

## Forum exposes lack of dormitory cohesion

**OLANDO GARCIA**  
*The Battalion*  
Eliminating Bonfire leadership positions, residence halls has undermined the camaraderie of dorm life this year, several students said at open forum Wednesday to discuss the future of Bonfire.  
"The dorms are dying," said Luke Cheatham, a sophomore civil engineering major, during a nearly three hour meeting that occasionally turned heated, a small but vocal group of students vented their frustrations at

the forum hosted by the Student Leadership and Participation Task Force, one of six subcommittees planning Bonfire 2002 within the parameters set by Texas A&M President Dr. Ray Bowen.

The other subcommittees, composed of students, faculty and staff, are examining other issues such as safety, design and construction.

Prohibiting dorms from appointing pots and crew chiefs has left a gap in the social hierarchy of dorm life, the students said.

"They're (crew chiefs) the leaders, they're your friends, the people you respect. They're

the ones that take the freshmen to Silver Taps, who teach them about the traditions and basically make them Aggies," Cheatham said.

Hall councils have not shown the leadership necessary to repair dorm unity, and the University has been overly hostile to any program or project involving former Bonfire leaders, Cheatham said.

Don Sweeney, an architecture professor and co-chair of the subcommittee, said the students' frustration was understandable because the Bonfire tradition is undergoing radical changes.

"We've found that Bonfire was run [by] a relatively small, tight-knit group that were the most excited about building it. As part of the old Bonfire structure, they feel disenfranchised, like they haven't been heard as the University tries to distance itself from the past," Sweeney said.

The open forum capped two days of almost non-stop meetings with students involved in Bonfire in an effort to identify important issues and gather input as the subcommittee develops a plan for student leadership and participation in Bonfire.

No decisions have been made, but the committee has gotten an earful from students about the concepts that must be included in any future Bonfire, said Josh Kaylor, subcommittee co-chair and junior agricultural development major.

"In every focus group, they tell us the qualities we need to hold on to, like competition and working hard toward a common goal. What made Bonfire special was not the burning, that was just an afterthought, but

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## Class choices may go online

**JEANETTE SIMPSON**  
*The Battalion*  
Making online registration less of a dream and more of a reality has become a recent focus of Texas A&M administrators and student groups.

Wednesday evening the Student Senate unanimously approved the Computer Access/Instructional Technology Fee (AITF) Increase Bill, which enables M to move forward in creating a Web registration system. The bill allows an increase of \$1 per semester credit hour to current fee of \$8.25 per credit hour. Of the \$1 increase, 75 cents per semester credit hour will go to Computer Access-related items, which would bring amount devoted to the Computer Access portion to \$7.75 per semester credit hour. This money is used to support equipment and services to students for computing and networking.

"With the money from this fee increase, we will be able to increase student file and email disk space by double, giving them [students] with 40 gigabytes total storage," said Dr. Pierce Strell, associate provost for instructional technology.

The fee also provides for an increased infrastructure, hardware and code to create online registration system.

