



Today



Tomorrow

See extended forecast, Page 2.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Bryan man threatens suicide in hotel room

Bryan man, distraught over his separation from his wife, locked himself in a hotel room and threatened suicide before surrendering Sunday, police said.

Robert G. Rodriguez, 38, shot his estranged wife at about 6:30 a.m. Sunday morning and threatened to kill himself, BPD patrol sergeant Harvey Branch said. His wife then called the BPD, which dispatched SWAT negotiation teams to the Brazos Inn at 3313 Highway 21 in Bryan.

Rodriguez emerged from the room at 4:30 p.m. and discarded his gun and ammunition, Branch said. He was taken into custody for psychiatric evaluation and was later charged with violating a protective order for contacting his wife.

No one was injured in the incident.

### Local Red Cross seeks donations

The Brazos County Red Cross is in need of money because of \$200,000 in aid given to victims of recent disasters in the area has depleted its budget.

Two apartment fires in College Station this spring left 44 people homeless. Red Cross exhausts its resources helping victims of accidents.

Bill Thomas, Red Cross executive director, said the fund now needs replenishing.

Thomas said money contributions were more needed than clothes and other items.

"We want to make sure that people who are made homeless have food, shelter, clothing and medical expenses taken care of, and then are able to get back on their feet," Thomas said.

Money vouchers for such items are given to disaster victims. The Red Cross receives much of its funding from United Way and small solicitation. Fund raising is always a big help, Thomas said, as are volunteers to help in relief operations.

### Comptroller Sharp files campaign papers

Texas State Comptroller John Sharp began his campaign for lieutenant governor June 7 by filing campaign papers with the Texas Ethics Commission.

Although Sharp has not officially announced his campaign plans yet, Ramsey, a Sharp spokesman, said the announcement would come shortly.

Sharp wants to succeed current lieutenant Governor Bob Bullock, who has said he will not seek re-election next year.

## TODAY IN BATTALION

### SPORTS

Texas A&M 4x100-meter relay team brought home the national crown this weekend.

See Page 3.

### OPINION

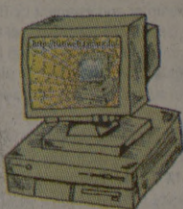
Society's treatment of elderly, homeless citizens displays unethical attitudes.

See Page 5.

### ONLINE

http://bat-web.tamu.edu

Check out the new look of The Batt' web page.



# Good Neighbors?

## Rec Center cancels pass sales to appease local competitors

By JENARA KOCKS  
THE BATTALION

Disagreement over the definition of a "student" between the Student Recreation Center and local gyms prompted the Rec Center to stop selling "continuing passes" to students enrolled for fall but not summer classes.

See COLUMN, Page 5

Dennis Corrington, director of the Department of Recreational Sports, said that before the cancellation, such "continuing students" were considered students.

But a "good neighbor policy" between the Rec Center and the gyms capped the number of non-student passes the Rec Center could sell, and the gyms complained that continuing

students are non-students and should not be allowed to buy summer passes. Corrington has since redefined the "student" as one who is enrolled in the semester he or she wishes to use the Rec Center.

Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. J. Malon Southernland, who concurred with Corrington's decision to discontinue the passes, said local businesses always thought continuing students were defined as non-students.

"He (Corrington) made a decision in support of their (local businesses) perception," Southernland said.

Southernland said the businesses did not threaten legal action on the issue, but were "aggressive in their request."

Steve Lumpee, manager of Gold's Gym, said selling continuing passes violated the good neighbor policy.

"They (the Rec Center) said they would try not to drastically affect the private sector," he said.

Lumpee said the center has affected local businesses because only two gyms remain open in the Bryan-College Station area since the Rec Center began operation.

