

# THE BATTALION

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## Provost search resumes

### Applications for the position of vice president and provost were reopened.

By Wes Swift  
THE BATTALION

The search for Texas A&M's new executive vice president and provost, which was almost complete, is likely to stretch at least to the fall semester. An A&M search committee attempted to fill A&M's second-

highest administrative position as early as July 1. But that situation changed when the committee's nominee accepted the presidency at another university.

Dr. Alan L. Sessoms, former executive vice president for academic affairs for the University of Massachusetts System, was picked to fill A&M's executive vice president and provost position.

Sessoms accepted a position as president of Queen's College in New York, and withdrew his name from contention before the committee could extend a formal offer. "I'm still in love with A&M,"

Sessoms said. "I visited the school and fell in love with the school and the students. The only reason I didn't take the [A&M position] is because this other offer came along first."

Dr. Mark Weichold, an electrical engineering professor and head of the search committee, said he was disappointed by Sessoms' decision.

"I was disappointed because I thought he was a very good candidate," Weichold said.

The search committee began the screening process again.

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## Bill may bring storm clouds for A&M's weather center

### The bill proposes to eliminate services for aviation, marine or agricultural communities.

By Katherine Arnold  
THE BATTALION

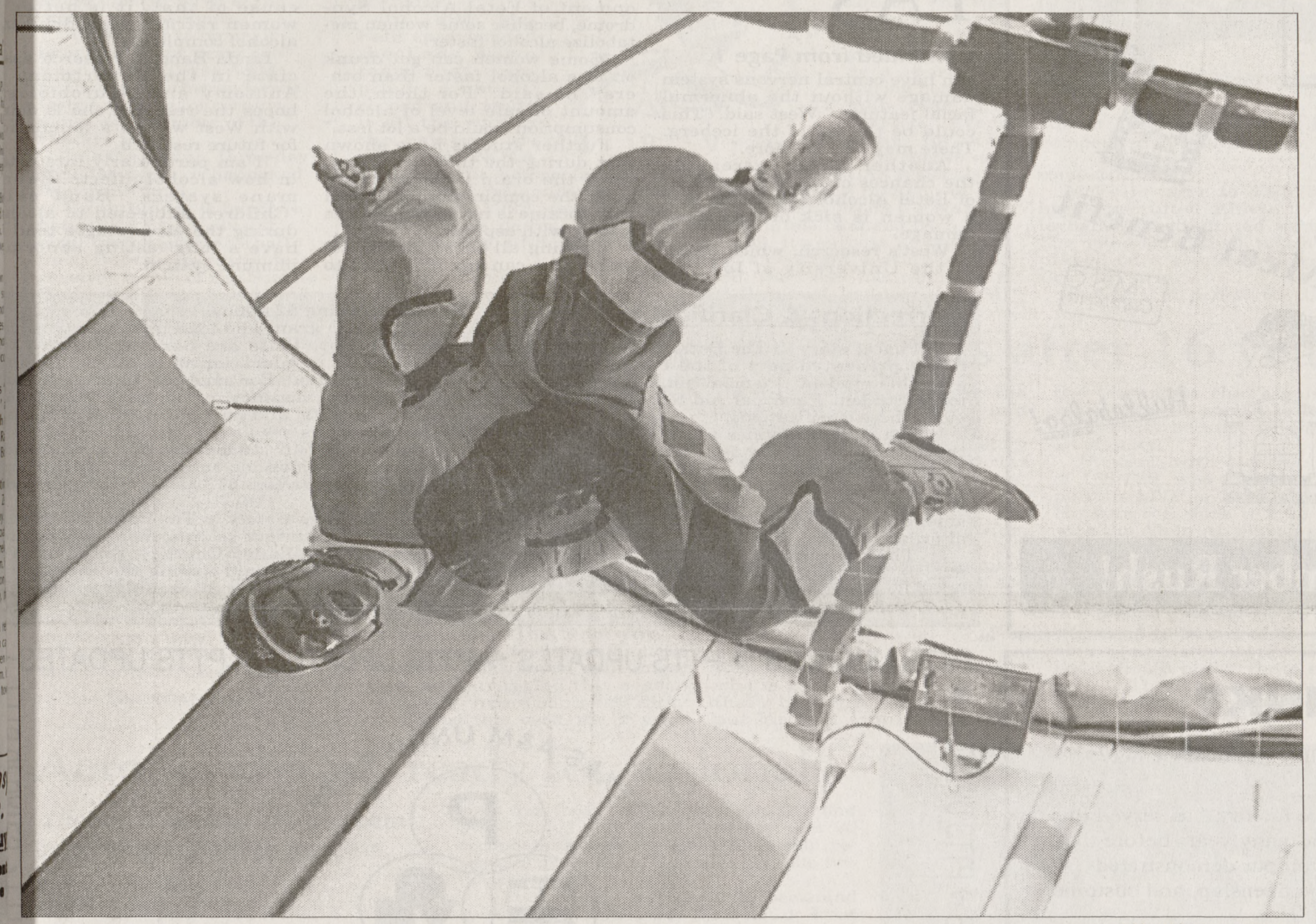
The forecast for the Southwest Agricultural Weather Service Center at Texas A&M is not

