

Committee to review early registration

BY ANN LOISEL
The Battalion

Students expecting a few days head start on registering because of student worker or honors status may be disappointed the next time they try to phone in their class choices.

A subcommittee to the Academic Operations Committee (AOC) will review the current system of early registration, said Donald D. Carter, chairperson of the new subcommittee and A&M's registrar.

The current registration system allows honors-eligible students to register for classes before normal registration begins and allows student workers who can prove their work status to register a few days earlier than their classmates.

By registering early, these students have more flexibility in

choosing their class schedules so they can allow time for work and honors classes.

Carter said the subcommittee will not necessarily change the current policy, but they will review the current system to see if any changes are needed.

"We will review the practice of early registration... [but] we have no design or agenda one way or another," Carter said. "We're going to look at all the issues."

Amanda Brondy, a junior speech communications and international studies major, is both a student worker and an honors student. She is also working toward the University and Foundation honors distinctions, which require her to take a certain amount of honors course credit hours.

"I always try and get big blocks of time open [in my schedule]," she said. "If I weren't able to do that, it'd be difficult [to

work]." She said she would be upset if early registration privileges were taken away.

Dr. Edward A. Funkhouser, interim executive director of the Office of Honors Programs and Academic Scholarships, said he hopes there will not be any changes in the registration process for honors-eligible students.

"We would have a precipitous drop in [the number of] students participating in honors," Funkhouser said. "It would be a bit more difficult for students to schedule the limited courses that are in honors into their schedule as they work toward completing the requirements for Foundation and University honors."

Honors students who want to register early must register for an honors class and stay in it. However, Funkhouser added some people are just using honors as a vehicle to get pre-registration.

Funkhouser said early registration for honors students is important, though, for A&M's status as a university.

"A strong honors department contributes to the overall reputation of a university... and also helps in recruiting high-achieving students," he said. "Lots of institutions do honors pre-registration to help students build their schedule around an honors class... if they are delayed, they have less of a chance to get the honors class to fit in their schedule."

Carter said several meetings would take place before any recommendations are made to the AOC. If any changes were proposed, the earliest change would not be made until the spring semester of 2001.

"Nothing has been done — only the committee has been named," Carter said. "This is a very sensitive issue." The subcommittee will meet in March.

Figures show decline in enrollment

BY ROLANDO GARCIA
The Battalion

Recently released enrollment figures for the spring semester reflect the continuing decline in the number of minority students at Texas A&M.

According to numbers released by the Office of Institutional Studies and Planning, there are 40,626 students attending the University.

The number of Hispanic and African-American students total 4,466, compared to 4,831 in the spring of 1999.

Also, A&M lags behind the University of Texas-Austin in recruiting minority students.

Since the 1996 Hopwood court decision that ended affirmative action in Texas higher education, UT has regained its pre-Hopwood minority enrollment figures while A&M continues to lag behind its former status.

The number of new African-American students enrolled at A&M shrunk from 197 in the fall of 1998 to 181 in the fall of 1999.

The number of new Hispanic students declined from 669 to 572.

At UT, African-Americans and Hispanics totaled 18 percent of the 1999 freshman class, while those two groups comprise only 11 percent of the Class of '03 at A&M.

A&M officials expressed concern over the gap, and say the University is stepping up efforts to recruit minority students and to dispel the perception that A&M does not welcome diversity.

"If we can get students from

ENROLLMENT	
Total	
Spring '00	40,626
Spring '99	40,390
SEX	
Spring '00 M(21,684) F(18,942)	
Spring '99 M(21,896) F(18,494)	
RACE	Spring '99 Spring '00
White	30,981 31,313
Hispanic	3,698 3,408
Black	1,133 1,058
Asian	1,353 1,263
Native American	165 174

RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

those target areas to come to campus, they'll get a sense of the quality of education and student life we have to offer. It sells itself," said Jan Winniford, the associate vice president for student affairs.

Winniford said programs like Century Scholars, which provides financial assistance to top students from targeted high schools in Houston, will help bring the best minority students to Texas A&M, Winniford added.

Felicia Scott, director of Multicultural Services at A&M, said an aggressive recruiting presence in large cities like Houston and San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley is key to dispelling the myth that the environment at A&M is hostile to minorities.

"The problem is a not-knowing perception, and that can lead to a negative perception," Scott said.

"We need to get the word out that we welcome and embrace different cultures and ethnicities."

Director's cut



JP BEATO/THE BATTALION

Director **Robert Rodriguez** (*The Faculty*, *From Dusk till Dawn*) was a panelist for the "War Stories" discussion on Saturday at the 7th annual Texas Film Festival. He also spoke in the evening session, took questions from the audience and showed his movie *El Mariachi*. See related article on page 3.

SIMS database to receive upgrade

BY SARA PROFFITT
The Battalion

The Student Information Management System (SIMS) is due for retirement according to university officials, but a replacement system has yet to be found.

