

# THE BATTALION

Volume 109 • Issue 70 • 10 pages

www.thebatt.com

Monday, December 9, 2002

## International students undergo visa scrutiny

### Students denied visas

The federal government cracked down on student visas after Sept. 11

As a result, hundreds of foreign students with specialties in math, physics and petroleum engineering were kept out of the United States this fall

Of the 66 petroleum engineering graduate students registered for Texas A&M this fall, 22 were not able to attend

Source: The Dallas Morning News, A&M's Office of Graduate Studies  
TRAVIS SWENSON • THE BATTALION

By Sarah Walch  
THE BATTALION

International students at Texas A&M, and those denied a visa to study here, are feeling the pressure of the federal government's attempts to regulate who can have access to American institutions of higher education.

The graduate petroleum engineering department at A&M has turned away 11 Iranian students, two Indonesians and at least three Nigerians already admitted to the

program after they encountered visa problems, said Dr. Thomas Blasingame, assistant head of graduate studies in the petroleum engineering department.

"Iran is the only Middle Eastern country whose students have continued to be a part of our program," Blasingame said. "In the past, these students really have turned out to be very well attuned to what is going on with their career. We don't like to lose students of their caliber."

The 11 Iranian students have

since chosen programs in Australia, Canada and Europe.

Two graduate students in Blasingame's department were also delayed from returning for at least four and a half months, although their visas were still valid. One student from Saudi Arabia, recently returned, but another Indonesian student has still been unable to return, Blasingame said.

Blasingame said he has one recommendation for international graduate students consid-

ering returning home before they receive their degree: don't do it.

"Everything is crazy right now," he said. "Students are being rejected outright for visas with little explanation. Muslim males are the target, and it's been pretty rough."

A November e-mail notified University employees that all male citizens aged 16 and older from Afghanistan, Algeria,

See **Visas** on page 8

## Low Hispanic enrollment causes concern

By Melissa McKeon  
THE BATTALION

Texas is not increasing college enrollment among Hispanic students, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board officials said during Friday's Texas A&M System Board of Regents meeting.

Board chairman Erle Nye said universities are not doing their best to increase enrollment. Businesses and communities must get involved by donating and raising money for educational goals, he said.

"If we want to ensure the future of this state," Nye said, "we'll commit first priority to higher education."

Total enrollment at colleges and universities in Texas is on the rise, but Texas will meet only 75 percent of its 2005 target for Hispanic enrollment if the trend continues, Coordinating Board Chair Pamela Willeford said.

"A majority of (Hispanic) citizens understand a college education is necessary but not accessible," Willeford said. "(The Board) will let students and parents know they can participate in higher education through use of resources and public awareness."

Higher Education Commissioner Don Brown said the statistics are troubling. Institutional targets, such as the relationship between high schools and the community as well as performance system targets that require submitting a report on how the Board has done over the past year, are under review.

"We want to look at whether the targets are where they should be for the state and individual institutions," Brown said. "We also have to look at whether we are making progress."

The coordinating board's "Closing the Gaps" plan hopes to add 500,000 more students to the Texas college and university system by 2015. The plan hopes to increase enrollment among Hispanics, who are the highest-increasing population in Texas. Coordinating board officials said their goal is to have 129,000 Hispanics enrolled in colleges and universities in Texas by 2015.

"There was an increase in Hispanic enrollment for Fall 2001," Brown said. "But the growth was too small."

At A&M, minority enrollment of freshmen decreased this year, Willeford said. Texas is not showing any increases degrees awarded, she said. Brown said there has been a strong increase in research grants and expenditures.

"We hope to increase federal research funding to 1.3 billion in 2015," he said.

To reach the board's goals, Willeford said, Texas must invest billions more in higher education. The coordinating board would present funding requirements to the legislature next year, she said.

"We're here to keep ourselves and the A&M system focused on where we are and where we need to be," Willeford said.

In other business, regents approved renovations on Davis-Gary residence hall that would turn the corridor-style hall into apartments suites in 2004. Engineering and architectural firms have not been named.

### Greeting kiddos



RANDAL FORD • THE BATTALION

A Bryan firefighter waves to a crowd on University Drive during the 76th annual Bryan-College Station "Spirit of Christmas in America" parade. The parade attracted

almost 30,000 spectators. The route went east on University Drive and then north on Texas Avenue to the intersection of Villa Maria in Bryan.

