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Student Center Complex Fee

Students to decide on increase

By MELISSA NUNNERY
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M students will have an opportunity to decide today whether the Student Center Complex Fee will increase by \$2 per semester until it reaches \$30 per semester in 2000. Texas law requires that increases in the fee be passed by student referendum. The Student Center Complex Fee is one of the main sources of income for the University Center, which includes the J. Rudder Complex and the J. Koldus Building. These facilities provide office space for meetings and event rooms for student activities. Chris Williams, MSC presi-

dent and a senior speech communication major, said students do not realize the importance of the Student Center Complex Fee. "A lot of people don't realize how this fee affects them," Williams said. "It supports the student activities program, which is one of the best in the nation." Williams said the fee, now \$24, would increase \$2 a year starting in Fall 1997. The fee has not been increased since 1992. The University Center is under financial pressure, Williams said, because the fee has not increased in five years. He said the University Center Complex has generated revenue from other sources to supplement the inadequate funding the fee provides. "They increased the cost to

hold conferences there," Williams said. "But ... people stop having conferences there if the cost gets too high." He said student use of the center is probably greater than other uses. Therefore, some of the costs of operating the center is being shifted to the students. He said the purpose of the fee is not to run up individual budgets for student groups. But if the fee increase is not passed, Williams said, student organizations will face a financial burden. "[If the fee is not increased] the most likely outcome is that student organizations would be charged for their use of the University Center," Williams said. Williams used Ring Dance as an example. He said because

class councils sell tickets to Ring Dance, they would have to use a percentage of their profits from ticket sales to pay for the use of rooms in the University Center for the dance. "Class councils can't afford that," Williams said. "They're trying to save for class gifts." Student Body President Carl Baggett said the fee increase is necessary. "Students are going to value those buildings and the services they provide," Baggett said. "I support Chris' stand." Students may vote from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the MSC, the Commons, Wehner, Kleberg, the Student Recreation Center, Sterling C. Evans Library, Zachry and Sbsa.

Slocum releases 3 football coaches

By KRISTINA BUFFIN AND TOM DAY
THE BATTALION

Throughout a long and disappointing .500 season, the Texas A&M Football Team hunted for answers to its problems on the gridiron. On Tuesday, the program took another step in search of a solution. Offensive coordinator Steve Ensminger, defensive coordinator Phil Bennett and wide receivers coach Les Koenning Jr. were dismissed from their posts Tuesday in the wake of A&M's worst season since finishing 5-5-1 in 1983.

"I've visited with all three coaches," Slocum said in a statement released late Tuesday. "I have released them to pursue other job interests." Slocum's decision came as no surprise to at least one of the three coaches. Bennett, who turned 41 yesterday, had informed Slocum earlier in the season of his desire to leave A&M. "I told R.C. from mid-season on that I wanted to pursue other interests," Bennett said on the telephone from his home Tuesday. See RELEASES, Page 10



Holding On

Caitlin Dowell, a 3 1/2-year-old Bryan resident, goes ice-skating for the first time with her father at the Post Oak Mall ice-skating rink.

X: Bush linked to drug cartel

By WESLEY POSTON
THE BATTALION

Former President George Bush is the kingpin of a crack cocaine cartel, Minister Quanell X and Harley Schlanger said Tuesday night in Rudder Auditorium. Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. sponsored the lecture "The Bush Connection: Who Started the Crack Cocaine Epidemic," presenting evidence of Bush's involvement with Nicaraguan cocaine trafficking. Schlanger, of the Executive Intelligence Review, outlined a system of drug trafficking that connected drug pushers on street corners to the White House. "If you want a war on drugs, follow the money and go after the networks to the top," he said. "[Former President Bush] bears direct personal responsibility for destroying American lives." The Iran-Contra scandal of the 1980s was funded through government-controlled drug trafficking, Schlanger said.

"To focus solely on the CIA is to be misdirected," he said. "We were fighting Oliver North and Bush at the beginning of the Contra affair. The Contras were created by the U.S." Schlanger presented newspaper clippings from South American newspapers focusing on Bush's involvement in drug trafficking. "Bush is the kingpin of crack," Schlanger said. "You stand anywhere in Watts (Los Angeles) and you look out and every single house has been affected by the drug problem. The destruction that's been done deserves an explanation and the people deserve justice." "Bush, as a crack king responsible for the destruction of thousands of American lives, should not disgrace the campus of A&M with a library in his honor." Quanell X, a minister in the Nation of Islam, challenged the African-American community of A&M to respond to the drug problems. See DRUGS, Page 6



Harley Schlanger of the Executive Intelligence Review claims former President Bush is the kingpin in the crack cocaine epidemic in America.

