

THE BATTALION

WEDNESDAY

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107 YEARS AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

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False alarms

Many residence halls have been overwhelmed by false fire alarms and damages this semester. The latest alarm occurred Friday night at Crocker Hall, when a pull station was activated by an unknown individual. "The alarms have been a little annoying," said Bonnie Wright, an Underwood Hall resident and a sophomore general studies major. "We never know if it is a real fire or just a drill. Most of them have not been our fault." Of the five false alarms that occurred at Underwood this semester, only one was activated at a pull station, said Dan Mizer, associate director of Residence Life. Tampering with fire detection and alarm system equipment is a Class A misdemeanor, which

Bush, Gore face off in first debate

Vice president, governor display attitudes toward national issues

BOSTON (AP) — Vice President Al Gore and Texas Gov. George W. Bush clashed over tax cuts, prescription drug assistance under Medicare and abortion Tuesday night in their first campaign debate of the fall, a pivot point in the closest White House contest in a generation. Combative from the outset, Gore charged that his rival's tax plan would "spend more money on tax cuts for the wealthiest 1 percent than all of the new spending he proposes for education, health care, prescription drugs and national defense all combined."

"I've been standing up to Big Hollywood and Big Trial Lawyers," he shot back, mentioning two groups that have lavished campaign donations on Gore and Democrats.

The two men argued at length over prescription drugs for Medicare recipients, a key issue, particularly in the key battleground states of the Midwest. Bush blamed Washington for failing to pass legislation, and touted his own plan to have states offer benefits.

"You've had your chance, Mr. Vice President," the governor said.

But Gore, who favors a prescription drug benefit available to all Medicare recipients, said that under Bush's plan only low-income seniors would receive immediate help. Everyone else would have to wait up to four years, he said. In addition, he added, seniors could be forced into HMOs to get a prescription drug benefit.

"I cannot let this go by, the old-style Washington politics, trying to scare you with phony numbers," Bush swiftly replied. He accused Gore of "Mediscare."

"This is a man who has great numbers," he said of the vice president. "I'm beginning to think not only did he invent the Internet, he invented the calculator."

Asked about a recent FDA decision approving the use of the abortion pill RU-486, Bush said, "I don't think a president can overturn such a decision. He then restated his willingness to sign legislation banning so-called "partial birth abortions,"

and said Gore would not.

Gore said he would ban such late-term procedures, but only if it included exemptions to protect the life or health of the woman, the position Clinton has taken in vetoing two bills on the subject from the Republican-controlled Congress.

Eager to regain the offensive on a volatile issue, Gore said Bush would appoint justices to the Supreme Court who would overturn a 1973 ruling that legalized a right to abortion.

"I support a woman's right to choose. My opponent does not," he said.

Bush said he was "pro-life," but disputed any suggestion that he would use the issue as a litmus test for appointments to the high court.

Gore sighed audibly when Bush said that, as if to register disbelief.

"Everybody who pays taxes ought to get relief."



GORE

"I've been standing up to Big Hollywood and Big Trial Lawyers."



BUSH

No mercy



STUART VILLANUEVA/THE BATTALION

Heather Wilde, a senior elementary education major, hits the tackling sled during rugby practice Tuesday afternoon.

Wilde and other members of the Women's Rugby Club team are preparing for a match in Austin on Saturday.

Bowen proposes Blinn merger

By TAMRA RUSSELL
The Battalion

Students at Blinn-Bryan campus will be allowed to coenroll at Blinn and Texas A&M and take part in A&M student activities if a new program introduced by A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen is approved by the A&M University System Board of Regents.

Despite controversy among some students, Bowen's program would provide Blinn students an easier avenue for entering A&M — on academic and social levels. The program, if approved, will begin Fall 2001 and will accept 500 students the first year, 750 students the second year and 1,000 students the third year.

Of the 3,500 transfer students A&M receives every year, 1,000 transfer from Blinn.

Blinn Public Information Officer Gena Parsons said this may be because the students hope to transfer to A&M when they enroll at Blinn.

"We get students at our Bryan campus that want to transfer to

have the same programs other community colleges have," Parsons said. "The desire may be greater for Blinn students than students from other colleges."

Bowen said the program will only be offered to Bryan campus students because of the proximity of A&M and Blinn and what he said is a good relationship between the schools.

"What we're trying to do is get more good transfers in this University, and we've got a good relationship with Blinn, and we're very pleased with the success of their students when they come here," Bowen said.

"This way they'll be close to the University, and they can partici-

pate in a very limited amount of activities."

