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Byrne, Franchione contracts to be approved

By Brad Bennett
THE BATTALION

Athletic Director Bill Byrne and Head Football Coach Dennis Franchione will overcome their last hurdle in becoming official members of the Texas A&M family today when the Board of Regents officially approves their contracts.

The regents' contract approval is guaranteed and merely a formality, said Bob Wright, director of communica-

tions for the Texas A&M University System.

Also on the regents' agenda is authorizing the creation of five new learning centers, creating a Hispanic Studies Ph.D. program and renaming the outdoor tennis center.

Dr. Manuel Martin-Rodriguez, director of Hispanic Studies at A&M, said he is confident the regents will authorize the Ph.D. program.

"It is an extremely elaborate process in which the proposal has gone through in order to be

considered by the regents," Rodriguez said.

If approved by the regents, the proposal will need to be approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordination Board before being offered at A&M. The higher education board's process can take several weeks and requires visitation by the board members.

Rodriguez said the program could begin as soon as the Spring 2004 semester but will probably be held off until Fall 2004. Rodriguez said he will be

able to minimize costs for the new program by not hiring new faculty to overcome recent University budgetary constraints.

Budgetary constraints have not led to any cutbacks in the \$585 million allotment for construction which is being reviewed by the regents, Wright said.

"This (reviewing construction) is a standard item at every

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Board of Regents Agenda

1. Approve contracts of new Athletic Director-Byrne and Head Football Coach Franchione
2. Establish five new learning centers
3. Approve Ph.D. in Hispanic Studies
4. Approve construction budget

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
TRAVIS SWENSON • THE BATTALION

Protesting the penalty



RANDAL FORD • THE BATTALION

Rich Woodward and other members of the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty in Brazos Valley, hold up a sign that says STOP EXECUTIONS at the corner of Texas and Walton Wednesday evening. The

Brazos Valley chapter consists of roughly 50 members who protest every time someone is executed in the Brazos Valley. Robert Lookingbill was executed in Huntsville by lethal injection Wednesday.

Bill could abolish Texas death penalty

By Nicole M. Jones
THE BATTALION

In 1989, Robert Lookingbill beat his sleeping grandparents with a 25-pound metal bar, only to steal \$568 from his grandmother's purse to buy cocaine.

His grandmother died 10 days later from head injuries, but his grandfather survived with brain damage. On Wednesday, Lookingbill was executed by lethal injection in Huntsville.

On Jan. 8, state Rep. Harold V. Dutton Jr., D-Houston, proposed a bill to the Texas legislature to abolish the death penalty in Texas. If this bill is passed, it will take effect Sept. 1, 2003. In a Houston Chronicle editorial, Dutton said that by placing a moratorium on executions, the problems could be identified and solved.

His bill is the latest legislative action since Gov. Rick Perry signed a law that made post-DNA testing available to inmates to see if additional evidence can be found to prove their innocence.

Earlier this month, Gov. George Ryan ordered the release of all 167 inmates on death row in the state of Illinois. In a Houston Chronicle article, Ryan said the flawed legal system of Illinois was a major factor in his decision.

Supporters of the abolishment of the death penalty have long been active in Brazos County.

The Brazos Valley unit of the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP) held its customary vigil on the corner of Texas Avenue and Walton Drive in College Station Wednesday night to protest Lookingbill's execution.

The chapter holds vigils at this location every

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Campus master plan to remodel aging buildings

By Sarah Walch
THE BATTALION

Top representatives from two firms that have undertaken the job of A&M campus planning were on hand Wednesday afternoon to field questions from students and faculty.

Austin-based Barnes Gromatzky Kosarek Architects, Inc. and Boston-based Michael Dennis & Associates have been working with an advisory and steering committee on the plan since August 2002.

The planners' four main problems with the current campus design are the railroad, the distance between buildings, the landscaping, and the aesthetics of the

post WWII buildings, Karl Gromatzky said.

