

THE BATTALION

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Housing boom continues

By Lecia Baker
THE BATTALION

The economic slowdown has not stopped the expansion of upscale student housing - with new apartment complexes and private dorms competing to offer well-heeled Aggies luxurious amenities.

Two new apartment complexes and a private dorm are slated to open next fall, hoping to lure students with posh extras such as larger, fully furnished bedrooms, state-of-the-art hot tubs and screened-in patios overlooking swimming pools.

With more plush housing options, fewer incoming freshmen are opting

for the no-frills arrangements of on-campus residence halls, said Ron Sasse, director of the department of Residence Life. In past years, there was not enough room to accommodate all the students who applied for on-campus housing.

"We have been able to keep the dorms full, but we certainly do not have an over supply," Sasse said.

Students' needs have fueled an apartment construction boom in recent years which has sharply increased competition among off-campus housing complexes, said Toni Bruner, manager of Campus Lodge, one of the new luxury apartment complexes.

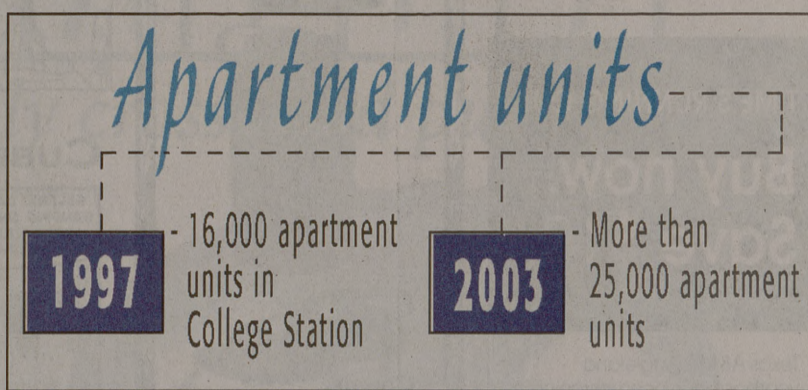
"In 1997, there were 16,000 apartment units in College Station, and now

there are over 25,000," she said.

Market research has shown there is a large market for upscale student housing in College Station, with freshmen, who typically live on-campus, willing to pay more for quiet atmospheres, larger living quarters and private bathrooms Bruner said.

In the competition for affluent students, new properties must offer an array of perks and amenities, Bruner said.

Like The Tradition and The Calloway House, The Cambridge, opening in the fall, is geared toward freshmen seeking a residence hall atmosphere with apartment-style amenities. For example, in addition to a full kitchen in each unit, it also features a dining hall, said Joe Goodwin, leasing



TRAVIS SWENSON • THE BATTALION
SOURCE: CAMPUS LODGE

director of The Cambridge.

Laura Kinion, property manager of Aggie Station, a new luxury apartment complex, said that in the fact they are brand new makes them more appealing to students and their parents.

Students who currently live on or off campus said despite the economic

slowdown, they are still willing to pay for luxury living arrangements.

Michelle Katz, a sophomore general studies major, said she signed a lease with Campus Lodge for next fall because she was willing to pay more for larger living quarters and other amenities.

Stringing along



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Playing in Texas A&M's only male and female mariachi, violinist Virginia Hodnnett, a senior agriculture development major, performs on the steps of the University Center

Gallery by Rudder Fountain Tuesday afternoon. The group is sponsored by Women in Time.

Security experts: Awareness helps prevent terrorism

By Molly Cain
THE BATTALION

Heightened awareness is key to preventing acts of terrorism on college campuses security experts said Tuesday as part of an audio conference addressing the terrorist threat on American universities.

The conference, titled "Terror Target: College Campuses," also discussed issues such as threat assessments, student and faculty safety and crisis prevention, to more than 2,000 listeners, including 40 from Texas A&M.

Asa Boynton, vice president of the Office of Security Preparedness at the University of Georgia, said colleges need to prepare themselves for what they cannot anticipate.

"Many institutions fail to prepare an emergency plan," he said. "We need to do better at preparing and updating those plans on a daily basis to make sure they work."

Boynton said that a college campus contains many of the resources that a terrorist wants and terrorism is a great way to come into a campus and interrupt daily activities. Because of this, Boynton said that if administrators prepared for events like these, they could minimize damages.

Richard Maurer, managing director of the Security Services Group for Kroll, Inc., said that the company is currently a worldwide leader in providing threat assessment and risk management services to many universities, corporations and agencies.

Maurer said the level of risk is the first thing his company looks for when preparing a security assessment for an organization.

See **Terrorism** on page 2

Hispanic group protests Vanity Fair stereotype

By Lauren Smith
THE BATTALION

In the February issue of Vanity Fair magazine, columnist Edna Everage answered a letter from a reader about what she thought of the Spanish language and its use in the real world.

