

NEWS BRIEFS

University to ease 170-hour cap crunch

The state legislature has authorized universities and colleges to offer students with 170 or more credit hours out-of-state tuition, which is currently \$248 per credit hour. The state legislature, in its most recent session, enacted a 170 credit cap, effective Sept. 1, 1999, to encourage students at colleges and universities receiving state financial assistance to graduate sooner. These universities and colleges no longer receive state support for students exceeding the 170-hour cap. As A&M University officials said, it will offer more courses than usual this summer to help students avoid pending tuition increases. The University plans to add more sections and 4,000 seats beginning now and Sept. 1, 1999, said Executive Vice President and Provost Ronald G. Douglas. In order to allow students to graduate earlier and progress through their programs more easily, Douglas said additional courses will be offered during the coming summer, fall and spring semesters at Texas A&M. Douglas said courses in high demand, in which there is a backlog of students attempting to enroll, and which are needed for graduation will take priority in the additional offerings. The courses are being done on a smaller scale than in previous years when approximately 20 courses were added to the original schedule. The summer's program will be greatly expanded, Douglas said.

Researchers survey campus racial climate

Several thousand undergraduate students recently received a survey to assist student affairs administrators in understanding the campus climate and other issues regarding diversity programs and services. The undergraduate survey is the final phase of the project that was initiated in the fall. Dr. Ray Bowen, Texas A&M University president, authorized the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs to initiate the assessment means of being proactive in meeting student needs. Sylvia Hurtado, an expert on campus climate, and a team from the University of California Center for the Study of Higher Education are conducting the survey. In the fall, the research team was on campus conducting focus groups with students, holding interviews with campus administrators and attending a variety of Aggie events. The visits helped frame the questions for the series of surveys being conducted this spring. Comprehensive surveys also have been designed for faculty, staff and graduate students. Results from the surveys will be formulated into recommendations for consideration by A&M administration late spring.

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tp://battalion.tamu.edu look up with state and national news through The e, AP's 24-hour online news service.

Clinton clips controversies with comedy

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton navigated an awkward night by cracking wise on his lawyers, bemoaning the "March Madness" of scandal and promising with a flourishing disco pose that he will be "Staying Alive" through it all. The 113th annual Gridiron Club Dinner was a white-tie roasting that briefly, gingerly turned the Monica Lewinsky inquiry into a laughing matter. Setting the tone with the first words of his monologue, Clinton gazed over the crowd of journalistic and political elite Saturday night and quipped: "So, how was your week?" The audience erupted into laughter, knowing it was a rotten week for Clinton. It began with presidential accuser Kathleen Willey appearing on CBS-TV's "60 Minutes" and ended here — at a gathering of the fire-breathing

Fourth Estate. "Please withhold subpoenas until all the jokes are told," Clinton said. Just getting warmed up, he compared the controversy to this month's NCAA basketball tournament: "This is an unusual time in Washington — sort of our version of 'March Madness.'" For the next several minutes, Clinton deftly made light of the controversy without mentioning Lewinsky, Willey, Paula Jones or even Gennifer Flowers. The laughs, it turned out, were on his attorneys. His jokes "were a whole lot funnier before the lawyers got ahold of them," Clinton said. That launched him into a lighthearted routine poking fun at his no-comment, no-details legal strategy. House Speaker Newt Gingrich preceded Clinton to the lectern, saying it is sobering to realize that "during this meal the president's job ap-

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Dirty work



Randall Jay, an assistant superintendent for Bartlett and Cocke Construction, oversees the demolition of part of the horseshoe of Kyle Field Saturday afternoon.

Mexican gun laws halt U.S. hunters

FORT WORTH (AP) — Hundreds of U.S. citizens wind up in handcuffs or prison each year for violating strict Mexican gun-control statutes, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported Sunday. Most Americans arrested for Mexican gun violations are innocent tourists, say U.S. consular officials in the six districts along the 1,933-mile U.S.-Mexico border. Darrell Dowden, for example, the landscaper from Carrollton, a northeast Dallas suburb, was looking forward to a two-day Mexican getaway Nov. 15 when he crossed

the border. Problem was, Dowden had an unloaded .410-gauge shotgun behind his front seat, where it had been for the past five years. Mexican border officials arrested Dowden on suspicion of smuggling a military weapon into Mexico, a federal crime with a potential 30-year prison sentence. It would cost Dowden 103 days in a Mexican jail and more than \$17,000. "I feel wronged," Dowden said. "Hell, I wasn't running weapons down to Chiapas or anything. They know it was a little old rabbit-shooting .410. I don't feel I did anything

wrong, and they're going to take three months of my life and all my money?" Darrell Dowden's story is not unique. Mexico forbids the importation or possession of any gun or ammunition without a permit. Its laws ban dozens of types of guns that are legal in the border states of California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, including the .357-caliber Magnum pistol and any shotgun with a barrel shorter than 25 inches. Dowden said he was unaware of the law until he crossed the border.

