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(Left) Michael Murtha listens in during Monday's trial. (Center) Election commissioner Emma Douglas consults team during the trial. (Right) Joseph Benigno defends his position as SBP-elect.

SBP contenders trade blows at trial

SGA Judicial Court hearing concludes, decision expected in next 72 hours

By Wade Feilin

At the heart of the Monday night J-Court trial that could decide the next student body president were the questions of whether fines should be levied against the SBP-elect and who has the right to assess them.

At the Murtha v. Benigno & Douglas trial hearing, all parties presented their arguments regarding SBP-elect Joseph Benigno's alleged violations of Election Commission rules in a

campaign video, titled "Go(Pro) With Joe." A decision is expected within 72 hours, and if J-Court elects to assess fines that exceed Benigno's campaign budget, he could be disqualified. In that case, Michael Murtha, who finished second in the Feb. 19-20 election, would assume the position.

Murtha's counsel began with the argument that the misapplication of election regulations to both parties violated the student Bill of Rights, which states SGA statutes and regulations must apply equally.

Murtha's counsel said the Election Commission violated this clause by fining SBP can-

didate Isaiah Tsau, but not Benigno. "Ms. Douglas offered no support from election regulations, SGA code or the university constitution that what she did by not fining Benigno is not supported in any language in any law," economics senior Clayton Cromer said on Murtha's behalf.

Election commissioner Emma Douglas said she considered severity and intent with the fine levied against Tsau.

Douglas argued the intent of Tsau holding a banner in the MSC was to garner votes, and because the MSC is a high-traffic area on

SBP ON PG. 2

STUDENT AFFAIRS

Two names put forward for VPSA vacancy

By Katy Stapp

After a national search, the Division of Student Affairs announced two finalists for the vice president for student affairs.

The two finalists, David W. Parrott and Daniel J. Pugh, will interview this month and conduct an open forum with the public.

Four undergraduates served on the search advisory committee that sifted through the applicant pool. Student Body President Kyle Kelly, a committee member, said the opening drew wide interest and the candidates reflect the quality of the search.

Coming alongside a transition to a new university president in Michael Young, a new VPSA will be part of a "new era of leadership at A&M," Kelly said.

Parrott, executive associate vice president and chief of staff in the Division of Student Affairs at Texas A&M, previously served as associate dean of students at A&M. Pugh serves as the vice provost for student affairs at the University of Arkansas as the senior student affairs officer.

The A&M position is occupied by Tom Reber, who has served as interim VPSA since April 2014.

Pugh's campus visit will take place March 12-13, with the open forum from 1:30-3:30 p.m. March 13 in MSC 2300A. Parrott's campus visit will take place March 26-27, with the open forum from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. on March 27 in MSC 2406.

M. BASKETBALL

Aggie road schedule closes with Florida

By Lawrence Smelser

After winning its 20th game of the season — a first for the Aggies under head coach Billy Kennedy — Texas A&M hopes to secure its 12th SEC win Tuesday against the Florida Gators.

The previous matchup between A&M and Florida was a 63-62 thriller. Fifth-year senior post Kourtney Roberson led the Aggies with a season-high 20 points, and junior forward Jalen Jones helped seal the win for Texas A&M by sinking two free throws with about a minute remaining.

As the teams prepare to meet again, Texas A&M (20-8, 11-5 SEC) sits in third place in the SEC behind undefeated Kentucky and one game back of Arkansas.

In its last game, Texas A&M beat Auburn by a whopping 25 points — its largest margin of victory in SEC play. Four of Texas A&M's players scored

BASKETBALL ON PG. 3

STUDENT GOVERNMENT



Kasey Kram (left) speaks with COSGA delegates at a reception Monday.

COSGA sparks talk between student reps across globe

By Lindsey Gawlik

The annual trek of student representatives from universities across the world to College Station just got larger.

The Conference on Student Government Associations, COSGA, is in its 34th year at Texas A&M. Saturday through Tuesday, COSGA — with more than 40 schools, 350 delegates, 110 A&M undergraduate staff members and a \$90,000 budget — celebrated its largest conference to date, said director Julie Craig.

COSGA invites members of student governments to Texas A&M, where SGA delegates discuss ways to approach campus issues while also showing delegates around College Station.

Some of the subjects touched on this year included concealed carry and growth and visibility of student governments, all of which fit within the overarching theme, "Ever Onward: Define Your Vision, Improve Continuously, Forge Your Legacy."

Daniel Beard, programming executive and industrial engineering junior, said the theme fit well with the goals of student leadership.

"That's kind of like the process I believe that every organization has to do — they have to have some type of vision for how they want to accomplish their goals," Beard said. "And then once they have those goals they need to improve continuously because if you have a goal but you can't execute it, it's a hallucination basically."

Trey Foster, construction science senior and COSGA host, said one of the most interesting ideas he heard from delegates this year was a "Meet the Senate Day," in which campus senators make themselves available during the day to visit with their student constituents.

Connie Song, international studies senior and promotions committee member, said she sat in on a roundtable discussion about concealed carry, in which members of North Dakota State University talked about how their campus allows them to carry firearms on campus under special circumstances.

Concealed carry has also been a recent topic of interest at Texas A&M, as Student

COSGA ON PG. 2

FOOTBALL

IT BEGINS.



The A&M football team began spring practice Monday.

Coaches get first look at roster at spring practice

By Andre Perrard

Aggie football is back for spring workouts as the team began its 2015 campaign Monday.

The practice marked the first time out for some new Aggie coaches as Dave Christensen and John Chavis made their debuts Monday for A&M.

Head coach Kevin Sumlin said Chavis, his new defensive coordinator, is fitting in to the

new job and environment. The two had a moment to talk on the field before practice began.

"[Chavis] has been excited since he's been here," Sumlin said with a grin. "He was looking around at the white helmets and told me, 'Coach, I can't tell you how excited I am for today.' And I said, 'I can't tell you how excited I am, too.' It's good. We're just trying to get better as a team. I think there are some things fundamentally that we're doing that makes sense. He brings a lot of experience

not just in this league but overall. Think right now it's one of those situations where guys are learning. It's a new defense. Few days before we scrimmage. We'll see where we are but I'm real pleased with the energy right now."

The team has its fair share of injuries. Mike Matthews and Otaru Alaka are two of the handful of players who are not participating at all this spring due to injury. However, Sumlin said he does not dwell on the issue, but uses it

FOOTBALL ON PG. 3

High-speed rail advocates: B-CS still benefits

Proposed Houston-to-Dallas route to bypass College Station after all

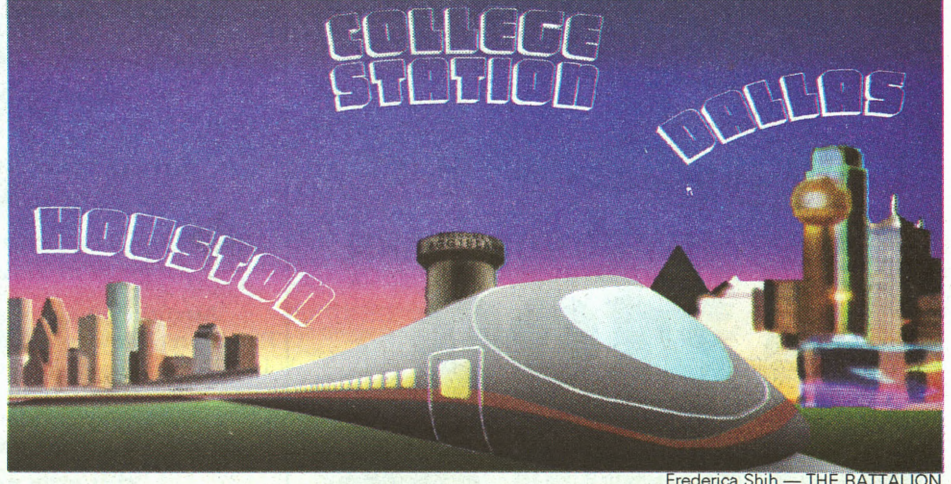
By Nikita Redkar

Texas' high-speed rail initiative took a step forward, but Bryan-College Station is left unsure of its place along the proposed route.

Officials at Texas Central Railway recommended a route in mid February for the high-speed rail connecting Houston and Dallas that places the rail's sole stop-over 20 miles from College Station.

Local high-speed rail advocates say the stop-over's proximity to Texas A&M could still reap substantial benefits if the rail is ultimately built and if the community finds a way to close the 20-mile distance.

RAIL ON PG. 4



If proposed route stands, the new high-speed rail will not run through College Station.