



MULTIMEDIA ONLINE



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WEST: A TOWN REBUILDS

For many UT students driving on I-35, the town of West is best known as a kolache stop. But one year after an ammonium nitrate blast rocked the small town of 3,000, leaving 15 people dead, residents young and old who call West home are finding a way to remember and rebuild.



Pu Ying Huang / Daily Texan Staff

A memorial dedicated to the lives lost in the West plant explosion stands in a field across the site of the incident. One year after the explosion, residents of West are still rebuilding houses and businesses in the community. A memorial will be held Thursday evening at West Fair and Rodeo Grounds to commemorate the anniversary.

Legislators deliberate new safety regulations

By Jeremy Thomas
@jeremyobthomas

As a result of a fertilizer plant explosion in West exactly one year ago, state politicians are considering new regulations for ammonium nitrate storage in fire-proof bins or by installing fire sprinklers.

Ammonium nitrate is often used in agriculture as a high-nitrogen fertilizer. When exposed to heat, the chemical becomes explosive. Investigators confirmed ammonium nitrate as the material that exploded in West.

The State House Committee on Homeland Security and Public Safety heard recommendations from several state agencies and officials Monday. State Rep. Joe Pickett, D-El Paso, who is also chairman of the committee,

REGULATIONS page 3

One year after tragic blast, West continues to rebuild

By Madlin Mekelburg
@madlinbmek

One year after a fertilizer plant exploded, killing 15 people and injuring more than 300, the residents of West are rebuilding.

West, a farming town located approximately 20 miles outside of Waco, has a population of less than 3,000 and an all-volunteer fire department. On April 17, 2013, a fire broke out, causing stores of ammonium nitrate at the West Fertilizer Co. to detonate. Of the 15 people killed in the explosion, nine were first responders.

The explosion, which had

force comparable to that of a small earthquake, caused severe damage to surrounding buildings, including stores and homes. The local high school, located across the railroad tracks, had to be demolished and has yet to be rebuilt.

Small wooden stars with positive messages such as “God bless West!” stand, hang or lie in the yards of almost every lot around the field where the plant used to be. Some of the surrounding properties have been left untouched since the explosion — one lot holds a house without a roof, windows or doors, and a tree bearing the

remnants of a tree house. Other lots are now under construction.

Suzanne Hack, executive director of the West Long Term Recovery Center — a nonprofit organization created to provide guidance, resources and education about rebuilding efforts — said the town has issued 28 certificates of occupancy and 205 building permits since the explosion. Hack said many local contractors and builders are working to rebuild houses in the town.

David Eubanks, an electrical contractor from West,

WEST page 3

After explosion, school closes but prom tradition continues

By Hannah Smothers
@hannahsmothers_

One day before the anniversary of the West fertilizer plant explosion, Lauren Wernet, a senior at West High School, picked her red nail polish, left over from prom, off her fingernails.

Wernet has been to three prom dances, but her senior prom last Saturday was her favorite — even though it couldn't be held in the high school she attended for almost three years. The prom, held at the Knights of Columbus Hall in West, was a Great Gatsby-inspired, 1920s soiree.

Wernet picked her dress to match the theme.



Shweta Gulati / Daily Texan Staff

Cordell Clark (left) and Lauren Wernet are seniors at West High School, which currently exists as portable buildings because of the plant explosion that destroyed the old school building.

“It was black — sparkly all the way down,” Wernet said. “The cut was right here on one side. I had red heels and

silver jewelry. And I did my own makeup, and I had my

SCHOOL page 3

CITY

Group advocates musician-friendly laws

By Julia Brouillette
@juliakbrou

It is not uncommon to hear singing, drumming and guitar strumming echoing through the streets of the busy entertainment district in downtown Austin. But according to a group of advocates and city officials, performers are sometimes mistaken for panhandlers.

The Austin Music Commission, an advisory committee focused on matters that may affect musicians and the music industry, passed a resolution tasking a group of three commission members with researching laws friendly to street performers. Ultimately, the group hopes the

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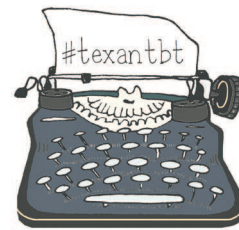


Andrea Kurth / Daily Texan Staff

Pablo Gigante, who moved to Austin from Missouri to work as a musician, sings on South Congress Avenue on Wednesday. The Austin Music Commission is researching busking-friendly laws to clarify the differences between panhandling and performing on the streets.

THROWBACK

Since 1972, tuition has risen by 8,165 percent



By Kevin Sharifi
@kevsharifi

With some students having already registered and some about to do so, the coming fall semester has Longhorns either dreading the \$4,000-5,000 blow to their finances or wondering whether their self-worth will allow them to accept another several-thousand-dollar donation from their parents. But

tuition once cost less than a year's worth of Netflix.