In the frantic first days after her son's arrest, his mother, Janice Dowden, called or wrote letters to lawyers, diplomats, senators, congressmen, Mexican officials, even Ross Perot. Mexican officials acknowledge that some tourists who bring guns into the country are swept up accidentally in arrests aimed at criminals involved in weapons smuggling. Still, her son remained in jail. Finally, at the suggestion of a private investigator she hired a pair of Texas bounty hunters who negotiated her son's release.

Clinton travels to Africa

ACCRA, Ghana (AP) — Slowly, the driver edges his car into the busy intersection, blasting his horn and flashing his lights before speeding past the darkened corner and making it safely to the other side. The power is out, the traffic light is dead and automotive pandemonium reigns. This is just a hint of the electrical nightmare that has been growing in Ghana since January. Industry has been hobbled, thousands of people have been laid off and rationing programs mean the electricity flips off in nearly every Accra neighborhood for 12 hours a day. Ghana, long one of Africa's stronger economies, is struggling to get by on generators, candles and oil lamps. Water levels at the country's main hydroelectric dam, Ghana's prime source of electricity, have dropped drastically because of poor rainfall. Power output is down more than 45 percent.

But with President Clinton arriving today to begin a 12-day swing through Africa, Ghanaian authorities are leaving little to chance. Fearing an embarrassing electricity outage — even though most places the president will visit already have priority for power — generators have been installed nearly everywhere that he and Hillary Rodham Clinton will visit, according to a top Ghanaian official. Any sudden shutdown during their nine-hour stop will be immediately corrected. "We cannot afford to let down our august visitor," the official said on condition his name not be used. "This visit means a lot to Africa and to Ghana in particular." Clinton's six-nation tour, which will focus on a plan to bolster trade and investment in Africa, also includes stops in Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa, Botswana and Senegal.

Presidential trip

President Clinton's trip to sub-Saharan Africa is the most extensive by any American president. A look at his itinerary:

- 1 Ghana:** Visiting a Peace Corps project in the first nation where volunteers were sent. (3/23)
- 2 Uganda:** Meeting regional leaders to stress cooperation on conflict resolution, human rights, democracy and economic reforms. (3/23-3/25)
- 3 Rwanda:** Airport stopover; will condemn 1994 ethnic killings and genocide worldwide. (3/29-3/31)
- 4 South Africa:** Visiting Robben Island prison with Nelson Mandela where he spent 18 years as a political prisoner. Visiting Cape Town and Johannesburg where Clinton will celebrate the 1994 end of apartheid. (3/25-3/29)
- 5 Botswana:** Going on two-night safari. (3/25-3/29)
- 6 Senegal:** Visiting Goree Island, the shipping point for slaves to the Americas, now a tourist destination. (4/1-4/3)

AP/Wm. J. Castello

Court to rule case on appeal

LAGO VISTA, Texas (AP) — Five years ago, a call from the cops stunned school superintendent Virginia Collier. One of the district's teachers, a 52-year-old retired Marine, had been found naked in a secluded, wooded area with a 15-year-old student. The teacher, Frank Waldrop, was eventually stripped of his teaching certificate and pleaded no contest to attempted sexual assault. The girl, now 20, went on to college. Collier supervises a larger district 90 miles to the east. But the fallout continues with a lawsuit filed by the young woman and her mother against Lago Vista Independent School District. The U.S. Supreme Court hears arguments Wednesday in a case that may determine whether a school district can be held liable for teachers' sexual misconduct — even when it knows nothing about the misbehavior and it occurs off school property. The lawsuit, rejected by lower courts, contends Waldrop singled the girl out in 1992 when the 14-year-old freshman took his social studies class. Just before spring break, Waldrop brought a book to her home. Finding her alone, he kissed and fondled her, according to legal briefs. That was "the first absolutely blatant, no questions, no mistaking, sexual advance that he had made towards me," the girl said in a deposition. But it was not the last: Waldrop enticed the gifted, young student into further contact with advanced course work. She said she did not go to school officials about the developing sexual relationship because "then I wouldn't be able to have this person as a teacher anymore and that was my main interest in any relationship with him." The same year, the parents or guardians of at least two other girls complained to Collier about what they called inappropriate remarks Waldrop made to their daughters. Waldrop met with the parents and said he had meant no offense. The principal admonished the teacher and felt the matter was resolved, according to legal briefs in this case. But the young woman's lawyers contend deeper investigation by the district might have revealed his conduct with the freshman student. A federal judge in Austin dismissed her suit against the district, saying no school official knew of the teacher's misconduct. The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals agreed last year, saying a district cannot be liable unless a supervisory administrator knows about misconduct and fails to act. The young woman's appeal says that standard falls short. "We characterize that as the 'ignorance is salvation' approach," said Samuel Issacharoff, a University of Texas law professor helping her. The Supreme Court ruled in 1992 that students sexually harassed by teachers may collect monetary damages from their schools and school officials under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which forbids discrimination in education programs receiving federal money.