

Hispanic Heritage Month

Speakers stress politics, community

BY ERICA ROY
THE BATTALION

Speakers from the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) addressed Texas A&M students about the importance of being active in politics on Tuesday night. Valdez, the national director of MAPA in Riverside, Calif., and Valdez, the chapter leader of the San Antonio chapter, were invited to speak by the Hispanic Business Student Association, Ballet Folklórico Central and the Rio Grande Valley Cultural Club. Navarro stressed that Hispanics should understand and stand up for



Navarro

their personal rights. "The issue is when it comes to rights," he said. "If you don't know what your rights are, then you're not informed. If you know your rights, then you can inform your family, friends and neighbors."

Valdez and Navarro said students need to visit communities after college graduation. "Don't quit learning about your rights after you leave college," Navarro said. "Have a commitment that you'll go back into the community and find someone to take your place at the University. A lot of us forget after we leave, that the community needs help." Valdez urged students to become involved politically in their communities both during and after college. "If our faculty won't take leadership roles, then it's up to you as students, so you can start working with a younger generation," Valdez said. "As

students, you have a lot to offer." Valdez said having a college degree does not always ensure equal treatment in society. A day before graduation, her 16-year-old daughter was told that she would not be able to receive her degree because her English teacher did not believe teenage mothers "should be allowed to take up space in a classroom."

When Valdez contacted the teacher, she was told there was nothing she could do that would enable her daughter to graduate. MAPA stepped in, and Valdez's daughter graduated the next day.



Valdez

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New parking garage planned for 'fish lot'

BY WESLEY POSTON
THE BATTALION

Parking and facility officials plan to begin construction on Parking Area 61, "fish lot," next fall, so by late 1998 or early 1999, it will be covered with a parking garage. Vergel Gay, an architect for the facilities planning division of the Texas A&M System, said the proposed \$18 million garage should house about 2,400 spaces. However, Gay warns, the specific details "will change all over the place." Tom Williams, director of Parking, Traffic and Transportation, said the original plans were to

build a \$12 million, 2,000-space garage on the 981-space lot. The plans were altered because it was more economical to increase the number of spaces. The covered parking garage will include visitor areas and contract spaces, he said. "We plan to sell about 1,000 spaces as dorm parking," he said. The construction should coincide with the opening of the Reed Arena parking spaces. Parking spaces that will be lost during construction will be reallocated to Reed and other parking areas. Williams said the new

site will be a popular addition to the shuttle bus routes. Students will be able to park in the garage and ride a bus to class on West or Main campus. Aggie Buck payment for hourly parking will be available, he said. Other options like debit cards may become available as the plans are finalized. The planning process began, he said, with students' requests to the Board of Regents for parking that is accessible to West and Main Campus. "You can never have enough parking for the students," he said. See GARAGE, Page 12



Dave House, THE BATTALION

Model Student **Tressa Orsak**, a junior environmental design major, carefully places a building on a large-scale model of downtown Bryan.

RESPECT aims to improve diversity

BY ANN MARIE HAUSER
THE BATTALION

The Division of Student Affairs has a vision of how to enhance the Texas A&M community for the 21st century. Achieving Community Through RESPECT is a mission "to critically examine the Division's programs and services to see where we could begin to improve in areas of diversity." Felicia Scott, assistant to the vice president for Student Affairs, chaired the two-year Diversity Task Force that developed the program to outline A&M's operational philosophy. The program is called Reaffirming Equality through Sensitivity, Patience and Education, leading to Communication and ultimately to Trust (RESPECT). Scott said RESPECT aims to make the Aggie experience positive for all students. "We are trying to be proactive in meeting the needs of all the students at Texas A&M through community development," Scott said. "[The vision] will have to come from the top down and then the bottom up."

ter with the Task Force on Racial Climate Assessment. Scott said the University hired an external agency to study A&M's racial climate because we often cannot see the negative things happening within the System. We are an institution of higher education, and people are from various backgrounds, Scott said. "We're not a true community until every member of the community

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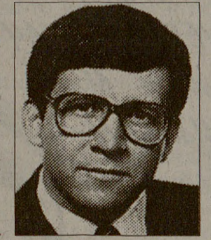
The Task Force incorporated three groups — students, student organizations and staff and administrators. After discussing the positive and negative aspects of campus practices, recommendations were made and discussed with the Student Affairs Council. Combined with input from the Division of Student Affairs, the departments within Student Affairs discussed the controversial issues. Dr. J. Malon Southerland, vice president for Student Affairs, said creating a sense of community will impact the students. "[The action plan] is a recognition of the proper way to do business in a university system," Southerland said. The first phase of RESPECT is the knowledge and assessment phase which was implemented this semester

feels a part of the community," Scott said. "Ultimately, by the year 2000, we will achieve a true community." Phase two of RESPECT will be an action plan, and phase three will implement the vision. What happens in the second and third phases will depend on the assessments from the first phase. Scott said the inherent mission for the University is to prepare students for the world. She compared A&M to a cocoon for students. "It's sad to grow just academically," Scott said. "But socially, how have you grown?" Carl Baggett, student body president and a senior accounting major, said RESPECT will take time to permeate throughout the organization. "It will take time and a lot of effort, but I think that it is very possible," Baggett said. "A&M is a great place, but you can always improve."

