

## MSC evolution in students' hands

### Referendum will increase Complex Fee

By ELIZABETH RAINES & KRISTIN ROSTRAN  
The Battalion

Students are accustomed to the antiquated carpet, dilapidated furniture and worn-down floors. However, the Memorial Student Center (MSC) Council is asking students to help give the living room of Texas A&M a face lift.

The student body will have an opportunity to vote today on the Student Center Complex Fee Referendum regarding the remodeling and funding of the MSC.

The first half of the referendum is to increase the Student Center Fee from \$30 to \$40. The second half of the referendum is for student support to ask the Texas Legislature to raise the student fee cap from \$40 to \$100.

The \$10 per semester fee increase would fund the replacement of furniture, flooring, wall coverings and ceilings in the MSC. The fee increase will be split: \$8 will go toward renovating the MSC and \$2 will go toward normal maintenance, cleaning, utilities and staff costs.

"We estimate it will cost in excess of \$1 million to \$1.5 million," said Dr. William Kibler, associate vice president of student affairs. "It would definitely be done in phases, because you can't just shut down the MSC."

A two-year task force came up with a list of

primary concerns and changes that are necessary for the MSC. The main concern is that the MSC needs to take a step into the 21st century.

"With over 100 meetings and 47 percent of the student body visiting the MSC daily, all one has to do is walk around the center to see the effects of the wear and tear of 27 years," said Mary Helen Bowers, MSC associate director of special events facilities. "The whole idea — of course, pending student approval — is to give the MSC a whole new look."

If the referendum is approved by the students, the \$10 increase will go to the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents for approval in March. If approved by the board, the increase will show up on the Fall 2001 student fee statement. Once approved by the board, remodeling could begin in Summer 2001 on the first and second floors of the MSC. Visible results of the remodeling are expected by Fall 2000.

If the referendum does not go through, the MSC will have to put all remodeling plans on hold and approach the students with the fee increase again in Spring 2001, said Dennis Busch, University Center manager.

Once remodeling of the first and second floor is complete, remodeling of the MSC base-

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Top: Students frequent the MSC flagroom each day making it the "living room" of A&M. Right: Aggies take a break on a tattered couch in the MSC.

### Fall semester general election underway

By COURTNEY STELZEL  
The Battalion

The Class of '04 will make its first mark on the Texas A&M campus when results from freshman elections are announced at 10 tonight in front of the Lawrence Sullivan Ross statue.

The elections are not limited to freshmen; the Student Center Fee Referendum makes this voting period a general election.

Neal Simpson, election commissioner for the Student Government Association (SGA) and a junior recreation, park and tourism sciences major, said there has not been a fall general election in at least three years.

"Normally only freshmen vote in these elections, but due to the referendum, we are hoping for a greater turnout," he said. "This election is very important to the freshman class, not just because of the Freshman Council and Student Senate candidates, but due to the fact that they'll be the ones that pay and benefit the most from the [Student Center] Fee than any other class on campus."

There are 13 names on the ballot for Class of '04 president, seven for vice president, one for secretary, one for treasurer, two for historian and

one for social secretary. Simpson said the overall candidate total is down from last year by about 30 people, but the number of presidential candidates has increased.

In addition to the class officer nominees, 13 candidates are vying for four seats in the Student Senate.

"The freshmen are the only class to have seats in the Student Senate because they were not here in the spring to be represented by the various colleges and living areas," said Chad Wagner, speaker of the Student Senate and a junior political science major. "The reasoning behind this is that the freshmen have no vote placed on their behalf and are therefore under-represented without Senate seats."

Their role in the Student Senate will be to write constituency reports based on the demands and concerns of the Class of '04. They will also be obligated to arrange sessions for freshmen to express their concerns to the freshmen senators.

The senators will also be responsible for sitting on one of the four standing committees of the Senate: Academic Affairs, External Affairs, Student Services and Rules and Regulations.

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### Raise in funding used for MSC renovations

By TAMRA RUSSELL  
The Battalion

Every semester when Texas A&M students pay their tuition, \$30 goes toward a Student Center Fee that brings in \$24 million to the Memorial Student Center (MSC) for operational costs.

According to figures released by the MSC Council, the operational costs are on a decline, with an expected budget deficit of \$78,785 by the year 2002.

To combat this impending decline, the MSC Council is proposing a \$10 increase to the \$30 Student Center Fee, in a referendum on the freshman election ballot, to assist with maintenance costs, to refurbish the MSC and to finance design plans for MSC expansion. This increase would bring in an additional \$800,000 for MSC operational costs and keep the MSC afloat.

The funding would assist other aspects of the University Center complex, including the John J. Koldus Building, Rudder Tower, Rudder Theater, the Board of Regents Annex and Rudder Fountain.

William Kibler, associate vice president of Student Affairs, said the University Center does not receive money from the MSC Bookstore, the MSC Post Office, Department of Food Services or the state of Texas.

"The only two sources of funding come from the Student Center Fee and non-student customers," he said. "We could increase the charges to non-students, but then we might lose business."

Nathan Cray, MSC Council president and a senior mechanical engineering major, said the Student Center Fee is strictly used for the MSC and does not go to MSC committees or businesses in the MSC.

