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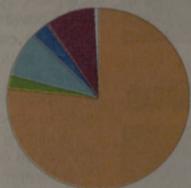
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TEXAS A&M ADMISSIONS DATA

A&M's Board of Regents is concerned about the University's low minority enrollment numbers despite improvements from last year's figures.



	Fall 2003	Fall 2002	
White	34,262	34,547	↓ 285
Black	1,057	1,048	↑ 9
Hispanic	3,813	3,714	↑ 99
Asian/ Pacific Islander	1,306	1,349	↓ 43
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	199	211	↓ 12
Non-Resident Aliens/ Foreign Nationals	3,823	3,679	↑ 144
Non-reported	426	636	↓ 109

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SOURCE: OFFICE OF PLANNING & INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

Regents: Minority enrollment low

By Bart Shirley
THE BATTALION

Members of the Board of Regents said they were concerned with low enrollment numbers for minority students at Texas A&M during the board's Sept. 26 meeting.

"Our freshman minority recruiting numbers are not good," said David Prior, interim provost and executive vice president of Texas A&M.

Prior said there was a decrease in Asian enrollment and a slight increase in black enrollment. According to the preliminary 12th class day enrollment and admissions report, the number of Asian students decreased by 3.2 percent, from 1,349 in the fall of 2002 to 1,306 students this fall. In addition,

only nine more blacks are attending Texas A&M this fall.

"We are concerned that we are not using all possibilities to improve (our) yield rate," Prior said.

The yield rate is calculated by comparing the number of students admitted to the University to how many actually attend. Prior said there is a growing discrepancy between how many minority students are admitted and how many arrive on the first day of classes.

Regent Lionel Sosa, chair of the committee on educational access, said the biggest challenge facing the university is finding scholarship dollars to give to minority students. He said the majority of minority students accepted typically fail enroll, and this implies that other universities might be reach-

ing out to them more effectively.

"Texas A&M has an opportunity to take a stronger leadership (position) in terms of minority recruitment. I know lots of programs are in the works, but I'd like to see those (programs) in the numbers," he said.

Prior said this summer's Supreme Court decisions regarding the University of Michigan were an element in the administration's thought processes regarding the problem. In this case, the Supreme Court struck down the undergraduate school's point system that gave minority applicants a bonus in their application process, but it upheld the law school's system that considers race without giving it a set value. The latter decision affirmed the legality of some forms of affirmative action and is spurring administrators

in all state schools to re-examine their admissions processes.

Prior said a task force was formed after the decision at Michigan and University President Robert M. Gates is questioning A&M's recruitment efforts. He said the University of Texas-Austin is doing the same thing as the admissions department here.

"This is a matter of great concern to us," he said. "We are discussing what are the best strategies to do."

Some members of the Board were adamant about the University's need to step up its efforts.

"They just need to get to work on it," said Regent Wendy Gramm, chair of the campus art and aesthetic improvement committee. "It's not rocket science. We can recruit the best and the brightest in athletics. We can do it elsewhere."

Unity Project plans for second bonfire

By Melissa Sullivan
THE BATTALION

With debt from last year's student-led bonfire looming, the Student Unity Project has begun planning for its second annual bonfire, scheduled for Nov. 22.

To pay off the debt and earn money, members have made a deal with Westgate and DCI Biologicals. People wishing to contribute to UP can do so by donating plasma at either of these clinics. The money earned is then given to UP at the donor's request.

A person can earn up to \$150 a month if he donates two times a week within a 48-hour period, said Brandon Ballard, assistant manager for Westgate Biologicals.

"A lot of students donate plasma so we thought we would help the community as well as the University," he said.

The Unity Project is a student group independent of Texas A&M that aims to revive the tradition of Aggie Bonfire in some form so that it is not lost, according to the UP Web site. The group built an off-campus bonfire last November that drew more than 3,000 people.

UP's 2002 bonfire cost approximately \$26,000 from start to fin-

ish and UP wants to make enough profit to ensure that the tradition will continue, said Jennifer Evans, a senior economics major.

"Based on last year's numbers, we estimate that if every person who comes out to cut donates plasma, we should raise enough money to break even this year," she said.

Evans said because funding is limited, it is important for people to support UP.

"We are funded only by students and a few former students," she said.

Jim Bouse, a senior agricultural development major, said donating plasma not only helps with the cost of a bonfire, it benefits burn victims.

"I feel that helping bonfire get going again with such a small contribution is the least I can do," he said. "I gave plasma in the past for my gain and I feel that bonfire needs the money more than I do."

Ballard said donors will be asked a series of questions to see if they are eligible to donate. They will need their driver license, Social Security card and proof of address.

Donating will take a little more than an hour, Ballard said.

In addition to donating plasma, UP is selling T-shirts and other merchandise through its Web site, www.studentbonfire.com.

Sign here



SHARON AESCHBACH • THE BATTALION

Ten-year-old Jared Dewey of Katy gets an autograph from third time gold medal winner of the X-games, Tommy Clowers Sunday afternoon at the Katy Mills Mall. Thirty-one year old Clowers, known as TomCat, started rid-

ing professionally when he was 18 and now is on tour around Texas showing off his motorcross skills and his favorite jump, called the Cat Nac Indian Air, where he hangs off his bike with his legs in an open scissor position.

