

# THE BATTALION

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**DIVERSITY DIALOGUE**

Texas A&M administrators and students have been caught in a war of words regarding diversity issues on campus since James Anderson, the new vice president for diversity, took office Nov. 19.

**Nov. 19**

- The Young Conservatives of Texas hosted an affirmative action bake sale.
- President Robert M. Gates sent an e-mail encouraging civility at A&M.
- Director of Athletics Bill Byrne said the YCT was hurting recruiting in his "Wednesday Weekly" commentary.
- The YCT sent letters to Gates and Byrne about free speech rights.

**Dec. 3**

- Gates held a forum on A&M's new admissions policies regarding minorities.

RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION  
SOURCE: TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

## YCT, administration debate diversity

By Sonia Moghe  
THE BATTALION

The A&M chapter of the Young Conservatives of Texas' recent affirmative action bake sale has created a mass of heated correspondence between the organization and school officials about diversity.

The bake sale, which was held on Nov. 19, sold baked goods for different prices based on race with the intent of discouraging affirmative action in light of James Anderson's appointment to the position of vice president and associate provost for institutional assessment and diversity.

Since then, University President Robert M. Gates sent an e-mail to the student body, calling for civility on campus.

"During the last few weeks important conversations about diversity have taken

place throughout the University in both formal and informal settings," Gates said in the Thanksgiving week e-mail. "While everyone has the right to freely express her or his opinions, such sentiments must be presented with a genuine sense of civility."

The YCT responded to this e-mail with an open letter on Nov. 30 in which it stated that Gates' e-mail implied the group had violated Aggie traditions by making several critical remarks toward individuals, including Anderson.

"One final point: YCT officers who, unlike you, are A&M students or alumni, resent your presumptuous claim of what is and is not 'Aggie tradition,'" the YCT said in the letter. "We further direct you to the Aggie Code of Honor ... before making false accusations."

At Gates' symposium on admissions and tuition held Dec. 3, he stated that the University would not include race

as a factor for admission.

"We're obviously thrilled that he's not using race as a factor in admissions," said Mark McCaig, director of communications for the YCT.

During the question and answer session at the forum, Gates was asked whether he would apologize to the YCT. He said he had served to protect the country for several years and wanted to protect people's rights, specifically the freedom of speech.

"I am the one that deserves the apology," Gates said.

Bill Byrne, director of athletics at A&M, made comments about the bake sale in his online "Wednesday Weekly" commentary on Nov. 26.

"The Texas A&M bake sale plays right into the hands of those who recruit against us, in both athletics and in the general student population,"

Byrne said. "(Those who recruit against us) will use something like this to suggest that Texas A&M does not have a welcoming environment."

The YCT also responded to his statement in the Nov. 30 open letter, defending the actions of the organization.

"We resent your shameless and feeble attempt to shift responsibility for Texas A&M's lackluster athletic season from yourself to A&M YCT," the YCT said in the letter to Byrne.

The YCT letter pointed to the racial imbalance in the football team as an example for its argument, saying that the team was made up mostly of African Americans who earned their spots on the team, and that other races were underrepresented in that sense.

"We feel all of our protests and

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## A&M admissions policy irks minority legislators

Staff & Wire  
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M President Robert M. Gates listened to concerns on Monday from minority legislators who are irritated by A&M's new admissions policies and explained the University's commitment to admitting and retaining more minority students in the future.

The legislators implored Gates to increase minority enrollment, even after the Board of Regents approved an admissions

plan Friday that will not consider race as a factor in deciding which students are accepted.

"What we are asking — no, what we are demanding — is that A&M show significant improvement in their diversity this fall as relates to admission of African-Americans and Hispanics, not only at the undergraduate level, but also at the graduate level," Sen. Royce West, D-Dallas, said shortly after a Capitol meeting with Gates.

Regents unanimously approved a new admissions plan that will not consider race as a factor in deciding which students are accepted for enrollment at its main campus, to go into effect for the 2006 incoming class.

Remarks from the meeting will have no effect on the policy, Gates said Monday night, since it has already been approved by regents. However, Gates said he listened to legislators' concerns and reemphasized his belief that his "aggressive outreach" programs will yield results.

"They clearly have a problem with what the regents approved," Gates said. "But by next fall, they will see a change in the repre-

sentation of minorities on campus."

Gates said lawmakers can hold him personally accountable for increasing the historically low number of minorities at A&M. "We basically need to get out there, get into communities and convey the message that A&M is serious about wanting minority students to join our student body," Gates said.

Hispanic students at Texas A&M made up 8 percent of this year's incoming freshmen, while blacks constituted 2 percent of the incoming students.

West said Gates' promise isn't enough and threatened legislative retribution.

