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Surveys show conflicting University ratings

A&M seeks 450 new faculty positions

By Sarah Szuminski
THE BATTALION

Despite dropping in U.S. News & World Report's 2004 rankings, Texas A&M is making progress toward its goal of becoming a top public university.

The University announced Wednesday that it will hire nearly 450 new faculty members over the next five years, helping rectify the problem of a high student-to-faculty ratio.

Class size is a major determining factor of a school's score in U.S. News' rankings and is one of the biggest strikes against A&M.

The University didn't fare well in class size, with 33 percent of its classes having 50 students or more

and only 18 percent of its classes having fewer than 20 students.

"The key is in the faculty," said Vice Provost William L. Perry. "The way a university gets to be in the top 10 is through its faculty."

A&M currently ranks 27th among public universities, while the University of Texas-Austin comes in at 17th.

The U.S. News ranking system uses 15 indicators of academic excellence on which each school is scored. Factors are assigned varying weights reflecting their judgment of how much each measure matters.

"Because of the way it's structured, we've suffered in the rankings," Perry said, citing a minor dip in faculty numbers yielding a

larger drop in rank.

A&M fell last year as well, he said, having placed 18th in 2002.

Perry said the University's dip in the rankings is a result of a gradual increase in student enrollment coupled with recent decreases in faculty. Faculty losses are due to a reduction in state funding, he said.

Although A&M's Vision 2020 plan aims to bring the University to top-10 status, Perry said rankings do not dictate decisions made by the administration.

"The rankings can give us a heads-up or bring our attention to issue, but we don't make decisions to tweak the rankings," he said. "We do what will give the best possible

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GATES' FACULTY PLAN

The University plans to hire 447 new tenured or tenure-track faculty by 2008

The plan will cost at least \$40 million

\$20.5 has already been reallocated from internal cuts

The current faculty count of 1,636 will be increased by 25 percent

RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION
SOURCE: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A&M ranks high in new Gallup Poll

By Lindsay Broomes
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M rockets its way to the top as a new Gallup Poll ranks it as one of the best universities in the country. The University fell just short of Vision 2020 as it tied for 11th place along with the University of North Carolina, Ohio State University, Penn State University and the University of Texas-Austin.

"This recognition will help recruit the best students across Texas with the University holding that type of stature in the public eye," said A&M President Robert M. Gates.

The rankings are based on telephone interviews of 1,003 adults that were conducted on July 1, according to the Gallup Web site. The method chosen enabled surveyers to sample the target population randomly.

"The object is to present the opinions of a sample of people which are exactly the same opinions that would have been obtained had it been possible to interview all adult Americans in the country," the Web site said.

Participants were presented with an open-ended question asking their opinion of the best university or college.

Lane Stephenson, deputy director of University Relations, said he agreed with the Gallup Poll's findings.

The rankings didn't differentiate between public and private schools. A&M measures itself against other public schools, he said. Some of the schools ranking above A&M included Harvard, Yale and Stanford.

"Gaining national stature and representation will continue to move us forward to our vision 2020 goal," Stephenson said. "We are obviously delighted to be recognized."

Vision 2020 originated with former A&M President Ray Bowen on Oct. 10, 1997, according to A&M's Web site. He laid out the groundwork for a plan to be followed that would place A&M among the top 10 public schools in the nation by the year 2020 while maintaining and enhancing its distinctiveness.

"Texas A&M is already perceived as one of the best," Gates said. "450 faculty members will be hired to ensure greatness; no other university in the country is doing that."

Stephenson said he was not surprised that the University was placed among with the elite, and neither were students.

"This school has so many unique qualities and incredible opportunities," said senior psychology major Leah Anderson, "I don't see why it would not be chosen to be among the best."

Gallup Poll

- A&M tied for 11th with UNC, Ohio State, Penn State and UT
- Harvard ranked #1, Stanford and Yale tied at second.
- Other top 10 schools were MIT, UC-Berkely, Notre Dame, Princeton, University of Michigan, Duke, UCLA

ANDREW BURLESON • THE BATTALION
SOURCE: WWW.GALLUP.COM

Ag Education reopens majors

By Justin Smith
THE BATTALION

The Department of Agricultural Education overturned a week-old decision on admissions caps Wednesday and reopened the department's majors to any qualified student.

Now, students may enter the degree programs of agricultural development, agricultural journalism and agricultural science.

The reversal came when the department learned of an increase in funding that will allow two new faculty members to join the department to help alleviate problems such as overcrowding.

"We are committed to working with these students," said Dr. Edward Hiler, vice chancellor and dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. "The department is committed to serving all of their students."

The original freeze on admissions into the majors was due to a growing enrollment that came without a corresponding increase in faculty to teach these growing classes. New teachers could not be hired because there was a teacher salary budget deficit of more than \$57,000.