CAMAC hosts La Posada celebration

By LAURA OLIVEIRA
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M campus will be transformed into Bethlehem tonight as a celebration of La Posada is hosted by the Committee for the Awareness of Mexican American Culture. The tradition displays a re-enactment of Mary and Joseph's Christmas journey through Bethlehem. Led by a tiki torch symbolizing the Christmas Star, an estimated 100 participants will stop at four locations on campus before they reach their final destination at the Grove. The event will begin at All Faiths Chapel at 7 p.m. From there, participants will travel to the YMCA, Hart Hall, and the MSC. Each stop symbolizes a place Mary and Joseph were refused shelter before arriving at the manger where Jesus was born. Anissa Silva, an event participant and senior sociology major, said she is proud the Mexican tradition empha-

will bring an awareness of the Mexican tradition. "It is cool to learn and see how different cultures celebrate holidays," she said. "This tradition is cherished in the Mexican culture, and I think it is important for people to see that." A star-shaped piñata will be brought out at the end of the event. The piñata signifies temptations, and the destruction of it symbolizes combatting them. Laura Huerta, vice chair of programs for CAMAC and a junior Spanish major, said the piñata is her favorite part of La Posada. "It is always fun and it is a very serious tradition," she said. "When the piñata comes out, you know it is time to celebrate and get down with the food."

izes the true meaning of Christmas. "It shows the Mexican-American culture views Christmas in a very religious way," she said. "We show what happened on Christmas night, and that is what we are supposed to be thinking about." A couple will be at each stop waiting for the candle-holding travelers. The traditional La Posada song will be sung in Spanish during the voyage. The song tells the story of the refusals Mary and Joseph received. A celebration with tamales, beans, rice and hot chocolate will be waiting for the participants at their final destination. Jessica Hickey, cultural director of CAMAC and a sophomore biomedical science major, said the event

"This tradition is cherished in the Mexican culture, and I think it is important for people to see that."
Jessica Hickey
CAMAC cultural director

THE BATTALION TODAY

- Thanks, A&M**
From a bugle stand to an "eternal" flame, Aggie senior class gifts have character. AggieLife, Page 3
- For starters**
The A&M Volleyball Team opens up NCAA Tournament play tonight. G. Rollie White. Sports, Page 7
- Surplus**
Anderson: Some elephants may be dead at A&M, but they're thriving wild in Africa. Opinion, Page 9

University chancellors to ask Texas Legislature for \$900 million

By BRANDON HAUSENFLUCK
THE BATTALION

A coalition of the chancellors from the four major Texas university systems are preparing to ask the 75th Texas Legislature for more than \$900 million to enhance the State's educational system and to secure financial stability for the 21st century. Texas A&M University System Chancellor Barry Thompson, along with chancellors William Cunningham of the University of Texas System, John Montford of the Texas Tech System, and Bill Hobby of the University of Houston System will ask for money that they say will benefit Texans for generations to come. Thompson said the funds are vital to ensure future financial stability in Texas. "[The money] will help increase the number of students who attend and graduate from college," he said. "If we don't significantly increase graduation rates (in

Texas), then all welfare costs and aid to dependents are going to skyrocket." The 1997 Higher Education Directory reports that Texas has 190 public and private higher education institutions. The money would go to improving all aspects of public education in Texas such as increasing public school partnerships and increasing student support and retention programs. Financial aid programs and research and development on increasing work force preparedness would also be funded. Demographic studies initiated by the coalition have shown that a growing population of ethnic minorities, school-age children and senior citizens will increase the demand for educational and social services. Texas' population is expected to increase from around 18 million in 1996 to over 33 million in 2030. Attendance rates at four-

year institutions in Texas are 14 percent lower than the national average. Attendance rates at community colleges and universities are 6 percent lower than the national average. Only about half of students who enroll in a public college or university in Texas earn degrees. To meet the national average of college graduates, Thompson said, Texas must raise the number of bachelor's degrees awarded by 15,200 a year, a 22.5 percent increase. Saralee Tiedy, deputy chancellor of the University of Houston System, said the future of Texas is at stake if improvements in the educational system are not made. "The outlook on the future of Texas is a rather grim picture," Tiedy said. "Our population is aging, there is a higher growth rate in Hispanic and African-American populations, and Texas is already a rather poor state.

"So [the chancellors] said, 'Let's draw our own educational forces together and report on the public school systems in Texas.'" Tiedy said the universities have worked well together in conducting their research. "We used the best people we could find," Tiedy said. "All of the reports were very good and we called on the expertise (of the researchers) to decide what are the best practices to solve the problems." A proposal to the 75th Legislature by the coalition stresses that because of lower educational accomplishments, Texas falls behind the national average in personal income. Higher educational attainment, it says, is increasingly necessary for job growth and economic progress in the 21st century. Through public school partnerships, a reading initiative would improve reading programs for 12,000 first through third grade students in 1998-99. Almost



50,000 students would benefit from a reading initiative in 2000-01. A college and university preparation initiative would model programs for up to 120,000 seventh- to 12th-grade students in 2000-01. Once fully implemented, 75,000 students per year would improve their reading

skills, and up to 12,000 more students would go to college each year. Thompson said he is confident Texas will overcome its education problems. "I am enthused about the prospect because Texas is expected to grow," he said. "It's about time that we attack the problems."