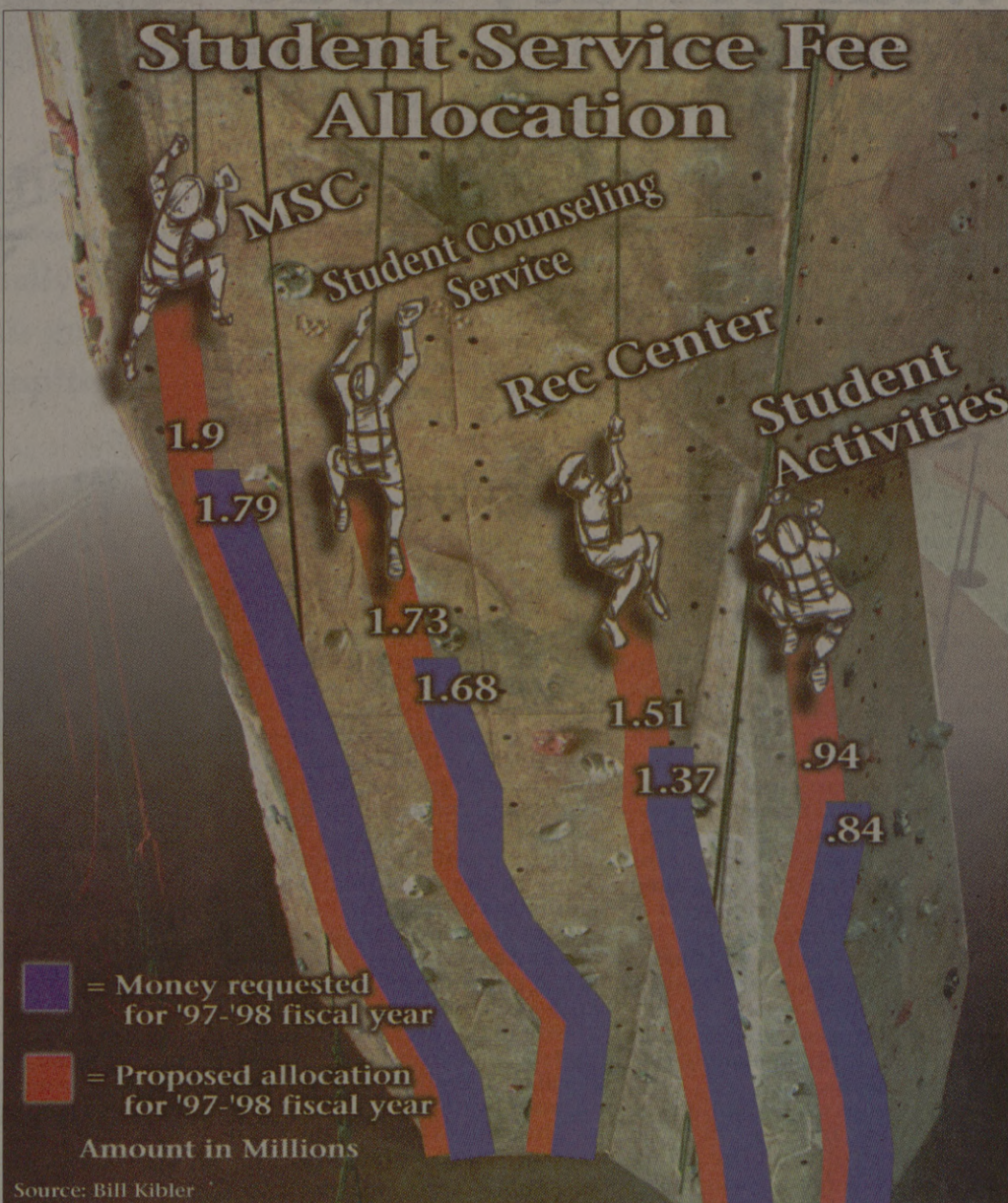
Corrington said the Rec Center and local gyms agreed on a 1,150 cap on the number of non-students, such as faculty and staff and families, who could buy a membership to the center.

But Corrington said this agreement did not define what constitutes a student.

Corrington said some students are exceptions to the new policy, and these students will be added to the cap. Graduate assistants and student workers for the Rec Center can buy an employee pass for the summer. Students in the veterinary and medical colleges also can buy a Rec Center pass during the summer because their enrollment is defined on an annual basis.

Corrington said that as of 10:30 a.m. June 4, the Rec Center was only 30 memberships away from the cap.

Lumpee said he believed other student services on the A&M campus cannot be used if a



Source: Bill Kibler

GRAPHICS: Brad Graeber, Tim Moog and Stew Milne

student is not enrolled in classes.

But at least two such services are available to continuing students. Charlene Clark, public relations officer for Sterling C. Evans Libraries, said "students continuing their studies in the summer or fall are still listed in the library's patron database and retain their circulating or check out privileges, as well as their use of the online databases."

Kirk Cole, assistant to the director of A.P. Beutel Health Center, said students who attended in the spring but are not enrolled for the summer can pay the \$44 health fee and use health services for the entire summer.

At least two services are either not available to continuing students or are limited. Ted Stachowiak, associate director of Student Counseling Services, said the services available to students enrolled in the fall but not the summer are limited to counseling on the student's fall schedule. Director of Computing and Information Services Thomas M. Putnam said computing resources are not available to students who are not registered for classes.

The Rec Center now also falls under the category of services unavailable to students if enrolled in the fall but not the summer term.

Corrington said the Rec Center will make up for the estimated \$42,000 loss in continuing pass revenue through "salary saving and other savings methods."

Southernland said how the Rec Center will make up funds is under evaluation. He said the Rec Center receives no state funds and has to pay for itself through membership and student fees.

However, Southernland said it is not an option to raise student fees because the fees are set by the legislature.

