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news BRIEFS

A&M engineering programs top in nation

Three Texas A&M undergraduate engineering programs are ranked among the top 10 nationally in the Gourman Report, a qualitative guide to higher education.

The Department of Petroleum Engineering, the Department of Agricultural Engineering and the Department of Industrial Engineering were recognized by the report, with petroleum engineering ranked 1st in the nation.

The Gourman Report rates programs on the basis of 18 criteria, including faculty and student qualifications, admission requirements, curricular content and computer facilities.

A&M, ETSU establish dual-degree program

Texas A&M's Dwight Look College of Engineering has established a new dual-degree program in engineering with East Texas State University (ETSU). Students at ETSU will be able to participate in the program, which allows them to take pre-professional courses in the sciences at ETSU before transferring to A&M for courses in engineering.

Upon completion of the program, entailing two or three years of work at their primary institution and how many additional years of engineering courses at A&M, the students will graduate with two degrees — a bachelor of science in mathematics, computer science or physics from ETSU and a bachelor of science in engineering from A&M.

A&M also has dual-degree programs with Sam Houston State University, Southwestern University, University of St. Thomas and Shreiner College.

70 mph limit applies to some local FM roads

Area motorists will now be able to utilize the 70 mph speed limit on farm-to-market roads as well as highways.

The speed limit changes began in December 1995, when the 55 mph speed limit was repealed.

Kirk Barnes, Texas Department of Transportation transportation engineer for the Bryan district, said not all FM roads will have a speed increase.

"We analyzed each and every FM road in our district," Barnes said. "As a result, there will be some roads posted at slightly slower speed limits of 65 mph and 60 mph."

The 70-mph signs on most FM roads should be posted in the coming weeks.

Aggies engineer winning van

The propane-fueled minivan took top honors in Canada

By Brandon Hausenfluck
THE BATTALION

A Chrysler minivan converted to run on propane by Texas A&M mechanical engineering students won the blue ribbon at the International 1996 Propane Vehicle Challenge held in Canada.

The effort marked the first time A&M students entered a contest to convert a vehicle from gasoline power to propane power.

The Chrysler Corporation donated a van through the Bossier Chrysler Dodge Jeep-Eagle dealership in College Station. Other sponsors included the U.S. Department of Energy, Chrysler-Canada Ltd. and Natural Resources Canada.

About 20 mechanical engineering students and three faculty advisers went to Windsor and Toronto from May 29 to June 4 for the competition.

The team won a cash prize of \$5,000 plus a \$1,500 bonus for achieving the lowest emissions while maintaining high performance. The conversion process included removing the gas tanks and replacing them with propane tanks. Then, the team had to make necessary changes in the engine to allow it to run on propane.

"We basically took a 1996 Chrysler minivan and converted it to run specifically on propane," Chris Vasiliotis, project leader and a mechanical engineering graduate, said. "This included doing things such as replacing the stock pistons to ones designed to work with propane."

Dr. Make McDermott, professor of mechanical engineering and a faculty adviser, said with a \$50,000 price tag, the project will bring notoriety to the mechanical engineering department and A&M students.

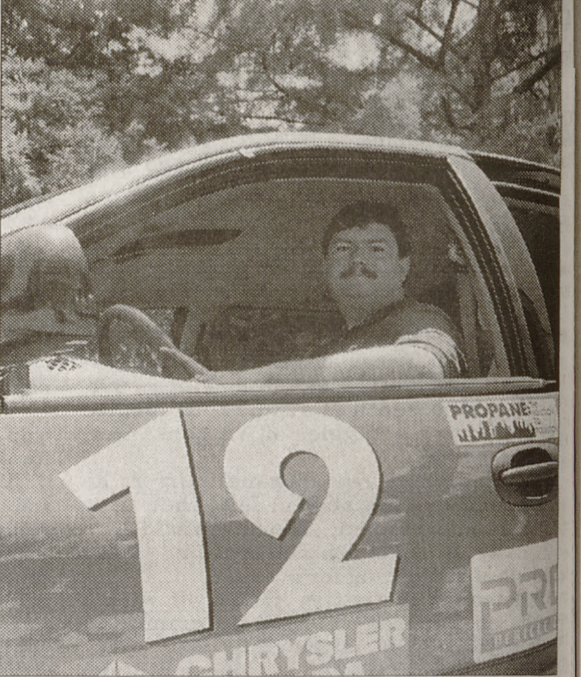
"This win publicizes to the automotive and alternative fuel industries the quality of the students and the program here at Texas A&M," McDermott said.

The vans were tested for their performance, fuel efficiency and the quality of their conversions. A written report and presentation were also required

for the competition.

Donald Jay, team member and a mechanical engineering graduate, said alternative fuels are important not only to the environment, but to the pocketbook as well. Propane, when bought in bulk, can cost just one-third the cost of gasoline.

"The main thing is alternative fuels burn cleaner and cost less because they are a by-product of natural gas and can be made from crude oil," Jay said.



Mike Billedeaux sits in the International Propane Vehicle Challenge winning van he helped convert.

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TUESDAY JUNE 18 at 11am and 1pm
WEDNESDAY JUNE 19 at 10am and 3pm
FRIDAY JUNE 21 at 11am and 2pm
All Meetings Held in Bizzell Hall West room 358

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News: The Battalion news department is managed by students at Texas A&M University in the Division of Student Publications, a unit of the Department of Journalism. News offices are in 013 Reed McDonald Building, Newsroom phone: 845-3313; Fax: 845-2647
ADVERTISING: Publication of advertising does not imply sponsorship or endorsement by The Battalion. For campus, local and national display advertising, call 845-2696. For classified advertising, call 845-0569. Advertising offices are in 015 Reed McDonald and office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Fax: 845-2678.
SUBSCRIPTIONS: A part of the Student Services Fee entitles each Texas A&M student to pick up a single copy of The Battalion. Mail subscriptions are \$20 per semester, \$40 per school year and \$50 per full year. To charge by VISA, MasterCard, Discover or American Express, call 845-2611.
The Battalion (ISSN #1055-4726) is published daily, Monday through Friday during the fall and spring semesters and Monday through Thursday during the summer sessions (except on University holidays and exam periods), at Texas A&M University. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77840.
Postmaster: Send address changes to The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.