

# THE BATTALION

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## Grad students seek remedy for insurance hike

By True Brown  
THE BATTALION

A group of graduate students is calling for an emergency meeting of the Graduate Student Council after the state Legislature reduced the amount of money the state will contribute to its part-time employees' health insurance coverage.

The Texas A&M System released health insurance prices for the 2004 fiscal year last Friday, and the new prices

show increases for part-time workers employed in the System.

Part-time employees with families could be subject to as much as a \$379.48 increase in their monthly health insurance bills, and every graduate assistant with health coverage will be subject to at least a \$145.60 monthly increase.

Full-time employees are also subject to increases, but not as significant as their part-time and graduate assistant co-workers.

Josh Peschel, GSC president, said Tuesday that he will meet with the GSC's executive council today, and the group will decide whether to hold an emergency meeting.

Even if a meeting is called, Peschel said he is not sure if they will have enough members for a quorum.

Peschel said he has already submitted the GSC's position to A&M President Robert M. Gates, Executive Vice President and Provost David Prior and John Giardino, A&M's dean of

graduate studies.

"(The GSC's) recommendation was for the University to fully cover the health insurance premium's increase for all graduate students who want it or need to have the insurance," Peschel said. "I feel like this is a realistic solution."

Peschel said another option would be for the University to try to offset some of the costs by giving graduate assistants a pay raise, but that would not help those with families who face

larger increases in costs.

Whatever happens, Peschel said he was confident that A&M would do something to help graduate students.

"I really believe the University wants to keep its graduate students," he said.

Andreas Mershin, a graduate student in the physics department, helped organize an impromptu meeting Monday afternoon for graduate

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### Enter the dragon



SHARON AESCHBACH • THE BATTALION

Petstop employee Jen Stinson clips a bearded dragon's toenails Tuesday night at the College Station pet shop. Bearded dragons get their name from a characteristic

expandable throat pouch with spikey scales. Their large stomachs can accommodate insects, plants and even small rodents.

## Race ruling will be felt beyond college campuses

By Ann Gearan  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court's endorsement of affirmative action this week brought sighs of relief from institutions as different as West Point, Yale and General Motors.

Current or former leaders at all three had urged the high court to consider how race and racial preferences work in the real world.

The 5-4 ruling acknowledges that, "in a society like our own ... race unfortunately still matters," as Justice Sandra Day O'Connor put it.

The court's most significant civil rights statement in years will affect walks of life beyond the college campuses that Monday's rulings directly addressed, lawyers said Tuesday.

"This decision is not confined merely to the halls of academia but rather is intended to show the court's support for the breadth of affirmative action in the workplace, in the corporate boardroom, the military academies and throughout other institutions in American life," said Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.

At the same time, the court did not signal a new willingness to support broadly preferential treatment for racial minorities. Its limited, cautious rationale is unlikely to undermine previous rulings that rejected race-based preferences in college scholarships, construction contracts and other arenas, lawyers said.

"It only directly reaches situations where the state is acting as an employer or operator of a university," said Andrew Koppelman, a constitutional law professor at Northwestern University and author of "Antidiscrimination Law and Social Equality." "But people can give the words of the Supreme Court whatever persuasive authority they like. If the Supreme Court says affirmative action is a good thing ... that might influence your thinking."

The court didn't quite say affirmative action is a good thing, but made clear that it has a place in society for now.

Ruling in two cases covering affirmative action programs at the University of Michigan, the court upheld the use of race as one among many factors that public, tax-supported colleges and graduate schools may use to select their students. A majority of justices said a diverse campus is valuable enough to justify flexible admission programs that give qualified minorities an edge in competition with white applicants.

As with many major Supreme Court rulings, the full implications may take awhile to sort out. It is not clear, for instance, how many colleges or universities will have to retool their admission policies, or whether schools might resurrect preferential programs that were shelved while administrators awaited the high court ruling.

