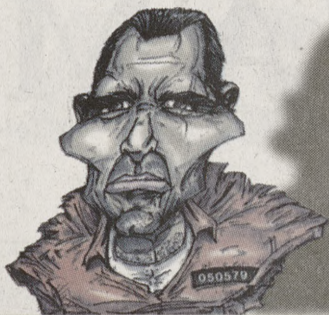


- Listen to KAMU 90.9 FM at 1:57 p.m. for details on the domestic violence call College Station police received.
- Check out *The Battalion* online at battalion.tamu.edu.



• With new DNA testing technology, should convicted criminals be given one more chance?



Weather:
Partly cloudy with a high of 92 and a low of 72.

THE BATTALION

TUESDAY

June 27, 2000
Volume 106 - Issue 159
6 pages

106 YEARS AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Proposal for equal protection awaits approval

APRIL YOUNG AND JEANETTE SIMPSON
The Battalion

A proposal that would explicitly guarantee protection for all students, including the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered population, is currently awaiting the approval of Texas A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen.

Last year, Faculty Senate submitted a proposal that would have created civil-rights protections for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered students. However, the proposal created legal risks for the University because, under federal law, gays and lesbians are not protected based on their sexual orientation.

"Last summer about this time, I got a proposal from Faculty Senate which created civil-rights-like protection for gay/lesbian students, and there were legal risks associated with that—

that's why I turned it down," Bowen said. "I told Faculty Senate I would support this word-smithing, which is now the issue. We obey the law. If the law does provide a certain protection and doesn't provide another protection, we don't go and provide that other protection not provided in the law. That creates legal risks for us."

Bowen said that although there are no civil-rights-like protections for gay and lesbian students, there are other protections provided in the student handbook.

"What we've always done is say we're not going to create those civil-rights-like protections for gay/lesbian students, but we have a lot of protection now, short of full civil-rights-like protections, such as access to programs, jobs, housing. They can fully engage [in campus activities]," he said.

Lorenzo Gonzalez, chair of the student services committee and a junior environmental design major, said Dr. J. Malon Southerland, vice president of student affairs, and Faculty

"The proposal put forth by the task force, if approved, would further guarantee all students the protection of their rights."

— Lorenzo Gonzalez
chair of the student services committee

Senate appointed a task force to examine the inclusion of sexual orientation in Texas A&M's non-discrimination clause.

Gonzalez said Brent Paterson, director of student life, worked closely with the Faculty Senate to examine the issue and has always been supportive of it.

However, Paterson denied any knowledge of the proposal.

"I am not aware of any bill being proposed regarding this subject matter to be going through any process at this time," Paterson said. "I am not aware of any proposal awaiting Bowen's signature."

Gonzalez said the proposal will affect all students.

"The proposal put forth by the task force, if approved, would further guarantee

all students the protection of their rights," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez said the proposed inclusion would use different wording to make the non-discrimination clause more clear.

"People feel threatened when you say 'we're on an equal level' rather than 'we're on the same level,'" he said. "The new clause would change the wording to make it more legal. It would create same rights instead of equal rights."

Bowen said the "wordsmithing" would include a phrase that was not used in the past.

"One of the phrases which other [universities] use is 'consistent with state and federal law' which [other universities] condition all of their statements on. We have not used that in

See PROPOSAL on Page 2.

Railroad relocation forum open to public

MAUREEN KANE
The Battalion

The first of five rounds of public meetings will be held this week to solicit public opinion on the possibility of relocating the railroad that runs parallel to Wellborn Road. According to Student Body President Forrest Lane, the forum is an opportunity to give input on the railroad's location.

"The forum is open to the public — for all Bryan-College Station area residents. Student government is in support of it because it's very beneficial to the A&M community," Lane said. "I am in support of ... moving the railroad tracks. The railroad is in support of moving the tracks as well because it would be quicker and more efficient."

The meetings will be held to gather public comment on a feasibility study being conducted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The MPO is one of 25 federally funded organizations in the state that brings together multiple agencies and jurisdictions to talk about regional transportation needs.

Michael Parks, the managing MPO director, said, "The MPO crosses boundaries between Bryan-College Station and the University, Brazos County and Texas Department of Transportation. We can talk about what's important to the community." He also said that the MPO has received both positive and negative feedback concerning the current location of the railroad.

"We are trying to find a proper location for the railroad tracks. This is a feasibility study to determine the needs of Union Pacific and the community. Union Pacific has specific needs — we are trying to determine what is best for everybody. Union Pacific has been a very good partner," Parks said.

Lynn McIlhane, mayor of College Station and a member of the MPO, said that she has heard both positive and

negative comments about the location of the railroad as well.

"You can't live in this community and not hear about it," McIlhane said.

The feasibility study will compare the cost of keeping the railroad where it is, and the cost of moving it to another location. The environmental, social, and economic impacts on the community will be considered.

Another issue that the MPO must take into consideration is safety.

