

Singing for the moment

Alpha Idol competition recreates 'American Idol' on campus

By Nishat Fatima
THE BATTALION

Tuition
Continued from page 1
block since February student efforts to save it.
"Where the cuts will hurt A&M is in programs the Dairy Science Center," Parker said. "We'll see Dairy Science bleed the floor when this is over."
Coventry said he was "just get back to where we were before" all the cuts took place.

"We would have to pay \$23 more per semester. Obviously we're not going to be able to do that," he said.
One proposed compromise between budget cuts and tuition is differential tuition, which would set different rates for classes based on the department, and a flat rate which would set a maximum for students regardless of the number of classes they choose to take.

"The hybrid of deregulation is differential tuition," he said. "Personally, I'm in favor."
A&M System Chairman Howard Graves is tentatively supporting a deregulation sponsored by State Sen. Florence Shapiro, which would allow schools to raise tuition up to three times the amount currently charged at all state institutions.

Students realize that tuition will rise eventually, but would rather a government institution implement it.
"I'm against deregulation because eventually, tuition is going to go up anyway," Lindsay Shanklin, a junior marketing major and student government representative, said. "I'm having the government set the rate instead of deregulation."

Regents

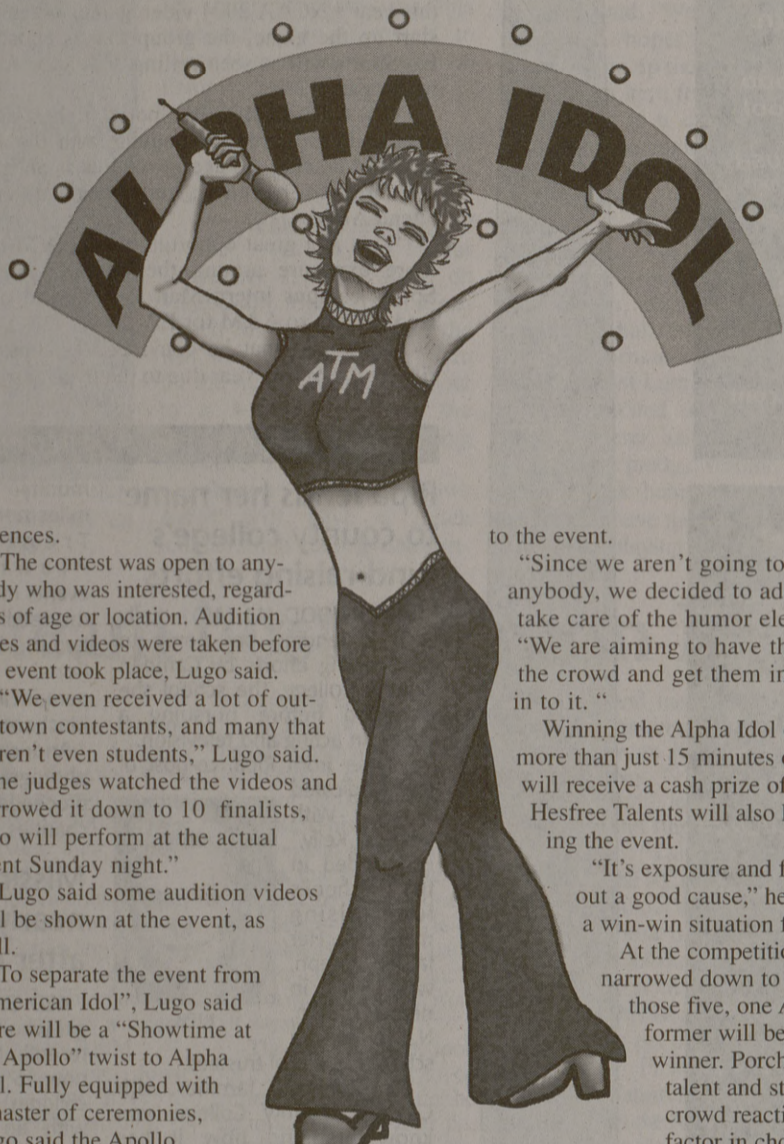
Continued from page 1
Regents, the highest governing body at A&M. Only one vote showed up to do so.
Jessica Daniel, a sophomore psychology major, cited her concerns on computers and unnecessary signs in classrooms as examples of how the University spends money more effectively before raising fees.
"Fees may have to increase, but maybe if more was spent more efficiently, it wouldn't be (as many) budget problems," Daniel said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Madeleine Albright to speak on campus
Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former ambassador to Israel and Edward P. Djerejian will discuss stability in the Middle East at 8 p.m. in Rudder Auditorium as part of the Lecture Series.
Albright served as the 64th U.S. Secretary of State and is the first woman to hold the position. She is also the highest-ranking woman in the history of the United States.
Djerejian is an expert on political, economic, security and religious issues in the Middle East. Tickets are available at the Student Center Box Office, ranging from \$7 for students and \$10 for non-students. For more information, call 845-1234.

