



Regents approve tuition increase for fall

By Jason Hanselka
THE BATTALION

Last-minute pleas from students on Thursday afternoon did not dissuade the Texas A&M System Board of Regents Friday morning from unanimously approving a 21 percent tuition increase for the fall semester.

Erle Nye, vice chairman of the board, said there was a tension between the two main factors contributing to the board's decision.

"We had to consider the quality of education offered on one hand and the cost on the other," Nye said. "To protect the quality of education, you have to have a certain amount of dollars."

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— Erle Nye
Vice chairman A&M System Board of Regents

Tuition for the fall semester is now set at \$74.50 per credit hour, a \$19.50 increase from the current rate of \$55 per credit hour.

Regent Susan Rudd Wynn said the tuition increase is about creating growth at the University.

"There is a tremendous need for new faculty," Wynn said. "The money needs to be in place when you hire the new faculty."

Wynn said the concerns of the students are very important to the board.

"We are very sensitive to the financial needs of students," Wynn said.

Nye said the students who voiced their concerns at the public hearing on Thursday were very curious and brought up thoughtful comments.

"The students are the immovable object and force of this University," Nye said. "My heart goes out to all of them."

John Barnett, however, said the regents did not take the students seriously.

"The public forum yesterday was a joke," said Barnett, a sophomore computer engineering major. "Today, every time a regent spoke about the issue, they couldn't even look a student in the eyes."

Nye said the board is actively trying to reallocate funds to the students.

"There is a significant effort to put money back

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Big Event is a big success

By Kyle Ross
THE BATTALION

Jelena Djuric, a College Station resident and recipient of The Big Event Saturday, said this was the second year she has had Texas A&M students volunteer their time and assistance in repairing her estate.

This year, she welcomed students from Kappa Alpha Theta and Phi Delta Theta as they raked leaves, cut shrubbery, planted trees and painted her trim.

"I just love these Aggie students," Djuric said. "I love to meet them, talk to them and share some experiences with them. It would take my husband and I months to do all of the housework these kids can do in a day. It's a great service to the community."

More than 750 of these types of jobs were successfully completed in just four hours Saturday said Jessy Hersman, director of The Big Event. The 22nd annual Big Event saw the participation of more than 8,000 students representing about 400 student organizations at A&M.

A&M President Robert M. Gates told the early morning crowd of students that gathered on Simpson Drill Field before leaving for the day's work that by participating in Big Event, lives across the area are changed.

"From coast to coast, the lives of men, women and children from 30 states will be better tomorrow because of events like this, and you started it all," he said. "It gets bigger every year, as this Aggie tradition becomes an American tradition."

Julie Whisenhunt, one of the students busy at work in Djuric's yard, said she was happy to give something back to the community.

"This gives us (students) a chance to get out of that 'college bubble' and meet the community,"

said Whisenhunt, a sophomore business major. "I live in this neighborhood, and I never met Mrs. Djuric before today."

College Station resident Margeret Lambert welcomed members of Squadron 17 of the Corps of Cadets to help her out around her house.

"I appreciate these kids more than words can say," Lambert said. "I feel like they're my sons. My blood is maroon, and it makes my year to have them come by here to help me out."

Due to a recent surgery, Lambert, a long-time Aggie and community member, was unable to do much of her housework, including moving her plants to the outside for the warmer months. She said the students helped her accomplish what would have been months of yard work in just a few hours.

But for one student, Saturday's event was not quite enough.

"I'm coming back to help Mrs. Lambert in the fall," said Sam McAnally, a senior agriculture development major. "There's no Big Event in the fall, but if I don't come back, her plants won't survive the winter."

Jared Bishop, a senior recreation, parks and tourism major and commander of Squadron 17, said the entire squadron had participated in The Big Event by splitting up into five groups and spreading out the work among different recipients.

Many organizations followed the same suit as Squadron 17, including the A&M football team, which had full participation, Hersman said.

With all of the hard work and hours volunteered, A&M students, in unison with many other colleges and high schools around the nation, are giving their respective communities a very loud and appreciated "thank you."



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Senior Russian major **Aaron Atkin** (from left to right), junior environmental design major **Stephanie Smith** and senior ocean engineering major **Jeremy**

Young plant trees at Heritage Park in Bryan as part of The Big Event. More than 8,000 students participated in this year's community service event.

Students split on service fee increase

By Rhiannon Meyers
THE BATTALION

Jim Carlson, chair of the Texas A&M Student Services Fee Advisory Board (SSFAB), encouraged students to vote in favor of the student services fee increase in an open forum Friday in the Memorial Student Center Flag Room.

The proposed increase of 65 cents would raise the fee from \$11.86 per credit hour to \$12.51, increasing the fee above the cap of \$150 and setting a new cap of \$250. Because the fee would exceed the \$150 cap, a student referendum is mandated by the state.

Carlson said the SSFAB did not purposefully suggest an increase that would change the cap.

"We just went through proposals individually, and in the end we added it all up. It just so happened that's what we ended up with," he said.

