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THE BATTALION

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Senator introduces student regent bill in state Legislature

The proposed bill would put a student on the system Board of Regents.

By Lisa Messer
THE BATTALION

A Texas senator introduced legislation Monday that would provide for a student regent on the governing board of the Texas A&M University System. Senate Bill 769, filed by state Sen. Jeff

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Wentworth, a former A&M student, would allow college and university students to be represented on the governing boards of their university systems. The Texas Senate has voted against

similar provisions 22 previous times.

A student liaison would have the same rights as other board members to voice opinions, make recommendations and participate in board meetings.

However, the student would not be allowed to vote on any matter before the board or be included in the executive sessions of the board, unless invited to attend by the chairman.

Wentworth said student liaisons are an integral part of representative democracies.

"A student liaison to a board of regents would, I believe, give university students the opportunity to be heard where it counts—in the policy-making councils of their universities," he said.

Mary Nan West, chairman of the Texas A&M Board of Regents, said although she is not opposed to a student regent sitting on the Board, she questions how well that student will be able to represent all students within the System.

"I have always welcomed input from students," West said. "They're the people we're supposed to serve. If we don't know what the students think, we can hardly serve them well."

"My one question, though, is how will a student regent be chosen to represent everyone. This is a system, not just Texas A&M University at College Station. We'd need to be sure there were mechanisms in place to be fair, but I don't know what those mechanisms would need to be."

Under the proposed bill, a system's student advisory council, which is made of representatives from each school in a system, would nominate three of its members for the position.

The names would be forwarded to the governor by June 1 for the final decision.

If the school chose to participate in the program, a student liaison would serve a one-year term. A school's student government would decide whether or not to participate, and it could with-

draw from the program.

Forty-three states have passed laws

"A student liaison to a board of regents would, I believe, give university students the opportunity to be heard where it counts—in the policy-making councils of their universities."

—Jeff Wentworth
Texas state Senator

University's student government's Legislative Study Group, said she doubts the bill will pass the Texas Senate.

"Its chances are pretty slim," Partain said. "The issue has been going on for years now, and the legislators are tired of hearing about it."

Partain said the A&M System may gain a student liaison without the state Senate's passing Wentworth's bill if the A&M Board of Regents approves a student government proposal to create a liaison.

"Our regents are very open to student opinion," Partain said. "They want to have student input and be informed on what students think. We have a much better chance of getting a student liaison through our Board of Regents than the legislature."

Partain said the student government's proposal should go before the board for approval in May.

Business leaders address students on affirmative action history, future

Leaders say they hire based on qualification, not affirmative action mandates.

By Eleanor Colvin
THE BATTALION

Business leaders who deal daily with the ups and downs of affirmative action told A&M students Monday that quality is their basis for hiring employees, not gender or race.

Judge James DeAnda, moderator of the forum sponsored by MSC Great Issues, said affirmative action has evolved since its conception.

"Affirmative action has changed because circumstances and events surrounding it have changed," he said. "Today, we see a decidedly different program from what was initially intended. In some ways, it has broadened and narrowed in its scope."

DeAnda said the purpose of the discussion was not to take a stand on the legality of affirmative action, but to offer insight on what types of affirmative action programs are used by companies today.

Jason Brown, chairman of MSC Great Issues, said educating students about affirmative action is more important than debating its value. Texas A&M students, whether for or against the issue, have an interest in it.

"There's a lot of anxiety on campus concerning affirmative action," he said. "Instead of

having a fight about the issue, we wanted professionals to tell us about what we're facing—help us get past the myths."

DeAnda said affirmative action and diversity play a significant role in the workplace but the bottom line today is quality.

Panelist Tom Holt, human relations manager for Schult Homes Corporation, echoed DeAnda's thoughts when he said his company searches for competent and dedicated workers, not minorities and women.

"We need quality people to make a profit," Holt said. "I'm looking for people dedicated to doing the job right the first time—responsible and honest workers."

Panelist Truman Bell, human resources coordinator for Exxon, said he spends little time thinking about affirmative action and concentrates on recruiting the best and the brightest from the finest universities.

"Of the 200 people I hire this year, I will target mechanical engineers, chemical engineers, accountants and other disciplines," Bell said. "Of those, I have no targets for blacks, Hispanics or women—only for qualified workers."

