

THE BATTALION

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Stayin' strong



JOSHUA HOBSON • THE BATTALION

Members of A Company (from left) freshman aerospace engineering major Reid Zevenbergen, freshman general studies major Paxton Miller and junior BIMS major Sarah Calberg, enjoy free time to exercise at Spence Park Monday afternoon. Last weekend,

fish participated in corps Brass Weekend and have received favor among the upperclassmen as their symbolic journey into the Corps. The fish get to take part in fun activities such as flag football and foot races because the past few days are considered "good bull."

Journalism closure is one step closer

By Sonia Moghe
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M Executive Vice President and Provost David B. Prior announced in a news release Monday his acceptance, in principle, of a proposal regarding alternate journalism education options. This signifies a step toward closing the A&M journalism department.

"Students currently enrolled in the program will be finishing their degree as they planned," said Charles A. Johnson, dean of the College of Liberal Arts. "This includes students that got into the program this year."

A plan proposed to Johnson by the Committee to Recommend New Initiatives in Journalism Education suggested that the University offer a new journalism minor and certificate program and an interdisciplinary program that emphasizes journalism studies and studies in another specific field. This will affect students not already in the journalism program who wish to study journalism.

"(The proposed plan is) quite flexible," said Barbara Gastel, a committee member and associate professor of the Department of Journalism. "To me, good preparation to be a journalist includes preparation in journalism and concentration in some other field of study."

The committee was made up of six faculty members from journalism, the Department of English and the Department of Communication, a student, three professional journalists and an associate dean who served as an ex-officio member. Its purpose was to take into account that the current Department of Journalism cannot currently offer an adequate journalism program, that funding needed to improve the program is not available and that a journalism degree is not a necessary component of journalism education in devising an alternate degree plan.

"Our charge was simply to suggest what would be a new plan for new pathways for journalism education," said Richard Street, a committee member and head of the communication department.

Aside from the proposed minor and certificate program and the interdisciplinary program, the committee proposed the addition of a journalist-in-residence fellows program, as well as a

Journalism Update



Dean of Liberal Arts Charles Johnson endorsed a plan to provide students with a journalism education:

- Create a minor and a certificate program in journalism
- Form a journalism-in-residence program
- Develop internships
- Create an advisory organization of journalists
- Create an interdisciplinary journalism major
- Close the journalism department and move the master's program

ANDREW BURLESON • THE BATTALION
SOURCE: COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

journalism advising committee. Individual advising to current journalism students will continue throughout the course of their education.

"They'll start the process of closing the department at the same time they start the process of implementing the interdisciplinary program," Street said.

The official closure of the department will happen only after official approval from the Board of Regents, which will simultaneously be processed as the implementing of the interdisciplinary program gets approval. It may take two years to develop a degree plan for the interdisciplinary plan and to earn approval from University officials and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

In the meantime, Prior might allow for a journalism minor to be an option to students, Street said.

"I think this plan is a tremendous change because it affords students more

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College Station is bicycle friendly

By Pammy Ramji
THE BATTALION

College Station was recently named among 26 other communities as a bicycle-friendly community by the League of American Bicyclists.

In May 2003, 14 communities were given the Bicycle Friendly Community designation. The League honored another 13 communities, including College Station, in October.

"This award is a way to recognize communities around the country that have done the extra work and that have built support to become bicycle friendly," said Patrick McCormick, communications director for the League of American Bicyclists.

The League of American Bicyclists is an awards program acknowledging cities that actively support bicycling. A bicycle-friendly community provides secure accommodations for

cycling and encourages its residents to bike for transportation and recreation.

Cherie Norman, a junior marketing major who trained in town for a triathlon, said she believes College Station is a good city for bikers.

"I've noticed from traveling to different towns that this is one of the only places that has bike lanes," Norman said.

Jason Ballard, a junior vertebrae zoology major and triathlete, said motorists elsewhere do not always give courtesy to bikers because the sport is relatively uncommon in the United States. College Station, however, is more biker friendly, he said.

"In town is great because there are a lot of bike lanes and people are used to seeing a lot of bikers," Ballard said. "Out of town is great, too, because it isn't very populated and the roads have big shoulders."

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FDA debates over-the-counter emergency contraception

By Lauran Neergaard
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Federal health officials are debating if it's time to put emergency contraception — also called the morning-after pill — on pharmacy shelves right next to the aspirin, available without a prescription.

Proponents say such a move would greatly increase women's ability to get the pills in time to prevent pregnancy; preferably within 24 hours but no more than 72 hours after rape, contraceptive failure or just forgetting birth control.

