

Xtreme fun



CHAD ADAMS/THE BATTALION

James Johnson, a senior management information systems major, skateboards by Rudder Fountain. See related story about Xtreme games on page 3.

Campus construction

Ditches to temporarily close Texas A&M streets

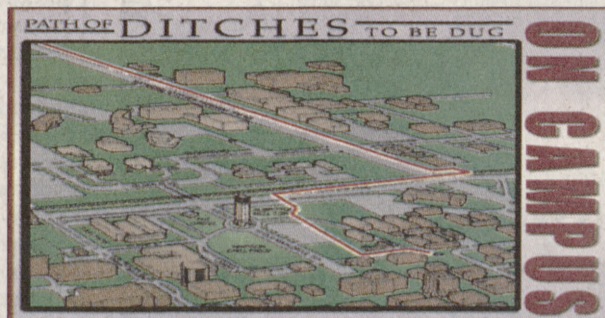
BY ROLANDO GARCIA
The Battalion

A utilities construction project slated to begin in a few weeks may temporarily close some roads on campus and interrupt vehicle traffic.

Charles Darnell, an assistant utilities director for Texas A&M Physical Plant, said work on installation of new electric wiring would begin soon, though no exact date has been set.

The project will involve extensive ditch digging to get at utility pipes and wiring that lie beneath paved streets and will begin at Fish Pond and wind through campus across Wellborn Road to Agronomy Road. The project will continue along FM 60.

"The designers have taken great pains to keep the construction off the roads," Darnell said. "The news here is that despite this massive project, there's going to be relatively little traffic disruption."



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

Most of the work will involve "boring," a process in which workers dig an underground tunnel to the utility pipes beneath the road, allowing construction work to proceed without interrupting traffic.

But when construction begins near Fish Pond, it will be necessary to close and reroute traffic on Houston and Ross Streets, Darnell added.

The project will take at least a year and a half to complete.

Tom Williams, director of Parking, Traffic, and Transportation Services, said he is concerned about the traffic mayhem that may result from the construction around Fish Pond, and is asking that work on that stage of the project take place during the lull between the spring and summer semesters.

"We're doing our best to ask that they schedule work so it will have the least impact on traffic," Williams said.

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Students prepare to file taxes

BY APRIL YOUNG
The Battalion

Jennifer Carlson, a sophomore biology major, will receive money from her rich uncle this spring, but it won't be inheritance — it will be an income tax refund from Uncle Sam.

"I am looking forward to getting my income tax return this year," Carlson said. "I had two jobs last year so I am expecting a big refund."

Most students who earned a wage during the 1999 tax year will need to prepare and then file an income tax return by April 17.

Kenneth Vargas, spokesperson for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in central Texas, said the only way to get a refund is to file for an income tax return.

"If you had taxes withheld, you are entitled to the refund of that full amount and this year filing is easier than ever," Vargas

said. "One of the neatest things going right now, especially for college students with simple tax returns like the 1040EZ, is the option to file their taxes free over the Internet with the IRS e-file."

With e-file, refunds can be returned as soon as two weeks after submission, half of the time it takes for the traditional paper refund. Students also have the option of having the refund deposited directly into their bank account, which usually takes about one week.

Carlson said she plans to take full advantage of the electronic option.

"I plan to file for my return on the Internet and have it deposited into my bank account, but I'm a little worried since there has been so much hacking going on lately," Carlson said.

"On the other hand, I'm a little more comfortable with filing online since it is a gov-

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TAX SEMINAR

date **February 11**

place **Rudder Tower**
rm. 601

9:30-10:45 A.M.	INTERNATIONAL STUDENT, FACULTY & STAFF
11:00-12:00 P.M.	U.S. CITIZENS & RESIDENTS
1:15-2:30 P.M.	INTERNATIONAL STUDENT, FACULTY & STAFF
2:45-3:45 P.M.	U.S. CITIZENS & RESIDENTS
4:00-5:15 P.M.	INTERNATIONAL STUDENT, FACULTY & STAFF

DEADLINE: APRIL 17

RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

Officials declare parental notification of alcohol offenses a success

BY BRADY CREEL
The Battalion

Texas A&M's parental notification policy regarding underage alcohol violations on campus has been declared a success by University officials.

"I think the important part of what has taken place this past semester has been communication between students and their parents," said Dr. Brent Paterson, director of Student Life.

Student Life notifies parents only when alcohol violations occur on campus or at University-sanctioned events. Parents of students who receive citations from the College Station Police Department or Bryan Police Department do not receive a letter of notification from the University.

Paterson said it is too early to look for trends in behavioral change as a result of the parental notification program, but he believes that communication between students and parents has improved.

Cabrina Scott, public information officer for the College Station Police Department (CSPD), said CSPD supports and endorses the parental notification program, but has not

seen any significant change in statistics.

Lorna Breault, coordinator of first-year alcohol and drug education programs, said the introduction of the notification program was not as dramatic of a transition for incoming freshmen as it was for some of the students who have already been here.

"The incoming freshmen have not had the opportunity to experience freedom without fear of their parents being notified, whereas upper classmen who have lived in liberation of their parents since high school are now faced with the consciousness that their parents will be notified if they are found in violation of student rules," she said.

But Breault said students should realize the University is not out to get them.

"Texas A&M is approaching this policy from a healthy

"I think the important part of what has taken place this past semester has been communication between students and their parents."

