

# THE BATTALION

Volume 109 • Issue 63 • 10 pages

www.thebatt.com

Tuesday, November 26, 2002

## Football player dies after collapsing in Cain

By True Brown  
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M defensive lineman Brandon Fails died Monday morning after collapsing in his dorm room in Cain Hall.

Fails, 18, a freshman general studies major, was rushed to St. Joseph's Hospital in Bryan where he was pronounced dead at 9:03 a.m.

A&M head football coach R.C. Slocum said Fails was at the team's practice Sunday and had gone out to eat with some teammates later that evening. He was on his way to breakfast Monday when he told his room-

mate, tight end Patrick Fleming, he was having a hard time breathing, Slocum said. He collapsed moments later.

An autopsy will be performed to determine the official cause of death.

Fails's death marks the second time in four seasons that a dark cloud has been cast over the Aggies annual football game with the University of Texas (UT). The first time was the 1999 Bonfire Collapse that killed 12 and injured 27 Aggies.

"Preparation for the game obviously comes at a distant comparison to what his family, his team and the rest of the guys will go through this week," Slocum said. "Words cannot describe the pain and sorrow felt by our football

family regarding the loss of this fine young man."

Fails played in four games for the Aggies before undergoing knee surgery in October. Slocum said Fails had been granted a medical redshirt this season.

Slocum said there were no indications of heart problems at the time of the surgery, but there was a history of heart problems in the family.

"Brandon had no history of any heart problems," Slocum said. "His dad had a heart attack at an early age, and his grandfather had one at a much older age, so there was some history there."

Fails was credited with two tackles this season. He played against the

University of Louisiana-Lafayette, Louisiana Tech and Baylor.

"He likely would have started for us next year, and possibly would have been starting right now if not for the knee surgery," Slocum said.

In response, UT canceled its Monday night hex rally, a gathering traditionally held before the annual A&M-UT game that brings down a fictional witches' curse on the A&M football team. The rally was also

cancelled after the 1999 Aggie Bonfire Collapse.

"Our hearts go out to the family and to the Texas A&M staff and players," UT head coach Mack Brown said in a statement. "There is nothing anybody can say. We understand their pain."

In February 2001, the Longhorns suffered a similar loss when defensive end Cole Pittman died in a one-car accident on his way to join his team for spring practices.

Fails is the third football player to die at A&M since 1991.

In September 1991, kicker James

See **Fails** on page 2



FAILS

### An organized mess



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Sophomore architecture student **C.J. Staudel** takes a measurement for a house project just before putting it all together

in Langford. **Staudel's** concept, which took 30-40 hours to complete, was for Environmental Design Studio 105.

## Professors seek Fulbright Scholars

By Amy Adams  
THE BATTALION

A group of professors in the Brazos Valley is seeking out ways to attract more international educators and students to Texas A&M.

The National Fulbright Association has approved the formation of a local chapter in Brazos Valley to be created by former Fulbright Scholars from A&M. The new chapter is one of two in the state of Texas and one of 43 in the United States, said Rhonda Collins, director of the International Center.

The 22-member group will serve as a council of advisers to provide advice on international issues, she said.

"The local chapter will be able to promote the excellent programs of Fulbright and it enables them to have a strategic way to share their expertise and experiences abroad with A&M students," Collins said.

Collins said the new chapter is aimed at increasing the number of Fulbright Scholars who choose to come to the A&M campus. In addition, the chapter

will work with the current visiting Fulbright Scholar students to make them feel more at home.

The U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program sends 800 scholars and professionals to more than 140 countries each year, where they lecture or conduct research in a wide variety of academic fields including journalism, urban planning, music, philosophy, business administration and zoology.

Each year, the University has two or three foreign Fulbright Scholars visiting the campus and five to six A&M faculty Fulbright Scholars that go abroad.

Currently, there are about 30 international students visiting A&M through the Fulbright program.

Suzanne Gyeszly, director for the policy sciences and economics library, served on the founding board for the new chapter.

"The new chapter will allow for excellent collaboration among members on international matters," Gyeszly said.

The Fulbright Scholar Program originated in 1946 and is sponsored by the Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

## Researchers help fight staph infections

By Melissa Sullivan  
THE BATTALION

Research at the Texas A&M System Health Science Center's Institute of Biosciences and Technology is helping fight the growing threat of staph infections around the country.

The staph — short for staphylococcus aureus — pathogen has become more resistant to drugs, causing researchers such as Dr. Eric Brown, assistant professor at the Institute of Biosciences and Technology, to examine what might be egging the infection on.

