



The Battalion

105 YEARS AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

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College Station, Texas

aggielife

• Creatine debate rages on: Safe muscle supplement or common anabolic steroid?

PAGE 4

today's issue

Black History Month 3
Super Bowl..... 9

Tuesday's issue

Opinion analyzes Ground Hog Day and the reoccurring nightmare on Capitol hill.

PAGE 7

sports

• Aggie swimmers win seven events at Austin swim meet Saturday.



Freshman falls to death

Friends watch freshman Barry Vail fall three flights after losing his balance when straddling outside garage handrail.

BY MELISSA JORDAN
The Battalion

Barry Joseph Vail II, a Texas A&M freshman from Spring, Texas, died Saturday after a three-story fall in the southwest stairwell of the Southside Parking Garage. Bob Wiatt, director of the University Police Department, said Vail and two friends were exiting the outside garage at 3 a.m. Saturday after having parked their vehicle on the fourth floor of the garage.

Wiatt said witnesses reported Vail straddled the handrail between the third and fourth floors in the

stairwell and began to slide down the rail. After losing his balance, he fell over the rail to the first floor of the building.

Vail was taken to St. Joseph Regional Health Center and was placed on life support due to massive head injuries. Wiatt said Vail was taken off life support after 12 hours.

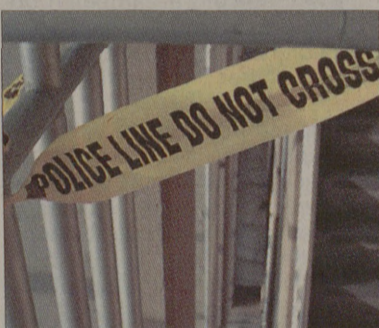
"They felt that it would do no good, so they removed the life support at 6:30 [Saturday]," he said.

Wiatt said the incident may have been alcohol related, but officials are waiting for lab results before a determination can be made.

"The preliminary investigation has indicated the possibility of alcohol involved in the young man's death," Wiatt said.

Members of the University's Student Affairs Critical Response Team provided counseling to students Saturday and spoke to residents in Dunn Hall, the dorm in which Vail lived.

Wiatt said officials will inter-



SALLIE TURNER/THE BATTALION

Exiting the Southside garage at 3 a.m., after parking on the fourth floor, freshman Barry Vail straddled and slipped from the stairwell handrail. Police hope the investigation of the incident will come to a close this week.

view the students with Vail at the time of the accident tomorrow to gain information about events that occurred before the three returned to the Southside garage.

Wiatt said the investigation of the incident will come to a close this week.

"Hopefully we would have a conclusion reached by Tuesday or Wednesday," he said.

Police investigate hazing incident

TAMU investigators look into assault claims by former Corps of Cadets member, hazing practice

BY RONDA COOK
The Battalion

Texas A&M University police officers are conducting an investigation concerning the assault of a former freshman Corps of Cadets member.

The 18-year-old woman was a member of Squadron 5 and attributed the physical and emotional assaults to hazing.

Hazing, as defined in the Texas A&M Student Rules book, is any act that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student, or that destroys or removes public or private property for the purpose of initiation, admission into, affiliation with or as a condition for continued membership in a group or organization.

Such behavior includes but is not limited to misuse of authority by virtue of one's class rank or leadership position, striking another student by hand or with any instrument, any form of physical bondage of a student, taking of a student to an outlying area and dropping him/her off, forcing a student into a violation of the law or a University rule such as indecent exposure, trespassing, violation of visitation, or any form of "quadding."

Having first-hand knowledge of the planning of such activities or first-hand knowledge that an incident of this type has occurred and failing to report it to appropriate University officials is also a violation under this section.

Officials said the woman was forced to perform rigorous exer-

cises at two different Midnight Yell Practices and at the site of Bonfire cut.

"[Rigorous exercise is] any exercise beyond the pail of normal exercise, over and beyond normal exercise, to the point of physical exhaustion," Bob Wiatt, director of the University Police Department, said.

An article in *The Bryan-College Station Eagle* said officials said the woman was grabbed and pushed against a wall in her dormitory, another act of hazing.

Wiatt said 20 witnesses or active participants in the hazing are being investigated.

Wiatt said once the investigation is complete, the results will be provided to the county attorney to determine whether charges will be brought forth.

11th annual scholarship pageant crowns winner

Contest Results

Miss Black and Gold plans to continue Bryan-College Station mentoring

BY APRIL YOUNG
The Battalion

Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity crowned the new Texas A&M Miss Black and Gold Saturday at the 11th annual Miss Black and Gold Scholarship Pageant.

Junior journalism major Tiffany Grant, Miss Black and Gold 1999-2000, said the achievement is an honor.

"I share this title with every contestant in the pageant," she said. "We are all queens no matter who wins the crown. I hope to represent Alpha Phi Alpha with pride at the state competition in February."