Italy blackout affects 57 million

By Tom Rachman
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROME — A storm-tossed tree branch that hit Swiss power lines helped trigger a massive blackout in almost all of Italy, trapping thousands on trains and forcing the pope to use a backup generator to proclaim his new cardinals. The outage underlined the fragility of Italy's reliance on imported power.

In Italy's worst power outage since World War II, most of the country's 58 million people were affected — more than in North America's biggest blackout, which left 50 million people without power in Canada and the United States on Aug. 14.

As in the North American black-

out, there was initially confusion about the cause and finger-pointing among neighboring countries. With scant domestic supply and swelling public demand, Italy imports most of its electricity.

The blackout began at 3:25 a.m., hitting all of Italy except the island of Sardinia. The lights came back on in northern Italy by early morning and in most of Rome shortly after noon. But large swaths of southern Italy were still without electricity Sunday evening.

The outage tripped a burglar alarm at the home in Rome where Lonia Liscio, 21, was babysitting an 8-year-old boy. She woke up in a panic.

"The baby woke up too — he sleeps with the light on," she said.

"He took out a flashlight and was up all night long. I was scared. I didn't know what was happening."

Tommaso Primavera, 17, was riding his motor scooter at the time in Rome.

"There was panic on the streets," he said. "The tourists went mad — everyone was thinking about themselves."

As experts tried to work out the cause, none of the three countries involved wanted all the blame. Swiss and French energy officials said the responsibility lay with Italy, while the Italians noted that the power cut came from France.

Initial investigations indicated a chain reaction that started in Switzerland and moved through

Italy in the dark for cause of blackout

Most of Italy's 57 million people were affected by the blackout that struck early Sunday. Officials suspect the problem started in Switzerland, then transferred to France, from where Italy receives a large amount of power, and from there to Italy.



SOURCE: ESRI

See Blackout on page 2

Month showcases Hispanic culture

By Lauren Smith
THE BATTALION

When Julian Lopez lived in Corpus Christi, a city in which much of the population is Hispanic, he never thought of diversity issues. Then, he came to Texas A&M.

"The biggest issue facing Hispanic students at A&M is adjusting to the new environment," Lopez said. "A lot of Hispanics here are coming from cities like San Antonio or Corpus where they are the majority."

In the fall of 2003, Hispanics constituted 8 to 9 percent of the student enrollment, with 3,813 Hispanic students in the 44,876-member student body.

Hispanic Heritage month, from Sept. 15 to Oct. 10, is a month of celebration made official in 1960 by President Lyndon B. Johnson, said Dr. Luis San Andres, communications secretary for Professional Hispanic Network and professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering.

"It is a time to celebrate the contributions of Hispanic cultures to mainstream culture," San Andres said. "At the University, we will bring speakers of national recognition

See Culture on page 2

Energy blueprint reflects industry priorities

By H. Josef Hebert
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Congressional Republicans are cobbling together an energy blueprint substantially more favorable to industry than a Senate-passed bill hailed by Democrats as a victory this summer.

From drilling in an Alaska wildlife refuge to electric utilities' use of renewable fuels, pro-industry views are winning consistent support in negotiations on a final bill.

Democrats are complaining about being shut out from decision-making as the talks move toward a conclusion — possibly by the end of this week — on the first overhaul of the U.S. energy agenda in a decade.

Sen. Pete Domenici, chairman of the House-Senate negotiations, dismisses the Democrats' complaints. The GOP staff has "worked closely" in "open and bipartisan negotiations," said Domenici, R-N.M.

But he also said he wants to avoid the type of gridlock that prevented passage of a bill last year.

A senior Democrat involved in the talks said he is dismayed at the way Republican leaders are putting together the bill after the House and Senate approved different versions this year.

"Republicans ... expect (us) to ratify a final product that we have not yet seen," said Rep. John Dingell of Michigan.

The emerging plan reflects a greater tilt toward the energy industry, is more to the White House's liking and more represents the

priorities of conservative House Republicans.

It is largely replacing the legislation passed by the Senate in July when GOP leaders, facing an impasse over their own bill, resurrected a measure approved in 2002 when Democrats were in the majority.

Domenici promised to rewrite the Senate-passed bill in negotiations with the House — and that is what he is doing with Rep. Billy Tauzin, R-La., head of the House delegation.

"This bill will be a Christmas wish list for the oil, gas, coal and nuclear industry," predicts David Alberswerth, a natural resource specialist for the Wilderness Society.

As an example, Democrats point to the

See Energy on page 6

Hispanic Heritage Month

There will be an Hispanic Literature Showcase in the MSC Bookstore from Sept. 15 to Oct. 10.

Oct. 1	Colombian Film Series	3:30 to 6 p.m.	410 Library Annex	"Visa USA"
Oct. 2	Conversaciones Dr. Rogelio Saenz	12 to 2 p.m.	402 Rudder	"Hispanic Demography"
Oct. 8	Colombian Film Series	1 to 3:30 p.m.	410 Library Annex	"Los Niños Invisibles"
Oct. 9	Conversaciones Dr. Circo Sumaya	12 to 2 p.m.	502 Rudder	"Changing Demographics of Hispanics in Texas"
Oct. 10	Latin Aggie Nights	8:30 to 11:30 p.m.	MSC	

GRACIE ARENAS • THE BATTALION
SOURCE: HTTP://PHN.TAMU.EDU