Parsons said the Blinn students would have to take 12 to 15 hours at Blinn and 1 to 4 hours at A&M and declare a major at A&M. Their courses would have to correspond with A&M's requirements to take advantage of activities offered to A&M students. Some activities include use of the Student Recreation Center and the option of getting an athletics sports card.

"[Blinn students] must complete 45 hours of prescribed courses within four long semesters (fall and spring) with a 3.0 GPA at Blinn and A&M," Parsons said. "If they meet that requirement, they're automatically admitted to A&M."

Parsons said the program will be reviewed by Blinn's board of directors and will be returned to A&M for approval.

"Bowen presented the program

See **BLINN** on Page 10.

Eligibility Requirements for Automatic Admission to A&M from Blinn

- The program, if approved, will begin Fall 2001 and will admit 500 students the first year, 750 students the second year and 1,000 students the third year.
- Complete 45 hours of prescribed courses at Blinn within four semesters (fall and spring)
- Maintain a 3.0 GPR at Blinn and A&M

BRANDON HENDERSON/THE BATTALION

UT allows excess to go to system school

HOUSTON (AP) — Rejected applicants at the University of Texas-Austin may have to spend their freshman year at another UT System school instead, then reapply for admission at the crowded Austin campus.

The UT main campus has an enrollment of 50,010 students this year. But UT Austin administrators say they want to reduce that number to 48,000.

So Larry Faulkner, UT Austin president, proposed Monday that high school students rejected by the university could earn their way back by spending their entire freshman year at the University of Texas-Arlington starting next fall.

The plan would make it harder for students rejected at the Central Texas campus to earn admission through an existing provisional program. Rejected students may still get in by enrolling at another UT campus for their freshman year and earning at least a 3.0 grade-point average.

Any Texas high school graduate rejected by UT Austin can still get into the school now by taking 12 credit hours of required basic courses during the summer semester and earning at least a 2.25 GPA.

UT Arlington has agreed to serve as the "template" for the program, Faulkner told the Houston Chronicle in Tuesday's editions, adding that other UT system campuses may participate in the future. He said he wants the program in place by the next academic year.

Members of the academic affairs committee voted Monday to support the proposal. But Faulkner said UT Austin's faculty council still must approve it in October before a possible vote by the Board of Regents in November.

It is part of a plan to curb UT Austin's growing enrollment while also admitting more qualified students who have been rejected in recent years from the state-supported university.

Moving the provisional program to other

schools would allow UT Austin to offer admission to 600 more freshmen every year, in addition to the 6,500 normally admitted, Faulkner said. He said the additional students would include many with high grades and test scores who likely would have been rejected in recent years because there was not enough space.

Faulkner disagreed with claims that a 1997 Texas law guaranteeing admission to any state college for the top 10 percent of graduating seniors is responsible for keeping so many qualified students from gaining admission to UT Austin.

Administrators have acknowledged that the 10 percent law has helped fuel the rise in applications. This fall, 47 percent of the freshman class is composed of students who graduated in the top 10 percent of their class, compared with 38 percent in the fall of 1997.

Faulkner said the number of applications to UT Austin has increased by 46 percent in the past three years, creating more need for the plan.

PTTS to hand ticket book to student leaders for day

By RICHARD BRAY
The Battalion

The ongoing relationship between students and Parking, Traffic and Transportation Services (PTTS) will take another next step today.

In an effort to better understand the role of PTTS, student senators and Student Government Association (SGA) leaders will take on the duties of PTTS administrators today and Thursday.

Angela Newman, a communications specialist for PTTS, said the program is meant to help the Student Senate gain a better understanding of what PTTS does.

"Each year our administration goes on a management retreat, so they will all be out of the office," she said. "They just wanted students to empathize with us and understand the daily function of what PTTS goes through and some of the phone calls and some of the issues that are involved in day-to-day activities here at PTTS."

The experience will give students a taste of what PTTS does. Student senators will be in managerial positions and will not be able to make ticket-related decisions,

See **PTTS** on Page 10.

Fire Figures

- Punishment for tampering with a fire alarm system: Up to \$4,000 fine, Up to 1 year in jail
- Number of alarms activated last fiscal year: 261
- Highest number of alarms activated in a year: near 500
- Starting date for fire inspections: Oct. 10

BRANDON HENDERSON/THE BATTALION

The College Station Fire Department's fiscal year (Oct. 1, 1999 to Sept. 30, 2000) saw 261 reported alarms on the A&M campus, a number Humphreys said is typical of the early '90s.

"The University has made some substantial

See **DORM** on Page 10.