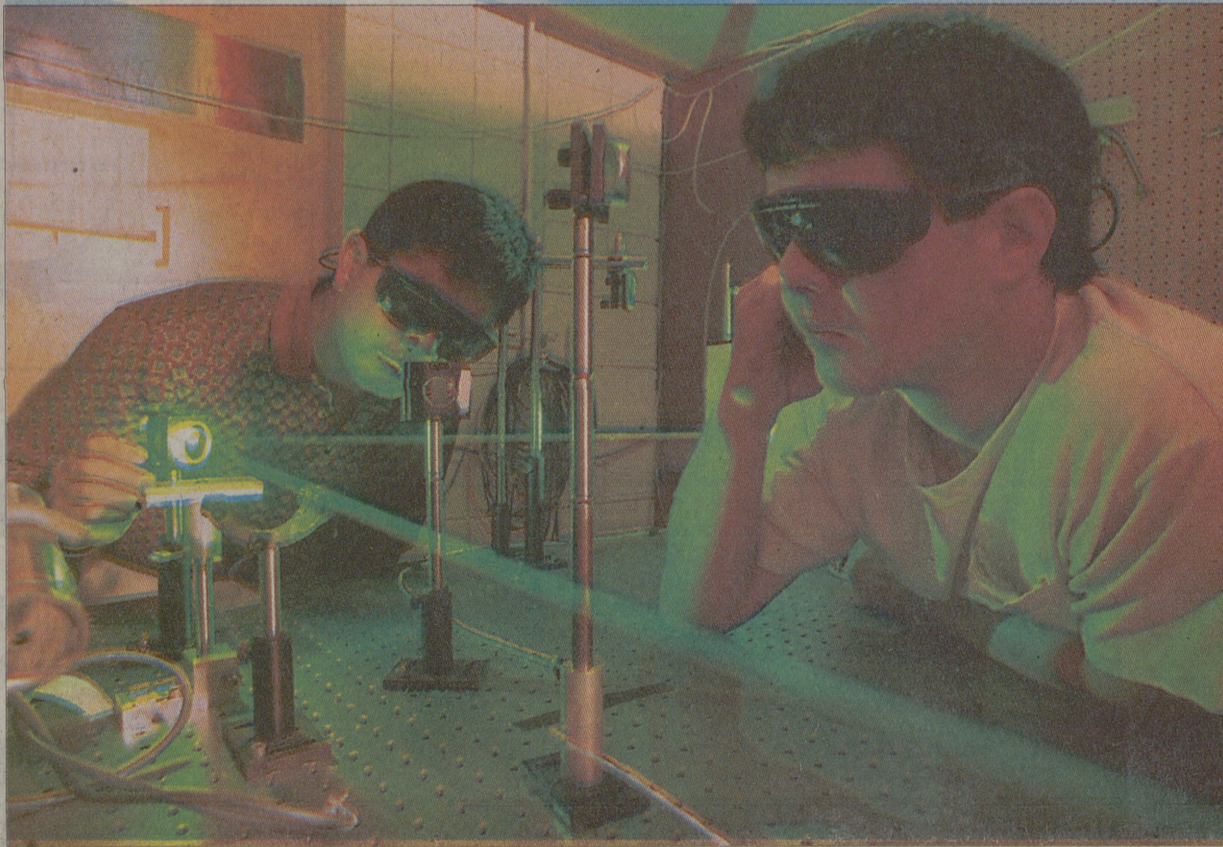
"We hope to run a pilot online registration program in the summer of 2001, have a full system ready for the Fall 01 registration system," Cantrell said. Student Body President Forrest Lane, senior political science major, said the increase will match the money already allocated for online registration.

The additional 25 cents from the \$1 increase will be added to the \$1.25 per semester credit hour for Instructional Technology, and will be used to support classroom instructional technology and main faculty in the use of the instructional technology.

A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen last week recommended that the bill be placed on the agenda of the Board of Regents for consideration at its March 2001 meeting. Board of Regents must then approve fee increase for it to take effect. The Senate approved the University

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## "Frickin' laser beams"



Jeffrey Katz, a graduate research assistant, watches as Gang Yao Xiao, a post doctoral associate, adjusts a green laser beam in the Engineer-

ing Physics Building on Wednesday. The laser is used in remote sensing to test the properties of ocean water.

## Former student group against Bowen's Bonfire 2002 criteria

**BY RICHARD BRAY**  
*The Battalion*

Keep the Tradition, an organization of former students, is continuing its goal of resurrecting Bonfire as soon as possible, despite University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen's decision that Bonfire will not continue until 2002. Keep the Fire Burning, a student group, did not build an off-campus bonfire this fall.

Keep the Tradition now hopes to have a bonfire, with or without the University's sanction, in 2001.

Robert Steinhagen, Keep the Tradition's founder and Class of '93, said neither the lack of University sanctioning nor of having bonfire off campus in 2001 would make the proposed bonfire any less meaningful than in previous years. He pointed out that, in Bonfire's early years, it was not sanctioned by the University or on campus. Steinhagen said Keep the Tradition

does not believe building a bonfire before 2002 disrespects family and friends of those killed in the accident.

"It wasn't the Bonfire tradition that caused the tragic structural collapse; it was a faulty design," he said. "Don't eliminate the tradition based on faulty

### "Honor the Aggies who died by building a safer Bonfire."

— Robert Steinhagen  
founder of Keep the Tradition

design. Like everything else, make the necessary changes to assure safety. Honor the Aggies who died by building a safer Bonfire. It shows greater disrespect to the Aggies who died in the Bonfire collapse to kill a tradition they were working to continue."

In a letter written by Steinhagen on behalf of Keep the Tradition in late September, he said the organization asked Bowen to reconsider his position regarding Bonfire and to enact the following changes:

- Any faculty member who did not graduate from Texas A&M in College Station may not oversee this or any other tradition.

- Any firm hired to directly assist in the planning, development or construction of Aggie Bonfire must be owned and/or operated by graduates of the A&M College Station campus.

- Retract the design constraints and two-week time limit for construction placed on Bonfire. Appoint a committee made entirely of Aggies (current and former students) to plan this process.

Cynthia Lawson, executive director of University Relations, said according to records, Bowen never received this letter.

