

# Campus

## Texas A&M to host state robotics finals

BY AMY CURTIS  
The Battalion

Texas BEST Robotics Championship will bring over 300 middle- and high-school students to Texas A&M to demonstrate accomplishments they have made in engineering.

The competition is open to the public and will be on Saturday in G. Rollie White Coliseum, from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. A presentation featuring astronaut Story Musgrave will be tonight at 7:30 p.m. in Rudder Theater.

Texas BEST stands for "Boosting Engineering, Science and Technology" and is a student-team robotics competition that invites high schools and middle schools all over the state to compete. The competition is open to any school interested. Teams can have as few as two members, but there is no limit to the number of members a team can have.

Anne Prewett, spokesperson for Texas Instruments, a sponsor of Texas BEST, said the competition offers students the chance to use their math and science skills in a fun and imaginative environment, and introduces them to deadlines, schedules, regulations and budgets.

"It combines the spirit of a sporting event with a real-world business effect," Prewett said.

Prewett said the program was created to inspire and motivate students pursue careers in technology, science and engineering. He said the competition gives the students an opportunity to realize that engineering can be fun.

Prewett said students are given the same kit of materials, and they are given six weeks to create remote-controlled robots that meet pre-established guidelines.

"The competition pits student-built robots against each other," she said.

Prewett said the Texas BEST competition has grown from 14 competing schools when it started, to include more than 175 from Texas and other states.

Prewett said the robots must be built by the students. The teams are aided by coaches and mentors who can suggest ideas and advise, but cannot help students with construction. Prewett said the competition is a fun event because students invite family and friends, and some schools bring cheerleaders and bands to cheer along contest participants.

The competition is judged by A&M engineering professors. Prewett said trophies, medals and grants up to \$1,000 to the team's school will be awarded to top qualifiers. She said other awards and titles will be given out, such as "Best of the Best," "Most Unique," "Most Robust," "Most Sturdy," "Most Photogenic" and "Most Elegant."

Story Musgrave, Friday night's speaker, is a retired astronaut who has worked for NASA for 30 years and flew the longest shuttle mission in NASA's history. Among his other accomplishments, he also tied for the record for most space flights, was the first to fly in all five space shuttles and served on the mission that repaired the Hubble Space Telescope.

## New Student Computing Center opens

BY NONI SRIDHARA  
The Battalion

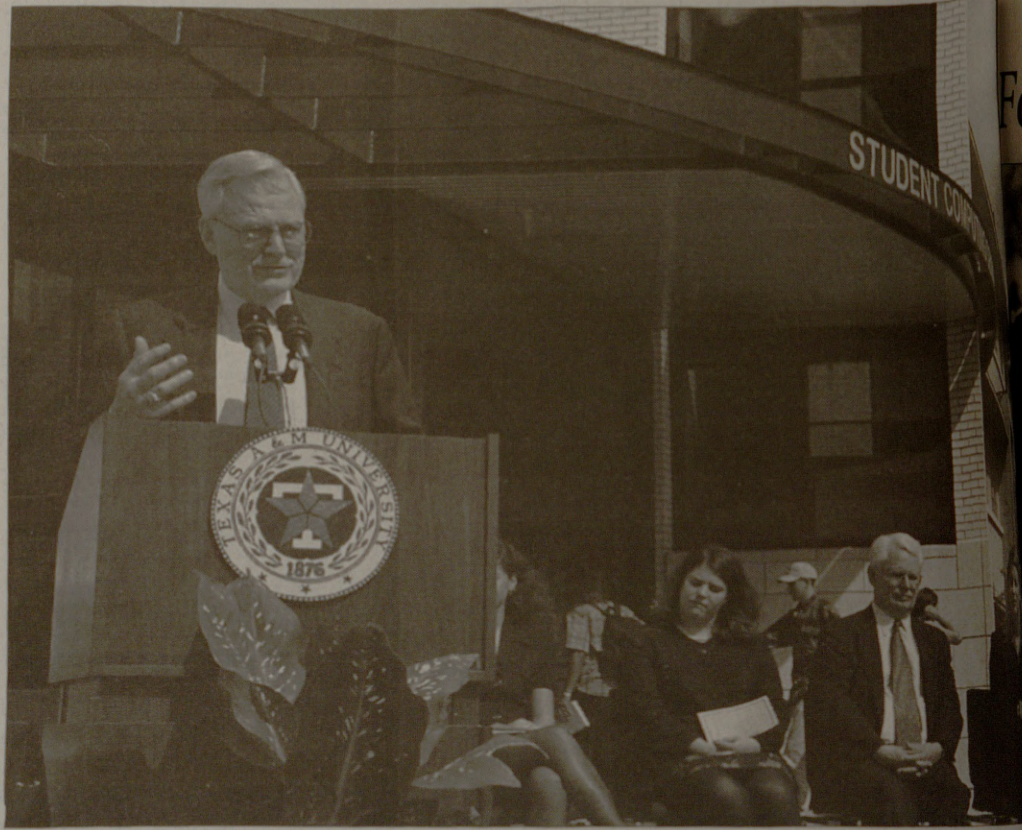
A ribbon-cutting ceremony took place Thursday morning to honor the official opening of the new Student Computing Center.