Carlson said the fee increase is necessary to continue to offer and develop services and programs for A&M students. He said the fee increase would also provide funds for merit salary increases.

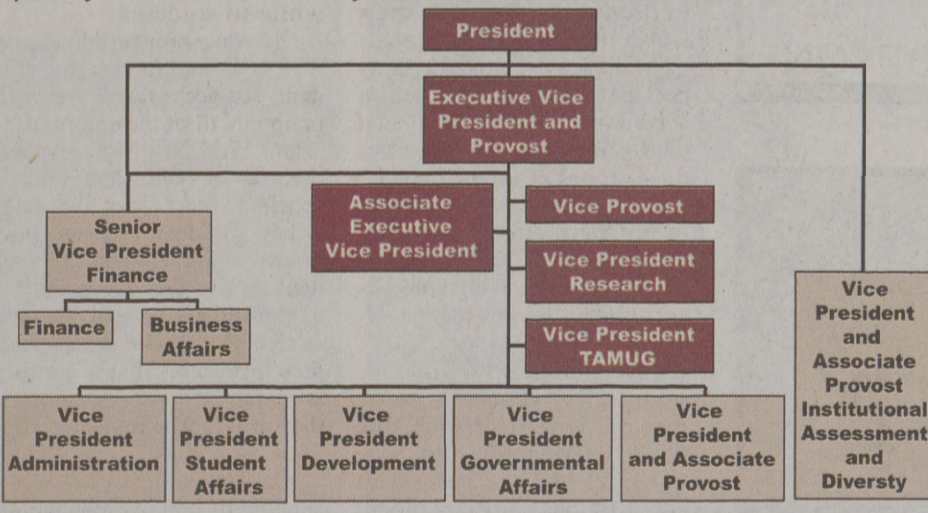
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A&M administration to undergo changes

By Jason Hanselka
THE BATTALION

Reorganization of University Departments

Texas A&M President Robert M. Gates announced several restructuring changes to take place by the end of the 2004 fiscal year. The new structure is as follows:



RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION
SOURCE: OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Texas A&M's administrative structure will undergo several changes by the end of the 2004 fiscal year to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of administrative functions, said A&M President Robert M. Gates.

Gates said the administration's structure went through some uncommon changes.

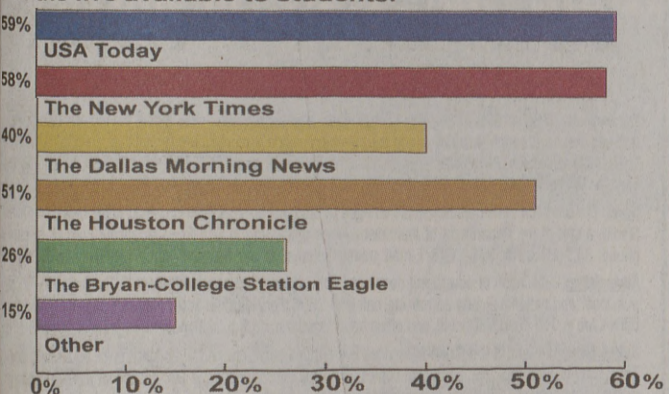
"In the past, administrators that no longer had a connection to a particular organization moved to another job within the administration and took their previous functions with them," Gates said. "The result was that you had anomalies such as the vice president for student affairs managing Reed Arena."

Gates said the Office of the Senior Vice President for Finance will undergo the most noticeable change. The category of business affairs will be added, which will encompass many responsibilities that are being shifted

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EXTRA! EXTRA! Read all about it!

In a survey taken by 600 students March 23, USA Today was the most widely-read newspaper of the five available to students.



RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION
SOURCE: THE COLLEGIATE READERSHIP PROGRAM

Readership program will return this fall

By Aerin Toussaint
THE BATTALION

The four-week USA Today Collegiate Readership Program was an overall success, and the program will return to campus next year for a trial run beginning in the fall, said Chris Diem, a junior political science major and vice president of student services.

The program ran from Feb. 9 to March 5 and gave students the opportunity to pick up newspapers such as USA Today, The New York Times, The Houston Chronicle, The Bryan-College Station Eagle and The Dallas Morning News free of charge at different on-campus locations.

During the four-week program, 92,000

papers were distributed, with an average of 4,545 papers distributed per day, Diem said.

Six-hundred students were given a survey on March 23, and USA Today was the most widely-read newspaper among students with 59 percent of students reading it. The New York Times followed with 58 percent, The Houston Chronicle with 51 percent, The Dallas Morning News with 40 percent and The Bryan-College Station Eagle with 26 percent.

On the whole, the response was encouraging, Diem said. At the end of the program, 99 percent of the received surveys were positive.

Debra Blakely, a journalism professor, said she heard about the program from her

students. Blakely said the response was positive because journalism students found the free papers an asset as they did homework for her course, which requires them to keep a media journal.

According to the survey, 96 percent of A&M students said it is important to read different newspapers to keep up with current news to enhance their education.

"Because of the success of the program, next year we are going to bring it back on a trial run basis for the entire year starting in the fall," Diem said.

The newspapers will be free to students,

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