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UT-El Paso refuses county offer for sports center addition

EL PASO (AP) — University of Texas officials have refused a county offer to let the university add a \$9 million sports center to the Sun Bowl if the county can use the bowl for eight public events each year.

The county owns the Sun Bowl and has leased it to the university for \$1 a year since 1961. The lease is not up for renewal until 2062, but the university needs permission from the county before it can build the Larry K. Durham Sports Center. The university's total investment would be about \$11 million, which would include renovations allowing soccer games to be played in the stadium and a giant-screen video display.

"They've just completely spurned our request," El Paso County Commissioner Charles Hooten said Tuesday. "I guess we should just sell the Sun Bowl to the university."

Hooten said he had hoped the university would bargain with the county. "I was surprised they didn't counter offer — instead of eight times per year, maybe four times because month after month it becomes vacant," Hooten said.

Hooten said using the Sun Bowl

for public events would help El Paso attract national entertainment acts. He said money generated from those events could be used for programs the county has a hard time funding, such as juvenile crime prevention.

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— Charles Hooten
El Paso County Commissioner

University of Texas-El Paso (UTEP) officials declined to comment until the county responds to its latest offer, which was outlined in a letter to El Paso County Judge Dolores Briones.

The letter, signed by James S.

Wilson, executive director of the University of Texas System Real Estate Office, states: "...we are not willing to amend the lease."

It says the university is willing to pay "fair market value" for the "residual interest in the leased fee estate in the Sun Bowl property."

Jim Manley, deputy chief administrator for Briones, said that language will require some clarification.

What is not clear, he said, is whether the university is talking about the value of the stadium in 2062 when the lease expires or the current value.

"State law requires a recent appraisal of actual value," Hooten said, adding that he believes the stadium would have a significant value in the year 2062 as well.

Manley said trying to agree on an appraisal more than 60 years into the future would be difficult.

The letter states: "Given the terms of the lease for the Sun Bowl, the county's residual interest in the leased fee estate will be modest." It goes on to offer a \$250,000 "El Paso County Sun Bowl Scholarship Fund," to help county residents attend UTEP.

King's son asks to end penalty

AUSTIN (AP) — Calling the death penalty the "ultimate form of racial profiling," the son of Martin Luther King Jr. on Tuesday asked Gov. George W. Bush to issue a moratorium on capital punishment.

In a news conference in front of the Capitol, Martin Luther King III, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, said blacks and Hispanics are more likely to be convicted by a jury and judge, and more likely to receive the death penalty.

He chose Texas as his first stop on his tour to states with high rates of executions because Texas has executed more people than any other state and because he wanted to highlight the case of Gary Graham.

"Undoubtedly, racial profiling was a factor in the execution of Gary Graham on June 22, 2000," King said. "Graham, an African American man convicted of killing Bobby Lambert, a white man, exemplifies, unfortunately, the worst-case scenario."

Bush spokeswoman Linda Edwards said, "Gov. Bush believes we have a fair process in Texas with many checks and balances including thorough and exhaustive reviews of death penalty cases by the courts to prevent an innocent person from being put to death."

King said the timing of his protest is not related to Bush's presidential run.

"This state has killed more than anyone in one nation," King said. "I don't think it is ever political when a life is taken."

During Bush's term as governor, 142 people have been executed and 230 since 1982 when the state resumed carrying out capital punishment.

Minutes before the news conference, King and his entourage of six, including civil rights activist Dick Gregory, filed into the Capitol where they delivered letters to the offices of Bush and Attorney General John Cornyn, asking for a meeting to discuss the Graham case.

Texas SAT math scores increase, verbal scores decrease this year

AUSTIN (AP) — Texas students taking the SAT college entrance exam scored one point better this year in math but dropped a point in the verbal test. Both scores were below the national averages, the College Board reported Tuesday.

The average math score for Texas students increased from 499 in 1999 to 500 this year. That compares with a national score of 514, up from 511 the previous year.

The average verbal score for Texas students was 493, down from the 494 students had scored in each year since 1997. Nationally, the verbal score remained stable at 505 for the fifth year.

Texas' verbal score was the third worst in the nation, behind South and North Carolina, which scored 484 and 492, respectively.

In math, Texas tied four other states with the nation's seventh-worst average of 500.

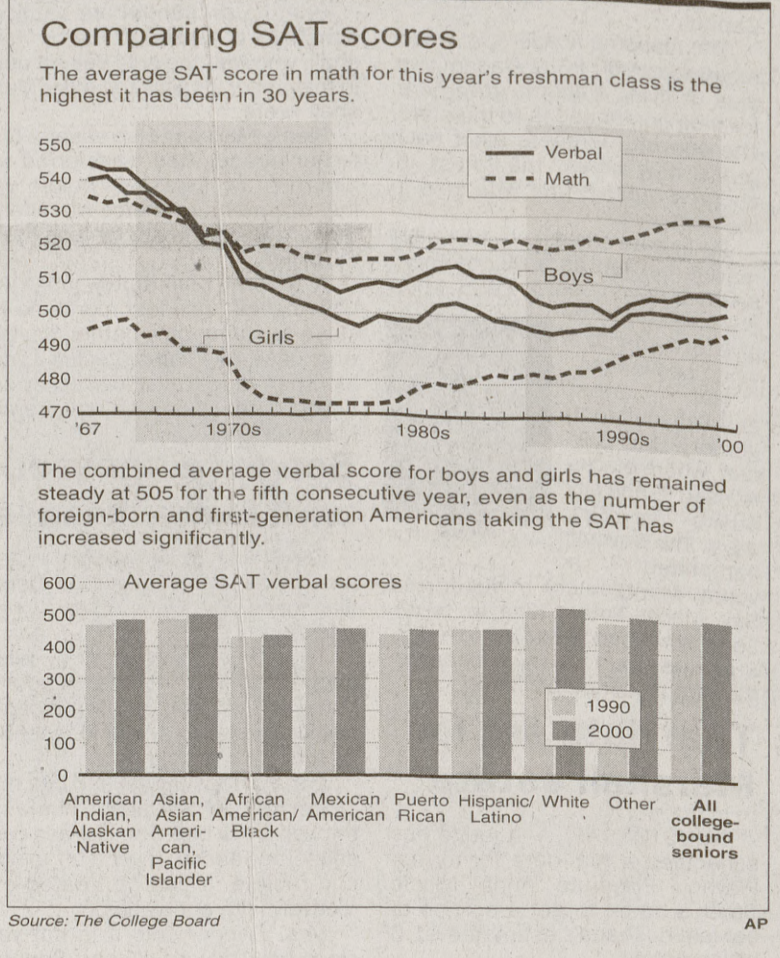
Texas Education Commissioner Jim Nelson said he was encouraged by the record-number of students who took the test and was satisfied with the scores.

"Officials with both of the country's major college entrance exams say scores normally fall as more and more students take an exam," Nelson said. "They tell me it is a very good sign that Texas scores have held steady despite the dramatic increase in the number of students taking the tests. I'm glad so many Texas young people are interested in going to college."

According to the College Board, which administers the Scholastic Ap-

titude Test, 52 percent of Texas' 217,977 high school seniors took the exam this past school year. That is up

from last year, when 50 percent of 208,288 seniors took the SAT. Nationally, 44 percent of all high



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