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Survey measures reactions to GUF proposal

SURVEY RESULTS

Are you satisfied with the quality of education at Texas A&M?
Yes: 86%, No: 14%

Do you feel our faculty and staff deserve a pay raise?
Yes: 71.1%, No: 28.9%

Would you be in favor of the proposed increase in the General Use Fee?
Yes: 41.6%, No: 58.4%

By JOANNE WHITTEMORE
THE BATTALION

Texas Aggies Making Changes (TAMC), a Student Government subcommittee, conducted a non-scientific survey to determine students' feelings about the proposed General Use Fee increase. Laurent Therivel, vice president of finance for Student Government and a senior management and marketing major, said the purpose of the survey was to measure students' reaction to the increase.

"We want a gauge of students' opinions of the General Use Fee,"

he said. "First, if they know about it; and second, what they think about it."

The survey was distributed to students in the MSC and various classrooms.

A brief synopsis at the top of the survey informed students of the current GUF rate, how a GUF increase would affect them, and why the issue is important.

Therivel said students complain about the last line of the synopsis stating, "A failure to increase fees would result in a decrease in the quality of education and the value of the Texas A&M diploma." Therivel said students

felt the statement was biased in favor of the GUF.

Matt Mayfield, executive vice president of administration for Student Government and a senior animal science major, said the survey was as unbiased as possible.

"If you want to tell people the facts, you can't go about it in a completely unbiased way," he said. "You can't be completely unbiased on something like this."

The survey asked students whether they are satisfied with the quality of education at A&M, whether they feel the faculty deserves a pay raise, and whether

they would support an increase in the GUF. There was also a section for students to add their comments.

Therivel said students' answers varied in the comments section. He said students felt they were constantly "slammed" with fees since the GUF was recently increased and the proposed GUF increase would come all at once, rather than in monetary increments.

Therivel said students felt financial aid and scholarships needed to be increased to offset the GUF increase. He said students suggested getting revenue

from other sources, such as the state government.

Therivel said the GUF received a closely divided response because students are not as informed on the issue as they could be.

Student Government is attempting to better inform students by distributing information to major campus organizations and speaking to organizations that show an interest in learning more about the GUF. But Therivel said it is mostly up to students to get informed.

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Lawsuit presses for child support interest payment

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — A judge entered a class-action order Monday providing for parents to collect interest on past-due child support, a sum plaintiffs' attorneys say could total billions of dollars.

"This is based on the fundamental proposition that child

Dusek said. Cases in which the past-due amount has been paid will be re-examined for interest assessment, he said.

There is no figure available on how many cases that would apply to or how much money is involved, Dusek said.

Interest has not been assessed uniformly in private or state cases for back child support, according to the Attorney General's Office. A state law was passed in 1991 allowing interest to be paid. It was amended in 1993 to provide for a 12 percent interest rate.

"We will not allow private attorneys to profit from the children."

Dan Morales
Texas Attorney General

Sinkin and Richard Orsinger, another plaintiffs' attorney in the class-action lawsuit, said the judge's order means anyone who received child support since Sept. 1, 1985, can seek recalculation of the amount of any past-due child support to include interest.

The attorneys estimate some 2 million Texas children may be affected, with the interest totaling billions of dollars.

support is not a request. It is a court order. These are just arrearage debts owed to the children of the state of Texas," plaintiffs' lawyer Steven Sinkin said.

State District Judge John D. Gabriel Jr. ruled custodial parents who have been owed back child support would be certified as a class in the case.

Maria del Carmen Rios and Virginia Wilson, two San Antonio women who have been owed past-due child support, are the plaintiffs representing the class.

"It feels good to be able to help out others," Rios, the mother of a 15-year-old, said. Her past-due child support increased from \$4,575 to \$22,199 since interest was figured in, Sinkin said.

Texas Attorney General Dan Morales intervened last week on behalf of the plaintiffs and pledged to pursue unpaid interest in the child support cases his office handles.

"We do in fact want to collect interest on the past due child support," said Ron Dusek, a spokesman for Morales.

The state began collecting interest on pending cases of past-due child support in July,

"This is a situation that has existed in Texas for a long time," Orsinger said. "I think it just takes a little push ... and then it'll start rolling."

The attorney general's office handles 800,000 child support cases. The interest calculation won't place an unmanageable burden on the office because a new computer program will handle much of the work, Dusek said.

Court hearings are to be held to determine who will notify the members of the class and how the private attorneys in the case will be paid.

Morales said last week all the past-due interest should go directly to children or to refund the state for welfare payments that supported the children when child support wasn't paid.

"We will not allow private attorneys to profit from the children," Morales said.



Famous Pearls Former First Lady Barbara Bush gets her first glance at the new George Bush Presidential Library during a site visit on Monday afternoon.

Computerized GRE benefits students

By ERICA ROY
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M now offers students the opportunity to take a computerized version of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) instead of the pencil-and-paper version previously used.

Dr. Kathy Hannula-Bral, a testing services administrator with Measurement and Research Services, said the computer-based test can benefit students in various ways.

"It's valuable for students in a number of ways," Hannula-Bral said. "They have the flexibility in when they can take the test, a quick score reporting to the institution, and immediate feedback (on the test score)."

The first computerized test at A&M will be administered Wednesday at 5:30 p.m. in Room 005 of the Agriculture Building. Four students may take the examination at a time, and two of the spots are filled.

The next computerized test will be administered Saturday at 2 p.m. Various other test dates in December are available.