But, Hiler said, funds within the College of Agriculture have been reallocated and an additional \$85,000 is coming from the provost's office to be used to hire the necessary faculty.

In a decision that will be officially announced next week, 44 new teachers will be hired by the college over the next four years, and the search to fill the two spots in the Department of Agricultural Education has already begun.

Gary Shinn, head of the department, said a national search will be conducted to find the best two candidates for the job.

"It will take six to eight months to find and hire people to fill those position," Shinn said.

To help lighten the load, five temporary lecturers will be hired to teach some classes.

"We will have to bite the bullet in the spring," said

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Rainy days



SHARON AESCHBACH • THE BATTALION

Rainy weather hit Bryan-College Station early Wednesday, slowing down traffic, covering the streets and inconveniencing students. Thunderstorms are expected to continue throughout Thursday evening and clear up for the weekend.

Student sports pass prices increase, students unaware

By Pammy Ramji
THE BATTALION

The cost of student sports passes has doubled since 1998, yet many students are unaware of the increases and where the extra funds are going.

The price of an All-Sports pass is now \$247.50, compared to \$180 last fall. Football passes also saw a significant increase from the previous year — they are currently \$187.50, up from \$132.50 in 2002.

Even with these large increases, David Roubion, financial manager for the Athletic Department, said prices aren't expected to level out anytime soon.

"We can expect the prices of sports passes to increase due to the increase in prices over the past five years," he said. "How much the prices will increase is unknown."

The cost of an All-Sports pass and a football pass were left out in online registration, allowing students to purchase either pass without seeing its price. Many

students said they didn't know the prices had increased.

"Did they?" senior biomedical sciences major Jesse Flynn said when he learned that the price of the sports passes had gone up.

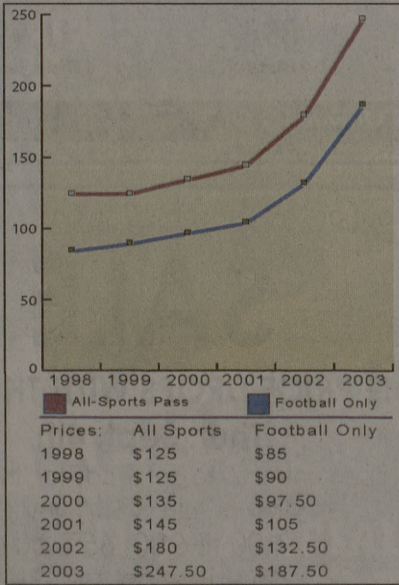
Alan Cannon, sports information director, said Texas A&M is after a championship and plans to compete at the highest level with the help of a new coach and new director, just two of the many changes for this year.

"As far as where the money is going, there are many answers. Scholarships and the overall operating expenses have to be paid for," Cannon said. "For example, we have been using the old locker room for many years now and finally decided to get a new one this year."

Junior biomedical sciences major Scott Lindsey said he will still buy a sports pass, despite the price increase.

"I have always been, and will always be a huge Aggie football fan, and will pay whatever price to support my team," Lindsey said.

Sports pass price increases



ANDREW BURLESON • THE BATTALION
SOURCE: TAMU ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT

Trushar Bhakta, a senior accounting major, said she understands the Athletic Department's need for increased funding.

"I don't agree with the price increase, but someone has to pay Bill Byrne and Coach Fran's salary somehow," she said. "They are here to make our program ranked nationally, and nothing comes free."

Open access labs try to speed up log-on delays

By Sarah Walch
THE BATTALION

Students returning to the Texas A&M campus Monday who visited the open access computer labs left frustrated due to log-on times of up to 30 minutes.

James Murray III, a senior English major, said it took him seven minutes to log on the first time he tried.

Other students faced times of 30 minutes or longer, during peak lab times of 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., said Tom Putnam, director of Computer Information Services.

"The second time I tried the labs I was late for class and needed to look at my schedule on BONFIRE (the A&M online student information system) to see where my class was and didn't have time to wait," Murray said. "But the help desk workers logged onto BONFIRE for me (on their computers) to help me out."

Putnam said his staff is doing everything within its power to speed up the log-on progress for students.

"Things are pretty grim right now," he said. "I think you'll see things drastically improve within a month, when we receive our new filer (the hard drive that stores students' roving profiles, currently located in the Teague Building). I've got an emergency order for the newer, bigger and faster filer sitting on my desk right now."

For now, Putnam said, things are improving significantly daily.

"Normally, things are pretty heavy anyway when students return to classes in the fall," he said. "This time, it's a problem aggravated by the profile conversion."

The profile conversion Putnam referred to is needed because of the installation of the newest Microsoft operating system, Windows XP.

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