"Technically we're at a point at which we continue to have numerous problems that we're going to be confronted with in the future," said Rick Floyd, associate vice president for Finance.

SIMS, which has been around since 1986, contains any recorded information about a student during his or her career at Texas A&M.

A committee chaired by Dr. Mark Weichold, associate provost for Undergraduate Programs, is examining the SIMS program and how to change it.

Weichold said the project is still at a very early stage and it is impossible to say exactly what the changes will be or when they will occur, but the committee is currently looking at other uni-

versities' SIMS to get ideas for updating A&M's own.

"SIMS still does a very good job for the bulk of our needs," Weichold said. "But there are some things that would make student advising easier if we had a more up-to-date SIMS system."

Monique Snowden, senior systems analyst, said SIMS is "the system that takes you from the career of being an entering freshman all the way to the point of seeing you out the door."

But Weichold said it is SIMS's abil-

ity to hold this information which has led to a misconception that SIMS produces a breach in the security of student records.

He said authorization to access SIMS requires a lengthy procedure in which various people authorize access.

"It's very secure," Weichold said.

Student workers in the Financial Aid Office are given limited access to SIMS, but are held to the same security standards as regular faculty. They are also unable to update any data.

Prairie View van may have exceeded posted speed limit

AUSTIN (AP) — Excessive speed may have contributed to a rollover accident that killed four members of the Prairie View A&M track team on a two-lane state highway in East Texas, according to a preliminary report of the Texas Department of Public Safety.

The van was en route to a track meet in Pine Bluff, Ark., on Nov. 10 when it flipped three times on State Highway 43 near Karnack, about 20 miles north of Marshall.

The DPS concluded that the van was speeding when it came up on another vehicle that was preparing to make a left turn into a convenience store.

The DPS said the van veered to the right onto the shoulder, then turned over when it over-corrected to the left.

The posted limit on the two-lane highway in 65 mph; the report did not say how much over the speed limit the vehicle is believed to have been traveling.

Authorities have interviewed the

driver of the other vehicle, DPS spokesperson Tom Vinger said.

"No other contributing factors including the vehicle... have been de-

"No other contributing factors including the vehicle... have been determined at this point."

— Tom Vinger
DPS spokesperson

termined at this point," Vinger said.

Five of the ten passengers were thrown from the van before it landed upside down in a private driveway. Only two of the passengers were wearing seat belts.

Killed in the crash on Texas 43 were track team members Houston Watson, 21, of Greenville; Jerome Jackson, 22, of Dallas; Samuel Sturns, 21, of Jasper; and Vernon James II, 18, of Vallejo, Calif. Jackson was buried Friday and Watson, Sturns and James were buried Saturday, all in their hometowns.

Injured were coach Hoover Wright, 71, and students Lamar Adams, 35, of Vallejo; David Arterbery, 19, of Waskom; Lewis Edmonson, 20, of Caldwell; Trenton Harris, 20, of Bloomburg; and Rashad Shelton, 19, of Raymond. None remains hospitalized.

Watson, the driver of the Ford 350 15-passenger van, was pinned inside the vehicle and died at the scene along with Sturns and James.

Jackson died while being taken to Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in Shreveport, La.

A final report on the accident is expected to be completed in 30 to 60 days, Vinger said.

Police use drinking raid to find Seaton fire witnesses

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — Frustrated by an investigation grown cold, authorities used a raid on underage drinking at a popular bar to round up potential witnesses to a deadly dorm fire at Seton Hall University, The Star-Ledger of Newark reported Sunday.

Nearly a dozen of the students arrested during the raid at the New Hall Tavern just before 1:30 a.m. Friday were given subpoenas to testify Tuesday before a grand jury looking into the fire, the newspaper said. Investigators had expected the group to be at the bar.

The Jan. 19 blaze killed three freshmen and injured 62 people. Law enforcement sources, whom the newspaper did not identify, said their investigation has been hampered because some students have been withholding information.

According to the newspaper, investigators believe the fire was deliberately set and they are focusing on three freshmen. All three were in the bar early Fri-

day, and at least one was given a subpoena, the paper said.

"I'm not going to confirm or deny anything regarding grand jury subpoenas," Charlotte Smith, executive assistant prosecutor for Essex County, said Sunday.

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— Charlotte Smith
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ty. She refused to "discuss or make any comment on the fire investigation."

The three freshmen have been interviewed once but have since retained lawyers and have refused to give investigators further interviews, the paper said. Grand jury witnesses must answer questions without their lawyers present, although they can decline to make statements incriminating themselves. Officers charged 37 people in the tavern with underage drinking. The bar's owner, John Holland, 56, of Cedar Grove was charged with serving minors, possessing an unregistered handgun and other offenses.

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Att Radio

• Tune into 90.9-FM at 1:57 p.m. for details on A&M's mock trial team.

Batt Online

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