Malon Morales to discuss affirmative action

CARLA RENEA MARSH
THE BATTALION
Attorney General Dan Morales addressed affirmative action as the guest speaker at the Aggie Democrats' meeting tonight. Morales will answer any questions or concerns the audience may have about affirmative action. Miller, vice president of Democrats and a junior business management major, Morales will tell students what he is doing on their behalf. Christina Perez, president of

Aggie Democrats and an educational psychology graduate student, said tonight's discussion will be unlike other affirmative action debates. "We want to try to present affirmative action for what it is," Perez said. "Students can decide for themselves rather than have an issue



Morales

shoved at them." Perez said the major goal of the meeting is to educate and clarify misconceptions about affirmative action. Misty Hataway, programs director of Aggie Democrats and a junior political science major, said the Aggie Democrats plan to have more Texas leaders speak at their meetings to promote their organization. "Wednesday night's event will showcase the Aggie Democrats for everyone to see what we're about," said Hataway. She said the Aggie Democrats are dedicated to educating college students and encouraging them to vote. "With this year being an election year, it is important for college students to vote," Hataway said. Perez said students need to familiarize themselves with the state officials in Bryan-College Station. "Even though several students are registered to vote in their home town, it's important for college students to know who represents them in the place where they live," she said.

Right to carry firearms does not cross border

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — A warning to gun-toting Texans: Your right to carry does not extend past the border, and the consequences for ignoring that fact can be severe. An East Texas couple recently found out how much trouble it can be to take a firearm into Mexico, even unwittingly.

Even though they didn't remember the rifle was in the truck until they were asked about weapons, the couple broke a Mexican law prohibiting the importation of firearms or ammunition without a permit. Such problems are actually common on the border, officials said, often because people either forget they have the weapons or the fact they're entering another country or don't realize that U.S. laws don't apply there.

Five people are currently in prison on gun charges in Ciudad Juarez, across from El Paso, and another is being held for taking ammunition into Mexico. An American is also being held in Matamoros and another in Reynosa. "It's a real heartbreaker to find people who have gotten themselves in this situation," said Larry Colbert, consul general in Juarez.

Aggie Opener

20th-ranked A&M basketball Team faces Texas at home tonight in Big 12 debut. Sports, Page 9

Free For All

Year: Students could take advantage of free food and great conversation tonight. Opinion, Page 13

Enrollment figures reveal trends

Numbers show decrease in African-American, Hispanic students
BY LAURA OLIVEIRA
THE BATTALION

But while overall enrollment has risen, the freshman enrollment among African-Americans and Hispanics is down more than 19 percent. Males still outnumber females with 55 percent, or 23,157 students. Females make up the remaining 45 percent, or 18,735 students.

Donald Carter, University registrar, said the enrollment ratio of men to women has "evened out" in recent years, but male enrollment is still consistently higher. Seniors make up the largest group of students, with 10,909, and sophomores, with an enrollment of 6,500, are the smallest group. The junior class has an enrollment of 8,641, and there are 8,012 freshmen. Of the total enrollment, 1,320 are African-Americans and 4,052 are Hispanics. Gary R. Engelgau, executive director of the Office of Admissions and Records, said that although they are not exactly sure why, some say the drop in minority enrollment is connected to the Hopwood decision. Starting in Fall 1997, race and ethnicity will no longer play a role in the admission process. However, the fill-in-the-blank race/ethnicity box is still on admission applications for federal and state purposes. "It has not been taken off the applications, but at the same time, it is not being considered in the application process," he said. A feature that will be added to Fall 1997 applications is consideration of the family educational background of an applicant. Engelgau said that when the family's educational background is considered, applicant reviewers are given more insight into each individual's personal circumstances. This allows A&M to diversify all aspects of its student population. "Diversity is important in all its dimensions," he said. "What we are going to do is make sure we have a good geographic distribution throughout Texas."

	Male	Female	Total
Class 0	23	21	44
Freshman	4182	3830	8012
Sophomore	3402	3098	6500
Junior	4613	4028	10641
Senior	6080	4829	10909
Class 5	110	126	236
Professional	318	400	718
Graduate	4429	2409	6832
	23157	18735	41892