

Regents OK first-ever affiliation with law school

APPROVED:

- affiliation agreement between South Texas College of Law and Texas A&M.
- ranking of sealed proposals for Kyle Field expansion project.

The Board of Regents

TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY



JR. BEATO

BY COLLEEN KAVANAGH
Staff writer

The Texas A&M System Board of Regents Thursday gave Texas A&M University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen the authority to execute an affiliation agreement between South Texas College of Law and Texas A&M.

Jim Ashlock, director of University Relations, said he anticipates affiliation will happen after the Board meets tomorrow morning.

"The main advantage is that for the first time in history, A&M has an affiliation with a law school," he said. "This absence has kept A&M from being qualified as a top university."

Ashlock said this affiliation will encourage A&M students interested in attending the law school. "Fifteen percent of their students right now are from

A&M," he said. "Now, we hope there will be more interest in Aggies going to the South Texas College of Law because they will be in the family."

As of now, there are more students from the University of Texas and the University of Houston than from A&M attending the law school.

"That says a lot about the quality of the college because UT and U of H have their own law schools," Ashlock said.

The South Texas College of Law would maintain its private school status, but the schools would share libraries and set up joint programs in law, business and the George Bush School of Government at A&M.

The Board also approved the ranking of sealed proposals for the Kyle Field Expansion project. Bartlett Cocke, Inc., of San Antonio was the preferred company, with a proposed amount of \$35.7 million for the Phase IIIb expansions.

Wally Groff, A&M athletic director, said negotiations on the amount of the project will begin on Monday.

"The price may be lowered because there may be

some parts of the project that can wait," he said. "The space will still be there so the parts can be built later on. We hope to get the negotiations finished within three to five weeks so the final budget can be presented to the Board for approval."

Groff said the new ranking procedure makes sense because now a company is not chosen only because they proposed the lowest bid.

"The system makes sense because now we can see the whole offer, and we don't just have to take the lowest bid," he said. "It's a win-win situation."

In other action, the Board:

—approved guidelines for the 1999 fiscal budget.

—authorized a name change of the Texas Animal Damage Management Service to the Texas Wildlife Damage Management Service

—approved the campus enrollment management projections for the 1998-99 academic year.

—designated a 40-acre area of land between the George Bush Library and the Horticulture Science building as the West Campus greenway.

Q-drop deadline faces revision if administration approves Senate bill

BY STACEY BECKS
Staff writer

The Student Senate approved a Q-drop bill Wednesday night that would end the deadline to Q-drop a course til last day of classes if approved by administration.

Aaron Bigbee, a senator and sophomore mathematics major, said the current drop deadline is too early in the semester.

"The current Q-drop policy is unfair," said. "Originally, it was intended to give students a second chance."

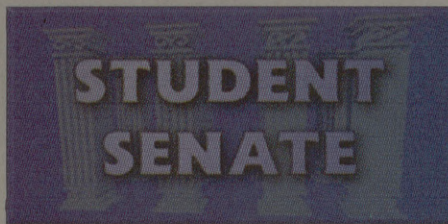
The deadline to Q-drop and change course to pass/fail is the tenth week school.

The bill also would benefit students who need full enrollment for insurance purposes and would give students with scholarships more time to make the required grade.

The bill would not go into effect until the Faculty Senate and University Academic Operations Committee approve it.

Thomas McKittrick, secretary treasurer of Faculty Senate, said if the bill is approved, it will be enacted by next fall at the earliest.

Craig Rotter, a senator and an agricultural education graduate student,



said he hopes the administration will support the bill.

"I'm hopeful the administration will take a serious look at this bill," he said. "It's something that positively affects the student body."

Robert Kimmel, a senator and junior mechanical engineering major, rein-

forced that the bill will only go into effect if the Faculty Senate and AOC approve it.

"I don't know what the Faculty Senate will do," he said. "If they pass it that would be great, but we simply don't know where AOC or Faculty Senate stand."

Lisa Jones, a senator and sophomore finance major, said money should not be a factor that determines the faculty's decision because the University will continue making money.

"If a student Q-drops a class that is required, he will have to retake the class," she said. "The school will make money off of the class again."

Lee Doggett, a senator and sophomore political science major, said he hopes the Q-drop bill will help change the image of Student Senate.

"We're always hearing complaints about how we never do anything of relevance for the student body," he said. "I think the Q-drop bill speaks loudly to the contrary."

