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# THE BATTALION

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## Regents award contract for Special Events Center

A Dallas-based firm will begin building the center in three weeks. Construction is expected to be finished by May 1997.

By Wes Swift  
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Board of Regents awarded a \$32 million contract Wednesday for the construction of the Special Events Center to a Dallas-based company.

Construction on the 12,500-seat Special Events Center, which will be used for graduation ceremonies, con-

certs and sporting events, will begin in three weeks.

Dr. Barry B. Thompson, Texas A&M chancellor, said the contract marks a milestone for the University.

"This is a historic moment at Texas A&M," Thompson said. "The Special Events Center has been discussed and discussed and rehashed over again."

The contract comes after 13 years of planning for the center.

Plans for the Special Events Center were rejected by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in

1991 because of the high price tag.

Later, acting on advice from the coordinating board, a scaled-down version of the project was resubmitted and approved in July 1994.

Mary Nan West, Board of Regents chairman, said that at a recent A&M Club luncheon in San Antonio, several former students asked her about the status of the center.

"[The graduates] asked me over and over, 'When are you going to build that Special Events Center so we can have graduations there?'" West said.

West said she was delighted to see the System award the contract and take the first substantial step for the construction of the center, which the students fully support.

"I wouldn't have voted for this unless

the students wanted it," West said.

Mark LeVoy, chief executive officer of Huber, Hunter & Nichols, Inc., the construction company that will begin building the 230,000-square-foot center, said his firm was proud to be selected for the project.

"Obviously, we're very excited about being part of such a special and historic event here," LeVoy said.

Huber, Hunter & Nichols, Inc. is a nationally-known construction firm that has been involved in the construction of several high-profile sports facilities.

During the last three years, the firm has served as construction manager for the 65,000-seat Alamodome in San Antonio, Jacobs Field in Cleveland and United Center in Chicago, each costing more than \$100 million.

The smaller budget of the Special Events Center was never a drawback, LeVoy said, and the company takes on projects with budgets from \$7 million to \$600 million.

John Lindsey, regent and chairman of the Board's facilities and planning committee, said Huber, Hunter & Nichols is an "excellent contractor."

The Special Events Center will seat 12,500 fans for basketball games and 11,500 for concerts. It will hold 10,500 guests and 1,500 graduates for commencement exercises.

The center will be built at the corner of Olsen Road and Joe Routh Boulevard, across from the soon-to-be opened Recreational Sports Center. Construction of the Special Events Center is expected to be finished by May 1997.



West



## SQUIRREL CENTRAL

Campus squirrels draw much attention from A&M students and employees.

By Michael Simmons  
THE BATTALION

A squirrel runs across the grass in front of the Academic Building to join a group of squirrels already being fed seeds and nuts by two Texas A&M staff members.

This scenario is a common one at A&M, as many students and University employees spend breaks between classes and work feeding the squirrels on campus.

Elizabeth Aldredge, accounting assistant for the Fiscal Department, feeds the squirrels that reside in the trees behind the Coke Building.

"We started feeding the squirrels 10 years ago," Aldredge said. "At first we did it just to see if the squirrels would come."

The trial was a success, so Aldredge and other personnel who work in the Coke Building now spend their breaks feeding the squirrels.

"If the squirrels recognize you when you come outside, they will climb up onto the bench with you," Aldredge said.

David Rideout, a technical guidance biologist with the Texas Parks and Recreation Department, said squirrels adapt easily to people.

"It is not uncommon for squirrels to become tame," Rideout said. "But everyone has to remember that a squirrel is a wild animal and should be treated like one."

Aldredge said that although squirrels sometimes climb on the person feeding them, she has never been hurt by any of the squirrels.

"They don't do anything to you as long as you don't try to pet them," she said.

Jean Longhofer, an accounting assistant with the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Science, feeds the squirrels every day from her office win-

dow on the second floor office of Nagle Hall and said this has become routine.

"Every morning when you come in, it's automatic," Longhofer said. "You come in, make the coffee and feed the squirrels."

The squirrels try to get the attention of the office workers by scratching on the windows, she said. The rubber has even been chewed around one of the window sills where a squirrel once tried to get to the food in the office.

The construction in progress on Nagle Hall has not kept the squirrels away from Longhofer and co-workers.

"Even with the construction going on, the squirrels come back every morning," she said.

Every office should keep sunflower seeds handy specifically for feeding the squirrels, Longhofer said.