The idea for the center was conceived by Steven Weber, Edward Munoz and Chris Taffinder in October 1990. These students were special assistants to the student body president. Weber, Class of '92, said the student body president at that time had appointed special assistants who were assigned to explore various campus issues.

"I was assigned to library resources, Thomas was assigned to representing facilities and Edward was assigned to computer assistance," Weber said.

Weber said the three conceived the idea for the center over dinner. "One day, I kept waiting and waiting until about two o'clock in the morning, and I could not find a computer and had a paper due the next day. Edward was facing similar problems, so we decided that we needed to come up with a plan to create a larger computer space with 24-hour accessibility," he said.

Weber said they presented their proposal to the Student Government Association and then moved on to the Student Senate to gain its support. The Senate approved the idea for funding the center's construction, which they decided would be collected through an additional \$1 per-credit-hour charge added to the Computer Access Fee. Weber said the computing center proves there can be effective collaboration between the student body and University administrators. "This center is proof that stu-



Texas A&M University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen speaks Thursday at the dedication ceremony of the new Student Computing Center, next to the Sterling C. Evans Library.


dents can become aware of their needs and derive viable, realistic and creative solutions. This center is proof that the administration will listen to the student body's ideas, respect their opinions and is not afraid to act upon them. The creation of this center defines the true Aggie spirit," he said.

Texas A&M University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen was also present at yesterday's ceremony. Bowen said that computing re-

sources are one of the most valuable resources the University has. "We should never lose our focus on how important these computing centers are if we want to reach our aspirations and continue to be what we are today," Bowen said.

Bowen also said that the Bryan-College Station community needs to team up with the University to help provide high-speed networking and get more off-campus stu-

dents connected. Dr. John J. Dinkel, dean for the master's program at the Lowry Mays College of Graduate School of Business, said the opening of the computing center marks a special event. "Although the student body developed the idea for the computing center will not be here, it, this center will stand as a tribute to their foresight initiative," Dinkel said.



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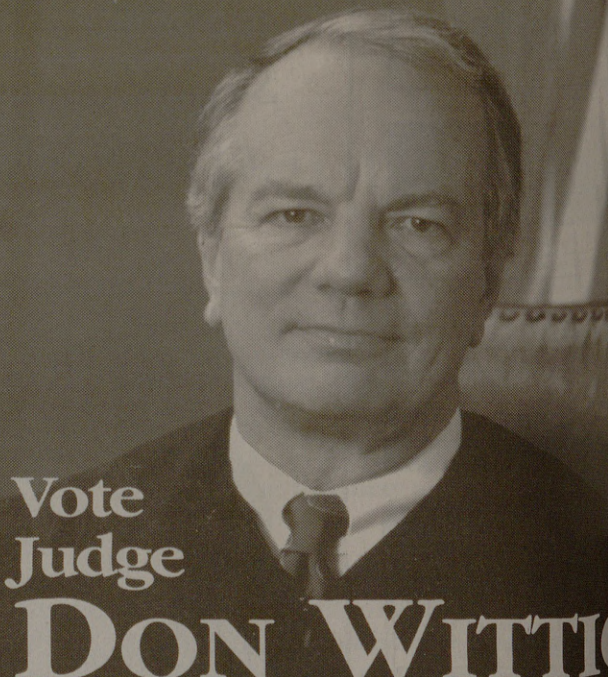
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