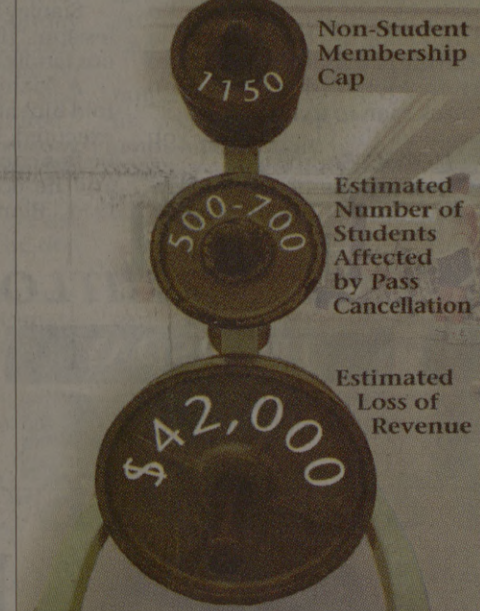
"This is a direct hit on the Recreation Center's budget," Southernland said.

Southernland said he is uncomfortable with any long-term reduction in services to students.

For the moment, he said, Corrington has agreed with the businesses, but Southernland said this matter is "definitely open to discussion."

"We will be working to get the needs for students met while trying to understand the needs of local businesses," he said.

### The Weight of the Cap



# A&M System could get 11 percent boost in funds

## Budget bill allocates over \$1 billion of state money

By JOEY JEANETTE SCHLUETER  
THE BATTALION

Need-based scholarships, non-faculty pay raises, merit-based raises and building improvements are among the higher-education allocations featured in the state budget bill approved by the Texas legislature. The bill awaits Governor George W. Bush's approval or veto.

Texas A&M University System Chancellor Dr. Barry Thompson said the bill would provide a boost to higher education in the A&M system, including the College Station campus.

"With my 26 years of working with the Texas Legislature, I can say that this group of lawmakers put their hearts into ensuring that college students and their families, as well as the economic future of our state, were among the top priorities this session," Thompson said.

Approximately \$1 billion in state support would be given to the A&M system for the next two years, bringing the general revenue appropriation up 11 percent from the previous fiscal period.

Kathy L. Harris, A&M System communications specialist, said the extra money is necessary and will

benefit A&M in many ways.

"We are really excited," Harris said. "This is a real home run for higher education if the governor signs the bill."

Harris said improvement of higher education is the No. 1 goal of the bill. Its goal is to increase the number of college graduates in the state of Texas by concentrating on undergraduate students.

The bill calls for across-the-board pay raises for non-faculty, budgeted employees. The \$100-per-month raise, the first such increase in four years, would go into effect September 1, 1997.

A&M employs a fraction of the 220,000 state employees eligible for this raise. Employees on hourly wages will not be affected by the pay raise.

Dr. Ray M. Bowen, Texas A&M president, would decide whether to give pay raises to faculty members based on a merit system and would make his decision at a later date.

The A&M Financial Aid Department would be granted an unspecified amount of money to go toward need-based scholarship recipients. Plans include a new scholarship, titled "New Horizons", directed toward minority students in need of financial assistance.

George Parker, A&M assistant provost, said students would benefit in three main ways from the increase in funds.

"The budget affects salaries, de-

"This is a real homerun for higher education if the governor signs the bill."

Kathy L. Harris  
Communications specialist,  
A&M System

partmental operating expenses and a lot of other things that have to do with the resources that we have to carry out our mission in undergraduate and graduate education," Parker said.

Students would benefit from funds allocated for scholarships, building and campus improvements and more teacher-staff devotion, he said.

However, Parker said the faculty is already committed to serving undergraduate students.

Merit-awarded pay raises would allow professors and teachers more time to focus on classroom activities rather than financial situations elsewhere.

"The faculty here work hard," he said. "They work hard with the undergraduates. They work hard with the graduate students."

# Legislature TAGs over \$9 million onto scholarship fund

By ERICA ROY  
THE BATTALION

The Texas Legislature increased funding for the Texas Tuition Assistance Grant program from \$98,000 to \$10 million as part of the 1998-1999 appropriations bill.

Texas high-school students from middle- to low-income families who hold a B average are eligible for the program, which would pay for college tuition and fees to a state university.

Students who receive tuition assistance must maintain a B average in college or lose eligibility.

Nickie Obenhaus, the 1996-1997 Legislative Relations Committee chair and a senior chemical engineering major, said the \$10 million will help more financially challenged high-school students to attend college.

"It (TTAG) makes college so much more accessible to students," Obenhaus said.

Chris Reed, the 1996-1997 Student Senate speaker and a senior finance major, said TTAG will help relieve the burden of tuition and fee increases for more students.

"As we see fee increases and tuition rising, by having the state provide financial aid based on merit will really benefit A&M students," Reed said.

Texas A&M along with the University of Texas, Texas Tech University and the University of Houston organized press conferences and lobbied to legislators about TTAG.

Mandy Gomez, external affairs chair for Student Senate and a junior political science major, said at least one A&M student was at the state Capitol every week during last semester talking to legislators.

Gomez said the support from the universities showed students care about their educations and futures.

"When we went into the offices [of legislators] with so many voices, it was really hard for them not to listen to us," she said.

Gomez also said the Legislature is in support of higher education, so it is important to have a student presence in Austin to push the increased scholarship funding through.

Please see TTAG on Page 6.