Citing appropriations and confirmations of appointments, West said that without improvement "there will in fact be issues that A&M will have to face during the legislative process."

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.

The University of Texas and several other schools in the state have announced a comprehensive change in policy that allows for the consideration of race and ethnicity.

A&M's new plan will continue to make attracting minorities to the 45,000-student campus a top priority but will do so through increased outreach efforts in predominantly minority areas. The plan also calls for a \$5,000-a-year scholarship targeting first-generation college students who come from lower-income families.

"A big part of what we need to do is to encourage more students that we admit, even under the top 10 percent law, actually to enroll in Texas A&M," Gates said, after

*"We basically need to get out there, get into communities and convey the message that A&M is serious about wanting minority students to join our student body."*

— Robert M. Gates  
Texas A&M President

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## Air mail



JOSHUA L. HOBSON • THE BATTALION

Freshman international studies major Beth Stierman arranges donations to prepare them for shipping Monday afternoon at Rudder Fountain. The drive will continue Tuesday and is accepting donations of T-shirts, long underwear and baby wipes for two former students on military duty and their units in Baghdad who lost their personal items in a fire.

## A&M researcher helps NASA

By Erin Price  
THE BATTALION

When Mark Lemmon, a researcher for Texas A&M's Department of Atmospheric Sciences, was an undergraduate at the University of Washington, he never thought he would be involved with a NASA mission to Mars.

"My graduate studies were at the University of Arizona's Planetary Science Department," Lemmon said. "That was where I really started getting into it."

NASA has launched two robotic rovers



LEMMON

that will land on Mars in January, and Lemmon, who has been helping NASA with Martian research for six years, will use scientific instruments to direct the rovers' travels.

The two rovers, named Spirit and Opportunity, will study the history of Mars' climate and try to determine if there was ever water on the planet.

"We know there has been water on Mars at one point, but we don't know how much or how long it was there," Lemmon said. "If Mars had water, it might have had life."

Lemmon said there is plenty of evidence that there was once water on Mars. There are flood plains, river valleys and a crater lake

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## Mission: Mars

A Texas A&M researcher is working on a project with NASA to send two rovers to explore the "red planet."

The rovers will travel about 300 million miles to their destination. Two out of three previous missions to Mars have failed.

Spirit Lands:  
Jan. 3, 2004, about 10:35 pm

Opportunity Lands:  
Jan. 24, 2004, about 11:05 pm



ANDREW BURLESON • THE BATTALION  
SOURCE: HTTP://MARSROVERS.JPL.NASA.GOV

## Political science majors face registration problems

By Carrie Pierce  
THE BATTALION

Political science majors who have had trouble registering for required courses will be given a chance to force into classes needed for graduation starting Wednesday, when University-wide open registration begins.

Senior political science major Noel Freeman said he couldn't locate a single 300- or 400- level political science class when he tried to register on his assigned date.

"They can't tell me that on the first day of registration every class is full," Freeman said.

Freeman said the political science department was not helpful.

"I went around and around with the department," Freeman said. "They are making political science majors fill out applications for classes, but they said they could not guarantee graduating seniors would get into the classes."

Freeman said the registrar's office suggested he consider transferring to the University of Texas or Texas Tech University if he could not be forced

into his required classes.

"There is not a whole lot I can do," Freeman said. "I'm going to have to take distance courses."

Junior international studies major Canion Boyd said he attempted to register for Political Science 331 on the first day of junior registration, but it was already full.

"It is ridiculous that on the first day this would be full," Boyd said. "Everyone has to take political science courses."

Boyd said he was told by a political science adviser that political science classes had been reduced and that there were four fewer staff members in the department.

Boyd said students attempting to get into political science classes can meet with advisers later this week to get forced into classes. Boyd said he is concerned because these classes are held in the Bush School where the maximum capacity of most classrooms is 30.

Gary Halter, associate professor and director of undergraduate studies for political science said students need not worry.

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## Vet school cited for inadequate procedures

By Jacquelyn Spruce  
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M's College of Veterinary Medicine was cited for not having adequate alternatives for procedures that could cause slight pain or distress to animals, according to an inspection report issued by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in April.

Teri Barnato, director of the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (AVAR) in Davis, Calif., said citations were given to nearly all U.S. veterinary medical schools for noncompliance with the federal Animal Welfare Act. She said the inspections and citations were a result of a petition for rule making and enforcement under the Animal Welfare Act that AVAR filed last year.

"The USDA responded more positively than we could have ever expected," Barnato said. "For as long as I can remember, veterinary medical schools have used the USDA as an excuse for continuing to harm and kill animals for educational purposes."

Although the exact protocols that

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