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A&M courts Hispanic students

By Natalie Younts
THE BATTALION

The percentage of Hispanic students admitted in the fall increased by 11 percent, Texas A&M officials said, but of those admitted, only 650 students have confirmed they will be attending.

While this is an increase of 7 percent from last year, administrators are still concerned.

"It's not so much a matter of the number of kids who apply," said A&M President Robert M. Gates. "The disturbing thing is the number of students that we admit who choose not to come here. We want those kids who meet our stan-

dards and who share our culture to want to come to A&M."

Dr. Frank Ashley, director of admissions, said 2,079 Hispanics completed applications for fall admission, an increase of 8 percent from last year, and 1,341 of those were admitted.

According to a report by the Office of Institutional Studies and Planning, 34,038 undergraduate students enrolled at A&M during spring 2003. Of those, 82.4 percent were white, 9 percent were Hispanic, 3.2 percent were Asian, 2.4 percent were black and 0.5 percent were American Indian.

The biggest asset for Hispanics is the family atmosphere, said Higor Gil, a senior computer science major and co-vice

president of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers.

"We always go back to our family and bring that sense of family to wherever we go. I feel we try to bring that to A&M," he said.

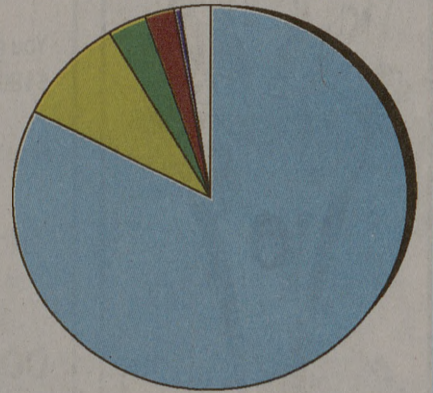
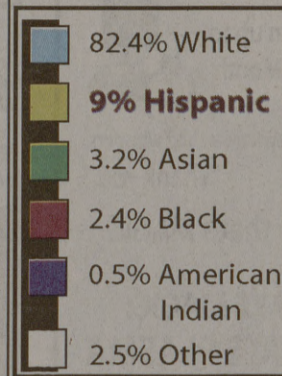
In addition to a sense of family, Gil said Hispanics bring liveliness, energy and an understanding of a different viewpoint to A&M.

Atanacio Hinojosa, a senior management major and student coordinator for the Hispanic Scholarship Fund, said Hispanics offer something unique to the University.

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Increased Hispanics at A&M

34,038 undergraduates enrolled in Spring 2003



RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION

SOURCE: OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL STUDIES & PLANNING

Asbestos found in MSC Annex

By Megan Orton
THE BATTALION

Renovation projects on the regent wing of the Memorial Student Center Annex, which began as a ceiling sprinkler system installation, have led to an asbestos abatement, said University Center Manager Dennis Bush.

The repairs began in response to a mandate by the state fire marshal, who ordered that sprinkler systems be installed in overnight residences according to state law, Bush said.

When the repairs began, a significant amount of asbestos-containing material was found in the ceiling being used as a fire retardant and sprayed on the metal structuring of the rooms in the regent wing. Small amounts were also found on light fixtures and in other remote places.

Asbestos refers to several type of fibrous minerals divided into two categories, amphibole and serpentine. It is hazardous because once in the human body, it can remain there indefinitely in the lung tissue and eventually cause cancer.

"The amount of asbestos found was below the amount that requires you to close down," said

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SHARON AESCHBACH • THE BATTALION

Ladders lean against the Memorial Student Center as crews replace asbestos-filled areas of the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents wing.

Modeling the past



BRIAN RUFF • THE BATTALION

Nautical archeology program research assistant Glenn Grieco attaches a cannon to a replica of the U.S. Brig Jefferson, a ship that patrolled the waters of the Great Lakes during the War of 1812. The

model is precise down to the number of nails and timbers used on the original ship. The model will take almost 18 months to complete, and will be housed in the Anthropology Building.

Crackdown continues in Iraqi capital

By Jim Krane & Donna Abu-Nasr

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq — U.S. authorities announced creation of a new criminal court Tuesday and a panel to purge judges loyal to Saddam Hussein. The U.S. military said a sweep of loyalist strongholds resulted in 400 arrests, and an American soldier was killed in Baghdad.

The reforms announced by L. Paul Bremer, the top U.S. official in Iraq, are designed to upgrade a judicial system that catered to Saddam's desires rather than the rule of law.

