

THE BATTALION

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Grade forgiveness policy under review

By C.E. Walters
THE BATTALION

The Faculty Senate Academic Affairs committee is reviewing the existing grading policy for students who retake courses at A&M.

Currently, University rules allow for students who receive a C or below in a class to repeat and have the grades from the first and second attempt averaged on their transcript. The new policy would eliminate Q-drops in favor of grade forgiveness, a system where students could retake up to three courses and receive credit for the higher grade.

Chaired by associate professor and assistant department head of petroleum engineering Dr. Thomas Blasingame, the committee is weighing the advantages and disadvantages of this plan.

The ability to forgive grades now lies within the dean's jurisdiction, but grade forgiveness, Blasingame said, would return some of this power to the student.

"It would empower the student to control part of his destiny," he said.

The plan would be relatively easy to execute, Blasingame said. It would need to be a compromise between students and faculty that ensures students who retake a course show improvement.

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Student dies in car accident

By Brandie Liffick
THE BATTALION

Brittany Page, a sophomore agricultural development major, was killed Sunday in a car accident on State Highway 30 in Grimes County.

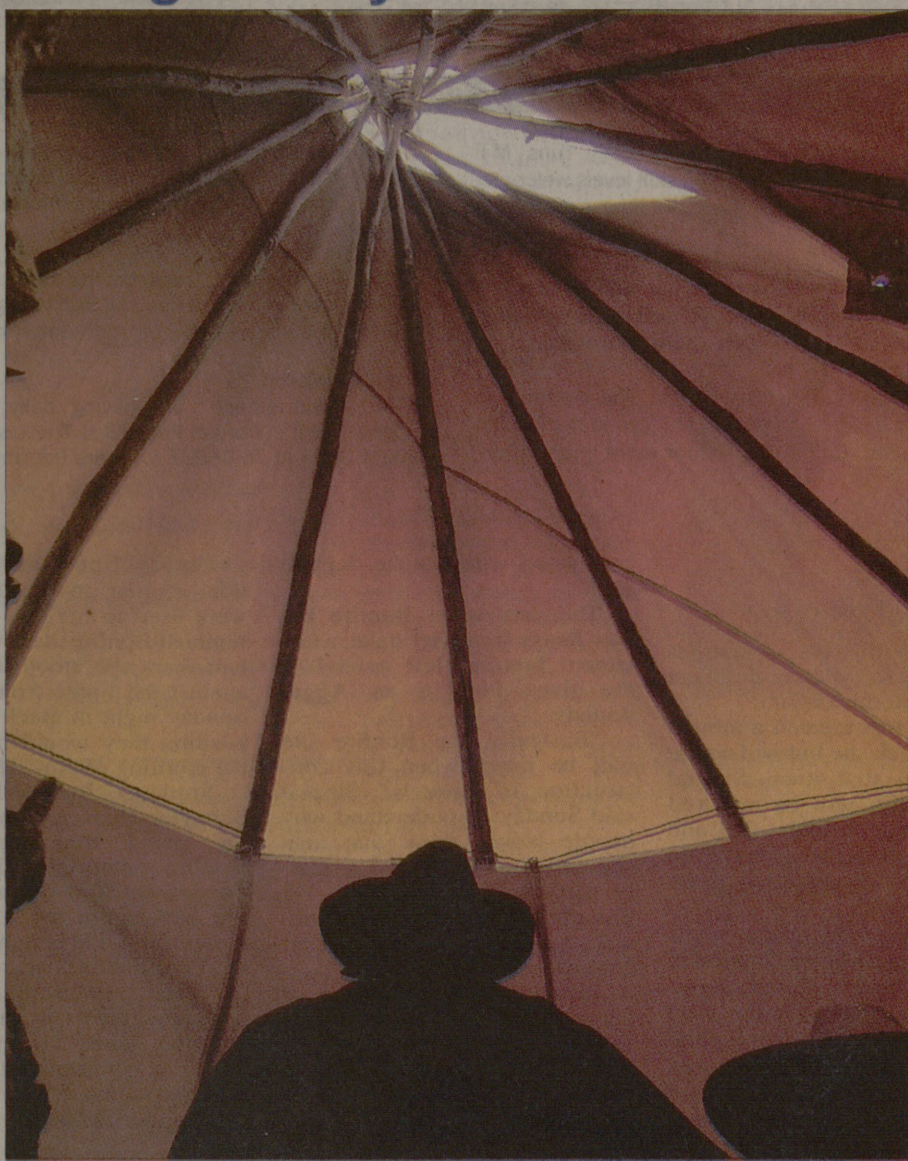
Page was attempting to pass in a no-pass zone when an oncoming car entered her lane, according to the Department of Public Safety. She swerved into the right hand lane and collided with a car that was behind her, officials said.

