

Leaders discuss A&M's racial environment

This is the second in a three-part series examining issues facing African-American students at Texas A&M University. Leaders of various African-American student organizations were asked to participate in a round table discussion on the state of racial relations at A&M. The Battalion formulated several questions to facilitate discussion and encouraged open and honest dialogue among the participants.

Adriane Ballare: president of National Association of Black Journalists
Ernest Broussard: representative from Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity
E.L. Brown: representative from Eta Chi conference
Kendall Davis: president of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity
Saette Figan: president of NAACP
Tammy Henry: president of Black Awareness Committee
Rubeda James: president of African-American Business Society
Prison Jenkins: president of Gamma Phi Delta Christian Fraternity
Van Johnson: president of Pan-Hellenic Council and president of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity
Joe O'Bryan: representative from the National Society of Black Engineers
Samuel Ogunbemi: president of African Students Association
Gina Peto: president of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity
Winitara Simpson: vice-chair of Black Awareness Committee
Tair Upham: president of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

Question 2: Why do you think Texas A&M is not attracting a lot of African-American students? Does A&M have a reputation in the state of Texas for not being a welcoming racial environment?

Kendall: I've been here for four years now, to me it's all individual perception... if I knew then what I know now, there's nothing that would attract me here because there's nothing here to do for us, there's nothing...

High: So why did you choose A&M?
Kendall: I came here because it's a good school to get an education. My parents went to Prairie View down the road and I'm the first to go to a major university. So I wanted to be the first one to say that, but if I could have chose differently I would have chose differently.

High: What would you have chosen?
Kendall: UT is cool, no one cares what you are.
High: You feel like your race wouldn't be an issue at UT, where as here, it's always in the back of your mind.
Kendall: Not as much. Not as much.

James: The number one reason I came to A&M is money. I'm

not saying I'm just dirt poor — or really poor — but money really did attract me to A&M. The fact that they had set aside scholarship money for minority students. I felt like I had a better chance, even though I think I can compete academically with anybody else on this campus, but just for the simple fact that money was set aside [for] minorities. The second reason is that I was tricked to come to A&M. They brought me down on a black event-weekend. I came down here thinking 'Wow, we got some black people here.' When I came down to my freshman orientation [it was the second week of orientation, for the honors invitation] Out of a thousand plus people [at the orientation] it was, what, eight of us? Oh no, I almost went to [the University of Houston] right then and there. For me, money was a big issue and if I could do it again, I would try to go to either UT or U of H. A&M, it seems like they do a lot of talking, "Oh yes, we're trying to recruit, and everything."

James: Yes. Look at [my high school]. My year, there were ten of us, and the year after us there were 12, and now we're down into the single digits. So I mean what happened within a two-year span is what I want to know. Is A&M really doing anything to try and recruit?

Ballare: When Texas A&M came down to recruit people like

me and Rasheda to go to A&M, when they brought us to the SB-SLC (Southwestern Black Student Leadership Conference), my automatic thought was that they do have a lot of black people that go here. Because it was just goo-gobs of black people and that's all I saw. I was like, 'This is the school I want to go to' and plus I heard their academics were good and everything else. So that's the reason I chose to go here and I felt that I was tricked, but I do not regret coming here. I am glad that I did make the choice to come here, because I know I would not change it.

Jenkins: I'm hearing people saying I was tricked into coming to A&M and this, that and the other, but the deal I have is that if we're talking about why there's so much racial tension and stuff going on, why is it that 'Well, I want to be around black people all the time,' or 'If I had to do it over again, I would have gone to an all black school.' Aren't we purposely segregating ourselves? Does anyone else feel what I'm saying? Am I off base or something? I mean, y'all let me know.

Davis: I said I would go to UT, I would go to a place where no one really gave a damn. We feel different things, because you're in the Corps, I'm not, I'm on the outside, you're on the inside.

See ROUND TABLE on Page 2.

Howdy Week takes off



STUART VILLANUEVA/THE BATTALION

Freshman business major **Robbie Blakley** kicks off howdy week with a splash by jumping into Rudder Fountain on Monday.

Variety of apartment options available

BY SARA PROFFITT
The Battalion



CHAD ADAMS/THE BATTALION

The fall semester is almost six months away, but many students are planning looking forward to pack up and move to another location.

For many students, the option of moving into an apartment is the most appealing choice of living arrangements.

Some apartments are seen as luxurious, offering more amenities at a higher price, while others are often seen as offering few luxuries but at an affordable price.

But do "high-class" and high-priced apartments really offer more for what they charge?

Tyann Blessington, a freshman horticulture major who currently resides at a less expensive apartment complex, believes high-class apartments are nice but unnecessary.

"I have to pay for it, so I'm not going to lease anything like that. I don't think they're worth it," Blessington said. "You're in college as a student, not as a millionaire."

"The apartments are nice, high quality, with little problems, but I wouldn't pay that much," said Kerri Reed, a sophomore journalism major.

Reed's opinion echoes the concern of most students: "We're college students. We can't afford it."

Sterling University Village, which may be considered high-class, offers basic cable, monitored alarms and high speed Internet connection included in the rent.

Students have a variety of housing choices in the Bryan-College Station area ranging from high-end luxury complexes to less expensive apartments.

University Commons, which may also be considered high-class, offers full furnishings with many kitchen appliances included.

