

THE BATTALION

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A&M diversity draws debate

By Sonia Moghe
THE BATTALION

Student groups gathered Wednesday to protest and support Dr. James Anderson taking office as vice president and associate provost for institutional assessment and diversity.

One student group, the Texas A&M chapter of Young Conservatives of America held an affirmative action bake sale in protest.

"We're out here today to show our objections to this new administrative position," said Mark McCaig, communications director for the YCT.

After YCT announced its intentions to hold the bake sale, the Department of Multicultural Services urged multicultural student organizations to show their support for Anderson by setting up tables at Rudder Fountain. Several organizations rallied against the bake sale outside the Academic Building.

"This is probably the most diverse group of students I've ever seen on campus," said Nick Anthis, president of the Texas Aggie Democrats.

The bake sale, not meant to raise money but merely raise awareness about affirmative action, offered store-bought baked goods for sale at prices based on race. Asians had to pay \$1 for baked goods, whites 75 cents, Hispanics 25 cents, and African Americans 10 cents.

The reason for the pricing was symbolic; those who paid the most at the bake sale paid the most because of affirmative action. Asians paid the most because they are put at the greatest disadvantage by affirmative action, McCaig said.

"I'm offended by the way (the YCT) approached the situation," said Rebekah Sanchez, a member of Delta Xi Nu. "They could have been more politically correct — I think they focused too much on shock value."

The YCT's position is that the hiring of Anderson deprives A&M of funds that

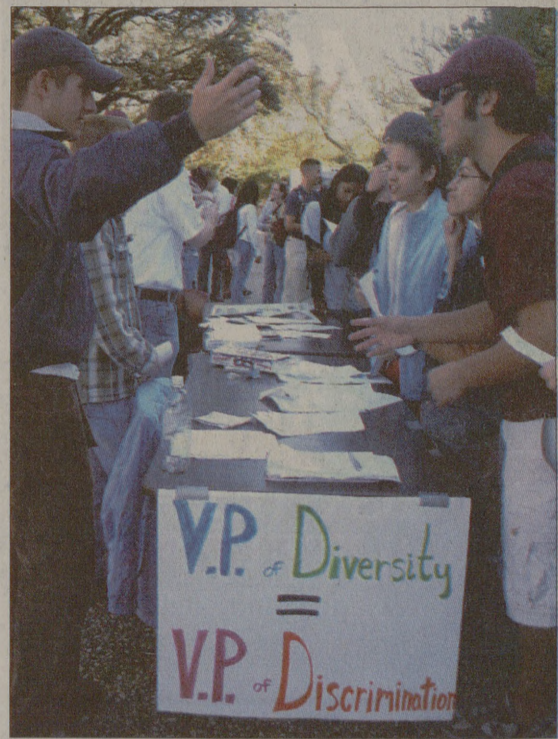
could otherwise be used to fund student activities, lower tuition costs and help support dying departments, such as the department of journalism.

Other groups, such as the Texas Aggie Democrats, see Anderson's appointment as a move in the right direction. Anthis said he was shocked when he first came to A&M as a freshman by how much the school lacked diversity of race, religion and ideas.

"We support the University's attempt to diversify A&M," Anthis said. "We don't want to see this small but vocal group ruin that."

Matt Maddox, President of the YCT, said the bake sale, although offensive to some, benefits the campus because it allowed students of different ideological backgrounds to get together and debate their opinions.

"We've engaged in spirited debate, but nothing violent has occurred," Maddox said. "We just wanted to encourage Anderson to look past superficial characteristics such as race in attempting to diversify A&M and instead look to diversify intellectually."



Weston Balch, left, of Texas A&M's chapter of the Young Conservatives of Texas, discusses the issue of affirmative action with fellow students at an affirmative action bake sale hosted by YCT on Wednesday. YCT gathered to protest the addition of a new president of institutional assessment and diversity to A&M's staff. For more photos, visit www.thebattalion.net.

SONIA MOGHE • THE BATTALION

Hanging tough



SHARON AESCHBACH • THE BATTALION

Senior electrical engineering major Michael Hall hangs on a trapeze after climbing up and jumping off a 30-foot pole during his venture

dynamics. Venture dynamics, taught by Grant Irons, is held at the ropes course off Harvey Mitchell, Parkway and Gabbard Street.

A&M scientists aim for safer food

By Dan Orth
THE BATTALION

Scientists at the National Electron Beam Food Research Center are working to improve the safety of foods through a method that uses common electricity to irradiate foods.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 5,200 people die from food-borne illnesses each year and 323,000 are hospitalized. Children between the ages of 1 and 14 are most at risk.

Food safety is a problem that scientists using this technology may address through reducing pathogens such as E. coli, listeria and salmonella so that food-borne illnesses are minimized.

