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## Trial to examine fairness of TAAS

Advocates claim state-required exit exam discriminates against minori-

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Minority-rights advocates went to federal court yesterday asking the state be banned from requiring students to pass a standardized test before receiving a high-school diploma.

Telling the judge the lawsuit is for "the disappeared and the forgotten," plaintiffs' attorney Al Kauffman said the exit-level Texas Assessment of Academic Skills discriminates against black and Hispanic students.

The negative impact of the 10th-grade test on those ethnic groups contributes to higher dropout rates and an increased retention of Hispanics and blacks in ninth grade, Kauffman said.

"This is, indeed, the ultimate high-stakes test," Kauffman, regional counsel for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), said.

MALDEF represents the plaintiffs group, which includes the Hispanic education organizations CI Forum and Image de Tejas and seven Hispanic and black students who completed

their school work but failed the TAAS exit test and were denied diplomas.

The Texas Education Agency and high-level state education officials are the defendants.

**"There is no other way ... to ensure that students learn the material that the state of Texas considers important ..."**

— Deborah Verbil  
Texas assistant attorney general

U.S. District Judge Ed Prado will decide the case. The trial is expected to last about a month.

MALDEF is bringing the lawsuit to trial under federal regulations barring discrimi-

nation by states receiving federal education money. The plaintiffs also cite their right to due process.

In opening statements, attorneys for the state disputed the discrimination claims and defended the exit-level TAAS as a valid exam that is screened carefully for any bias.

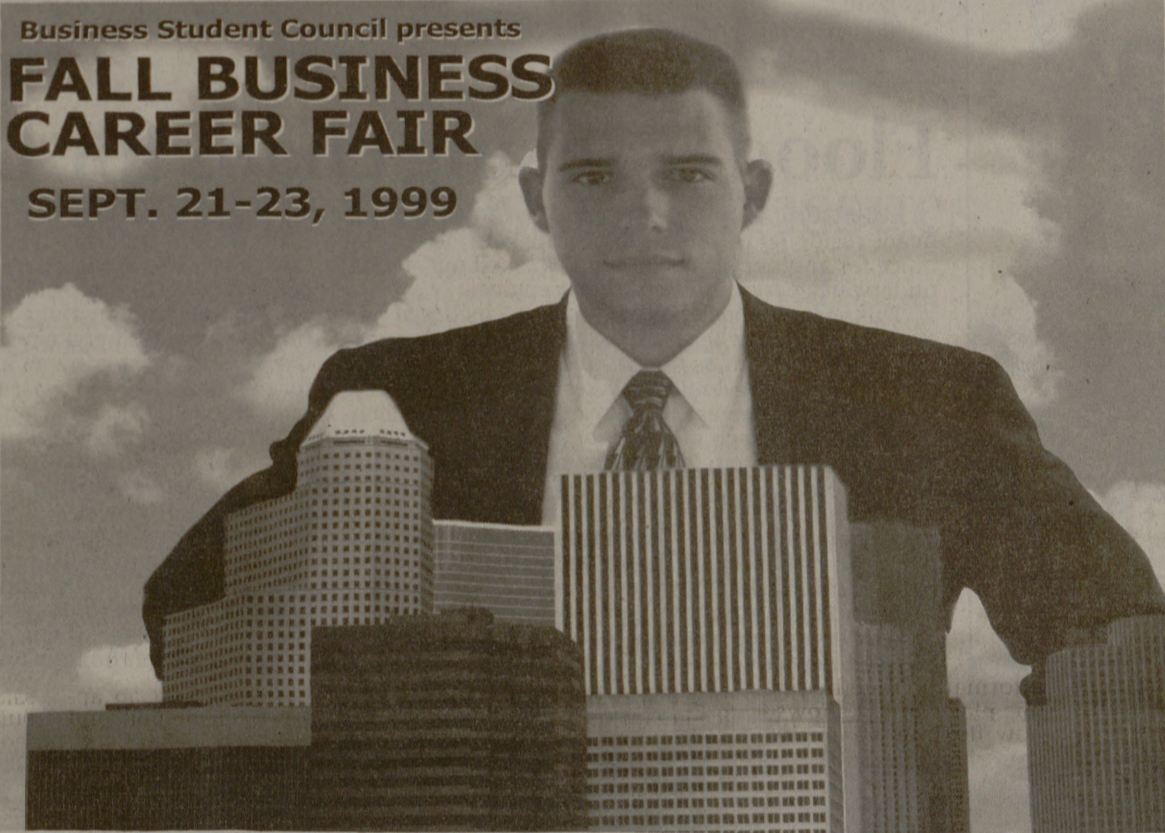
"There is no other way for the state of Texas to ensure that students learn the material that the state of Texas considers important than by an objective test," assistant attorney general Deborah Verbil said.