A June 1, 1971 article in The Summer Texan warned students that then-Gov. Preston Smith had signed a tuition increase bill that, by 1972, would put tuition on a semester-hour basis and charge students a staggering \$4 per semester-hour.

“The measure, which passed both houses of the Legislature May 21, puts tuition on a semester hour basis with resident students paying \$4 per semester hour,” the article said. “Thus a student taking a normal 15-hour load will pay \$60 tuition, up \$10 from the present \$50

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TOMORROW'S WEATHER

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Her accordion?

THE DAILY TEXAN

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Friday.....Sunday, 12 p.m.

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FRAMES FEATURED PHOTO

Sam Thornton tries on a hat in the Goorin Bros. Hat Shop on South Congress on Wednesday afternoon.

Andrea Kurth / Daily Texan Staff

TUITION

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fee. Students taking 12 hours or less, however, will not benefit because the measure sets a \$50 minimum tuition fee for a regular semester.”

If the culprit for increases in resident tuition since 1972 were merely inflation, an in-state student taking 15 hours at UT today would be paying approximately \$330 per semester — just \$4,569 shy of the current weighted-average tuition for a UT student taking 15 credit hours.

The 1971 bill also stipulated that tuition for non-residents enrolling in 1972 would increase to \$40 per semester-hour, meaning a total of \$600 in tuition fees for an out-of-state UT student taking 15 hours. If inflation were the only factor influencing out-of-state tuition increases, nonresident students today would be paying approximately \$3,300 per semester instead

The measure ... puts tuition on a semester hour basis with resident students paying \$4 per semester hour. Thus a student taking a normal 15-hour load will pay \$60 tuition, up \$10 from the present \$50 fee.

of the current \$16,921.

A UT student committee’s pending tuition proposal to the UT System Board of Regents includes an increase in the weighted-average resident tuition from \$4,899 to \$5,026 and an increase in the weighted-average nonresident tuition from \$16,921 to \$17,361.

For new residents, the

proposal also offers what would become the first guaranteed tuition plan to be implemented at UT. If this plan were to go into effect, students that choose the guaranteed tuition plan would pay an average of \$5,433 per semester for resident tuition and \$18,880 per semester for nonresident tuition.

MUSICIAN

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city will clarify ordinances regarding panhandling and street performing.

“The challenge is that there are a number of ordinances that are in place that were put into the mix with good intentions but that accidentally conflict with one another,” said Jennifer Houlihan, executive director at Austin Music People, a civic engagement group that supports the local music economy. “That makes it challenging for the musicians to understand what they’re allowed and not allowed to do.”

Houlihan said current

laws, which prohibit sitting or lying on the sidewalks as well as verbal or non-verbal solicitation of money, are unclear when it comes to public performing.

“If you put out a note there that says ‘tips welcome’ or ‘tips appreciated,’ the police could ask you to take the note out or just stop playing altogether,” Houlihan said. “That’s not because anyone is doing anything wrong or anyone’s trying to be difficult. It’s because the laws are conflicting.”

Houlihan said the ideal solution would be a set of ordinances that make it easy for both police and musicians to follow the rules.

“This should support the efforts that the police are making for public safety with the existing loitering and panhandling laws without unfairly penalizing people who are legitimate artists who happen to be on the street,” Houlihan said.

APD Cpl. Chris Carlisle, who works downtown as a patrol supervisor, said the department fully supports street performers.

“We are more than passionate about their need to work, and we do everything we can to not cite them,” Carlisle said. “We haven’t issued a citation to a musician for soliciting in over six years.”

According to Carlisle, problems arise when musicians block the flow of pedestrian traffic.

“If musicians have their cases or drums set up on the sidewalk, then it forces the public to walk closer to the street, and because the streets aren’t closed, that puts them closer to the cars,” Carlisle said.

Linsey Lindberg, a busker who heads the Austin Busker Project, a non-profit organization aimed at promoting street performers, said she believes the current regulations discourage artists from performing.

“You go out to busk and you never know if the police officer on the corner is going to say, ‘Hey, that’s really cool what you’re doing,’ or if they’re going to tell you that you have to leave or give you a ticket,” Lindberg said.

Lindberg said while some city leaders, such as city councilman Mike Martinez, have publicly supported street performing, Austin lags behind other cities in terms of creating an artist friendly environment.

“We say that we’re the music capital of the world and that we support our artists, but what we’re really doing is making it impossible and pretending there’s no problem,” Lindberg said. “We have to get over the desire not to get our hands dirty in order to make Austin a better place to live.”

