

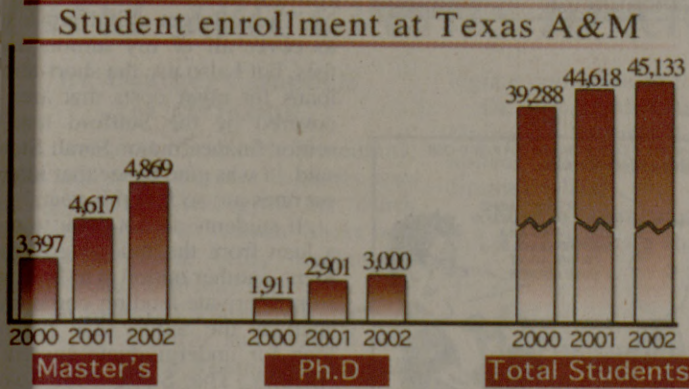
THE BATTALION

Volume 109 • Issue 15 • 16 pages

www.thebatt.com

Thursday, September 19, 2002

A&M enrollment reaches record high growth



By Sommer Bunce
THE BATTALION

Enrollment at Texas A&M broke the 45,000 mark this fall, with graduate student growth higher than it has ever been, according to preliminary 12th day class figures.

A&M's student population has grown to a record 45,133 this semester and will likely retain its fifth-ranked status among universities nationwide, said Joe Estrada, A&M's assistant provost for enrollment. But A&M is still not growing as quickly as its flagship Texas counterpart, the University of Texas.

UT's record-breaking 52,273 students this year keeps it the largest school in the nation. In the same year that UT grew by 1,657 students, A&M added only 535, a third of UT's total.

Estrada said A&M may not want numbers as high as UT's.

"We need to make sure we've got the correct balance in graduate and undergraduates," Estrada said. "We want growth in our graduate population. (But) we don't want to grow at the pace the University of Texas is growing. They're ballooning at UT."

The economy is an important factor in the growth of A&M's graduate programs, which added 344 students this year, said Michael Nelson, an economics lecturer. Though graduate programs have traditionally kept low numbers at A&M, the economic downturn that hit last fall brought people out of the work force and undergraduate programs and into graduate school, Nelson said.

The economic forecast has brightened since then, Nelson said, but unemployment

is still high, meaning more people will head back to school until the bad weather passes.

"Economic downturns always make it a good time for going back to school," he said.

The University wants to add more students to its graduate programs, but at the same time strict controls need to be placed on undergraduate growth, Estrada said.

"The academic departments are attracting (graduate) students, so they're the answer," he said. "We've grown in the populations that the University wants to be growing in."

The freshman class this year totals 6,980, an increase of 191 students from last fall; included in that count are 315 students

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Dean appointment causes controversy

By Sara Szuminski
THE BATTALION

from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, in favor of Bennett.

The recent appointment of Kem Bennett as A&M's new dean and vice chancellor for engineering by administrators has frustrated faculty members in the engineering department along with members of the search advisory committee, said a member of the search committee who asked to remain unidentified.

Despite the committee's decision not to recommend Bennett to the Board of Regents and the engineering faculty's overwhelming lack of support for him, Chancellor Howard D. Graves and University President Dr. Robert M. Gates bypassed the input they received from the committee and a faculty vote and listed Bennett as one of the three finalists for the position, the source said. The regents then selected Bennett from among a list of three candidates including John Junkins from A&M and Daniel Reed from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Graves and Gates dropped the committee's recommendation for Mark Kushner, also

"They (Graves and Gates) didn't listen to us or respect our opinions," the source said. "They decided on their own that they knew better."

Usually, the appointment of a dean requires the approval of the search committee before a candidate can be hired, according to University rules. But because the position of engineering dean includes administrative posts within the A&M System, it is exempt from the University rules.

"We all want A&M to be a great University," the source said. "That happens by doing the right things, one of which is to have more democracy -- to listen to the people that care."

Graves and Gates asked for the committee's involvement because they were interested in their thoughts on the candidates' strengths and weaknesses, Graves said. Choosing the three candidates to recommend to the Board of Regents was the responsibility of Gates and himself, not the committee, Graves said.

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Blown away



RANDAL FORD • THE BATTALION

Junior general studies major and Aggie Band member **Jim Chesier** (right) plays the tuba with the rest of the Aggie Band at the volleyball game Tuesday night at G. Rollie White Stadium.

Student loan rates at record low point

By Ruth Ihde
THE BATTALION

Students at Texas A&M are taking advantage of the low interest rates on student and parent loans which are at their lowest point in history, said Jack Falks, director of Financial Aid for Texas A&M.