Kim Allen, a senior English major, said she was surprised by a squirrel while studying on a bench outside the Academic Building.

"I just sat down to study when the squirrel started climbing on my backpack," Allen said. "So I got out some peanut butter crackers and started feeding it. I can't believe how tame they are."

Allen said she has always seen people trying to feed the squirrels on campus and was impressed with how bold the squirrels are.

Rideout said the squirrels have adapted well to living on campus. In the wild, squirrels usually nest in old, hollowed trees, but the trees on the A&M campus are young and do not provide natural hollows for the squirrels. The squirrels have adapted by making their nests out of leaves, he said.

Although the squirrel survival rate on campus is unknown, Rideout said, the squirrels are challenged by a limited food supply.

"In the wild, squirrels eat a variety of berries and nuts," Rideout said, "but the squirrels on campus are limited to tree buds and live oak acorns."

Squirrels on campus are not threatened by the same predators they encounter in the wild. Rideout said he believes the only animals that pose a threat to the squirrels on campus are hawks and owls.



Nick Rodnicki, THE BATTALION

Senior English major Kim Allen shares a seat and a snack with one of AggieLand's squirrels by the Academic Building Wednesday afternoon.

## Waiting process for Aggie license plates cut short

TxDOT pre-stocks the plates as part of a six month pilot program.

By Jill Saunders  
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M collegiate license plates now are available at the time a vehicle's registration is renewed because of a pilot program run by the Texas Department of Transportation and the Brazos County Tax Office.

Gerald Winn, Brazos County tax assessor-collector, said the tax office wanted to provide convenience to its customers.

The program, which began July 3, will run for six months before a decision is made to permanently pre-stock the plates.

Collegiate plates of 34 schools are be-

ing stocked in 13 counties. The Brazos County TxDOT office currently stocks plates for A&M and the University of Texas at Austin.

Bob Tanner, chief of headquarters operation for TxDOT's Vehicle Titles and Registration Division, said the plates available were chosen by each county.

"We went to each participating county and had them identify the particular plates they wanted to stock in their particular county," Tanner said. "For example, Lubbock County might not want to have the plates for a small college far from them."

Tanner said that although the license plates are available to everyone in the community, he expects the majority will be sold to college students and alumni.

The new program for obtaining collegiate license plates is faster and more con-



See PLATES, Page 6

## Technical writing class available to students on World Wide Web

By taking classes on the Internet, students can access class information 24 hours a day from the location most convenient for them.

By Jill Saunders  
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M students can take a technical writing class for credit over the World Wide Web in Fall 1995, thanks to the implementation of educational programs utilizing the Internet.

Bill Ambrose, systems analyst and head of A&M's electronic information access team, said the Web allows for computer exchanges among various users.

"The Web is a mechanism for communicating information from any number of computers across a network," Ambrose said. "It has links that go from one document to another document."

Dr. Elizabeth Tebeaux, professor of English who teaches technical

writing over the Web, said the class is a modern approach to teaching.

"I don't have to sit in front of a class three days a week for students to learn," she said. "There should be alternate platforms from which students can pick the delivery they want."

Twenty students completed the class when Tebeaux first taught it during Fall 1994, and 40 students completed the class during Spring 1995.

The section for Fall 1995 is full, but the class most likely will be offered Spring 1996.

Although the class has not been advertised, Tebeaux said, enrollment has been high.

"We've had no trouble getting students," she said. "Most students found out about it through word of mouth. Also, in Spring 1995 I sent memos to the deans of engineering and business to tell them about the class."

The course curriculum and grading policies differ from those of traditional classes, she said, because the only test is the final exam. The class also requires students to complete 10 assignments, she said.

Last semester, Tebeaux conducted

two tutorials in order to personally interact with her students.

The class provides an alternative for students who live off campus and have a difficult time getting to classes, Tebeaux said.

"I've been arguing and saying we need alternate delivery of classes so that students don't have to fight their way to campus and deal with the problems of parking and traffic," she said.

John J. Dinkel, associate provost for Computing and Information Services, said the class provides the students with new opportunities.

"The technical writing class taught using the Internet provides the students with opportunities to access the course at their own pace and from where ever they choose to access it," Dinkel said. "As a result, this provides an entire level of flexibility that has not been available in the past."

Ambrose agreed that the class is more convenient for students.

"Students have access to all the information around the clock," Ambrose said. "It is easy to refine and update information that is discovered in a particular field."