Panelist Gaither Fischer, corporate manager of Employment Planning at Southwestern Bell Corporation, agreed that quality is the key in hiring employees.

"When I saw 'White Men Need Not Apply' on the program I almost dropped it, because that simply is not the case," Fischer said. "The bottom line is profit and hiring on the basis of race and sex simply is not profitable."

Fischer said he sees the controversy surrounding affirmative action shifting from race and gender to economics, and this shift calls for policy changes.

"Affirmative action may need to be based on economic need, not race or sex," he said. "There is a definite distinction between the haves and the have-nots in this society. If we don't address it we'll have more have-nots of all races and sexes wanting a change."

Panelists said they think the misconception that women and minorities are not qualified for the positions they hold is dying.

"We are definitely getting past that point," Bell said. "Your productivity determines how long you stay in a job or how far you will go—not race or sex."



Bart Mitchell/The Battalion

Tom Holt, the human relations manager for Schult Homes Corporation, addresses a crowd Monday night about issues concerning affirmative action practices in today's job market.

Harambee Fest closes Black History Month

The festival, sponsored by the Black Awareness Committee and the Pan-Hellenic Council, will be held tonight.

By Eleanor Colvin
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M students can experience the essence of African-American culture tonight at the Harambee Fest, sponsored by the Black Awareness Committee and the Pan-Hellenic Council.

Harambee, which means unity in Swahili, is the theme of the festival celebrating African-American culture and achievement.

The co-directors of programs for the Black Awareness Committee, Tina Harrison and Steve Traylor, said they hope to bring students

together and educate them.

"We hope to build unity among Texas A&M students, regardless of race and ethnicity," Harrison said, "and to offer a glimpse of African-American culture during the last days of Black History Month."

Traylor said unity is an important aspect of African-American issues.

"A lack of unity is the backbone of many issues plaguing the African-American community and this campus," Traylor said. "We want to stress the need for unity as we commemorate Black History Month."

Harrison said the increasing minority population at Texas A&M creates a need to break down cultural barriers through education.

"With the current racial climate on campus, it's necessary for everyone to learn about other cultures," she said. "It's important for others to be able to understand

the black culture, even if they don't wish to accept it."

Traylor said the Harambee Fest provides an opportunity for student organizations to give insight on what Black History Month means to them.

"We are offering a means to emphasize the preeminence of African-American culture," Traylor said. "We are very much alive on this campus and the Harambee Fest will give African-American students a chance to prove this."

Various groups, including The Voices of Praise, Focus, Prime Time Posse, National Association of Black Engineers, NAACP, several Greek organizations and others, will be represented at the fest.

Harrison said she wants the unity within the groups to encourage all students to accept and identify with

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Bart Mitchell/The Battalion

Hang on!

Mike Coyle, a sophomore civil engineering major, slaloms the course at 36 m.p.h. using a 15-foot rope at Century Lake on Monday afternoon. The TAMU Waterski Club practices at the lake seven days a week, weather permitting.

Japanese language course offers students an 'edge'

The College of Business will offer the language and culture non-credit class beginning in March.

By Tracy Smith
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Center for International Business Studies is helping business faculty and students get a competitive edge by offering a Japanese international language and culture class.

Becky LeFlore, the senior secretary for the Center for International Business, said a Japanese course, beginning March 28 and ending April 27, is for people inter-

ested in learning about the Japanese lifestyle and gaining skills needed to survive in Japan.

"This class is especially good for people who ever plan to do business with the Japanese," she said. "While the five-week course won't teach everything, it will cover many fundamentals needed when visiting Japan."

Dr. Lyon Schoenfeldt, a Texas A&M management professor, said it is important for people in the field of business to be as diverse as possible.

"This class lets the students learn a few words and phrases, something the Japanese people appreciate when someone visits from another culture," he said. "Secondly, it offers an understanding of their culture by giving some valuable insight."

Schoenfeldt, who sat in on a previous class, said he has taken three groups of 20 students each to Japan to learn more about the Asian culture and to visit companies throughout Japan.

"You can't learn the little things that go on without being there," he said. "But the class definitely gives you an edge over those who don't have any Japanese training."

Janice Mills, a business graduate and one of the students who visited Japan with one of Schoenfeldt's groups, said that with the continuing globalization of the economy, it is important for business professionals to have knowledge about other cultures.

"While in Japan, one of the

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