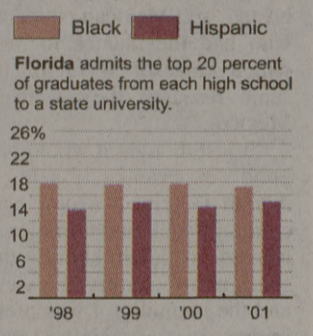
In the meantime, lawyers, educators, business

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### Percent plans and minority enrollment

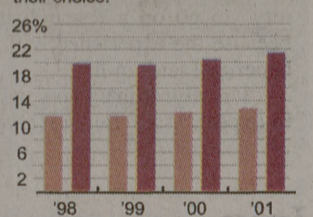
States that have race-blind admissions and admit a percentage of top students from every high school have seen only minimal gains in black and Hispanic enrollment.

Enrollment rates at state university systems



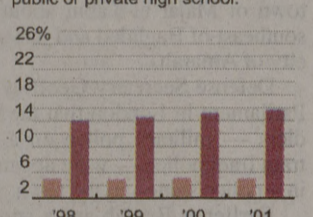
The 15- to 19-year old population is 21 percent black and 20 percent Hispanic.

Texas admits the top 10 percent of graduates from each public or private high school to the state university of their choice.



The 15- to 19-year old population is 13 percent black and 39 percent Hispanic.

California guarantees admission to a UC system campus for the top 4 percent of graduates from each public or private high school.



The 15- to 19-year old population is 7 percent black and 39 percent Hispanic.

NOTE: Enrollment listed is for full time, first-time freshmen throughout the system.

SOURCES: Civil Rights Project, Harvard University; U.S. Census Bureau

## Group studies Mexico's technological development

By Jodi Rogers  
THE BATTALION

Learning all about the United States' southern neighbor, four Texas A&M undergraduate students and a professor from the Department of Agricultural Education spent the last two weeks conducting communication and technology research in Mexico.

The group spent its time interviewing people about the ways they communicated with each other and changes in technology.

The four students visited three different universities in northeast Mexico. A&M faculty members from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences conducted research with the universities through an organization called the Technical Consortium from Northeast Mexico.

"Through this bridge that we create, we want to involve as many young people as possible, be they undergraduate or graduate students, in such a way that they get to experience a connection with other stu-

dents in other cultures in a safe environment," said special programs director Manuel Piña, Jr.

The students met with a professor in Mexico and worked together on a communication project.

The trip was part of a larger project sponsored by the agriculture program called the Texas-Mexico Initiative, which began about six years ago. It is a group of

See **Mexico** on page 2

## Africa exhibit opens

By Lindsay Broomes  
THE BATTALION

Prairie View A&M professor the Rev. Clarence Talley Sr. offered Texas A&M a taste of Africa with his art exhibit entitled "A View of Africa."

Talley, along with other college faculty members and 17 elementary, middle school and secondary teachers, ventured to Tanzania, East Africa, during the summer of 2000.

During his stay, Talley compiled a collection of works that include 1,400 photographs, mixed media and sculptures. From this array, he narrowed it down to 26 pieces to be displayed in his exhibit.

Talley's pieces vary from beaded works, both vibrant

colors and black and white, to photographs that accent a specific body part such as the hands or eyes.

"In many photographs, the viewer finds himself staring directly into the eyes of the people Rev. Talley met and shared a summer with," said Kelly Hollinger, student adviser

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## Six British soldiers killed in south Iraq

By Steven Gutkin  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Six British soldiers were killed and eight wounded in southern Iraq in a series of attacks on coalition forces Tuesday that marked one of the deadliest days since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.

The casualties were a shock to

British troops occupying the largely Shiite south, which until now had been essentially free of the daily hit-and-run attacks plaguing American soldiers in central and western Iraq. British troops have felt so secure they have been patrolling the country's second-largest city, Basra, without flak jackets or helmets.

The U.S. military said insur-

gents had increased their attacks on American and British troops: 25 over a 24-hour period, including a firefight in Ramadi, west of Baghdad, that killed three Iraqis and wounded an American soldier.

The violence fueled concerns that Iraq is descending into a

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SOURCE: Associated Press

EVAN O'CONNELL • THE BATTALION  
Ivory sculptures are among the artifacts on display at the Jordan Institute.