The two new authorities — the Judicial Review Committee and the Central Criminal Court — are important steps in giving the Iraqi people a justice system they can trust and respect, Bremer said.

"The review committee's task is to clean up Iraq's judiciary," he said. "If the committee finds any judge or prosecutor who violates these standards, the committee will dismiss him or her from office."

The committee will consist of three Iraqis and three members of the occupying coalition and will finish its initial work in three to four months, Bremer said.

The criminal court will help the judiciary crack down on criminals undermining Iraq's security and reconstruction. They "will be brought to justice without delay," Bremer said.

Some judges and lawyers scoffed at what they called U.S. interference in their courts.

"The Americans are an occupation force and we are the source of one of the oldest codes of law — Hammurabi's Code," judge Qassem Ayyash said. "It's like teaching a driver how to drive."

Iraq's judiciary has not recovered from the war. Most courts have been looted or destroyed and

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Consumer prices hold steady

By Jeannine Aversa
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Consumer prices held steady and big industry boosted production for the first time since February, a double dose of good news for the wobbly economy.

The flat reading in the Labor Department's Consumer Price Index for May, which came after a 0.3 percent decline in April, eased worries that the country could be headed for deflation, an economically dangerous long-term slide in prices, economists said.

The CPI report "should help alleviate some of the nagging fears of deflation," said Mark Vitner, an economist at Wachovia.

Production at the nation's factories, mines and utilities

nudged up by 0.1 percent last month after dropping by a sharp 0.6 percent in both March and April, the Federal Reserve said in a report that economists viewed as a sign the nation's battered industrial sector could be turning a corner.

Also, the Commerce Department reported that housing construction bounced back in May despite rainy weather in some parts of the country, escalating 6.1 percent to an annual rate of 1.73 million. That performance came after a 6.3 percent decline in April.

The latest batch of economic reports Tuesday raised hopes that the lumbering economy would pick up its pace in the second half of this year.

At the White House, presidential spokesman Ari

Fleischer said the CPI report suggested that deflation is "not a serious worry" and that President Bush "is hopeful the signs of economic growth will continue to gather steam."

Still, many economists believe the Federal Reserve will cut short-term interest rates, now at a 41-year low of 1.25 percent, by at least a quarter of a percentage point at its meeting next Tuesday and Wednesday. The thinking is that the Fed wants to energize the economy and help ward off even the threat of deflation.

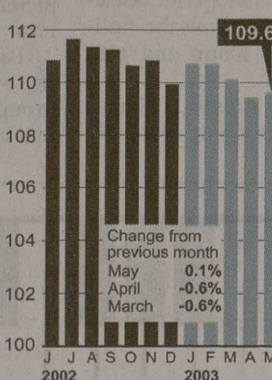
Although Fed policymakers say the chance of deflation is remote, the central bank still must be alert because of deflation's potential to wreck the economy, economists said.

The United States' last

Factory output

Here is a look at the industrial production index.

Seasonally adjusted 1997 = 100



SOURCE: Federal Reserve Board AP

serious deflation occurred during the Great Depression.

A bad case of deflation can lead not only to widespread price declines — from goods and services to real-estate and stocks — but also to job losses and pay cuts. On Wall Street, stocks posted small gains.

Abbas seeks end of militancy, attacks continue despite plea

By Ibrahim Barzak
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas failed on Tuesday to persuade militant groups to end attacks on Israelis. Just after their meeting, Palestinian gunmen opened fire on a car and killed an Israeli child.

A 7-year-old girl was killed and a 5-year-old girl was seriously wounded in the shooting on a highway just inside Israel, close to the West Bank town of Qalqiliya. Army radio said the gunfire came from the West Bank. There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Israeli government official Zalman Shoval said the shooting showed that alongside peace efforts, "our own battle with the terrorists will have to continue."

Violent Palestinian groups have

so far refused to halt attacks, despite tremendous Palestinian, Egyptian, and international pressure backed up by the prospect of a serious Israeli campaign to wipe the militants out. A deal would apparently require Israel to commit to ending killings of militant leaders.

Such an agreement could reportedly include the release of uprising leader Marwan Barghouti — a Fatah leader perhaps second only to Arafat in popularity among the Palestinians. But some Israeli officials dismissed that as a possibility.

Abbas' three-hour meeting with leaders of militant groups produced no truce accord, but there was agreement to continue the talks. Ismail Abu Shanab of Hamas said Hamas leaders "are still discussing this subject within the movement and have not yet made

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