Grant says she plans to continue to mentor in the community and use her title to exhibit herself as a role model.

"I want to encourage local teenagers that if they believe in themselves and strive for what they want, they can

achieve it," Grant said. Kyemba McMillian, president of Alpha Phi Alpha, complimented the job done by the contestants.

"The contestants did great," McMillian said. "I talked to a few of the judges after the pageant, and they said that it was hard to choose. Up until the winner was announced, it was still up in the air."

Evan Gentry, chair of the pageant, said this year's attendance was higher than last year's.

Grant encouraged all interested African-American women to get involved in the pageant.

"The Black and Gold Pageant is a wonderful experience for the upliftment of our race and for women," Grant said. "I look forward to working with next year's contestants."



KATHERINE STEPIEN/THE BATTALION

Junior journalism major Tiffany Grant was crowned Miss Black and Gold 1999-2000 Saturday night.

Board of Regents appropriates funds for new building

BY AMANDA SMITH
The Battalion

The Texas A&M University Board of Regents appropriated funds for construction of a new architectural building, an expanded northeast campus parking lot and renovations to Sbis Dining Hall in a list of items approved Friday.

The Board of Regents approved an estimated \$12 million for a new architecture building between the two existing buildings of the Langford Architecture Center.

The architectural firm of Philip Johnson and Alan Ritchie, Architects of New York has been selected to prepare the architectural design for the building.

The 75,000-square-foot building will include a large auditorium and a large lecture hall, a Technical Resource Center, electronic classrooms and laboratories and a defined main entrance.

Funding for the new facility will come from private donations.

The Board also appropriated \$1.4 million for the addition of 600 spaces to Parking Area 50, located adjacent to the Zachry Engineering complex.

The Board appropriated \$1 million for the replacement of the air-conditioning system and upgrades to the electrical and the plumbing systems of McInnis Hall.

Other renovations will include compliance with fire-and-life safety code and handicap accessibility.

In other business, the Board of Regents:

- Appropriated \$4.4 million for the replacement of boiler No. 8 in the Central Utility Plant.

- The construction for the replacement of the boiler is scheduled to be completed by January 2001.

- Appropriated \$10 million for the historical architectural work, roof replace-

Approved Expenditures

- \$12 million - New architecture building
- \$10 million - Sbis Dining Hall renovation
- \$4.4 million - Boiler No. 8 replacement
- \$1.4 million - Parking Area 50 expansion
- \$1 million - McInnis Hall renovation

MEDALS conference encourages leadership

Weekend leadership conference attracts high schoolers throughout the state.

BY NONI SRIDHARA
The Battalion

High-school students from throughout Texas were part of the Minority Enrichment and Development through Academic and Leadership Skills (MEDALS) conference this weekend.

Conference attendees participated in workshops during the two-day conference, which included topics such as leadership skills, preparing for college and adjusting to college life. Flor Sifuentes, a

conference participant from Houston, said she decided to come to the conference because she was interested in anything geared toward helping minorities.

"I was really surprised to see how many minorities have worked their way up to hold leadership positions here, since this is a predominantly white school," Sifuentes said.

Cassandra Solis, a conference participant from Katy, said one of the most important things she learned at the conference came from the entertainment Friday night.

"Coming from Katy, you're not very exposed to all the different cultures," she said. "I learned how important it is to learn from one another's experiences."

Texas A&M students had the opportunity to lead and assist participants with many of the events as peer advisers.

Tracey Armstrong, a peer adviser for the conference and a junior accounting major,

said the students were not the only people gaining knowledge from the conference.

"I learned that that there is such a diverse number of people in such a limited area," she said. "It is also interesting to see how everybody is unique in their own way."

Dr. J. Malon Southerland, vice president for Student Affairs, addressed the students at a banquet and told them how valuable they will be in the future.

"If the young people in this room are not representative of the future, then all of us are in trouble," he said.

Dr. Mario Rivas, associate dean of undergraduate studies at San Francisco State University, was one of the keynote speakers at the conference.

Rivas said as a first-generation Latino in the United States, from a single parent family, he struggled throughout much of his education and wanted to help inspire and encourage the



SALLIE TURNER/THE BATTALION

Dr. Mario Rivas, associate dean of undergraduate studies at San Francisco State University, speaks to students Saturday at the MEDALS Conference.

minorities of today. "We all have a powerful learning self, and not always are we in touch with that self—but when we are in touch, we fly," Rivas said.

Rivas told students to overcome their fears, to dispel the myths about minorities not being as intelligent as white students and to further their education by going to college.

"College will empower you to know yourself and

speak yourself," he said. Rivas shared his personal experiences and spoke of how he eventually had to see a psychologist, who helped him achieve his current position.

"We need others to help us find ourselves," he said. "We need to look for people who are going to bring us closer to the light of hope and inspiration that we all have in our lives."