One firm representative called the post WWII buildings "utilitarian hulks."

"They have no elaboration of detail," the representative said. "The quality ranges from pretty boring to a waste of space."

The specific buildings presenters said were in need of reconstruction included several West Campus edifices.

The planners qualified their words with praise of the "communal feel" at the campus's center.

"The historical core of campus is beautiful," Gromatzky said.

Michael Dennis said the beauty of the main campus has been an inspiration to planners.

"The administration building, the library, and the Academic building have an excellent communal relationship between buildings, sidewalks, and open space," Dennis said. "Now we want to see that happen on the West Campus."

Dennis said he wants to see the campus center shift from Evans to the Simpson Drill Field within the next 50 years, as a more natural connection between West Campus and Main Campus.

"What made the campus beautiful in its early history was that its buildings framed quadrangles," Dennis said. "We are going to imitate that when we set apart quadrangles of green space on West Campus around which future buildings will be built."

CAMPUS DESIGN FLAWS

- RAILROAD
- DISTANCE BETWEEN WEST AND MAIN CAMPUS
- LACK OF CAMPUS-WIDE LANDSCAPING
- LACK OF ATTRACTIVE BUILDINGS

SOURCE: MICHAEL DENNIS
RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION

See **Plan** on page 2A

Campus bus hits SUV; no injuries

By Melissa Sullivan
THE BATTALION

Bus accidents at A&M have increased due to new or altered routes because of the growing rate of construction on numerous campus roads, said Gary Jackson, Transit Services (formerly Bus Operations) Director.

An A&M bus was involved in an accident Wednesday morning at the intersection of Raymond Stoltzer Dr. (University) and Discovery Drive.

The bus was traveling westbound on Raymond Stoltzer Dr. when it failed to give the right of way to a Ford Escape traveling eastbound and attempting to make a right turn onto Discovery, said Lt. Rodney Sigler, College Station Police Department public information Officer.

"It was a pretty good impact," he said.

With 19 passengers aboard the bus, there were several complaints of injury; however, none were life threatening, Sigler said.

The driver of the Ford had minor injuries and was transported to College Station Medical Center, Sigler said.

Jackson said both drivers were apparently trying to beat the light.

"Our drivers are usually very careful," Jackson said.

Jackson said the damage suffered to the bus was minor, although you can tell it was in an accident.

The bus is easy to fix and will be back on the road by next week, Jackson said.

"It was unfortunate, but it could have been much worse," he said.

Jackson said after every accident involving a bus, the driver receives

an opportunity to go before a board of five of his peers, which includes dispatchers and trainers, with all the details of the accident. The board then decides what disciplinary action should be taken.

"Everyone thinks the students are easy (on each other), but they really are harder than we would be," Jackson said.

Jackson said drivers who have wrecks may be fired or have a severe punishment of transference to a different route.

Transit Services statistics indicate that for every 100,000 miles driven, four to six accidents occur.

"Drivers drive approximately 1.2 million miles a year, so five accidents is actually very good," Jackson said.

Reports also show that the number of accidents increases at the beginning of each semester due to

Fails family disputes death ruling

By Rob Phillips
THE BATTALION

The family of deceased Texas A&M football player Brandon Fails is disputing a ruling by Justice of the Peace Margaret Meece stating that Fails died of natural causes.

According to The Associated Press, the ruling could prevent the family from collecting a \$100,000 practice and player death benefit

available for families of A&M students who die because of a sanctioned athletic activity.

Fails, 18, died Nov. 25, 2002 after collapsing in his Cain Hall dorm room. An autopsy performed by the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office originally reported the cause of death to be a



FAILS

massive blood clot inside of Fails' leg.

According to the Bryan-College Station Eagle, Meece claims that the clot was not more than 10 days old, meaning that it could not have resulted from the injury or surgery. This finding is in opposition to the autopsy results that suggest Fails' death was the result of a clot that developed after an October knee surgery due to a football practice injury.