Staph bacteria can be found everywhere and has always posed a problem, especially in hospitals, where people are consistently

battling infections, Brown said. The most chronically ill or debilitated patients, such as those receiving systemic steroids or cancer chemotherapy as well as infants in the nursery, are the most susceptible to the disease.

A staph infection, which looks and feels similar to the flu, can lead to an array of medical problems, including arthritis, toxic shock syndrome, food poisoning and skin rash. Staph infections usually attack the elderly and those already ill. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of cases of staph infections in hospitals has increased every year since 1940.

But Brown's research has put science one step closer to understanding how staph

infections have become more powerful in recent years.

Certain proteins that make up the building blocks of staph affect how a person's immune system responds during a staph infection, Brown said. After careful testing, Brown found that one of the staph proteins interferes with the work of the body's T-cells, a patient's most specific defense against foreign intruders. Such interference would leave a person nearly defenseless as the staph infection spreads.

The next step is finding out how much T-cells are affected by the proteins in staph through a series of laboratory experiments.

See **Staph** on page 2

## Northgate redevelopment plan focuses on safety

By Eric Ambroso  
THE BATTALION

College Station and Texas A&M are working to redevelop Northgate to attract more businesses while making the area safer for students walking to campus.

The Northgate area is home

to about 1,200 residents, a population expected to double within the next five years, said Gary Bellomy, director of the Northgate Redevelopment Plan. But business owners are worried that the parking and driving conditions around Northgate discourage businesses and consumers from frequenting the

area, he said.

The current problems with Northgate have caused the city to update the Northgate Redevelopment Plan, originally created in 1996. The outcome of the 1996 plan was the implementation of a number of public projects, including repairs to College Main and the creation of the parking garage behind Northgate, said Charles Wood, a member of the College Station Economic Development Department.

Don Ganter, owner of the Dixie Chicken and other local businesses, said parking is a problem for Northgate patrons.

"Why shouldn't we have free parking?" Ganter said. "Northgate has been producing a tremendous amount of tax dollars for years, yet it's the only place in the county with parking meters. I wish the city would

take away all of the meters."

Bellomy said one solution to the problem would be to hire an entity to manage the growth of the Northgate parking situation. This person would serve as a liaison between interested parties and make final decisions.

Parking meters raise revenue and stops students from occupying the spaces, Bellomy said.

"Meters are the easiest way to manage parking," Bellomy said. "People have to view parking as a common commodity that everyone needs and shares. There is a perception of a lack of parking at Northgate, but there is only a lack of free parking for convenience retailers."

Safety has also become an issue in Northgate, as thousands of students frequent the bars and businesses in the area every day.

The University contributed

See **Plan** on page 2

## Survey: Alcohol consumption down

By Melissa McKeon  
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M is challenging a national trend of rising drug use with 87 percent of students participating in a recent survey saying they prefer not to have drugs present at parties.

The results were tallied from a survey taken this spring by the Alcohol and Drug Education Program (ADEP) staff in the Department of Student Life. ADEP presents the survey, which is given in schools nationwide, to A&M students every four years.

Use of marijuana was also reported to be five percent lower than the national average of 33.6 percent.

Jennifer Ford, programming coordinator with ADEP, said the number of students who think the social atmosphere at A&M promotes alcohol has fallen 16 percent from 1998 and now rests at 60 percent.

"People are realizing that not every activity revolves or has to revolve around alcohol," Ford said.

The percentage of A&M students who feel drinking is integral to having a social life went down in all major categories: male students, female students, athletes, fraternities and sororities.

The percentage of A&M students who think the campus is involved with the prevention of drug and alcohol use has increased 14 percent to 82 percent from 1994. ADEP modifies its programs based on developments revealed by the survey.

"ADEP works along with Student Activities," Ford said. "We

See **Survey** on page 2



### A&M Drug and Alcohol Use

— Survey of more than 1200 students

Drug use rate at Texas A&M:  
**28.6 %**

National Average Drug Use Rate:  
**33.6 %**

Students who prefer to not have drugs at parties: **87 %**

Students who think A&M's social atmosphere promotes alcohol use:

In 1998	76 %
In 2002	60 %

Source: The Alcohol and Drug Education Program  
RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION

### NORTHGATE REDEVELOPMENT

#### Key parts of the plan:

- Add medians to University Drive to allow parking on both sides of the street
- Increase the number of entertainment venues
- Bring in more live music

A&M contributed \$ 25,000 to the project

Total plan is estimated at: \$ 96,000

RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION