



## Commons Dining Center to close permanently

By Jibran Najmi  
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M Food Services decided on July 1 to permanently close the Commons Dining Center located in the basement of the Commons because of overwhelming financial losses and decreased traffic. An interim plan for residents has been instituted, including expanded seating, additional food lines and increased options at the Common Denominator.

The A&M Student Senate has formed an ad-hoc committee to gather information about what students want to eat, dining preferences and what replacements would be acceptable.

"We have already partially remodeled the Common Denominator, and we are currently working on compiling a report for Food Services so that they have a better idea of what students want to see in

place of the Commons Dining Center," said Scott Smith, Student Services chair for the Student Senate.

The committee includes senators elected from the Southside dorms, from within the Corps of Cadets and Chris Diem, executive vice president under Student Body President Jack Hildebrand.

Smith said the committee faces the challenges of finding a balance between all of the options offered across campus.

"Ideally, we would like to find some balance between the all-you-can-eat buffet style you find at Sbisla, the Chick-Fil-A-type restaurants you find at the Underground and the outbound system we currently have in places such as the Common Denominator," Smith said.

Students have had mixed reactions to the clo-

**"I think in the long run, this will be better for the University as all of the dining options on Southside are pretty much consolidated."**

— Scott Smith  
Student Senate Student Services  
Chair

sure. Rachel Johnson, a junior business management major, said the impact would not significantly affect residents.

"It was never really busy last year, so I can understand where the University is coming from," Johnson said.

Johnson said students didn't eat at the Commons because of the environment and the limited variety.

"My friends and I lived in Mosher, and we would rather walk to Sbisla, because it's newer, and I guess we liked the environment there a little more," Johnson said. "I think in general, students like the variety and quality of the food at Sbisla."

Over the summer, Food Services overhauled the food court located on the upper first floor of the

Commons and added options for residents.

"I love the convenience and the things they have added to the Common Denominator," Johnson said. "You walk outside of your dorm, and it's right there. I think the University is trying really hard to make up for the loss of the dining center to the residents of the Commons, but ultimately I don't think it's going to be that big of a deal."

Michael Murphy, a junior communication major, disagreed with Johnson's sentiment that the Commons will not be missed.

"I'm really disappointed to see such a permanent icon of Aggieland, a place where I've had so many fond memories, just suddenly disappear," Murphy said.

Food Services created a steering committee independent of the Student Senate and hopes to

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## Record crowd



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The Yell Leaders lead a record-breaking 4,403 fans in yells at the Aggie women's soccer game against Michigan Friday night at the Aggie Soccer Complex. This was the second-largest crowd to attend

an A&M women's sporting event. The Aggies won 2-1 against No. 15 Michigan and scored No. 12 Clemson Sunday night, where they lost 4-1. For more soccer news, see Sports on page 7A.

## Gas line inspected before fatal explosion

By Jibran Najmi  
THE BATTALION

University Apartment maintenance workers inspected the gas connections in the apartment of Saquib Ejaz prior to the July 31 explosion that fatally injured a 4-year-old child, and left her pregnant mother and paternal grandparents severely injured, said Sandeep Bhatnagar, a family friend.

Bhatnagar, who lives in the University Apartments, said he saw maintenance workers go out to the Ejaz apartment and that Ejaz personally told him that the workers changed the gas line tubing that ran through the apartment.

"(Ejaz) told me on the morning before the explosion that he could still smell gas, but that the maintenance workers had told him repeatedly that (...) the leak was outside of the apartment, and that he should just keep his windows closed so that no gases entered the apartment," Bhatnagar said.

Bhatnagar said Ejaz mentioned that the workers would return on Monday because they needed a whole team to fix the

external leak, and that it couldn't be done on the weekend.

"Earlier on Saturday morning, July 31, James Baletka, the coordinator of Apartment Services, had checked the apartment and instructed his crew to change the flexible tube connecting stove the wall outlet," Bhatnagar said.

Bhatnagar said the workers spent a great deal of time inspecting the gas lines and connections inside and outside of the apartment.

"(Ejaz) told me that Mr. Baletka told him that they had inspected the lines, and that there was no problem inside the apartment. What else can you do? You can't argue with the maintenance when they're telling you that it is OK," Bhatnagar said.

Texas A&M President Robert M. Gates said the Presidential Task Force he has appointed will look into all aspects of safety and maintenance on campus.

Gates said the task force would make recommendations

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## Nader urges Aggies to be more politically involved

By Sonia Moghe  
THE BATTALION

Ralph Nader accepted his nomination as the presidential candidate for the Reform Party at the Reform Party National Convention this weekend, along with the party's vice presidential nominee Peter Camejo and urged Texas A&M students to make their own voting decisions.

"No one's ever going to agree with everybody," Nader said. "You don't always agree on politics with your own family."

Nader, who is not on the ballot for the 2004 presidential election in Texas, accepted the endorsement Saturday in a speech at the convention, which was held at a hotel in Irving, Texas, attended by about 75 members.

