

DA ends missing voter application case

ELIZABETH RAINES

The Battalion
The Brazos County District Attorney's office announced Thursday that the probe of the missing voter registration paperwork of 150 Texas A&M students has been completed. After a four-month-long investigation, the DA's office concluded that there was evidence to show that an A&M student organization was responsible. According to a press release from the DA's office, "After investigating the matter, we found no evidence that the Brazos County Voter Registrar mishandled applications. We did receive credible evidence that, after the November election, a member at one of

College Republicans take blame for incident

the student organizations discovered approximately 150 voter registration applications in their cubicle on campus."

District Attorney Bill Turner declined to offer details about the case or investigation, and refused to name the organization involved. However, David Rushing, president of College Republicans and a junior political science major, said that College Republicans has accepted blame for the mistake.

The student who discarded the applications, Amy Sandlin, a former member of the College Republicans and a sophomore civ-

"I called Jack Long to make sure that it was OK to throw [the voter registration applications] away. He told me it was OK and to throw them away."

— Amy Sandlin
former member of College Republicans

il engineering major, said she approached Turner about three weeks ago and admitted to throwing the voter registration applications away.

She said she and a friend found the applications in the drawer of the College Republicans cubicle at the end of November — one month after they had expired. She said that since the applications were expired, she and her friend put them in a box to be thrown away.

"About 20 minutes after I put the cards in the box, I called Jack Long (then-president of College Republicans) to make sure that it was

OK to throw them away," Sandlin said. "He told me it was OK and to throw them away." Long was unavailable for comment Thursday night.

In a Nov. 9 *Battalion* article, Long, a junior political science major, said he had submitted about 1,500 voter registration applications and had watched an employee of the voter registrar's office hand-check each application to make sure the dates and information was correct.

"A&M students have not been allowed to vote due to screw-ups in the [voter registrar's] office," Long said in the article. "I am not accusing them of purposefully keeping

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Student printing falls 48 percent

RISHA BRYAN

The Battalion
The number of printing jobs in open access computer labs at Texas A&M increased by 48 percent last semester, said Computing Information Services (CIS) officials.

Richard Spiller, associate director of CIS, said students have dramatically reduced their use of printers since the charges for excess printing were implemented in Fall 2000. The charges were implemented to provide funding for printing needs like personnel, supplies, printers and paper.

Students can print 150 pages for free; any print jobs beyond that allowance cost 5 cents per page. CIS has billed students \$200,000 from the print charges from Fall 2000. Spiller said the charges provided for all printing costs, saving only negligible profits last semester from the charges.

The charges were added to students' spring 2001 fee statements, changing the balance of students who paid before classes started.

Thomas Putnam, CIS director, said there was a glitch in the program that handles those charges, but that CIS programmers are working with an accounting team to resolve the problem.

Compared to other universities, Texas A&M students pay a relatively low printing fee. The University of Texas-Austin charges 10 cents per page,

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Claymation



KRISTI HINES/THE BATTALION

Amber Guthrie, a freshman at Blinn College, collars a clay pot Thursday afternoon. She has been taking pottery for 2 and 1/2 years at a local pottery studio.

Graves admits to personal use of state planes

Will pay \$329 to A&M System

STAFF & WIRE

Texas A&M University System Chancellor Howard Graves, who admitted to twice using state-owned airplanes for personal business, will refund \$329.70 to the system.



GRAVES

Graves ordered an internal review of travel records, which showed he twice visited his orthodontist in Austin on system airplanes, the *Bryan-College Station Eagle* reported Thursday in a copyright story.

The review showed that one of the visits was during a business-related trip and the other was not.

Graves returned to College Station after both trips.

The System spokeswoman Brenda Sims said the internal review was launched after a Houston television station filed an open-records request for plane logs and other documents.

After consulting with the system's general counsel, Graves asked that the A&M system audit him for the charges he incurred on his trips, according to a statement released by the system.

Brazos County District Attorney Bill Turner said his office recently received a complaint about Graves' travel and is reviewing whether any laws were broken. Turner said he was "not in a posi-

tion to comment on the incident because it is currently under review."

Turner said "under the Texas Penal Code, a person accused of personal usage of state-funded resources would be tried for official misconduct."

The Texas Rangers have been called to investigate this case. The use of an A&M System plane costs \$460 per hour and is charged in 1/10-hour increments, Sims said. Charges for Graves, include vehicle rides to and from the airport.

Ross Margraves, former chairman of the A&M System Board of Regents, was convicted in 1996 of official misconduct after a jury found he used a system jet for personal reasons. Margraves said his 1993 trip to Louisiana State University, which cost taxpayers \$1,435, was official business but coincided with his son's graduation.

Turner, who prosecuted Margraves, argued it was illegal for government property to be used for private benefit. Margraves was sentenced to four years probation. He also was ordered to pay a \$3,000 fine and perform community service.

Graves was recently diagnosed with sarcoma cancer. During the next 9 to 12 months, he will be working intermittently as he undergoes chemotherapy. Dr. Jerry Gaston, deputy chancellor, will manage the System in Graves' absence.

