to have such a program.

"This is an educational institution and we believe a program like this will help people and give them the ability to do their jobs better," McMullan said.

Jennifer Drake, a training and development specialist for the Human Resources Department, teaches classes twice a week from 8:30 to 10 a.m.

Drake said employee instruction usually takes from four to six weeks to complete. She teaches grammar and writing skills to a large group and handles literature, social science and science in smaller, more individualized groups.

Drake said she realizes people have full-time jobs and families to deal with outside of the classroom. Because of these time restraints, most work and instruction has to be done in class.

The GED program has been part of the Human Resources Department since 1988, but originated in the Physical Plant Department about five years ago. The educational opportunity is open to all departments.

Employees interested in the program are encouraged to contact Jennifer Drake in the Human Resources Department at 845-1275 between 8 a.m. and noon.

Columbia soars with exotic load

Shuttle takes off with special cargo to study the effects of space on earthlings

CAPE CANAVERAL Fla. (AP) — Columbia dodged poor weather and soared into orbit Wednesday, starting seven astronauts, a gang of rats and a colony of jellyfish on a nine-day study of the effects of space travel on earthlings.

After two launch postponements and an 85-minute delay due to dense skies, Columbia roared off the pad at 9:25 a.m. The craft, trailing a column of fire and smoke, disappeared into clouds just one minute after rising from its ocean-side launch pad.

"Thanks for a great ride," shuttle commander Bryan O'Connor told Mission Control. "We appreciate it."

Three-and-a-half hours after launch, the astronauts powered up a Spacelab module carried in Columbia's cargo bay.

"Houston," an astronaut reported a few minutes, "We're in the Spacelab. We're inside." A television picture from inside the pressurized laboratory module was beamed to Earth, and Mission Control told the crew, "We see you in the module and you all look good."

The laboratory is the size of a small bus and is attached to the crew compartment by a tunnel. In the weightlessness of orbit, astronauts easily float through the tunnel to enter the lab or return to the crew quarters.

A television view showed the astronauts floating about effortlessly as they worked at equipment installed in the lab's walls, floor and ceiling.

Cages in the lab are the space home for 19 rats. Ten others are held in sealed cages within the crew compartment. The astronauts also are sharing Columbia with 2,478 jellyfish carried in plastic bags and bottles.

The humans and their companions are all specimens in the most extensive biomedical study conducted yet on the space shuttle.

Three of the crew, James Bagian, M. Rhea Seddon and F. Andrew Gaffney, are physicians. Two others, Millie Hughes-Fulford and Tamara Jernigan, are trained scientists. O'Connor and pilot Sidney Gutierrez will control the spacecraft while the others work in Spacelab.

The mission's goal is to discover the fundamental changes that occur in the body as humans respond to the microgravity of Earth orbit.

During their mission, the astronauts will be poked, probed, weighed, stuck with needles, forced to exercise while breathing different mixtures of gas and required to wear inflated collars that measure blood pressure. Blood samples will be drawn repeatedly, and urine specimens will be saved.

Gaffney was launched with a catheter threaded up his arm and into a vein near his heart. The catheter carries sensors that measured blood pressure during launch and afterward to detect the changes in fluid volume. The catheter was to be removed about eight hours after launch.

A&M encourages diversity

Speaker for Faculty Senate seeks to recruit minorities

By Chris Vaughn
The Battalion

Diversity will come up at least once in any conversation with Dr. Patricia Alexander — guaranteed.

It does because the 43-year-old professor of curriculum and instruction is absolutely and definitively committed to diversifying Texas A&M.

But Alexander, recently elected speaker of the Faculty Senate, now is in a better position to help remedy what she believes A&M is lacking — a diverse population.

"If I could change one thing about A&M, it would be to maintain the sense of loyalty and sense of commitment to the University I feel, while altering the composition of it," she said.

She means altering the composition of a largely white, male-dominated, conservative University with the infusion of more blacks, Hispanics, Asians and women into its student body and faculty.

"We want diversity because a university strives on differences of opinions, outlooks," Alexander said. "It fosters intellectual growth. It serves the academic community. Most students leave home and go to college to expand their horizons. A diverse university, then, means for students to come across other students they might not otherwise meet."

Alexander personally has gone a long way toward diversifying campus.