"We have our own internal budget," Cray said. "What is being voted on is going toward the build-



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ing — like renovations, upkeep, the basement and operating the other buildings in the University Center. Most student organizations meet here at some point or other, so they [would] all benefit in some way."

Pending approval by the student body, the \$10 increase would then go to the A&M System Board of Regents for its March meeting. If approved, the increase could take effect by Fall 2001.

Dennis Busch, University Center manager, said he hopes the students see the need for refurbishing the MSC. "Most of the furniture is from the last face lift in 1973," Busch said. "Based on input from former and current students, they want the look of the MSC to improve."

**Polling**  
places will be  
open until **5 p.m.**

- 1) MSC
- 2) Front of Sterling C. Evans Library
- 3) Across from Sbis Dining Hall
- 4) Duncan Dining Hall
- 5) Commons Lobby
- 6) Blocker Building
- 7) Zachry Engineering Center

Students can also vote online at  
[www.vote.tamu.edu](http://www.vote.tamu.edu)

RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

|                    | MSC Operating Budget<br>2000 | 2001        | Projected 2002 Budget<br>WITHOUT<br>INCREASE | WITH<br>INCREASE |
|--------------------|------------------------------|-------------|--|------------------|
| Beginning Balance  | \$106,215                    | \$156,215   | \$96,215                                     | \$96,215         |
| Income             | \$1,250,000                  | \$1,300,000 | \$1,300,000                                  | \$1,300,000      |
| Student Center Fee | \$2,400,000                  | \$2,400,000 | \$2,400,000                                  | \$3,200,000*     |
| Available          | \$3,756,215                  | \$3,856,215 | \$3,796,215                                  | \$4,596,215      |
| Less Expenses      | \$3,600,000                  | \$3,760,000 | \$3,875,000                                  | \$3,875,000      |
| Balance            | \$156,215                    | \$96,215    | -\$78,785                                    | \$721,215        |

\*Budget with increase is based on an increase of 1/3 for the same number of students.

SELSO GARCIA/THE BATTALION

## Two teenagers wounded by same gun in shooting

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — An argument between 13-year-old and 14-year-old students escalated into a gunfight on the grounds of a middle school Tuesday, critically wounding both boys.

Witnesses told police that after an argument, the 13-year-old got a gun from someone who passed the weapon through a fence.

The 13-year-old shot the 14-year-old, then, the 14-year-old grabbed the gun and shot the 13-year-old, according to police spokesman Lt. Marlon DeFillo said.

Police recovered .38-caliber revolver believed used in the shooting at

Carter G. Woodson Middle School in uptown New Orleans.

The shooting happened just before noon in a breezeway between the school cafeteria and the main building.

Both students appeared conscious when they were taken by ambulances to Charity Hospital, said David Bowser, a police spokesman. They were listed in critical condition, said hospital spokeswoman Jean Patterson.

There had been several fights reported at the school in the past few weeks, but it was unclear whether the shooting was related to the fights, Bowser said.

## Minority report yields alarming data

By STEPHEN METCALF  
The Battalion

Nearly a year after Texas A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen requested analysis on minority enrollment, a report from the A&M Race and Ethnic Studies Institute says a lack of financial aid and personal attention are the primary reasons Hispanics and African-Americans choose not to attend Texas A&M.

The 187-page report, titled "Factors Influencing Minority Students' Decision Not to Enroll at Texas A&M University," gathered information from 14 focus groups in 11 cities. Seventy-nine minority students and their parents took part in the research. The participants were African-Americans and Hispanics who had been admitted to Texas A&M in the fall of 1999 but chose not to enroll.

"I believe the administration became quite alarmed when they saw data that indicated 47 percent of minorities, particularly Hispanics

and African-Americans, who were admitted chose not to enroll at Texas A&M," said Dr. Mitchell F. Rice, author of the report and director of the Race and Ethnic Studies Institute.

According to the report, if left unchecked, the situation will threaten "the efforts taken by the leadership of Texas A&M toward achieving the necessary prerequisites, such as a diverse student body, to be considered one of the top 10 public universities in the nation by the year 2020."

The report says the yield rate — the percentage of students enrolled out of students admitted — of minority students at Texas A&M is comparable to the eight most selective state universities in Texas. A&M has one of the most unsatisfactory majority-to-minority ratios among public universities in the state, according to the report. Admissions data indicated an increasing proportion of freshman minority students enrolling at A&M until the Hopwood decision took effect in 1996.

In an effort to increase college admissions for under-represented ethnicities in the state after the Hopwood decision, the Texas Legislature enacted a bill that entitles the top 10 percent of the graduating class of each Texas high school to attend any state public college or university.

Dhananjaya Arekere, co-author of the report, said the Legislature's efforts have been fruitless at A&M.

"In fact, the number of minority students enrolling at A&M within the top 10 percent pool is decreasing," Arekere said.

Arekere said the research indicates that SAT scores were significantly higher for non-enrolling minorities than for enrolling minorities.

"Other universities that were comparable to A&M in stature and reputation offered many of the students in the study a better financial package than A&M," Rice said. "Also, parents felt

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