bright if Congress approves legislation eliminating services specifically for aviation, marine and agricultural communities provided by the National Weather Service.

The Southwest Agricultural Weather Service Center is a subsidiary of the National Weather Service, which falls under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association.

Jon Zeitler, a meteorologist at the weather

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Eddy Wylie, THE BATTALION

### LOOK OUT BELOW!

David Johnson, an instructor at Blue Skies America, practices indoor sky diving in the Blue Skies wind tunnel Sunday afternoon. Blue Skies just opened for business. It is located behind Wolf Pen Creek bowling alley.

## Looking toward diversity Multicultural Services dispels myths through diversity education

### The department sponsors conferences to promote minority leadership, retain minority students and inform others of race issues on campus.

By Michael Simmons  
THE BATTALION

The Department of Multicultural Services appeals to all students at A&M, regardless of race or gender, while offering insight into diversity, said Kevin Carreathers, department director.

"The dual role of the department is to educate the A&M community on the true meaning of diversity, while also offering a support system for minority students," Carreathers said.

Through diversity education, the department attempts to dispel the myths and rumors about different races.

"We don't want to make you think a certain way, but merely teach you to respect the differences in all of us," he said.

The department sponsors several programs aimed at furthering diversity education and retaining minority students at A&M.

U-ACT, a two-day retreat for students, and the Southwestern Black Student Leadership Conference (SBSLC) provides diversity education for students at A&M and across the nation.

The U-ACT retreat gives students information on stereotypes and the effects stereotypes have on A&M students.

Tanya Williams, graduate assistant for the Department of Multicultural Services, said the retreat enables students to speak freely about their cultures, while learning more about the cultures of others.

"Student leaders become better educated about the importance of diversity," Williams said.

Student organizations can nominate a representative to attend the retreat, or A&M students can attend the open retreat, which allows any interested University students to attend.

Another diversity education event is the annual SBSLC held on the A&M campus, which discusses topics like living in a black family and coping with attending a predominantly white university.

Niki Bisor, chairwoman of SBSLC, said the conference's focus is leadership, and gives A&M students the opportunity to show their leadership abilities to a host of individuals who attend the conference.

"The annual conference draws over 1,000 students from not only the southwest, but from all corners of the United States," Bisor said.

The four-day conference in January introduces students to several different topics, guest speakers and workshops, allowing them to learn about anything from secrets of success to economic empowerment within the community.

The conference also provides students with a career fair.

"A&M students have an advantage over students from other schools, because they can volunteer to work the career fair and network with any number of the businesses that attend," Bisor said.

The Department of Multicultural Services begins the process of assisting minority students well before they are accepted to college.

Excellence in Learning, Culture, Education and Leadership (ExCEL), a freshmen orientation program, and the Minority Enrichment and Development through Academic and Leadership Skills (MEDALS) conference enhance the retention of minority students, Carreathers said.

The department sponsors MEDALS, a conference which prepares minority high school students for continuing education.

