

THE BATTALION

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Texas A&M University

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Perry backs off student funds

By Rolando Garcia
THE BATTALION

Gov. Rick Perry backed off Monday from a proposal that would have used a portion of the fees paid by Texas college students to help balance the state budget.

Public university officials began scouring their budgets for spending cuts after Perry's Jan. 23 directive to state agencies to slash 7 percent from this year's budget. But on Jan. 29, a policy analyst for Perry informed university officials that the 7 percent cuts applied not only to the state funds schools receive,

but also to the tuition and fees paid by students — a move that dramatically increased the amount universities would have had to cut.

"We were shocked," said Bob Wright, spokesman for Texas A&M System Chancellor Howard Graves. "We've never considered (tuition and fee money) as general revenue. Students pay that money for services, not for the state government to spend."

Perry later decided not to cut from tuition revenue, just from fees. His original decision would have forced the A&M System to cut an additional \$11 million, Wright said. For A&M, which must cut \$16 mil-

lion from its budget this year, that could have resulted in at least \$4 million more in spending reductions.

Perry reversed course Monday and University officials were told that the state would not lay claim to fee money, and the cuts would apply only to a school's state appropriations.

Student tuition and fees will stay at A&M and be used as they were previously, to maintain the University system.

Perry's spokesperson could not be reached for comment Monday.

A&M receives about one-third of its \$800 million budget from state funds.

Early estimates from state budget

officials suggest even deeper cuts are in the works for next year's budget. A&M may have to slash 12 percent from its 2004 fiscal year budget, which begins in September, Wright said.

With only six months remaining in the 2003 fiscal year, finding the 7 percent in cuts mandated by the state will be especially daunting.

"It's almost like a 14 percent cut because we've already spent half the year's budget," Wright said.

A&M President Robert M. Gates has imposed a staff hiring and travel freeze and must submit a complete list of budget cuts to the state by Thursday.

SILVER TAPS

Brandon Charles Falls
General Studies

Gokul Lakshman
Petroleum Engineering

Kishore Shivdas Naik
Aerospace Engineering

Jacqueline Roquemore
Education-Teaching,
Learning & Culture

Rajiv Saha
Chemistry

10:30 p.m.
ACADEMIC PLAZA

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Junior international studies major **Chris Young** protests a war with Iraq Monday afternoon by the statue of Sul Ross in the Academic Plaza. **Young**, along with about 20 others from vari-

ous campus organizations stood in the plaza encouraging support from people who passed by with signs and chants. The events drew more than 150 signatures in protest.

Students protest war with Iraq

By Esther Robards-Forbes
THE BATTALION

Shouts echoed across the Academic Plaza Monday afternoon as students gathered to protest the possible war in Iraq.

"Bush, Exxon, Mobil, Shell! Take your war and go to hell!" was the call taken up by the group of more than 30 students, faculty and staff. The group carried picket signs declaring, "Give peace a chance!" and "Disarm Bush!"

The anti-war protest was the first on Texas A&M's campus in a long time, but it will not be the last, the protesters said.

The protest was organized by residents Karen Glover, Marie Leonard and Christina Morales, who invited community groups such as the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and student groups such as the Aggie Democrats and the Green

Party to participate.

Protesters obtained more than 150 signatures from students who supported the peace movement, according to Jonathan Steed, president of the Aggie Democrats.

"I see nothing to be gained by going to war," said Bob Presley, an oceanography professor who has taught at A&M for 32 years. "We don't want (Iraq) developing weapons, but with the inspectors there, that is unlikely to happen. Killing thousands of civilians is not the way to solve this problem."

The protest was organized mainly to raise awareness on campus about the issues surrounding President George W. Bush's plans for war, Leonard said.

Steed said he is worried the war with Iraq will be motivated by the wrong reasons.

"Bush's administration has been bought and paid for by

See **Protest** on page 2

TX-TF1 deployed to help find debris

By Brad Bennett
THE BATTALION

Twenty-seven members of Texas Task Force 1 (TX-TF1) had to leave their families and jobs with only hours notice after being deployed to Lufkin on Monday to aid in the search for debris from the space shuttle Columbia.

TX-TF1 spokeswoman Marilyn Martell said members of the task force knew they might be called after Nacogdoches County officials confirmed more than 800 reports of debris scattered across the county.

"Odds are if there is a disaster in the state, they will be activated," Martell said.

Task force members work other jobs besides TX-TF1.

