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"The bottom line is how we can serve students."

— Charles Johnson, dean of the College of Liberal Arts

Journalism gets the ax

Johnson recommends eliminating journalism

By Rob Munson
THE BATTALION

Dean of Liberal Arts Charles Johnson sent a recommendation to Texas A&M administrators Thursday asking that the Department of Journalism and all associated degree programs be cut during the next few years.

"After more than a year and a half of working in issues related to journalism, and after the past legislative session, it has become apparent that the most effective way to address our students' needs in journalism is to make a change in the current situation," Johnson said in a statement.

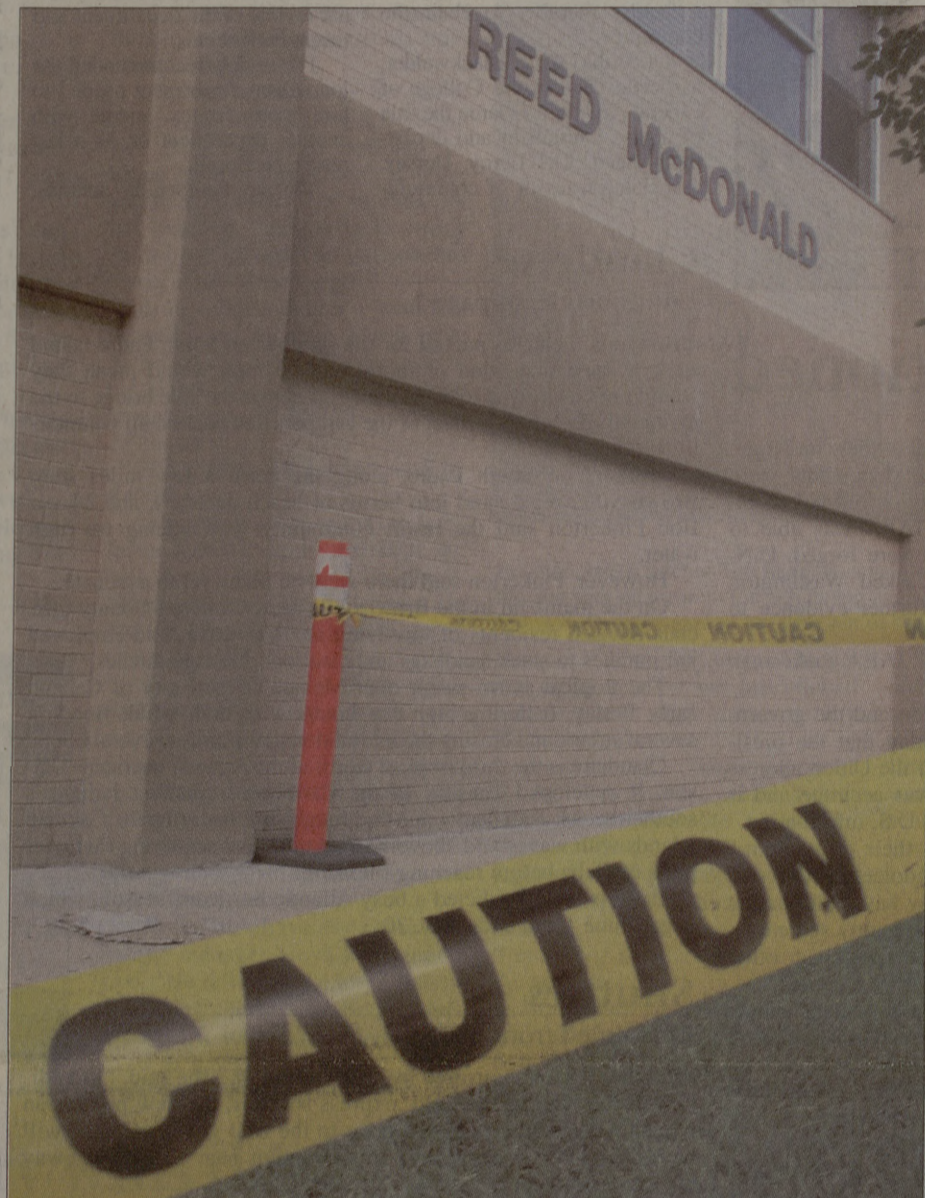
The journalism department was formed in 1948 and has been an accredited program since 1956. About 500 students are enrolled in the program and the department houses eight full-time faculty.