A&M researchers aim to foil high cost of food packaging

BY SUSAN E. ATCHISON
Staff writer

Researchers in the College of Engineering at Texas A&M University will begin Monday testing plastics as a cost-cutting alternative to the aluminum foil food packaging systems now used for military meal rations.

Dr. Elena Castell-Perez, a researcher and assistant professor at A&M, said the goal of the project is to determine whether new, biodegradable forms of packaging will keep foods safe and acceptable during the three-year life span of military packaged foods.

She said she hopes the project will help determine alternatives of plastics and save the U.S. Army money.

Castell-Perez said the top priority is to keep the food safe and edible.

"It has to look good, it has to taste good, it has to be attractive to the soldier, and it has to be safe."

After two years of testing, researchers at Texas A&M expect to have a prototype for the army to test among soldiers in the field.

The army is currently using meal, ready-to-eat (MRE) rations packaged in foil which can cost up to \$7 per 2,000 calories of food. Using plastic film in the packaging of military meal rations could cut the military's cost in half, Castell-Perez said.

These military packages are shipped to soldiers in the field, to refugees in other countries, or to people displaced by natural disasters.

Castell-Perez and Associate Professor Dale Whittaker, Director of the Center for Food Processing Technology, are co-principal investigators in the project. They are collaborating

with Dr. Rahmat Attaie of the agriculture department at Prairie View A&M as well as researchers from the Department of Agricultural Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Animal Science at A&M.

Whittaker said the project developed out of discussions within the Combat and Rations Network, consisting of universities, the military and manufacturing companies, that meets to discuss issues such as food packaging, clothing, and nutrition.

The United States Army Soldier Systems Command approached Texas A&M specifically to develop the project, granting researchers \$494,000 of funding to complete the three-year study, Whittaker said.

The project testing is a three-part process called "accelerated shelf life studies."

The first part of the study exposes chicken patties packaged in commercial plastics to extreme heat and humidity. After a month of weekly analysis, researchers should be able to determine whether the plastic film protects the safety and acceptability of the food.

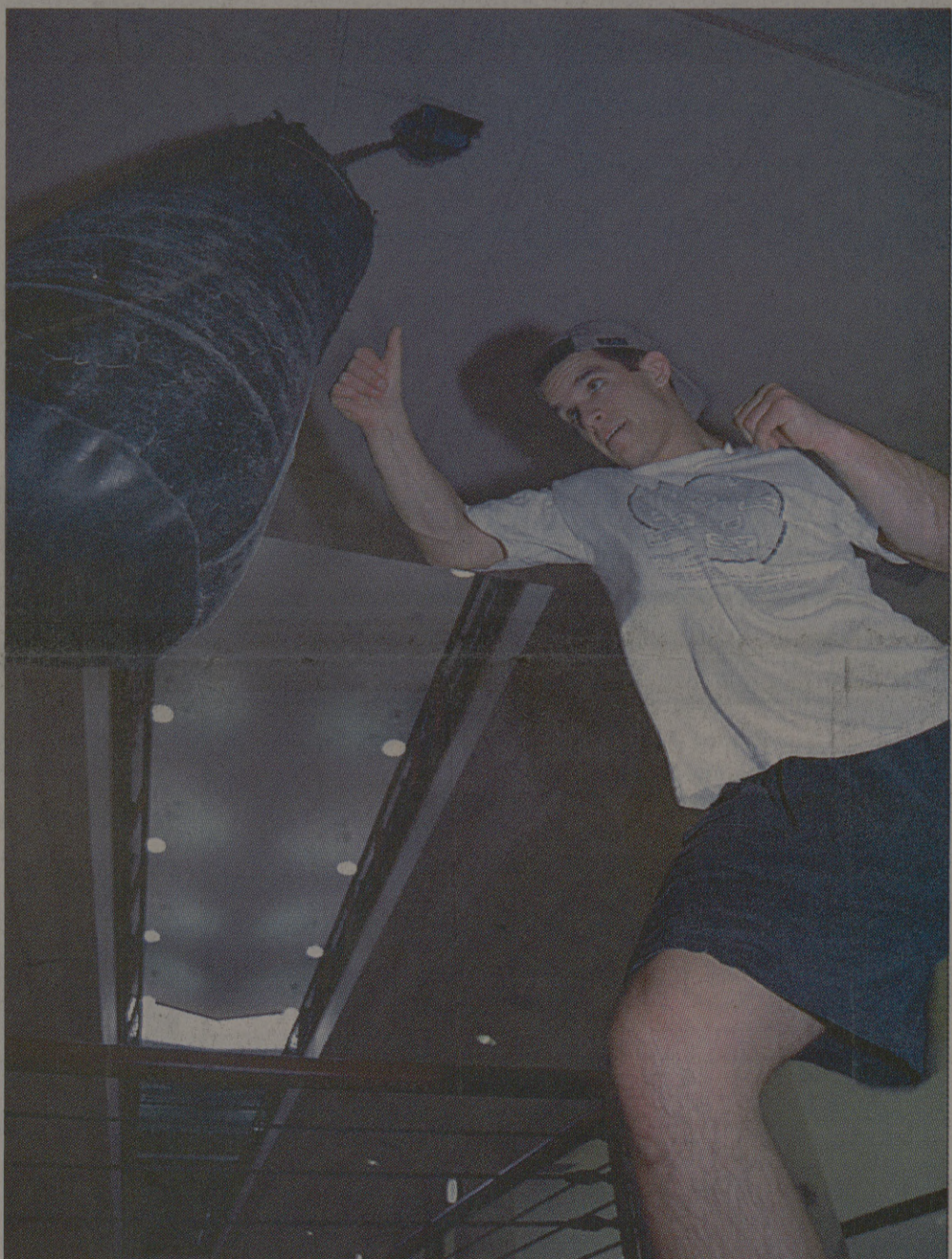
The second part of the study exposes the food to a temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit for six months.