Computer testing for the spring semester will begin Jan. 6, 1997. Tests will be given every Monday, Tuesday and Friday (except for Jan. 20 which is Martin Luther King Jr. Day) from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Wednesday nights from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.

More test dates will be offered if the demand arises, Hannula-Bral said.

The pencil-and-paper version of the test is still available, but the Educational Testing Service and the GRE Program are gradually de-emphasizing it. Only three pencil-and-paper tests are scheduled this school year, and two for the next year. Eventually, the GRE will only be administered via computer.

The computer version of the test is not simply the pencil-and-paper version copied onto the computer. The test is computer adaptive, which means the answer a student gives to a question determines the next question the student receives, and responses to questions cannot be changed once they have been answered.

After the administration of the

test is over, the student has the option of canceling the score or viewing it immediately. If a student chooses to view the score, it can no longer be canceled.

Students do not have to be computer literate to take the exam on the computer, because tutorials will be held before the administering of the test.

Students may call 1-800-GRE-CALL (National Registration Center), 862-7375 or 845-0532 (Measurement and Research Services) to register for the computer-based GRE. To register by phone, a student must have a credit card or Educational Testing Service Authorization voucher. Students may also register in Room 005 in the Agriculture Building and pay with check or money order.

THE BATTALION TODAY

Connick's Way

Walters: Musician Harry Connick Jr. is justified in moving from jazz to funk. AggieLife, Page 3

Last Hurrah

Senior Page White has high hopes on the eve of her final NCAA postseason appearance. Sports, Page 7

Dark Alliance

Whitefall: Quanell X speaks about former President Bush's alleged conspiracy. Opinion, Page 9

Sheriffs challenge Brady law

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two county sheriffs from Montana and Arizona are challenging the Brady gun-control law before the Supreme Court, arguing the federal government cannot require local police to help enforce the measure.

Sheriffs' departments may not "be conscripted for a federal crusade," say lawyers for Jay Printz, sheriff of Ravalli County, Mont. Also seeking to overturn the law is Sheriff Richard Mack of Graham County, Ariz.

But government lawyers say the 1993 Brady law is a legal effort to curb a "national epidemic of gun violence," and "there is no constitutional rule preventing Congress from devising a national solution and then requiring limited local assistance."

"I believe it's constitutional," President Clinton told reporters Monday. "Tens of thousands of people with criminal backgrounds and other serious problems couldn't get handguns because of the Brady law. ... People are alive today because of it."

After hearing arguments in the case Tuesday, the justices are expected to issue a ruling by next July.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the Brady law in 1995,

saying the requirement was a minor burden similar to "the federally imposed duties of state officers to report missing children or traffic fatalities."

However, previous decisions by the high court suggest some justices may be sympathetic to a states' rights argument.

In 1995, the justices struck down a federal law that banned gun possession within 1,000 feet of schools, saying the states — not Congress — had the authority to enact such criminal laws.

Last April, the court signaled a further shift in the balance of power between states and the federal government when it said Congress cannot force states into federal court to settle disputes over gambling on Indian reservations.

The Brady law was enacted by Congress over bitter opposition from gun-control opponents, including the National Rifle Association.

The measure is named after James Brady, who was seriously wounded in the 1981 assassination attempt on President Reagan. Brady, who pushed for the law, has urged the high court not to "mess with success."

Seniors prepare to graduate

By MARIKA COOK
THE BATTALION

In the aftermath of Elephant Walk, the Class of '97 is dead, but life after the Twelfth Man awaits them.

As graduation approaches, seniors are faced with major life decisions. Many are left wondering where they will go and what they will do to bridge the gap between their college years and their future.

Melanie Benson, a senior international studies major, is looking at all her options before deciding where she will go after graduation.

"I am a member of PRSSA (Public Relations Student Society of America) which is providing me with tips on the job market," Benson said. "We do office visits and practice interviewing. I'm also using a job bank in Houston and going to the PRSSA Career Fair in the spring. I want to get an internship after graduation and then continue with that company."

Many seniors are already

working, hoping to gain valuable work experience that will benefit them after graduation.

Michelle Lyons, a senior journalism major, is Class of '98 but will graduate one year early.

"Unfortunately, I went for quantity, not quality, and I don't feel like I learned enough," Lyons said. "I work at The Eagle now and I think experience is more important than grades. I feel like I work all the time anyway, so I might as well be finished with school and working full-time."

But looking for a job is not the first item on every graduating senior's agenda. Other graduates choose to put their professional lives on hold while they pursue personal interests.

Ashley Jensen, a senior Spanish major, said she wants to enter the job market but is in no hurry.

"After graduation, I plan to go to Argentina and enjoy some free time while I can, before I have to pay off my loans," Jensen said.

Another option for seniors is to continue their education in professional school.

Anthony Semien, a senior agricultural development major, said he plans to attend business graduate school at A&M. Semien is a "non-traditional" student because he has been married more than two years and has an 18-month old daughter.

Semien began school at A&M in 1989. He withdrew one and a half years later to complete a two-year mission for his church in South America. He started school again in the fall of 1993 and has been attending ever since. Along with taking 13 hours of school, Semien works 45 to 50 hours a week at two different jobs and is a newly appointed off-campus senator.

"My wife thinks I'm burning the candle at both ends, but I wanted this (Student) Senate seat in order to represent students that get lost in the shuffle — especially married students," Semien said. "I've learned that it's important to find your niche, what you really want to do with your life."

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