None of the four passengers in the car she collided with were harmed.

Page was from Shepherd, Texas.

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Living history



Larry S. Heidbreder, a historical reenactor from Huntsville, is silhouetted against the canvas walls of an authentic Native American tepee at the Lucky B Bison Native American Village in Bryan on Sunday. The Native American village was part of a celebration of Texas and Native American heritage.

STUART VILLANUEVA • THE BATTALION

Administration strikes top 20

Plan will not be in effect this fall

By Sommer Bunce
THE BATTALION

Qualified graduates in the top 20 percent of 254 economically disadvantaged schools in Texas will not be automatically admitted this fall under a plan Texas A&M officials have debated since October.

Officials announced late Friday afternoon that the top 20 plan, which was expected to go before the A&M System Board of Regents for approval this month, will not be pursued for Fall 2002, pending requests for more information from the University's attorneys.

The plan, which would automatically admit students in the top 20 percent who meet A&M's admissions standards and SAT requirements, may still be considered for Fall 2003.

The top 20 plan raised Hopwood-like questions on the constitutionality of soliciting students from inner and rural poor districts with large Hispanic and African-American student populations and drew a mixed response from the student body. The 1996 Hopwood decision prohibits public universities from considering race during admissions.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the decision in 2001.

The Student Senate considered a resolution last month condemning the top 20 plan, saying it did not properly address the goals of the University's Vision 2020, which in part seeks to make A&M more diverse by 2020.

"Almost all students are in favor of diversifying the campus," Student Body President Schuyler Houser said Sunday. "But so many are unsure of that specific plan to do it, of top 20 being the right way to attack it."

The Regents this fall asked University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen to look for ways to diversify admissions to A&M. At an October meeting, Bowen and a group of admissions specialists introduced the top 20 plan, saying 200 more students, who would traditionally have been turned away, would be admitted under the plan.

The plan would increase the enrollment cap to extend automatic admission to all those qualifying from the targeted 254 schools.

Regent Wendy Gramm expressed doubt at the Oct. 26 meeting, asking if the school would have another Hopwood on its hands. The Regents acknowledged that if any doubts as to the legality of the plan surfaced, they would reconsider implementing it.

"We know quite well what we can and cannot do from the Hopwood decision," Assistant Provost for Enrollment Joe Estrada said in October.

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A&M drives local economy during recession

By Anna Chaloupka
THE BATTALION

In an economic recession that has left many throughout the state and nation drowning in downsizing, layoffs and doubts, Texas A&M has kept the Bryan-College Station area riding the top of the wave.

A&M impacted the local economy with more than \$2 billion in spending this year, according to an in-house study A&M officials released last week.

Unemployment rates have remained consistently lower than other metropolitan areas and the statewide and national averages: 1.7 for the Bryan-College Station area in January compared to Texas' 5.7 rate.

The payroll for the 20,993 employees of the A&M System was \$547.4 million for 2001, the study indicated, an increase of \$23.4 million from last year. A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen said employees and their families directly affect the local economy by spending their salaries on purchases in the community as well as depositing money in local banks.

The study showed the local economic impact of the University's students for 2001 was \$208.6 million, an increase of \$8.5 million from 2000. The typical A&M student spent \$4,678 last year on expenditures such as food and housing, clothing, school supplies and recreation.

Dr. Bill Krumm, A&M's vice president for finances, said A&M's economic impact on Bryan-College Station is tremendous because of the thousands of employees and students who cycle their money in the community.

Aggies spend their dollars on renting apartments and eating at local restaurants, he said, and in turn the businesses they support spend their money on other commodities, putting those dollars back to work in the local economy.

"The community is important to the University," Krumm said, "and the University is important to the community."