No students currently enrolled in the journalism department will be forced out of the major, and no tenured, tenure track faculty or permanent staff will be laid off, Johnson said.

If the recommendation is approved by A&M officials, current faculty and staff will be shifted to other depart-



JOHNSON



JOSHUA HOBSON • THE BATTALION

Fallen debris from a second story ledge is blocked off Sunday evening outside the Reed McDonald building, in which the journalism department is housed.

ments. "Cutting a program is never easy, that is not the bottom line," Johnson said. "The bottom line is how we can serve students."

Johnson said 55 students entering A&M's journalism program this fall will be the

last class to major in journalism pending approval by Executive Vice President and Provost Dr. David Prior, A&M President Robert M. Gates and the A&M University System Board of Regents.

Gates said he defers to

deans on matters concerning operations within each college.

"I felt it was important to find an alternative by which we can have Aggies going

See **Johnson** on page 2

Students and professors question reasoning behind department's loss

By Melissa Sullivan
THE BATTALION

As news of Liberal Arts Dean Charles Johnson's recommendation of the journalism department reached current journalism students and faculty, questions still remain as to how the program reached the chopping block.

Students currently in the program said they understand where the administrators are coming from, but they still cannot believe the journalism department will not exist in a few years.

"I think the fields of journalism and communications are so vital in today's world that something else could have been done," said senior journalism major Abby Woller. "I know Vision 2020 is such a big thing, but I don't see how cutting a department can be a step in the right direction."

Some students said when they first enrolled in the department there was no indication there was a problem and they continued to pursue a degree from Texas A&M.

"I never thought they were going to do away with it," said Courtney Potter, a sophomore journalism major. "When I visited A&M during my senior year (of high school), I visited the journalism department and they said the College of Liberal Arts is the fastest growing college at A&M and a lot of students want to do journalism."

Potter said if she could have foreseen the department's closing she would not have majored in journalism.

Dr. Douglas Starr, professor of journalism, said despite the troubles the department has been facing, he did not expect Johnson's decision.

Starr said courses will still be

JOURNALISM DEPARTMENT

Formed in 1948, with approx. 500 students and eight full-time faculty

Dean Charles Johnson sent recommendation to administrators Thursday asking the journalism program to be cut over the next few years

No students will be kicked out, nor will any faculty be laid off

Dr. Julia Kirk Blackwelder will assume the title of department head

55 students were admitted into the program for the fall



RUBEN DELUNA & JOSHUA HOBSON • THE BATTALION

SOURCE: OFFICE OF THE DEAN OF LIBERAL ARTS

taught in journalism and from what Johnson said, the department will provide a background to supplement another major.

"It is entirely possible, feasible and not unusual," Starr said. "I don't need an administrative office to teach."

Students preparing to graduate have expressed concerns about finding a job, now knowing the future of the department.

"A journalism degree from this University is still accredited," Starr said.

Johnson said a journalism degree from A&M leads to successful careers and the action is not meant to detract

See **Reaction** on page 2

Fall football shuttle service expanded to Post Oak Mall

By Jodi Rogers
THE BATTALION

Transportation Services will offer a free express shuttle route from Post Oak Mall to Aggie football games at Kyle Field this fall.

Eleven "Get to the Grid" express shuttles will run continuously from the parking lot near the Sears entrance and Throckmorton Street 2 1/2 hours before game time and two hours after, said June Broughton, communications director for TS.

"We want to take a proactive approach to the

game-day parking and traffic challenges by offering fans an alternative to searching for a parking space near Kyle Field and fighting the traffic," she said. "This will also help in alleviating some of the traffic congestion for those fans who have reserved spaces on campus."