A look at her background reveals she is a native of Washington, D.C., a former public school teacher in the Shenandoah Valley, and maybe most surprising, a former jazz and blues nightclub singer.

She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Maryland in 1981 and headed straight for A&M. Ten years later, she is leading the Faculty Senate — the first woman ever to do so.

"I want to be the best speaker I

can be, regardless of gender," Alexander said. "I am the speaker for all the faculty members. But I realize that being the first of anything carries with it a certain responsibility and honor."

Alexander is driven by two equal personalities, one a highly organized, scientific researcher seeking resolution to a problem,

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- Dr. Patricia Alexander

and the other an energetic, entertaining teacher.

"I am someone who loves the whole sense of academia, being able to gather around a group of scholars," she said. "Pat Alexander values knowledge and the concept of learning."

"I believe when one stops growing, one stops living," she said. "I also believe change is not something to be tolerated, but to be sought."

Alexander, however, admits her constant search for change and diversity at A&M is hindered by the University's past.

The University's military traditions, which typically have drawn conservative students, and its academic traditions of agriculture, engineering and business, which do not attract most women or minorities, are among diversity's obstacles, she said.

Another problem is Bryan-College Station's somewhat remote location from Texas' major urban areas where minorities are more likely to live, Alexander said.



Dr. Patricia Alexander

SCOTT D. WEAVER/The Battalion

A lack of extensive support networks in the local area, particularly for single or minority faculty members, is another problem. Alexander, a single mother of a teenage son, knows this well.

But she is not ready to correct the problems by establishing quotas.

"I don't believe we want quota systems," she said. "We want this University to attract people. We want to actively seek candidates who represent diversity and try and bring them here, but we also want the very best."

"We don't want to fill positions quantitatively," she said. "We want to achieve the goal of diversity, while always striving for the best."

Alexander said she knows she is sure to rattle a few people in her drive to diversify A&M, but she added that she will not give up on a problem that will not go away.

"The goal is diversity," she said. "Gender, race, religion, sexual orientation: those are not judgment factors. That's the bottom line."

Outreach program helps students plan for college

By Greg Mt. Joy
The Battalion



Houston University Outreach Center

An outreach program started by Texas A&M and several other state universities is changing the lives of many children who never believed they had a chance to attend college, an official with the program said.

Cynthia Gay, director of the Houston University Outreach Center, said the program works mainly with minority students but will try to help any promising middle or high school student get into college.

"We begin working with students in eighth-grade," Gay said. "We try to plant the initial seed and tell all the students chosen that they do have the potential to go to college."

Gay said the program, devel-

oped in 1987 by A&M and the University of Texas at Austin, is now aiding more than 3,000 children.

Gay said once students join the program, they receive an extension on counseling normally available at their schools.

"We try to help kids improve their study habits, build their self-confidence and self-esteem and expose them to university life by visiting various college campuses," she said.

The center in Houston is one of five in Texas and one of three

sponsored largely by A&M under the Center for Academic Enhancement.

"We try to work closely with A&M and capitalize on programs that already exist at the University," she said.

"We try to get kids up to A&M for Engineering Day and to events sponsored by other departments," she said. "We try to fit in with the natural flow."

The center also offers tours and works closely with other universities, including the University of

Houston.

"Houston often lets us use their facilities and will sponsor a campus visit next year where the students will actually stay at the university in the dorms," Gay said.

The program also tries to provide role models for young students.

"We work for the most part with black and Hispanic students and provide them with someone to look up to so they can see just how far they can go," Gay said.

The Houston center expects to handle about 950 students during the 1991-92 school year, she said.

"We take in a new group each fall," she said. "The program is growing rapidly in that sense, but the number of staff members is not growing in proportion to the number of kids."

As a result, Gay said major agenda changes have become nec-

essary and it has become more difficult to work at a personal level.

Gay said, however, that expansion of office space is planned, adding that she believes the program's growth is positive.

The effectiveness of the program is not measurable at this stage, she said.

"The ultimate measure will be how many of our students actually enroll in colleges," she said. "We have noticed, however, that the students we work with are enrolling in more college-preparatory classes and more extracurricular activities. We find that this makes them better-rounded students and greatly increases their chances of success."

She said just the fact that some students now talk about college and have career interests is encouraging.

"When you ask them what they

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