Although this technology is useful and deemed safe by the Food and Drug Administration,

Dr. T. Andy Vestal said the biggest challenge in the widespread acceptance of irradiation technologies is the public's negative connotation toward the word irradiation.

Vestal, an associate director and Texas Cooperative Extension Specialist at the Institute of Food Science and Engineering, said irradiation is not synonymous with nuclear energy.

"When people think of irradiation, they think of nuclear radiation and incidents like Chernobyl. Texas A&M's electron beam irra-

diation process uses common electricity," Vestal said.

The Electron Beam facility was brought to A&M's Research Park through a \$10 million partnership with SureBeam Corporation. Use of the facility is split between test market commercial processing and A&M research. SureBeam built the facility, then deeded it to A&M in a 2002 ceremony.

SureBeam is a provider of patented electron beam systems and services to the food industry.

Vestal said the facility has

the capacity to irradiate ground beef at up to 40,000 pounds per hour, but the A&M contract governs processing to 25 percent of this capacity to ensure the facility's role in research and test marketing rather than commercial processing.

Advantages of decreasing food losses, improving shelf life and controlling food-borne illnesses come from irradiating foods. Killing the pathogens inside the food product controls contamination, infestation and spoilage.

The electron beam process begins when the product enters the chamber on a conveyor belt and passes through the two linear accelerators. These accelerators shoot electrons, similar to a flashlight beam, at almost the

"When people think of irradiation, they think of nuclear radiation and incidents like Chernobyl"

— T. Andy Vestal
associate director

See Scientists on page 2A

Prosecution rests case in plague trial

By Betsy Blaney
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LUBBOCK, Texas — The prosecution rested Wednesday in the trial of a researcher charged with numerous felonies stemming from his report of missing vials of plague bacteria.

Texas Tech University professor Thomas Butler, 62, is accused of lying to the FBI about the missing vials in his January report, which prompted a bioterrorism scare in this West Texas town. Butler later admitted he accidentally destroyed the vials, according to testimony.

In testimony Wednesday, the final prosecution witness talked about Butler shipping plague samples to Tanzania after confirming the bacteria tested positive.

See Trial on page 2A

Among the other charges Butler faces are smuggling, theft, embezzlement and fraud.

Biosafety consultant Barbara Johnson testified that transfers of the unlabeled containers of bacteria are a national security problem because terrorists are known to operate in Tanzania.

Johnson, who works for the private consulting company Science Applications International Corp., also demonstrated how fragile petri dishes can be by crushing an empty one with her hands. Butler used petri dishes to transport plague samples to a U.S. Army research facility in Fort Detrick, Md., according to testimony.

"This is not a safe,

Students: Marijuana should be legal

By Natalie Younts
THE BATTALION

Seventy students gathered in Rudder 701 Tuesday night to watch a former High Times magazine editor and a former narcotics agent debate about legalizing marijuana during a live satellite broadcast.

Mental health concerns colleges

By Jenna Jones
THE BATTALION

The anxiety of college life and its effects on students' mental health have been accentuated and scrutinized after a recent flare-up of suicides at New York University.

Three NYU students committed suicide during the first two months of the current semester. Michelle Glucagon's death on

Marijuana should be legalized because it is "part of my culture" and "locking people up for substance use or abuse is not a good thing in my opinion," said Steve Hager, who edited High Times magazine about marijuana usage, for 15 years.

Robert Stutman, a former U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency agent, said marijuana should not

be legalized because it "contributes significantly to accidents" by harming depth perception.

Dr. Billy Martin, a professor of pharmacology and toxicology at Virginia Commonwealth University, attempted to set things straight with a non-biased scientific perspective. He pointed to a 1999 report from the

Institute of Medicine called "Marijuana and Medicine: Assessing the Science Base."

"For most people the primary adverse effect of acute marijuana use is diminished psychomotor performance," the report says. "It is, therefore, inadvisable to operate any vehicle or potentially

See Marijuana on page 8A

Oct. 18 was preceded by Stephen Bohler's Oct. 10 suicide and the death of John Skolnik in September. The recent string of suicides at NYU, in addition to other high-profile suicides at colleges throughout the country, has re-emphasized the need for students' mental health awareness to become a priority on college campuses.

Paul Knipscheer, an affiliate relations associate at The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness, said sui-

cide now ranks as the third leading cause of death among college students, as more than 1,000 American students between the ages of 18 and 24 commit suicide each year.

Texas A&M's Student Counseling Helpline Coordinator Susan Vavra said issues dealing with relationships are the most common concerns counselors help

See Health on page 8A

Mental Illness
Effects on Young Adults

Due to an increase in suicides at colleges across the country, schools are focusing on students' mental well-being.

- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among college students.
- More than 1,000 American students between the ages of 18 and 24 commit suicide each year.
- More than 27 percent of young adults have a diagnosable form of mental illness.

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SOURCE: NATION'S VOICE ON MENTAL ILLNESS