"I know that safety has been an issue with the University and the community in regards to the cargo that comes through, and with the location of the tracks separating campus, the safety of the students who have to cross on a daily basis is an issue. We're looking at the impact on the community in the long term," McIlhane said. "We're looking at this from a totally holistic approach that will give policy makers information needed to make decisions. There is a citizens committee working with MPO, and there is a lot of public feedback on this program, which is important. It's a good, comprehensive feasibility study."

As for the possible options regarding railroad relocation, Parks said the MPO is waiting for the results of the study before discussing options.

"Options under previous studies included using the existing tracks for low-track alignment, in a trench in the current location; putting tracks down FM 2818 (Harvey Mitchell Parkway); putting the tracks along the Brazos River, along Highway 47, or along the East Bypass," Parks said. "Our study has not evaluated any of these yet. We're focusing on evaluating criteria to be used when we do get alternatives and suggestions."

McIlhane said that the cost of moving the railroad would be partially paid by the federal government, and the rest would come from a combination of local and state funds.

"Funds have not been identified. These are all things that constituents have to look at," McIlhane said.

Lane said that he has not heard of any potential funding problems.

"I haven't heard that money is a concern. Community leaders won't support it if the community isn't in support of it," Lane said. He added that the only a small number of residents in one of the possible relocation sites close to the Brazos River do not support the relocation of the railroad.

"What is important is that the citizens make their opinions known," Parks said.

Singin' the blues



Local blues sensation Ruthie Foster sings during the fifth annual Navasota Blues Festival held in Navasota at the VFW on Saturday. Foster was one of several acts to perform on Friday and Saturday.

BERNARDO GARZA/THE BATTALION

Minority population to increase

More than 11,000 applicants admitted for Fall 2000

KIM TRIFILIO
The Battalion

Preliminary Fall 2000 student-enrollment figures show the Texas A&M minority student population will increase this fall.

A&M accepted more than 11,000 of the 18,000 students who applied for admission this fall.

Joe Estrada, director of admissions, said the minority enrollment this year has changed slightly from last year.

"The African-American enrollment has leveled off from last year. The Hispanic enrollment has increased about 10 percent. International students have increased just slightly, as well as those students who checked the other/blank category. With more interracial marriages, more students are checking the other/blank category, and that is something that is happening all over. The number of Native American students dropped slightly by about a student or two," Estrada said.

Rodrick Moore, coordinator of student retention for the Department of Multicultural Services, said the high-

er Hispanic enrollment this fall reflects positively on the University.

"I am excited about the increase in numbers of Hispanics, and we look forward to a steady increase in the numbers of all of our minority students," Moore said.

Moore said the Department of Multicultural Services will continue to work toward keeping minority students at A&M with the goal of attracting more minority students in the years to come.

"I think we need to become more creative in our recruiting efforts to attract more minority students to Texas A&M University," Moore said. "Our work starts once students get here in the fall, and then we have to keep them here."

Gabriela Avila, president of the Mexican Student Association and a senior marketing major, said the increase of minorities, specifically Hispanics, is great for other minority students at A&M.

"A 10 percent increase is great," Avila said. "It is a wonderful increase for Hispanic people. I think it's great to get more Hispanic people here at A&M. This will also be good for the stereotypes that people have of Hispanics. People think Hispanics don't like to study or finish their career, but this shows them we do."

Avila said A&M offers many opportunities for Hispanics, which helps in the recruiting process.

"Here at A&M, they have a lot of opportunities for Hispanic people to join, like the Mexican Student Association. The increase is going to be great for our association, good for the stereotype of Hispanics, and good for Texas A&M," Avila said.

Estrada said several other preliminary statistics stood out.

"More males applied than females, but more females were admitted than males," Estrada said. "Also, the number of graduate applications is running about 2 percent ahead of last year. A good number of them are international students, and we are very pleased to see that occurrence."

RAILROAD FORUM

TUESDAY
WELLBORN BAPTIST
6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY
UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN
BAPTIST
6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

THURSDAY
BRYAN PUBLIC
LIBRARY
6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

BRANDON HENDERSON & ANDY HANCOCK/THE BATTALION

Texas A&M Fall 2000 Preliminary Enrollment Figures

- 18,679 → total applications
- 16,748 → complete applications
- 11,054 → accepted
- 6,769 → confirmed



JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION

News in Brief

AIDS Services offers free HIV testing

Texas A&M students, faculty and staff can come by the Memorial Student Center Room 139 from 1 to 5 p.m. on Tuesday for a free HIV test.

The AIDS Services of Brazos Valley will have two testing counselors available for free, anonymous/confidential HIV testing.

This is the sixth year AIDS Services of Brazos Valley has joined with Student Health Services to host National HIV Testing Day.

In addition to providing free HIV testing, information will be available at Rudder Fountain about the prevention of AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.

In addition, free HIV testing is available at the Student Health Center through AIDS Services by appointment each Thursday from 1 to 4:30 p.m.