While there has been a gap between minorities and whites in passing rates on the exit test, that gap is narrowing, Verbil said.

She also argued there is no evidence to prove the TAAS test led to an increase in minority dropouts or in more minorities being held back in ninth grade.

Although other versions of the TAAS are given to public-school students in lower grades, the lawsuit targets the test students must pass to receive their diplomas.

Business Student Council presents  
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SEPT. 21-23, 1999



**Receptions**

September 21st

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Hilton Bluebonnet Room

**Featured In Wehner**  
Tuesday, Sept. 21

- AIM Management
- Align Solutions Corporation
- Allstate Insurance Company
- American National Insurance Company
- Andersen Consulting LLP
- Arthur Andersen

- AT&T
- Blockbuster Inc.
- CarMax
- Chase Bank of Texas
- CINTAS Corporation
- Deloitte Consulting, LLC
- Eddie Bauer
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- Federal Reserve Bank-Houston Branch
- Ferguson Enterprises, Inc.
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- General Electric
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- Hewitt Associates
- IBM Global Services
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- KPMG, LLP
- Kurt Salmon Associates
- Mervyn's California
- National Instruments
- Neiman Marcus
- Northwestern Mutual Life
- Office Depot
- Olde Discount Corporation
- Payless ShoeSource
- PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP
- Prudential-Individual Financial Services
- Randalls/Tom Thumb
- Royce Homes, LP
- Ryan & Company
- Sewell
- Shell Oil Company
- Southwestern Bell
- (SBC Communications, Inc.)
- Sprint
- Standard Register

- State Farm Human Resources
- Texas A&M Career Center
- Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts
- TXU (Texas Utilities)
- U.S. General Accounting Office
- UCS
- Walgreen Company
- Zale Corporation

Reception tickets are sold in Wehner from 9:00 - 4:00 on September 20 - 22 for \$5.  
If you have any questions, visit our website at <http://wehner.tamu.edu/bsc>

## Officers indicted in 1998 shooting

HOUSTON (AP) — A federal grand jury yesterday indicted fired Houston police Sgt. Darrell Strouse and former patrolman James Willis on civil rights charges in a July 1998 fatal shooting during a drug raid.

Strouse led the botched raid by six Houston Police Department officers on the apartment of Pedro Oregon Navarro. Willis, who helped set up the raid, was acquitted in March on criminal trespassing charges.

Both are charged with conspiracy to violate Oregon's civil rights. No search warrant was obtained for the raid, according to the indictments.

Don C. Clark, special agent in charge of the Houston FBI office, said the indictments should not reflect badly upon the police department as a whole.

"This is not an indictment against law enforcement," Clark said. "It's certainly not an indictment of the police department, but we as law enforcement officers, the people depend upon us, we're there to secure rights and to protect these rights."

The indictments said the conspiracy involved finding ways to circumvent a search warrant for the raid on July 12, 1998, by police who entered the apartment of Oregon's brother.

Police shot Oregon, who they said had a gun and was pointing it at them. No drugs were found in the apartment.

The grand jury began hearing evidence seven months ago.

The Justice Department began a civil-rights investigation after a state grand jury cleared five of the six officers of wrongdoing.

## Ad campaign targets Y2K

AUSTIN (AP) — It is not quite like the song says, "Don't worry, be happy." But when it comes to Year 2000, state officials are recommending Texas adopt the slogan "Y2K: Don't panic, Be ready." "Everybody's done an outstanding job on a really massive (problem)," Shannon Porterfield, the state government's official coordinator for the Year 2000 computer problem, said. "But I don't think anyone working on this project can guarantee 100 percent nothing is going to happen."

Porterfield is not panicking. She is taking to heart Readiness 2000, a new state preparedness campaign.

The public education effort, by a coalition of state agencies, business-

es and volunteer groups, begins this week with print, television and radio ads by sports figures, astronauts and the cast of "Greater Tuna."

They will be urging Texans to adopt the "Don't panic, be ready" slogan. That is, Texans should be ready for possible disruptions if some computers running major services falter when their internal calendars, set to recognize only the last two digits of a year, are unable to distinguish 2000 from 1900.

Not panicking means ignoring schemes such as buying large amounts of gold for a collapse of the money supply or ones in which strangers urge people to transfer bank accounts to them for "safe-keeping" in case banks fail.

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1 Topping & Drink \$2.50	Add a Slice \$1.25	College Station 764-7272 Bryan 268-7272 TAMU/Northgate 846-3600
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