At a rate of 3.46 percent interest for students still attending school and 4.06 percent during repayment, many options are available to students and parents who would normally not be able to cover the cost of attending a university.

The U.S. Department of Education predicts 15.5 million students will be enrolled in universities this fall, according to Erin Love of the Sallie Mae Company.

"There will be about a 10 percent increase in enrollment this year at Texas A&M and nationally," Falks said.

Options for students or parents include long-term loans through the university, state or private institutions such as a bank or lender. Usually, long-term loans can be paid off in seven to 10 years, and most students choose to repay the loans after graduation, Falks said.

"This is usually because of two reasons," he said. "Some people take out a very little amount, and others choose to prepay early in order to shorten the repayment time."

A popular loan among students is the Federal Stafford loan. There are two types of long-term loans offered by the Stafford loan. A subsidized loan, which is need-based and must be applied for,

See **Loans** on page 2A

Loan Rates

- 3.46% Stafford loan for students attending school
- 4.06% Stafford loan rate during repayment period
- 4.86% Sallie Mae parent loan

TRAVIS SWENSEN • THE BATTALION

Aggie R-r-ring surveys students

By Sarah Darr
THE BATTALION

Aggie R-r-ring, the new program on campus that will survey students over the phone, began Wednesday with a campus climate survey, said Assessment Coordinator of Student Life Studies Peggy Holzweiss.

The Campus Climate Survey will be a follow-up survey to one taken at A&M five years

ago by a group from the University of Michigan, Holzweiss said. It will be a condensed version of the one taken in 1998, with approximately 13 questions, and will cover topics such as students' feelings about faculty and campus life. The updated survey will then be compared to the one taken previously, and the progress on these topics can be evaluated, Holzweiss said.

"We want the surveys to

reflect and represent the whole student body," Holzweiss said.

Students will be randomly selected through MARS (Measurement and Research Services) and contacted by telephone to participate in the five- to 10-minute surveys, Associate Director of MARS, Mark Troy said.

MARS receives a list of demographics needed for each survey including gender, race and ethnic background, Troy

said. From there a random sample of students is drawn, so that a non-biased group of students gets surveyed, Troy said.

A new survey will be taken around the middle of each month, and will take about four weeks to complete, Holzweiss said. The first three topics for surveys have already been selected, and the rest will be decided on by an advisory team

See **R-r-ring** on page 6B

Former A&M student executed

HUNTSVILLE, Texas (AP) — A former Texas A&M student who had been considering pharmacy school or a Baptist seminary after graduation was executed Wednesday after gunning down another Aggie during a burglary at her home eight years ago.

Ron Shamburger confessed to the fatal shooting of Lori Baker, 20, within hours of the attack, which climaxed a series of burglaries he'd been committing in College Station, many of them at homes he'd broken into numerous times.

As Shamburger was strapped to the gurney, he uttered several quotes from the Bible. He then looked at the victim's family and said, "I am really sorry for the pain and sorrow I caused you. I really do not know what to say, but I am sorry ... forgive me."

He sang an old religious hymn as the lethal drugs were administered.

He was pronounced dead at 6:17 p.m. CDT, six minutes after receiving the lethal injection.

Evidence showed Shamburger used a credit card stolen from Baker's home a few

days before the fatal attack to buy the murder weapon, a 9 mm pistol.

Shamburger's lawyers went to the U.S. Supreme Court to try to halt the punishment, but the court denied his petition and application for stay of execution. Similar efforts failed Tuesday in the state courts.

Shamburger, from Longview, was a 22-year-old fifth-year senior nearing a degree in biomedical science when authorities say he became obsessed with burglaries in which

See **Execution** on page 2A

Bush library to display Ground Zero flag

By Lauren Bauml
THE BATTALION

The lone American flag that was buried under rubble and debris for three days following the Sept. 11 attacks at the World Trade Center, commonly known as the Ground Zero flag, will make its way to

College Station next month.

The George Bush Presidential Library and Museum will house the flag Oct. 4-14 before its departure from the state of Texas. The flag will be displayed in conjunction with the "Freedom's Journey" exhibit, which will remain at the museum through the end of December.

The "Freedom's Journey" exhibit includes copies of instrumental historical documents, such as the Declaration of Independence, as well as original artwork by artists from various areas throughout the United States.

The Ground Zero flag, which spans 8 feet by 12 feet, was the only flag flying in the World Trade Center Plaza the morning

of Sept. 11, 2001. It was buried under piles of rubble and fallen debris for three days following the collapse of the towers. Once removed, two clearly visible tears along the flag's stripes caused many to push for a ceremonial destruction by the National Guard.

See **Flag** on page 10A