The study also found that although attendance at

RECESSION WOES		
UNEMPLOYMENT RATES ACROSS TEXAS		
	DECEMBER	JANUARY
Texas Avg	5.7	5.7
McAllen	12.7	14.1
Austin	4.6	5.4
Houston	4.5	5.3
Lubbock	2.2	2.7
B-CS	1.7	1.7

Source: Texas Workforce Commission
CHAD MALLAM • THE BATTALION

athletic and entertainment events and graduation ceremonies was down from 2000, visitors to A&M still rake in money for the local economy.

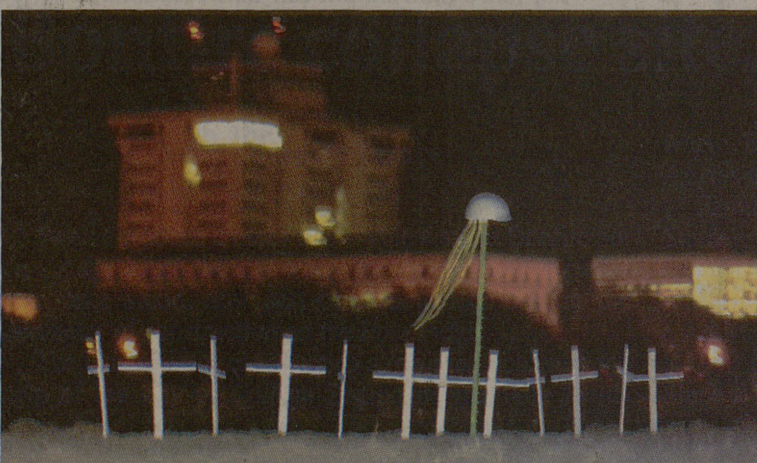
Visitors, including prospective students and their families, spent \$57 million last year in the area on athletic ticket sales, food, lodging, gasoline and other services.

Construction extends to 1999 Bonfire collapse site, families upset

By Sommer Bunce
THE BATTALION

Twelve wooden crosses and a whitewashed Bonfire pot on a stake adorn the site where the Aggie Bonfire center pole once stood, now part of a mound of dirt on the perimeter of construction on the Polo Fields.

The University is constructing a retaining pool with the help of the city of College Station on the Polo Fields



Twelve white crosses and a white Bonfire pot stand at the site where the Aggie Bonfire center pole once stood.

GUY ROGERS • THE BATTALION

where Bonfire once stood and in 1999 fell, killing 12 Aggies and injuring 27 others Nov. 18.

Family members of the victims journeyed to the site Sunday, upset to see the site where their sons and daughters died desecrated in a pile of dirt that functions as a road on the perimeter of the construction, said Will Clark, a A&M student who was part of Keep The Fire Burning, a 1999 and 2000 effort to build an off-campus bonfire. Since Bonfire fell, Clark has become close with most of the victims' families.

One family contacted Clark last week, asking him what the site looked like and telling him the University had assured them construction would not disturb the site, Clark said. He declined to say which family had been in contact, but when he told them "it was all torn up," they contacted other victims' family members and came to the center pole site to put up the crosses Sunday.

"They're telling me, 'Our children died out there, this is the ultimate disrespect,'" Clark said.

A&M Vice President for Administration Dr. Charles A. Sippial said the construction was not supposed to extend to the center pole site. The construction is part of ongoing campus construction to eliminate landscape flooding

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Program educates men

By Tanya Nading
THE BATTALION

Men can create helpful environments in the home and serve as allies to other men, women and children who have been victimized by violence at the hands of men, according to the message a new program at Texas A&M hopes to send to all men on campus.

Created in collaboration by the Interfraternity Council, Greek Life, Gender Issues Education Service and several other organizations, Men-to-Men is a program for and by men, meant to create a helpful environment for development and growth and discuss topics such as "Reconstructing Masculinity."

"Since the Interfraternity Council represents the largest all male group on campus I felt we had a responsibility to provide education to men on campus," said John Stewart, Interfraternity Council president and junior geography major.

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INSIDE



Sports Pg. 7
Stephenson helps Ags to victory over Tech

Senior right fielder's double pushes No. 17 A&M to first series sweep of Red Raiders since 1993

WEATHER

TODAY	
HIGH	55° F
LOW	17° F
TUESDAY	
HIGH	65° F
LOW	27° F

FORECASTS COURTESY OF www.collegeweather.com