Graves has served as chancellor since August 1999.

MPO will review railroad route alternatives

B-C-S residents encouraged to attend workshop, hear study results

BY ELIZABETH RAINES

The Battalion

Texas A&M students who have back-to-back classes on main campus and West Campus know the problems of caused by having a railroad run through the middle of campus.

The Bryan-College Station, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will host a workshop Friday at 2 p.m. at the Brazos Center at which Bryan-College Station residents are invited to attend. At the meeting, the MPO will report the findings of a study they have been working on regarding relocating the railroad.

The MPO, which is required by law in an area with a population of 50,000 or more, has been examining possible alternative routes for the railroad for more than three years. The MPO initially became interested in relocating the railroad in 1998, after A&M suggested the idea.

The study, which is being completed by the consulting firm Carter and Burgess and HDR Engineering, has considered the existing route and 22 alternative routes as options for the train

route.

After receiving the information from Carter and Burgess, the MPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the MPO Rail Advisory Committee (RAC) recommended three routes and the existing route to the MPO policy board.

"The routes originally chosen for recommendation by the TAC and RAC went into Burleson county," said Doug Johnson, MPO transportation planner. "We had to choose the new ones, though, because of the protests from citizens in Burleson County about the railroad being moved into their county."

The committees plan to discuss the three recommended routes and the existing route with the MPO policy board at the workshop today.

"Although the policy committee does not have to choose routes to look further into on Friday, we are hoping that they will choose two of the four recommended routes to study in more detail," Johnson said. "The study concludes in August when the funding

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ROBIN GRAHAM/THE BATTALION

The Tradition private dorm is located behind Northgate. Construction should be finished this summer.

New private dorm opening Fall 2001

BY ROB PHILLIPS

The Battalion

A new housing option will be available to students in Fall 2001, when The Tradition at Northgate opens its doors.

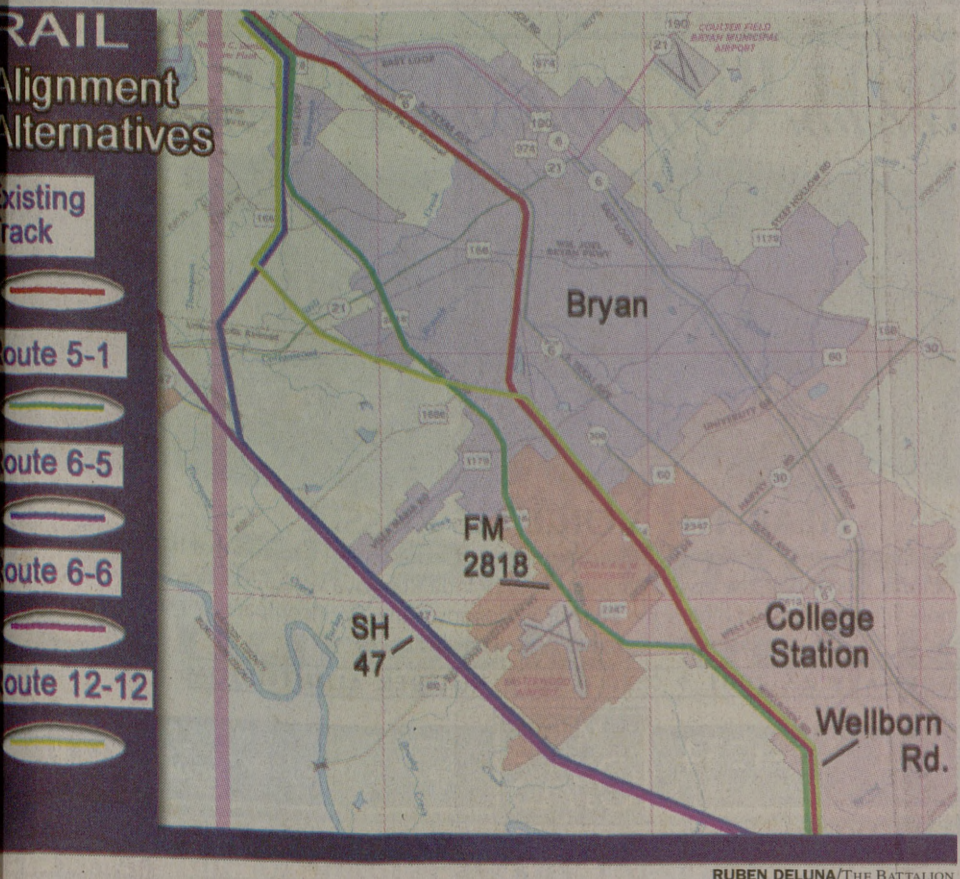
The new private residence hall, located on Church Avenue, one block from the north side of campus, will be completed by Summer 2001.

Brian Revell, senior project manager of C.D. Henderson Inc., said everything is going as planned.

"Construction is going quite well," Revell said. "Actually, we're right on schedule to complete the job by July 2."

The total construction cost of the new building, including the structure, roofing, mechanical/electrical, security systems, landscaping and the attached parking garage, is approximately \$26 million.

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RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION