

THE BATTALION

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Texas A&M University

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A&M to pursue engineering branch in Qatar

Staff &Wire
THE BATTALION

DALLAS — Howdy, Doha. Qataris soon might get the chance to become Aggies if Texas A&M gets state approval this week to open a branch campus in the Middle Eastern country.

A&M wants to join an unusual venture known as Education City in Doha, the capital of Qatar. The oil-rich nation has been home to the U.S. military's Central Command during the war with Iraq. Qatar's rulers recruited A&M to provide the engineering school for Education City, a high-profile project in a Muslim country that some say is determined to become more democratic and modern.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board members will vote Thursday on A&M's proposal, which won't cost the state or the University a cent. The private, nonprofit Qatar Foundation will foot the bill with a 10-year, multimillion-dollar contract that covers faculty pay, housing and a management fee for the university. The final amount is being negotiated.

State officials say the proposal probably will pass, but predict some interesting discussion about the concept of plunking down a branch of A&M — home to the Bush Presidential Library — in the Middle East.

Other American universities have set up campuses overseas, particularly in Japan because that nation sought American colleges in the 1980s.

A&M ran a two-year program in Japan from 1989-1995. It shut down the

program when the Japanese economy crashed and the mayor who supported the idea lost re-election. The Japanese city paid for the branch.

The Qatar program is rare, partly because of its location and because the universities are offering full degree programs.

"The real difference is where it is," said Marshall Hill, an assistant commissioner of universities at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. "The world has not paid much attention to Qatar until recently. We see daily briefings from Armed Forces delivered from Qatar."

"The idea that a Texas public university would establish a branch campus in such a place grabs your attention."

State officials are concerned about the timing because the hostilities in Iraq



SOURCE: KRT CAMPUS

Education City, Qatar

• A&M would provide the engineering school for Education City

• The nonprofit Qatar Foundation will foot the bill for the 10-year contract

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are not over, said Don Brown, the Texas Higher Education Commissioner.

"Everybody expects that one of the challenges will be to get the necessary

faculty there," Brown said.

But A&M officials have done a lot to

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Deregulation faces scrutiny

By Rolando Garcia
THE BATTALION

Tuition deregulation suffered a serious setback last week in the State Senate, but the issue is still alive in the Texas House as legislators debate how to grapple with budget cuts in higher education.

State Sen. Florence Shapiro, R-Plano and chair of the Senate's education committee, introduced a bill that would have allowed universities to raise tuition by up to three times what is currently charged without legislative approval. The bill was supported by leaders of the state's public universities, including Texas A&M System Chancellor Howard Graves.

However, the proposal found little support in the Senate and in the version approved by the committee, senators gutted the deregulation measure in the bill, opting instead for a modest tuition increase.

"The Senate is not ready to

give universities carte blanche to let them charge whatever they want," said Jennifer Rice, spokeswoman for Shapiro.

The revised Senate Bill 1542 would allow state universities to increase tuition by up to \$12 per credit hour, effective next January. Coupled with a previously approved \$4 hike, students taking 15 hours a semester could see their tuition bills go up by \$480 a year.

The committee will conduct a study on tuition deregulation and will revisit the issue in two years during the next legislative session, Rice said.

The House higher education committee is still considering deregulation. A bill introduced by the panel's chair, Rep. Geanie Morrison, R-Victoria, would allow universities to set their own tuition as long as they invest more in scholarships and grants. The goal is for families not to spend more than 5 percent of their gross income on college tuition increase.

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Senate Bill 1542
- Raises tuition \$12 per credit hour
- Students would pay \$480 more each year
- 15-20% of tuition hike set aside for financial aid

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SOURCE: OFFICE OF STATE SEN FLORENCE SHAPIRO

Shiite pilgrims worship at Iraq's holy shrines

By Bassem Mroue
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KARBALA, Iraq — Swaying and chanting, some bleeding from self-inflicted wounds of ritual mourning, an estimated 1 million Shiite Muslims marched to this city's holy shrine Tuesday, celebrating their freedom from years of repression by Saddam Hussein's regime.