The Food and Drug Administration says emergency contraception is very safe to use, but the question is whether women will understand exactly how

and when to take it without any professional advice.

Indeed, the morning-after pill marks the first in a series of ever more complex over-the-counter switch decisions facing FDA. Next year, the agency will be asked to allow nonprescription Mevacor, one of the popular cholesterol-fighting statins; it expects to eventually consider over-the-counter blood pressure medicine, too.

And as OTC drugs evolve from quick symptom relief to more complex therapy, the FDA is mulling whether it's also time to change how some of them are sold — perhaps beginning "behind-the-counter" sales for certain nonprescription drugs, where the pharmacist hands over the pills after giving health

Preventing pregnancy in an emergency

The "morning after pill" boosts hormone levels that can prevent pregnancy. Scientists say the drug may work in different ways.

The drug
First dose is taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex. Second dose is taken 12 hours later.

Availability
► Planned Parenthood clinics
► Several Web sites will forward a prescription to a nearby pharmacy after a doctor reviews a medical questionnaire the woman has filled out.
► Pharmacists in Alaska, California, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Washington have authority to dispense prescription medication

SOURCES: Food and Drug Administration; Women's Capital Corp.

AP

advice or, say, a cholesterol check.

Already, five states allow women to buy the morning-after pill directly from certain pharmacists without a doctor's prescription. The state programs — in

See Contraception on page 2

UT proposes inclusion of race as entrance factor

AUSTIN (AP) — The University of Texas at Austin has submitted a proposal to begin considering race and ethnicity among the many factors to determine acceptance in undergraduate, graduate and law school applications.

The UT System, which in August approved a policy allowing individual campuses to decide whether to adopt affirmative-action criteria in admissions, must review the proposal before new guidelines can be implemented.

State law requires changes in admissions policy to be posted a year in advance, so race and ethnicity probably would be used as a consideration of the 2005 entering class.

In the freshman admissions process, the proposal is to include the use of race

and ethnicity among about 15 factors in addition to academic factors.

"In the individual review we are looking for qualified students who can benefit the most from or contribute the most to the diverse and challenging educational experience at The University of Texas at Austin," UT Vice Provost Bruce Walker said.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in June that colleges and universities could use race as a consideration in admissions, overturning the 1996 Hopwood decision, which barred the use of race in college admissions, scholarships and financial aid.

Cheryl Hopwood was one of four white applicants who were turned away by the UT law school and sued in 1992.

Car sales irritate consumers most

A recent survey asked consumer protection agencies to list the categories that generated the most complaints in 2002. Buying a car was the most frequent complaint because of false sales promotions, misleading advertising, financing problems, undisclosed damage and title and registration issues.



COMPLAINT CATEGORY	% OF AGENCIES LISTING CATEGORY
Auto sales	70%
Home repairs	67%
Auto repairs	63%
Credit	60%
Advertising/telemarketing	42%
Collections/billing practices	26%
Household goods	23%
Internet/e-commerce	23%
Telecommunications/cable/satellite	23%
Real estate/landlord-tenant	23%

SOURCES: National Association of Consumer Agency Administrators; Consumer Federation of America

AP

Automotive sales top list of consumer complaints

By Jonathan D. Salant
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Suzanne Tejeda needed transportation to college so she bought her first car last February. But since then she says she's spent more time driving to the repair shop than to her classes.

The car's transmission has been replaced. So have the windshield and switches for the power windows. She complained to the Contra Costa County, Calif., consumer protection bureau and now is preparing to go to court.

"I thought I was going to be able to have my car and drive it and not take into the shop

every week," said Tejeda, 20, a student at Diablo Valley College in Pleasant Hill, Calif., about 30 miles northeast of San Francisco.

Tejeda has lots of company when it comes to car problems. Hassles related to buying new or used vehicles top the 2002 list of most frequent consumer complaints. That's according to a survey released Monday by the National Association of Consumer Agency Administrators, which represents government agencies that protect consumers, and the Consumer Federation of America, a consumer advocacy group.

The annual list reflects categories of complaints most often made to state and local consumer protection agencies. The 43 agencies responding to the survey reported

309,227 complaints in 2002, up 23 percent from 2001, and helped consumers get \$130 million in refunds last year, an 18 percent increase over the previous year.

Complaints about automobile purchases moved up from the No. 2 spot on the 2001 list. It replaced home repairs, which fell to second place. Those categories have occupied the top two spots for the last five years.

Among the most frequent complaints about buying autos were false sales promotions, misleading advertising, financing problems, undisclosed damage and title and registration problems.

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