## Expert says terrorists use symbolism

By Esther Robards-Forbes  
THE BATTALION

Symbolic targets are important to terrorists such as Osama bin Laden, terrorism expert Yoram Schweitzer said Friday at the Texas A&M Health Science Center.

The African embassies attacked in 1998 were a symbol of the western diplomatic machine, the USS Cole bombing in 2000 was a symbol of the American military machine and the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks in 2001 were a symbol of Islamic militants overcoming the capitalist economic machine, he said.

"You have to understand that for terrorists, success is important to encourage them," Schweitzer said.

Sept. 11 and other terrorist attacks were aimed at harming the American economy, proving to followers and potential followers that superpowers are vulnerable and the terrorist groups are strong, provoking a clash of civilizations, Schweitzer said.

Schweitzer is a renowned member of both the Israeli and international security communities. During his research career of the past 20 years, he has specialized in suicide terror, state-sponsored terror and Islamic fundamentalist terror. He has expert knowledge of the terror groups Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Hizballah as well as al-Qaida and its related cells.

"Terrorism is the major threat within the contemporary situation," Schweitzer said.

He outlined the history of Middle Eastern terrorist attacks in the United States, pointing out that the Sept. 11 attacks were not the first on U.S. soil. A group that has now been linked with bin Laden's al-Qaida group was behind the first bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, Schweitzer said.

Schweitzer said Islamic fundamentalist groups pose the greatest threat among the numerous terrorist organizations that have been identified.

Al-Qaida was first formed during the Afghan

See **Schweitzer** on page 10

## Health officials offer tips to ward off weight gain

By Lecia Baker  
THE BATTALION

As the winter break approaches, Texas A&M health officials are warning students not to forget their workout routines and normal eating habits in the face of Christmas ham and pumpkin pie.

Moderation is the best approach to avoiding the common holiday weight gain, especially when it comes to large holiday dinners, desserts and snacks, said Dr. Danny Ballard, professor of health and kinesiology.

"We can enjoy a small taste of several foods, but do not over-indulge on large portions of any of them," she said.

"It's really important not to turn into a non-activity, eating machine."

Ballard said there are many ways to eat less and feel full. She said students should eat smaller portions more slowly or put the fork down between bites to slow down eating. It is also a good idea to drink water before sitting down for a large meal, Ballard said.

"Make your plate look like it has more food on it by using a smaller plate and this could be mind over matter," she said.

Moderation is also important when drinking alcohol. It doesn't take too many drinks to add several hundred calories to

See **Health** on page 2

### HOLIDAY HEALTH TIPS

- \* Eat smaller portions, and eat slower
- \* Drink water before sitting down to a large meal to feel full sooner
- \* Moderate alcohol intake - two drinks a day for a man, one drink a day for a woman
- \* Continue any exercise routine

RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION

## Students design, construct bus stop covers

By Sarah Darr  
THE BATTALION

Students from the College of Architecture met on campus at 3:30 a.m. Thursday to install the bus stop covers they designed and built without permission from the University, said Tom Rusnak, an assistant professor in the College of Architecture.

The University does not have a policy about bus stop covers on campus, said Gary Jackson, assistant director for transportation. The main reason University-placed shelters are not present at all of the bus stops

on campus is because there is not enough money, he said.

When the student transportation fee was passed in Spring 2001, more shelters were planned. But with more services and buses added, there was not enough money left, Jackson said. The number of hours of bus service has doubled since Fall 2000, and the number of operating buses climbed from 59 to more than 90.

Rusnak said he hopes the University will approve of the bus stop covers and possibly use them as a model for future shelters.

"It would be great if the

University would pick up the covers as a prototype," Rusnak said. "But if we have to tear them down, then at least one cycle of students in the morning will have benefited from them."

Jackson said plans for additional shelters on campus are underway with the vice president of administration (VPA) in charge. Foundation work with connecting sidewalks will need to be done, he said.

By next August, there should be seven bus shelters on campus, Jackson said. The first two will be built at the Commons on Bizzell Street and one across the

street at the golf course parking lot, he said.

The architecture students installed five bus stop covers Thursday; four on Ross street and one in front of the Zachry parking lot, Rusnak said.

The bus stop shelters are intended to protect students from harsh weather, said Nathan Mills, a senior architecture major.

"Without covers it is hot during the day, and there is no protection from the rain," Mills said. "They go against the

See **Covers** on page 10



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Ben Fu waits for the bus at Ross Street Sunday night. Architecture students designed and constructed bus stop covers without permission from the University for a final project.