Everage responded with "Who speaks Spanish that you are really desperate to talk to? The help? Your leaf blower?"

Her response criticized the Mexican culture and spurred Texas A&M's Committee for the Awareness of Mexican-American Culture to host a two-day program Monday and Tuesday in response to the writer's claims.

CAMAC concluded its efforts Tuesday night by hosting a panel made up of professors and journalists that addressed the negative images of Latinos in the media, how these stereotypes are created and how to deal with them.

After CAMAC sent a letter to the magazine expressing their offense, the magazine responded with an e-mail apologizing for any "distress the article caused the Latin American community and there was no intention to mock any stereotypes."

Dr. Manuel Martin-Rodriguez, associate professor in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and

author of works on Chicano literature and Hispanic culture, said the media must not use the "get out of jail free" card, meaning the media uses the same excuse every time a problem arises.

"We must confront and analyze all things that the media puts out there as so-called innocent and fun," Martin-Rodriguez said. "If we do not, then who will?"

Martin-Rodriguez expressed his concern that more than 30 percent of the Latino population is under 18 so it can be easily influenced by such media pieces in what he calls "Vanity Fairytale".

Dr. Edward Murguia, associate professor in the A&M Department of Sociology, said joining a group is important because it is the way in which power is gained.

Nora E. Lopez, criminal justice editor at the San Antonio Express News and Region 5 representative for the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, said "diversity is the key because everything is achieved through having people on staff who understand different cultures and being aware of your actions and words."

CAMAC's mission is to teach people about the heritage

See **Protest** on page 2

Officials consider remodeling Commons dining

By Esther Robards-Forbes
THE BATTALION

Student complaints about the Commons dining area have prompted University officials to solicit student input to determine how the dining area should be renovated.

About 20 students attended a forum Tuesday sponsored by the department of Food Services to discuss remodeling the aging dining hall.

The Commons Dining Center has faced design problems since its inception because of its basement location, said Ron Beard, director of Food Services. It was remodeled 13 years ago, but in a survey taken last year many students expressed that the Commons was "dated" and "too dark."

Steps were taken earlier this year to alleviate some of the problems, Beard said. The dining hall was relighted, dark wall paper was removed and the back wall was decorated with photos supplied by Student Activities, Beard said.

A student advisory committee was formed by Food Services to address concerns about the Commons.

"The students saw what was done with Sbsa and they want the same type of thing on Southside," Beard said.

Ideas suggested by students include a meeting room similar to the one on the east side of Sbsa and a late night coffee house area similar to Bernie's Cafe ExpressO that would include study areas. Students also suggested that the serving area remain buffet style, and they want

other dining options like a food court area.

Some of the students who work at the Commons Dining Center said they feel remodeling would lure more students to eat there.

"I think it needs to be more like Sbsa," said Kelly Eubanks, a sophomore psychology major. "I don't like the atmosphere at the Commons. It's too closed in."

But some students who frequent the Commons said they do not think renovations are necessary.

"It's not falling apart or anything. It's not bad and it doesn't bother me," said Judson Houston, a freshman mechanical engineering major.

Funds would be set aside by Food Services if enough interest is expressed in the remodeling project, Beard said.

Students challenge Battalion performance

By Janet McLaren
THE BATTALION

Student leaders criticized The Battalion during a panel discussion with Battalion editors on Wednesday, saying that A&M's student newspaper is insensitive to racial issues and is prone to factual errors.

"(Battalion staffers) must understand the duty and responsibility you have to give a good and quality product. Quality in our eyes, not just yours," said Lyndon Pryor, representative of the Department of Multicultural Services.

Battalion Editor in Chief Brandie Liffick said the newspaper welcomed constructive criticism and encouraged students to share their concerns about stories with editors.

Barry Hammond, president of the Memorial Student Center Council, said lack of accountability was a problem for The Battalion, and suggested the University remove all support from the newspaper to make room for another publication.

"They have a monopoly on campus," said Hammond, a senior finance major.

Battalion Managing Editor Sommer Bunce said the staff of



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The Battalion always addresses mistakes in the paper.

"We try our best to make sure we are accountable," said Bunce, a junior journalism major.

Panelists said the Student Media Board, which oversees The Battalion and is comprised of faculty, students and staff, should do more to hold the Battalion staff accountable for

the content and accuracy of the paper.

The moderator of the discussion, Dr. Larry Oliver, associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts, said the forum demonstrated a need for communication between the Battalion staff and student leaders.

Resident Hall Association

See **Battalion** on page 2

From left to right: John Casares, Resident Hall Association president, Barry Hammond, MSC president, Zac Coventry, student body president and Burke Wilson, Corps of Cadets public relations officer.