More than 500 high school students participate in the conference, which culminates with the awarding of three \$1,000 scholarships funded by the Southwestern Bell Corporation.

ExCEL, a freshmen orientation conference, introduces students and their parents to college life by showing them what to expect and who to turn to for help, Carreathers said.

The aim of the department is to ensure that students are adequately prepared for college life and life after college by providing them with a home away from home, Carreathers said.



Carreathers



## College of Vet Med researches causes of birth defects in Rio Grande Valley

### A birth defect registry in the area monitors neural tube defect cases. Information from the registry is needed to find causation.

By Javier Hinojosa  
THE BATTALION

An apparent increase in the number of children born with neural tube defects along the Texas-Mexico border has Texas

A&M researchers investigating possible causes.

Every day, 12 babies in the United States are born with neural tube defects, which leave them without a brain or with incomplete back or spinal cord development.

Neural tube defects occur during the third or fourth week of pregnancy when the embryonic neural tube, which ultimately forms into the spinal cord and the brain, does not close properly.

Anencephaly, the absence of the brain, and spina bifida, the incomplete development of the

spinal cord, are the two major types of neural tube defects.

Spina bifida leaves children severely disabled while anencephaly is a fatal condition for the child which often results in miscarriages. Infants born with anencephaly will die within the first weeks of life.

Dr. Richard Finnell, an associate professor with the College of Veterinary Medicine's anatomy department, said a birth defect registry in the Rio Grande Valley along the border is now monitoring neural tube defect cases.

"Since Texas is one of 16

states that did not have a birth defect registry until last year, there was no ongoing surveillance," Finnell said. "We did not know what the rates of neural tube defects or other birth defects were."

"When we became aware of what appeared to be an increase, there was no background information to say, 'Yes this is two-fold or four-fold more than what we normally experience.'"

Information from birth defect registry databases is needed to

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## Binge drinking during pregnancy can affect unborn child

### Consuming several alcoholic drinks within a couple of hours can lead to the effect's of fetal alcohol syndrome, which is the leading cause of mental retardation.

This story is written to expand and clarify a July 19 Page 1 story, "Researchers study effects of alcohol on fetuses."

Researchers with Texas A&M's College of Medicine found that binge drinking during pregnancy can affect the un-

born child.

Dr. James West, professor and head of the college's Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology, said binge drinking can be defined as consuming several alcoholic drinks within a couple of hours.

"We have found in animals, that exposure to less alcohol can have more damage, provided that it is consumed in a manner that produces higher blood alcohol levels," West said.

Humans can get drunk with fewer drinks if they consume it faster, because the liver does not have a chance to metabolize the alcohol.

"Drinking a little bit at a time, over time, the liver would be able to metabo-

lize the alcohol," West said. "But drinking four cans of beer in a half hour or an hour, alcohol levels would be higher."

The blood alcohol levels are good indicators of the effects alcohol can have on a fetus, West said.

All Fetal Alcohol Syndrome studies at A&M are done on animals, mostly rats.

"The reason for that is, while we know that Fetal Alcohol Syndrome happens in the human population, you can't ask a pregnant woman to drink certain amounts of alcohol at particular times for practical and ethical reasons," West said.

Because mammals go through the same stages in development, animal data can be applied to studies in preg-

nant women, he said.

"We have found that one day of exposure to high blood alcohol levels can produce significant damage in animals," he said. "Based on that evidence, we can say that if a woman drinks until she is intoxicated, she is putting her fetus at great risk."

Binge drinking can lead to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or its effects, which is the leading known cause of mental retardation, West said.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome effects are low birth weights and lengths, abnormal facial features and central nervous system damage. An estimated 7,000 to 8,000 children in the United States are born

with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome each year.

These children have lower IQs, learning and memory difficulties, hyperactivity and motor control damage. When these children become older, they are easily persuaded to do bad things and often develop social problems.

"Some of the boys get into trouble with the law," West said, "and the girls often get pregnant."

Central nervous system damage may occur at any time during pregnancy, but abnormal facial features develop during the first trimester only.

"In binge drinking, many children

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