

Texas A&M University — Celebrating 125 Years

THE BATTALION

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Perry to declare disaster area in Bee County

BEEVILLE, Texas (AP) — Gov. Rick Perry said Monday he will declare flooded areas in Bee County disaster areas, allowing the area to qualify for federal assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Administration.

"Paperwork is on its way," Perry said in a story on the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* online edition. "As soon as we get it, it will be signed."

Scores of homes in the Skidmore area were flooded and schools were shut down after rains two weeks ago dumped more a foot of water on some areas of Bee County.

"We're going to have these issues addressed as quickly as humanly possible," Perry said.

Skidmore resident Pat Aguirre, whose home was flooded, said she is thankful that Perry intends to sign the declaration.

She's been living in her house since the floods and has been worried about mold problems.

Smooth hands



Larissa Levenberger, an employee at University Plus and a senior community health major, throws clay on a pottery wheel. The University Plus program runs Monday through Thursday from noon to 10 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from noon to 5 p.m.

Senate opposes new fee increase

By JUSTIN SMITH
THE BATTALION

The Faculty Senate recommended adding new courses to the Texas A&M curriculum Monday, and senators expressed their objection to A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen's proposed "excellence fee."

Bowen spoke with faculty senators about the \$30-per-semester-hour excellence fee that has been proposed to the A&M System Board of Regents in response to a lack of state funding.

The proposed fee would be levied on all incoming undergraduate, graduate and transfer students beginning Fall 2002. An alternative would be to add a \$10 fee to all current and future students' tuition, Bowen said.

Bowen explained that the University will lose more than \$6 million this year and will continue to if this fee increase does not pass. The state did not appropriate enough funds to A&M, he said.

"The belief is that we are rich, so we are not given as much money as we need," Bowen said. "There also is not enough money to go around to all the universities in the state."

Budget cuts may be a last resort for the University next fiscal year, Bowen said. Though undefined, budget cuts could include dropping parts of Bowen's Vision 2020 plan.

The \$30 fee increase could bring in more than \$9 million in 2002. Many faculty senators were opposed to making graduate students pay the fee.

Adding additional fees to graduate students' fees would only make the problem worse, faculty senators said. Some senators said students would rather go to other universities where they would not have to pay and could still get a quality education.

In other business, several new courses were approved to be added to the curriculum. New

See SENATE on page 6A.

PUBLIC EYE

Number of freshmen in the Corps of Cadets Fall 2001

682

TODAY

AGGIELIFE

Page 3A

Breakaway offers Christian service and music

SPORTS

Page 1B

Johnson out 'indefinitely'

• Aggie senior wide receiver sidelined by spleen injury

OPINION

Page 5B

A (very) bad idea

• Granting amnesty status to illegal immigrants misguided, unfair

WEATHER

TODAY

HIGH 89° F
LOW 67° F

TOMORROW

HIGH 91° F
LOW 64° F

FORECASTS COURTESY OF www.weathermanted.com

TKE pledge removed

By BRANDIE LIFFICK
THE BATTALION

Student Life to investigate possible sexual orientation discrimination

A Fall 2001 pledge of social fraternity Tau Kappa Epsilon (TKE) was removed from the organization Saturday — only hours after he had accepted its "bid" — because other fraternity members learned that he is gay, the student said. An investigation has been launched by the Texas A&M Department of Student Life.

Clay Cunningham was invited to become an associate member of the fraternity Saturday, and a group of pledges gathered at the Dixie Chicken that afternoon. At that time, Cunningham said, he was confronted about his sexual orientation and asked to turn in his pledge jersey and leave the fraternity.

Cunningham, a junior political science major, said he was asked by rush chairman Patrick Terramiggi if he belonged to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and

Transgendered Aggies (GLBTA), a campus organization.

"I told him that I was gay, and he said that if I was a member of TKE, that it would ruin their organization," Cunningham said. "It would decimate their pledge class and make them look bad when compared to the rest of the fraternities."