The third part of the study involves leaving the food at room temperature for three years. During this time, researchers will analyze the microbial, chemical and sensory quality of the food.

Castell-Perez said testing of this kind has never been done before.

She said that the project allows researchers at A&M to conduct applied research that will serve a purpose while conducting fundamental research on material properties and plastics development and packaging.

The Boxer



ROBERT MCKAY/THE BATTALION

Scott Junkins, a sophomore biomedical science major, works out at the Student Recreation Center on the punching bag Thursday afternoon.

Pope hits home with abortion, school issues

HAVANA (AP) — On his first full day in "this beloved country," Pope John Paul II went straight to the hearts and home life of the Cuban people, despairing over easy access to abortion and scolding the Castro government for closing the doors to Catholic education.

When it comes to schools, "parents ... should be able to choose," the pope declared, to applause from tens of thousands assembled for Mass in the dust and sweltering heat of an athletic field in the provincial city of Santa Clara, 160 miles east of Havana.

The demand for Catholic education was also believed high on John Paul's agenda for the most important official encounter of his five-day visit — a meeting with President Fidel Castro.

The pope and Castro talked privately for about 50 minutes in the Palace of the Revolution Thursday. There was no immediate word on what they discussed.

Entering and leaving the meeting, John Paul walked slowly with the help of a cane down a red carpet, with Castro slowing his step to the pope's pace.

After concluding their talks, they exchanged gifts and posed for photographers at the top of the broad steps outside the palace.

"(See) how we are after 70 and something years?" the 77-year-old pope said to Castro, who is 71.

Noting John Paul's difficulty in walking, the Cuban leader responded, "It must be because of the accident," referring to a 1994 fall that required the pontiff to undergo hip replacement surgery.

Castro gave the pontiff a 120-year-old, leather-bound biography of Father Felix Varela, a 19th-century priest considered to be a founder of Cuban nationalism.

"We racked our brains a lot" to come up with something, Fidel told John Paul.

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Campus organizations gearing up for this weekend's Open House

BY STEPHANIE DOSHER
Staff writer

Approximately 300 student organizations will line the rooms and walkways the MSC Sunday from 12-4 to talk and answer students' questions at The MSC Ring Open House.

Steven Biles, Associate Director of the Memorial Student Center, said the purpose of Open House is to get students familiar with the many student organizations on campus.

Biles said Open House also helps student organizations recruit members for

the new semester.

Greg Toole, senior marketing major and president of the Water Ski Club, said the club gained a lot of awareness last year at Open House.

"We had our boat in front of the water fountain and a table inside," he said. "With a physical object to catch everyone's eye, we gained a lot of attention and our membership went up."

This semester, student organizations may have a tougher time gaining attention. Student organizations will not only be competing against each other to recruit new members, they will also be

competing against the Super Bowl.

Although Open House ends before the game is scheduled to begin, one organization is making early preparations in case the turnout is lower than in past years.

Brittany Winnick, MSC Director of Special Events, said Off-Campus Aggies are planning a football theme for their table on Sunday.

Off-Campus Aggies will also be in the MSC today handing out fliers about their organization for those interested in Off-Campus Aggies, but who do not wish to miss any of the pre-game excitement.