— Dr. Brent Paterson
Director of Student Life

point of view, where we are taking the best interest of students, and not looking to sanction or discipline students but to make students healthy and smart," she said.

Students that receive an alcohol violation could face disciplinary action through the Department of Residence Life, Student Conflict Resolution Services, Office of the Commandant, or Athletic Department, depending on their individual situation and involvement in any of these organizations.

Disciplinary action for alcohol violations is handled on a case-by-case basis in the Corps of Cadets, said Col. Doc Mills, media relations coordinator for the Corps of Cadets.

The Corps follows guidelines of student rules, but students are disciplined according to "The Standard" — the book of guidelines and policies that all cadets must follow.

The unit commanders, along with upper classmen, are charged with enforcing those guidelines.

Mills said Major Gen. Ted Hoppood, commandant of the Corps of Cadets, has implemented a program in which students do not possess or consume alcohol in the residence halls or in the Quad area. There are currently five outfits with alcohol-free dorms.

Student athletes go through the same disciplinary actions that any student would, in addition to any reprimand they receive from the athletic department, said Dr. John Thornton, associate athletic director.

"It is almost double jeopardy for them," he said. "They are students, and much like any organization — whether it be athletic related or not — we get a gamut of things that come up from time to time."

The athletic department follows the guidelines of both the University and NCAA. Universities were given the option of parental notification when the Family Education of Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) was amended in October 1998.

Paterson said approximately 120 notification letters were sent last semester, and this number falls in the range he expected.

News in Brief

Comstock transferred to Dallas rehab hospital

John Comstock, the last Texas A&M student remaining in the hospital due to injuries received during the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse, was transferred to the Zale Lipshy University Hospital in Dallas Tuesday to begin rehabilitation.

Comstock, a freshman biomedical science major from Richardson, spent 83 days in the intensive care unit at the College Station Medical Center. Comstock was upgraded to "serious" condition Jan. 26.

"We join Aggies everywhere, parents around the world and community supporters who have kept the vigil for this courageous young man," said Tom Jackson, CEO of the Medical Center, in a press release. "He goes on with our best wishes for continued recovery and a full and joyous life."

In the press release, Comstock expressed gratitude to the Medical Center's staff and said he was overwhelmed at the news that his transfer is official.

"I owe everything to the staff at the Med. They are the reason I am here today," he said.

"This has been a long road already. I am looking forward to getting well and being back at Texas A&M this fall."

Bonfire investigation funds may not be enough

The \$1 million Texas A&M University allotted for the bonfire inquiry will proba-

bly be inadequate, an investigation official said.

Kent Lietzau, the chief of staff for the Special Commission on the 1999 Aggie Bonfire, told *The Bryan-College Station Eagle* that the commission is prepared to ask for more funds.

"The budgets for each team were based on the bare essentials," Lietzau said. "Whether more funds will be needed is dependent upon several factors, including on what the teams find out in the next few weeks and on the testing situation."

He added that an extension of the March 31 deadline may be necessary. The commission also released details of the \$1 million budget Monday. The largest portion, \$450,000, goes to Kroll Associates, one of the four consulting firms hired by the commission to investigate the cause of the collapse. Kroll will coordinate an information and document sharing system among the four teams and will conduct extensive interviews with officials, participants and witnesses.

Another firm, Packer Engineering, will collect \$250,000 to review the physical factors leading to the collapse, and will analyze Centerpole, the logs and the soil beneath the structure.

Fay Engineering will evaluate and test previous bonfire models at a cost of \$150,000. Performance Improvement International is charging \$150,000 to study the human and organizational factors behind the accident. McKinsey & Co., the firm managing the investigation, is billing \$30,000 for expenses, but is not charging professional fees.

Grad student offers memorial

BY STUART HUTSON
The Battalion

Many designs and opinions have been offered to the Department of Student Affairs about "what" the Bonfire collapse memorial should be, but Wilber A. "Tex" Williams has submitted a reason "why."

"There has been a lot of talk about how this can be built to remember those 12 students," said Williams, a graduate architecture

student. "The bigger question is, 'what does this mean for the faculty and students of the University and the tradition itself?'"

Williams has designed a "charrette," or a quickly built model, of how he feels the memorial should be constructed.

The model has been displayed in the architecture building's entranceway for the last three weeks, but it is not the design Williams wants people to notice — it is the model's statement about the col-

lapse's significance.

"I think this is the most important event in A&M's history because its symbolic relevance for the University," Williams said. "This happened not only as we move into a new millennium, but at a time when A&M is trying to become a truly world-class university."

Williams said the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse symbolizes the changes the University must make before it realizes its potential as a world-class university.

"I believe all tragedies happen for a reason, and this isn't an exception," he said. "This represents that we must change some things, so that we can overcome those barriers that some of us cling tightly to."

Williams said these "barriers" include a lack of unity and diversity among the A&M community and an adherence to the ways of the past which must not be forgotten, but changed to better survive in today's world.

"Bonfire can't continue to go on the way it was built in either spirit or structure," he said. "The way it used to be built was, in some ways, symbolic of the old South's attitudes and perceptions."

Williams said a new Bonfire tradition should incorporate more



Environmental design majors Dawna Houchin (R) and Summer Simmacher view a model of a proposed Bonfire memorial in the Langford Architecture building.

STUART VILLANUEVA/THE BATTALION

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Batt Radio

- Listen to KAMU-FM 90.9 at 1:57 p.m. for details on Texas' unemployment.

Batt Online

- Check out *The Battalion* online at battalion.tamu.edu.