Martell said eight members were notified at 10:30 a.m. Monday and will arrive in Lufkin Tuesday afternoon. Four more members were activated at 3:30 p.m. Monday and are expected to arrive in Lufkin Tuesday evening, she said.

The remaining 15 members assisting in the search are K-9 units that have been arriving in East Texas since Sunday.

A spokesman at the Joint Information Command Center in Lufkin said TX-TF1 is the first Federal Emergency Management Agency's

(FEMA) Urban Search And Rescue (USAR) team to be activated, and will assist the 300 National Guard Members already conducting a search that spans 250,000 square miles across Texas and Louisiana.

The 12 non-K-9 members of TX-TF1 are only a small part of the entire task force, which is made up of three 70-member teams of elite emergency responders.

"It is a very selective process to make the team," Martell said.

Martell said only a few members of the team were sent because the debris search is across mostly rural terrain, and TX-TF1 is designed for urban search and rescue missions.

A team of 70 members from TX-TF1 was sent to New York City five days after the Sept. 11 attack.

The 15 units make up the largest group of K-9 units ever used by the task force. Each K-9 unit includes a specially-trained dog and its human handler. Though the human/dog teams are not usually part of TX-TF1, they will be instrumental in finding pieces of the space shuttle.

"This mission is pulling in additional resources under the

See **Force** on page 2

Franchione speech at A&M sold out

By Brad Bennett
THE BATTALION

Head Football Coach Dennis Franchione will address 600 Texas A&M community members and answer questions following his speech at the George Bush Presidential Conference

Center on Thursday, communicating publicly with students for the first time since arriving on campus in December.

Franchione said his speech was unprepared but is likely to include his thoughts about building sports programs and improving leadership.

Signing day falls on Feb. 5

Dennis Franchione Speech

- Thursday, Feb. 6

- 6 p.m.

- George Bush
Presidential Conference Center- 12 tickets remain at WTAW
radio station

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this year, the day before Franchione's speech. On signing days, high school athletes make official commitments to the college program of their choice.

Franchione said because signing day falls so close to his speech, he may also discuss new recruits coming to A&M in Fall 2003.

The 400 student tickets held at the MSC Box Office for the speech are no longer available. The Bryan-College Station Eagle ran out of its 100 tickets Friday afternoon.

The remaining 100 available were given away by WTAW. By Monday afternoon, 12 tickets remained at the radio station.

The Bush Foundation will host the event.

Rod Thornton, deputy director of the Bush Foundation, said Franchione's speech was given a

bigger venue to accommodate Franchione's popularity. Franchione's speech will be open to a crowd of 600, while most of the Foundation's speeches are designed for only 150.

"It is not anticipated that the event will be moved to Rudder (Theater) unless several thousand people come to us within the next few days," Thornton said.

Thornton said the Foundation would prefer to maintain a more intimate setting for the speech. The smaller setting will also be important during the question and answer session following Franchione's speech.

Future discussion topics include range from horticulture to the potential war with Iraq, and all speeches will include a question and answer session, Thornton said.

B-CS tops Texas' low unemployment rate

By Melissa McKeon
THE BATTALION

Bryan-College Station once again has the lowest unemployment rate of any metropolitan area in Texas, according to a survey conducted by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

Clayton Griffis, labor market analyst for TWC, said Bryan-College Station typically has the lowest unemployment rate out of the 27 metro areas studied, which include Waco, San Antonio and Austin-San Marcos. The current unemployment figure of 1.7 percent for December 2002 is up from 1.4 percent a

year ago.

Those figures pertain to the people who actually live and work within the metro area, Griffis said.

"The economy (in Bryan-College Station) is generally stable and cyclical because of having such a large university there," Griffis said.

The survey indicates that Bryan-College Station experienced a gain of 200 jobs in state employment.

"That sheds light on the impact Texas A&M has on such a small metro area," Griffis said. "Thirty percent of the non-agricultural jobs in Bryan-College Station are state government jobs, and that is mostly because of the University."

The second highest employment sector in the community is concentrated in service areas, such as car repairs and dry cleaners, he said.

Lane Stephenson, deputy director of University Relations Texas A&M, agrees that the University is a strong part of this area's economy.

"A&M has long been a driving force in the economy of Bryan-College Station and the Brazos Valley," Stephenson said. "For the 2001 fiscal year, the A&M system based in Bryan-College Station had an economic impact of 2 billion dollars."

See **Rate** on page 2