Cunningham said he walked shirtless out of the bar where the new pledges had gathered.

Terramiggi could not be reached for comment.

Thomas Danner, president of TKE and a senior agricultural economics major, said Cunningham was asked to turn in his jersey because of dishonesty.

"He was not asked to leave the fraternity," Danner said, citing a release from the organization's national headquarters. "He was

asked to turn in his jersey because he misrepresented himself. He was not forthcoming about the activities he engaged in," Danner said.

"TKE does not discriminate based on sex, race, religion or sexual orientation," Danner added.

Cunningham has filed a complaint with the Department of Student Life and the Office of Gender Issues.

See TKE on page 2A.

Black woman twice rejected from all-white Univ. Alabama sorority

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (AP) — A black woman's attempt to join a white sorority at the University of Alabama has been rejected for the second straight year.

Melody Twilley, a 3.87 grade-point-average student who sings first soprano in the campus choir, was notified Sunday that she was not being invited to join any of the 15 all-white sororities.

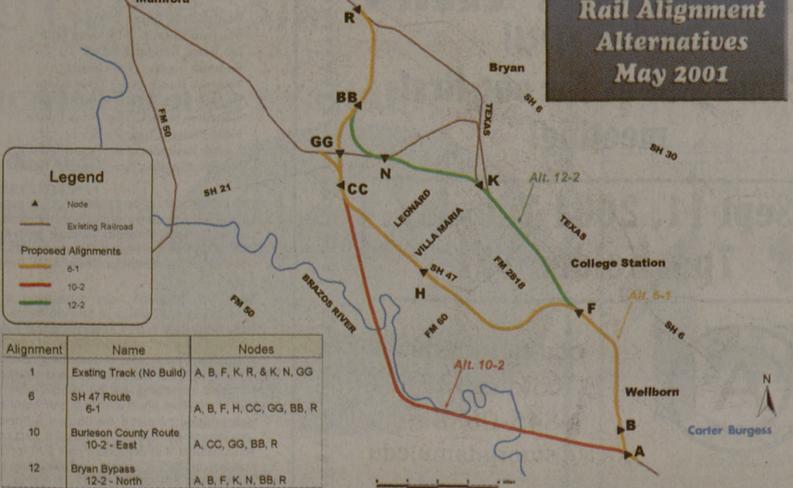
Twilley also was rejected for membership last fall, when she hoped to become the first black to be accepted into one of the school's 37 white fraternities and sororities. A woman who described herself as being half-black, Christina Houston, said last week that she broke the color barrier at Alabama last year by joining a previously all-white sorority, Gamma Phi Beta.

Twilley, 18, was the only black to seek membership in a white

See SORORITIES on page 6A.

MPO railroad route study to be completed June 2002

By ELIZABETH RAINES
THE BATTALION



A study conducted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) determining possible alternative routes for the railroad that runs through the Texas A&M campus will not be completed until June 2002.

The Local Rail Economic Feasibility and Relocation Study was expected by Sept. 30. The change of date follows new guidelines from the Federal Highway Administration that require the MPO to conduct more extensive environmental studies on the proposed routes.

The study began in February 1998 to locate the best rail route for Brazos County. Over the course of the study, the MPO narrowed the 23 alternative rail routes to four possible routes, which include one that follows Highway 47 and one that runs through Burleson County.

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MPO Director Michael Parks said

that although the study should be completed by January 2002, he wanted to give the MPO and the contractors, Carter and Burgess Inc., enough time to deal with any unexpected situations.

"Whenever we reach a milestone in the project there are new questions," Parks said. "We have to be prepared for the unexpected."

The federal government requires three separate levels of environmental assessments before a project can receive federal funding, Parks said.

The size of the project determines the level of assessment the government requires.

The Highway Administration requires an Environmental Impact Statement for a project the size of the rail plan. For each proposed route, the MPO must assess the environmental situation, record possible problems and create a plan to repair any environmental damage the new routes could cause, Parks said.

See MPO on page 2A.