Both offer swimming pools, recreational rooms, exercise rooms, tennis volleyball and basketball courts.

High class usually means high price, but managers at University Commons and Sterling University Village believe their properties are affordable.

Lisa Michael, assistant manager at University Commons, attended the Housing Fair held at the MSC last Wednesday.

"With what I saw, it looks like we are under everywhere else in housing," Michael said.

See APARTMENT on Page 2.

Ceremony marks beginning of International Week

BY DANA JAMUS
The Battalion



PATRIC SCHNEIDER/THE BATTALION

International Week began with an opening ceremony in the MSC featuring traditional performances by students representing their native countries.

Drums and dancing came to the Memorial Student Center (MSC) Flag Room as part of the opening ceremonies Monday for International Week.

Thomas Reagan, dean of architecture, spoke at the ceremony on how people's perception of the world has been changing over the years.

Our planet (which he continually referred to as "the blue marble") used to be perceived as flat, he said. Even though people knew it was round, they perceived it as flat.

Now, people visualize the earth as round, and this globe is a rotating entity with no beginning and no end.

Reagan advised the audience to visit countries abroad and experience the different cultures that will change a person's beliefs and values and present them with an environment to which they must adapt.

"Redefine yourself through international studies," he said. "This will make you stronger and happier." Reagan foresees managing a relationship between culture and the rapidly advancing technology as a challenge.

"Technology can be a great enemy of culture," he said.

Folklore dances and ethnic clothing will always be celebrated on occasions such as International Week, Reagan said. However, the real threat is that day-to-day culture will be eliminated because of technology displacing our lives.

Reagan said the challenge is to find a way to ensure that technology does not ruin culture, but rather helps to develop new cultures while maintaining the old ones.

The International Student Association's (ISA) mission for International Week is to promote cul-

tural exchange and interaction among students from all nations said Gustavo De Sousa, ISA president and a senior agricultural engineering major.

International Week is the association's biggest event during the year, but it also holds an International Camp, a program that helps incoming international students adapt to life in the U.S. and to Texas A&M traditions.

College Station Mayor Lynn McIlhenny upheld the yearly tradition of proclaiming a week — Feb. 28-March 3 this year — as International Week in both College Station and Bryan.

See INTERNATIONAL on Page 2.

MSC President selected for 2000-2001 school year

BY KIMBERLY OLSON
The Battalion

Beginning April 1, Nathan Cray, a senior mechanical engineering major and the new Memorial Student Center (MSC) Council president, will have a few more headaches and a lot more responsibility — but he would not trade either for the world.

The President leads the council by planning and carrying out both long and short-term goals to be executed by the 27 committees and 2,000 members of the MSC.

"As president, I will do my best to provide a vision for the council and make sure the organization is moving in the correct direction," Cray said.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the MSC, which will be heralded with a dedication ceremony to be held in the spring of 2001 along with other traditional events such as MSC Opera and Performing Arts Society (OPAS) and the Texas Film Festival.

During the 2000-2001 semesters, Cray hopes to find a place for every student interested in participating and wants the MSC Council to work with the other organizations such as the International Student Government and the Student Government.

Throughout his membership in MSC, Cray has served as a member of the MSC Film Society and in various positions on the council.

"The staff is wonderful because they are versatile," Cray said. "We can have a good time and get work done at the same time."

Kelly Siebert, the newly elected executive vice president of MSC Human Resources and a senior mechanical engineering major, said Cray will make the MSC an enjoyable work environment.

"Nathan Cray is a good leader, but he can also have fun," Siebert said.

Bill Anderson, former MSC president and a senior mechanical engineering major, said he is confident Cray will do a good job in his new position.

"Nathan will move the MSC Council forward to the position it is supposed to be," Anderson said.



RYLA SCULL/THE BATTALION

Nathan Cray, senior mechanical engineering major, is the president-elect of the Memorial Student Center Council.

Outreach program works for students

BY KENNETH MACDONALD
The Battalion

The Student Government Association's (SGA) new Outreach campaign has a mission — to let students know that SGA is working for them.

Next month, the Outreach Program's goal will be to educate the student body about the roles of SGA.

Laura Baggett, director of the SGA Outreach Program and a senior mechanical engineering major, said the SGA wants to get away from the student sentiment that the SGA is "too self focused," and to emphasize that the SGA's purpose is to serve students.

Baggett said the program is concentrating on three strategies. "First, we are trying to inform students about SGA services and the programs that we offer," Baggett said.

As part of the program, on March 6, members of the SGA will be outside the Memorial Student Center near the Rudder Fountain area passing out free t-shirts and information about the SGA.

SGA members will also be speaking to various organizations around campus over the next few weeks.

The second part of the program is to recruit new people into the SGA and encourage involvement by the student body.

"All of the big positions in student government are filled and there are a few spots open in the Student Senate, but there are a lot of parts in which students can become involved," Baggett said.

"If there is a certain issue on campus, we want to make an outlet for it," Baggett said that the third objective of the Outreach Program is to promote student government and improve their image with the campus community.

See SGA on Page 2.

INSIDE

Sports

- Ressa's presence felt Page 7

Opinion

- The Great Debate Student government at Texas A&M Page 11

Science and Tech

- Rescuing the Prairie Chicken Scientists apply genetic engineering to save birds Page 5

Batt Radio

- Listen to KAMU-FM 90.9 at 1:57 p.m. for details about CSISD

Batt Online

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