## RHA: A&M should be alcohol free

### To include The Zone, administrators' housing

**BY SOMMER BUNCE**  
*The Battalion*

The Texas A&M Student Affairs subcommittee on alcohol, aimed at ending alcohol-related injuries and deaths on and near campus, made five recommendations to Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. J. Malon Southerland this summer. At the top of that list was a recommendation to make all on-campus residence halls alcohol free beginning in Fall 2001.

Southerland said he will decide on the proposal on Feb. 1. His decision may go against a resolution by the Residence Hall Association (RHA) that would make the entire campus, including Kyle Field and administrators' on-campus houses, dry. Director of Residence Life Ron Sasse and the executive board of RHA have considered student input and will draft a resolution in response to the subcommittee's proposal.

The RHA surveyed students by phone and met with on-campus residents Wednesday night in an open forum. Members of the administration, including Sasse, sat in the audience to address questions and hear students' concerns.

"Addressing alcohol issues in dorm rooms on campus is only addressing part of a very big problem," said Dennis Reardon, a representative of the Alcohol Drug Education Program (ADEP). "This is not a black-and-white issue though it has a black-and-white end. This is one part of the constellation of efforts to solve alcohol problems; we are trying to effect a change in people's thinking."

Alcohol abuse and underage drinking are the No. 1 problems on campuses across the country, Reardon said. A campus wide task force formed in 1998 researched and sought solutions to alcohol problems at A&M.

The CORE survey conducted that year found that 64 percent of the student body surveyed consumed between zero and three drinks a week. However, half of A&M students surveyed reported they had suffered an uncomfortable alcohol-related incident, from being in-

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sulted to receiving unwanted sexual advances and worse, Reardon said.

The roughly 20 percent of the student population who have been found to abuse alcohol is a problem, Reardon said.

The subcommittee's proposal to make halls alcohol-free is an attempt to prevent

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## Gore wants ballot questions resolved

(AP) — Al Gore raced between TV interviews Wednesday, asking, "Will we count all the votes or not?" while his advisers urged him to seek a high court ruling with the answer he wanted. Both Democrat Gore and GOP rival George W. Bush pressed forward with separate blueprints for building a presidency.

"On Jan. 20, President Bush will be ready to take the oath of the government," said top adviser Andy Card — urging his boss a title that Gore still hopes will be his. Facing the public for more legal wrangling, the vice president said he was prepared to fight until "the middle of December" and suggested the dispute could drag past Dec. 12 deadline for appointing state electors — to six weeks later when the Electoral College meets.

With the stakes so high, the Republican-dominated Florida Legislature inched closer to securing Bush a backup plan. House Speaker Tom Feeney said Wednesday he

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## A.P. Beutel to not offer abortion pill

**BY ELIZABETH RAINES**  
*The Battalion*

Colleges and universities around the nation, including Texas A&M, have announced they will not offer the RU-486 abortion pill.

"Texas A&M University is taking no position on the RU-486 abortion pill," said nurse practitioner of the A.P. Beutel Women's Clinic Regan Brown. "However, we will not be offering the pill to our patients."

Since the Sept. 28 approval of RU-486 by the Food and Drug Administration, many colleges will not offer the pill because abortion is not typically a part of the of the primary health services offered by colleges.

"We are not involved in abortions at all," said Dr. Lucille Isdale, director of A&M Student Health Services. "It would be inappropriate for us to offer the pill because we are not equipped to do a surgical

abortion if something were to go wrong."

Southwest Texas State University assistant director of health services Karen Gorden-Sosby said the University is taking the same route as A&M.

"Right now we don't offer abortion because we are a primary health care facility, not a special health care facility," Gorden-Sosby said. "So the change has not affected us in any way."

Unlike A&M and Southwest Texas State, the University of Virginia has taken a stance against the RU-486 issue.

University of Virginia director of Student Health Dr. Christine Peterson has spoken out against offering the pill.

"It's an extremely dangerous process," Peterson said.

The American Life League surveyed colleges on the East Coast to find out whether colleges and universities will offer the pill. Most colleges said they would not.

Universities that will not offer the pill include the University of Maine, the University of Vermont, Boston University, Yale University, the University of South Carolina and Georgia Tech.

The RU-486 abortion pill was invented in 1980 by Dr. Etienne-Emile Baulieu for the French pharmaceutical company Roussel-Uclaf. It has been used in France since 1989 and accounts for 30 percent of all abortions in France.

It must be taken within the first seven weeks of pregnancy. When used in conjunction with a prostaglandin, it is 95.5 percent effective. The pill became available for doctors in the United States to order Nov. 17 under the trade name Mifeprex. RU-486 is administered in four doctor visits.

FDA officials insist that the decision to approve the drug was nonpolitical and based on the determination that RU-486 is safe and effective.

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RUBEN DELUNA/The Battalion