Nader is currently challenging the state of Texas' ballot-access laws in court to be able to earn a spot on the ballot for the November election.

Camejo urges A&M students not to vote based on how their families vote, but to make the choice for themselves.

"(Students) shouldn't be afraid to vote for peace and against the Patriot Act," Camejo said. "A vote for Bush is a vote for war. Only a vote for Nader is a vote for peace."

Mark McCaig, a senior marketing major who was visiting as a person interested in the political process, said he was surprised at the small size of the convention.

"I'm surprised that what was such a major force several years ago is now so small," McCaig said. "This is the party that with (Ross) Perot in the early 1990s earned 18 million votes."

Nader urges Aggies to become more politically involved and to understand the relationship between corporations and the general public.

"Corporations should be the public's servants, not masters," Nader said.

## Mays Business School releases figures More MBA graduates finding jobs after graduation

By Sara Foley  
THE BATTALION

This year, more MBA graduates found jobs within three months after graduation than in years past due to changes in the career placement services in the Lowry Mays MBA program.

Mays reported 90 percent of graduates had accepted positions at graduation and 95 percent three months later, compared to 86.5 percent and 95.9 percent last year. The average salary with bonuses dropped to \$87,880 from last year's \$91,644. The results were released on Aug. 17, just after the 90-day benchmark used to determine rankings by publications such as U.S. News and World Report and will be used for the 2005 report. In previous years, the information was not released until the U.S. News published its annual rankings in mid-April.

"We've never released the results early, but most schools do put them up at the 90-day point. We decided to because, to me, it isn't a secret," said Director of Graduate Business Career Services Jim Dixey.

Dixey attributed the increases to a proactive approach to career search and emphasis on alumni connections, such as a program called Executives in Residence, which brings in retired alumni experienced in the corporate world to consult students one-on-one about career goals.

Other changes include a requirement for incoming MBA students to meet one-on-one with career advisers within the first few weeks of classes to discuss their career objectives to ensure no one slips through the cracks.

"We ask them what their career goals are and stress that they must have at least three options," Dixey said. "If you don't pursue more

### MAYS BUSINESS SCHOOL Business Rankings

The Mays Business School, whose MBA Program was ranked 23rd in the nation for 2004 by U.S. News and World Report, released its post-graduate career placement statistics for this year on Aug. 17.

- 90 percent of Mays graduates accepted positions at graduation, compared to 86.5 percent last year
- 95 percent of Mays graduates accepted positions three months later, compared to 95.9 percent last year
- The average salary with bonuses dropped to \$87,880 from last year's \$91,644

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SOURCE: U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT

than one career path, it's a path to unemployment. It's like going fishing and throwing five lines in the lake — you've got a better chance at getting a bite."

The emphasis on career placement resulted in A&M's MBA program jumping from ranking 51st in 2003 to 23rd in 2004 by U.S.

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## Edwards stresses defense, social equality; Wohlgemuth stresses social order

By Lacy Ledford  
THE BATTALION

Contenders for congressional district 17 — incumbent Congressman Chet Edwards and State Rep. Arlene Wohlgemuth — discussed differing philosophies in a debate Friday, in which Edwards said the government's main duty should be to provide strong national defense and Wohlgemuth countered that it should be to maintain social and moral order.

The candidates appealed for the support of Brazos Valley voters in a one-hour debate held at the Animal Industries building on Friday. The debate gave the candidates an opportunity to discuss education, national deficit, balancing the federal budget and tax cuts.

"The debate was very informative, depending on what you were looking for," said Jarred Sulak, a freshman business major who attended the debate. "But I wish more questions could have been asked by the audience."

Republican candidate Wohlgemuth and Democratic candidate Edwards were allowed to ask each other questions and answer seven audience questions.

"Our founding fathers understood that we are a religious people, and our laws work best because we understand the respect for human life and the respect for one another," Wohlgemuth said.

Edwards said the government should show respect to those who protect America and provide educational opportunities and better playing fields

for low-income schools.

"I don't think the government should try to solve every problem," Edwards said. "You want government not to try and guarantee you success, but to at least say that if you're willing to work hard and play by the rules, you have an opportunity to have a few good things for your family."

The candidates were also asked if the United States should fund health care for illegal immigrants.

"We simply cannot provide health care, education and social services for all the people of the world," Edwards said. "I have been part of efforts trying to strengthen our border protection, not only against illegal immigration, but against terrorism."

Wohlgemuth agreed that the nation must do a

better job of defending U.S. borders.

"I believe we have the technology that can help us do that, but that we lack the political will to fund additional border patrol agents and military," Wohlgemuth said.

Just as the two candidates had opposing positions on various issues, the Aggies in attendance also varied in their reactions.

Senior marketing major Nicole Mozell said Edwards spoke more directly than Wohlgemuth in the debate.

"I felt more fulfilled with Chet's responses," Mozell said. "I think he supports more constituents at A&M than Arlene."

Edwards said he supports investing in education

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