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RADHIKA THIRUNARAYANAN • THE BATTALION

Take thousands of superstar wannabes, a scathing judge and a few million dollars worth of high-profile sponsors, and you have a hit television series. If you take several talented locals, the not-so corporate sponsorship of Century Scholars and Alpha Phi Alpha, and mix it with some heart, you have Alpha Idol. Unlike its mainstream predecessor, Alpha Idol's main purpose is not to find the stars of today. Rather, with the help of some creative participants, it is a fund-raising event to help the Aggies of tomorrow.
Luis Lugo, one of Alpha Idol's founders, is a member of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. Lugo, also a Century Scholar, said the idea for the event came after he was approached by the Century Scholars to assist in a fund-raiser.
"One of my brothers in my fraternity suggested that we incorporate the 'American Idol' theme into the fund-raiser to make it more interesting and appealing," said Lugo, a sophomore chemical engineering major. "Everybody in Alpha Phi Alpha liked the idea, so we took the idea back to the Century Scholars office and decided to call it Alpha Idol."
Shasta Porchia, recruitment and retention co-coordinator at the Office of Honors Programs and Academic Scholarships, said the event came to form after Century Scholars decided to raise funds for future Aggie Century Scholars.
"Since we are always encouraging the Century Scholars to get involved in community service events like this, we immediately said 'yes,'" she said.
Porchia said Century Scholars wanted to have a fund-raiser to help Century Scholars who are seniors in high school and have already been accepted to Texas A&M, but do not have the money to attend new student con-

ferences.
The contest was open to anybody who was interested, regardless of age or location. Audition tapes and videos were taken before the event took place, Lugo said.
"We even received a lot of out-of-town contestants, and many that weren't even students," Lugo said. "The judges watched the videos and narrowed it down to 10 finalists, who will perform at the actual event Sunday night."
Lugo said some audition videos will be shown at the event, as well.
To separate the event from "American Idol", Lugo said there will be a "Showtime at the Apollo" twist to Alpha Idol. Fully equipped with a master of ceremonies, Lugo said the Apollo theme will bring humor

to the event.
"Since we aren't going to hurt or offend anybody, we decided to add a comedic MC to take care of the humor element," Lugo said. "We are aiming to have the MC interact with the crowd and get them involved and really in to it."
Winning the Alpha Idol contest could mean more than just 15 minutes of fame. The winner will receive a cash prize of \$500, Lugo said. Hefree Talents will also have scouts attending the event.
"It's exposure and fun while helping out a good cause," he said. "It's basically a win-win situation for the contestants."
At the competition, the 10 will be narrowed down to five, and from those five, one Alpha Idol performer will be selected as the winner. Porchia said aside from talent and stage presence, crowd reaction will be a major factor in choosing the winning performer.

"The audience is going to be a big indicator for us," said Porchia, who is one of the event's four judges. "Even in 'American Idol', it ultimately comes down to what the audience wants. I think that the judges get a lot of cues from the audience."
Porchia said Alpha Idol will have the same basic elements as Fox's hit TV series, except for a judge everybody loves to hate, such as Simon Cowell from "American Idol."
"I'm a fan of 'American Idol' myself, and I think that it's the bluntness that makes it so appealing," she said. "But, since Alpha Idol is for a good cause, we have no intention of being rude or even bluntly honest. Even when we were watching the taped auditions, we didn't feel like we were in the position of criticizing anybody's musical talents. We hope that the event will be a fun and different type of community service fund-raiser."
Christopher Brient, a member of Alpha Phi Alpha, was also a judge for the initial auditions and said he thoroughly enjoyed the judging process.
"We all took notes based on the performances," said Brient, a senior agricultural journalism major. "I enjoyed giving the contestants some constructive criticism. Right now, I am looking forward to the battles between the finalists."
Organizers hope to make Alpha Idol an annual event, Brient said.
Lela Flores, a freshman general studies major, said she has been an avid follower of "American Idol" since its debut on the small screen last year and plans to attend Sunday's competition.
"I think it was a great idea to take 'American Idol' and incorporate it into a good cause," she said. "It's also a change from all of the regular bake sale and car wash type of fund-raisers."
Alpha Idol will premiere on Sunday, March 30, inside Rudder Auditorium at 6:30 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at the door for \$7.

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