The large turnout for the pilgrimage, which ends Thursday, highlighted the power and potential of Iraq's majority Shiite community. Despite bitter internal differences the Shiites, who represent 60 percent of Iraq's 24 million people, were able to pull off the event on short notice and thus far without violence.

It showed how once again, upheaval in a Middle East country has brought followers of the Shiite branch of Islam to the

forefront. It happened in 1979 when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini founded a Shiite theocracy in neighboring Iran, and three years later when Israel invaded Lebanon, drove out Yasser Arafat and ended up facing the Shiite fighters of Hezbollah.

Pilgrims, many with heads bleeding and limping from long journeys in 90-degree heat, pressed up against each other on roads. U.S. troops were largely out of sight, with a few members of the U.S.-backed Iraqi National Congress at checkpoints.

The collapse of Saddam's rule left a political vacuum. "So we moved in a specialized and organized way to face this problem," said a Shiite official, Sheik Sadeq Jaafar al-Tarfi.

"All the religious leaders, Sistani and Sadr, united to make it successful and had it not been for this unity it would have failed," he said, referring to

Karbala pilgrimage

Hundreds of thousands of Shiite pilgrims marched to this city's holy shrine Tuesday to mark the death of one of their most revered saints. They chanted, swayed and even cut their bodies in an emotional ritual that had been banned for decades under Saddam Hussein.



SOURCE: Associated Press

Grand Ayatollah Ali Hussein al-Sistani, Iraq's top Shiite cleric, and Muqtada al-Sadr, the son of al-Sistani's slain predecessor.

He said the Hawza al-Ilmiya, a center of Shiite learning headed by Sistani in the holy city of

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To mom with love



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George Balias, a senior environmental design major, drills screw holes in the side of a frame for a king size poster bed in the

Architecture Woodshop on Tuesday. Balias hopes to finish in time to give the bed to his mother for Mother's Day.

Editors nominated for 2003-2004

By Lauren Smith
THE BATTALION

Summer and fall Battalion editors in chief and the 2003 AggieLand editor have been nominated by the Student Media Board. Sommer Bunce (fall) and True Brown (summer) were tapped as The Battalion's new editors and Heath Taylor Crawford as the AggieLand editor for 2003.

Applicants for editor are considered by members of the Student Media Board, who vote and collectively nominate a candidate for each position. Before officially being offered the position, the board's nominees must be approved by the executive vice president and provost.

The application process for candidates include essays describing their qualifications and their intentions if presented with the offer to hold the position, a requirement of previous experience, samples of their work and an interview with the Student Media Board.

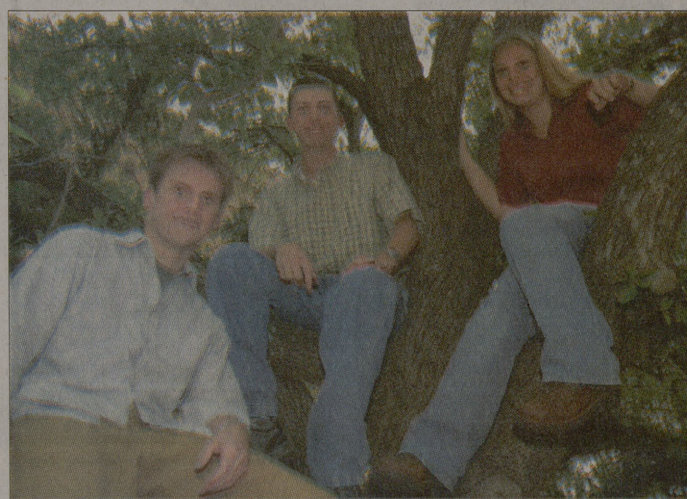
Bunce's days of working at The Battalion began even before she attended freshman orientation as she covered a secret off-campus Bonfire planning meeting equipped with a hidden recording device.

That assignment was the first of many in her three year career at The Battalion, in which she was assistant news editor, news

editor and is currently serving as managing editor.

"My plans for next year are very big. I want to make this paper as accountable to this community as possible," said Bunce, a junior journalism major from Aransas Pass, Texas.

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From left: Heath Taylor Crawford, True Brown and Sommer Bunce.