Broughton said Texas A&M shuttle buses do run to the mall but make several stops and are not specifically express game-day shuttles. TS will adjust how many buses run the express route based on how many people ride them. Broughton also said the

express service isn't a part of students' transportation fee.

"It's good for people who don't already live on a bus route," said Molly Mlod, a senior economics major. "It would be good for people who are from the visiting team and don't know where to park."

Broughton said TS, Post Oak Mall management and the Athletics Department will work together to provide the new service.

"Shuttle riders will have the opportunity to register for mall gift certificates

See **Shuttles** on page 2

"GET TO THE GRID" EXPRESS SHUTTLES

Direct route from Post Oak Mall to Kyle Field

Leave from Sears parking lot and drop off at Throckmorton Street

Shuttles run two and a half hours before the game, and two hours after

RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION
SOURCE: TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Hurricane watch posted as Claudette heads for S. Texas

By Lynn Brezovsky
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, Texas — A hurricane watch was posted Sunday along the South Texas coast as Tropical Storm Claudette crawled across the Gulf of Mexico, and campers packed up and left low-lying South Padre Island.

The storm was expected to make landfall at near hurricane strength as early as Tuesday, said Miles Lawrence, a forecaster at the National Hurricane Center in Miami.

A hurricane watch was in effect along the Texas Gulf Coast from Port O'Connor, about 70 miles northeast of Corpus Christi, to Brownsville and south along the Mexican coast to Rio San Fernando.

By 7 p.m. CDT, the center of Claudette was about 330 miles east of Brownsville, with maximum sustained wind blowing at 60 mph, 14 mph shy of hurricane strength. Slow strengthening is expected over the next 24 hours.

It has been almost stationary, but is expected to resume moving toward the west-northwest on Monday,

Claudette stronger in Gulf of Mexico

Position: 25.3 N, 92.4 W
Sustained winds: 60 mph
Movement: Stationary
As of 5 p.m. EDT Sunday



SOURCE: AccuWeather AP

the hurricane center said. The National Weather Service said swells were approaching the Texas coast and could create dangerous surf conditions.

"The circulation is strengthening," meteorologist Jesse Haro said at the National Weather Service in Brownsville. "That doesn't mean it's going to move any faster toward us, it simply means that it's becoming a stronger storm."

Owners of about 900 See **Claudette** on page 2

Legislators support A&M's employee retirement stance

By Karen Yancey
THE BATTALION

Sen. Steve Ogden and Rep. Fred Brown expressed support for Texas A&M's position on the question of new requirements for A&M and University of Texas employees seeking retirement, said Mike O'Quinn, A&M's vice president of governmental affairs.

The office is hopeful that Attorney General Greg Abbott will quickly rule in its favor to help employees make informed decisions regarding their retirement, O'Quinn said in an e-mail.

"I do know that Rep. Fred Brown has sent a letter to (Abbott) expressing his support for the A&M position," he said. "Sen. Ogden has also expressed support in favor of our

interpretation of the statutes. At the end of (last) session, we felt that Senate Bill 1652 grandfathered our employees. However, the UT System lawyers feel differently, and since the statute being affected only deals with A&M and UT Systems, clarity is needed to administer the retirement programs according to the law."

In June, A&M sent a letter to Abbott asking him to decide whether a clause that appears to grandfather A&M employees from the new requirements overrides another law that does not contain a grandfather clause but makes the same changes. The two laws were passed during the spring session of the Texas Legislature. The bills change eligibility requirements for retirement benefits for workers in the A&M and UT Systems to make them

more consistent with other state agencies. Both bills change the minimum retirement age from 55 to 65 years and the number of years of service to the state from five to 10 years.

Mike Gross, vice president of Texas State Employees Union, a lobbyist group for state workers, said three systems of healthcare exist in Texas. There is one for A&M, one for UT and one for the rest of the state.

In the past, all Texas universities had separate health care systems, but they were merged into the Employee Retirement System.

SB 1652 was authored by Sen. Florence Shapiro and is the bill with the grandfather clause.

The other bill, SB 1370, was authored by See **Legislators** on page 2