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1. "When it was exploding, we ran over there. It was scary." — *Jesus Alaniz-Castillo, age 9, West resident*
2. "We've been here every day since the blast. We'd drive my little grandson to school and sit right over there under that pecan tree, give everybody coffee and water." — *Beulah Zahirniak, West resident*
3. "We knew just about everybody [that was killed], and if you didn't know them personally, you knew of them. West is a small town, but I don't think anybody really realized how close we really are with each other." — *Cindy Grones, West resident*



West residents recount, recover

William "Pee Wee" Zahirniak watched his house on Reagan Street being built from underneath a pecan tree in 1961. Seven years later, he and his bride Beulah Zahirniak moved into the seven-room home. The two sat under the same pecan tree while their new home was constructed last year following the plant explosion. "We've been here all our life. We've been here all this time," Beulah Zahirniak said. The couple is now in the process of putting on the finishing touches. "We never thought about not coming back," William Zahirniak said.

Multimedia

Learn more about the rebuilding of West in a video and slideshow online at dailytexanonline.com



(Clockwise from upper left) **Photos by Pu Ying Huang, Shweta Gulati, Charlie Pearce** / Daily Texan Staff

WEST

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said he has worked on six new houses since the explosion. He said people have steadily been moving back into their houses.

According to Hack, the recovery center received \$3.6 million in donations since the explosion last year.

"I wasn't here when [the organization] started, but my understanding was that whenever the explosion occurred, a number of disaster relief organizations were immediately on the scene," Hack said. "The leaders of those organizations, as well as leaders in the West community, got together and discussed forming this organization."

West resident Trish Webber said her family's lawn mower repair business and part of her family's house were both destroyed in the explosion.

"For us, because we had the business that was destroyed also, we were not only out of our home, but we were out of work," Webber said. "Our main focus was getting the business back."

Webber said they were able to rebuild the business in two months but have only recently started seeing their customers come back because April is lawn mower season.

"Because we have the business, we're seeing our customers come back for the first time, so we pretty much talk about the explosion every day," Webber said. "I think it helps. I never talked about it a whole lot, and now I'm having to because I'm seeing a lot of people for the first time."

Cindy Grones, an X-ray technician from West, said her house, located just across the railroad tracks from the plant, was destroyed in the explosion.

Standing in the wooden

skeleton of her new home — which is scheduled to be completed in late August, with the help of a local contractor and longtime family friend — Grones said returning to her house after the explosion was an emotional experience.

"I can't remember what I ate yesterday, but I remember we came back on April 27 and it was horrible," Grones said. "Just destruction everywhere. You had to dig through your stuff and wipe all the fertilizer off."

Grones said rebuilding is only a small part of the recovery process.

"I think this is part of the recovery — the building part," Grones said. "The emotional part — it's going to be a long time. I don't think none of us will get through this totally. People say you can get over it, but I don't think so. You just learn how to deal with it day by day. You love your family. You try to do what you can."

Grones said the residents of West have grown closer since the explosion.

"We knew just about everybody [that was killed], and if you didn't know them personally, you knew of them," Grones said. "West is a small town, but I don't think anybody really realized how close we really are with each other."

Cindy Grones' youngest daughter, 15-year-old Anna Grones, said things have started to return to normal in West.

"Right after it happened, people who never talked to me before would come talk to me," Anna Grones said. "It's all back to normal now. If you try to talk about it, sometimes people say you're just trying to get attention."

Anna Grones said she is optimistic about the town's rebuilding efforts.

"It's no biggie," she said. "We got this."



Pu Ying Huang / Daily Texan Staff

Piles of rubble, such as the remains of this house on Jerry Mashek Drive, still exist a year after the fertilizer plant explosion in West. New regulations for ammonium nitrate storage are being considered to prevent any future incidents.

REGULATIONS

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said he asked state agencies to work together to form testimonies and recommendations to the committee.

"The goal is to give some direction, with [the committee] support to the state agencies on coming up with a very specific plan for West," Pickett said. "We will be looking at how to go forward and try to keep these situations from happening in the future."

Pickett said he would like to draft legislation by the end of this summer for the 84th Texas State Legislature commencing in January. However, Pickett said he did not necessarily want to file legislation to initiate a

statewide fire code but, rather, wants narrow legislation on the issue.

State Fire Marshal Chris Connealy said there are nearly 100 ammonium nitrate facilities in the state. Connealy said approximately half of those facilities store ammonium nitrate in wooden, flammable buildings similar to the West Fertilizer Co. facility.

"We have to keep fire away from ammonium nitrate," Connealy said. "If you want to keep ammonium nitrate in a combustible facility, you need to put fire sprinklers in there."

Connealy said investigators still don't know the cause of the initial fire. For rural areas, it is more difficult to implement sprinklers

within facilities because these facilities typically don't have water distribution systems, according to Connealy, who said the best way to prevent another explosion is to isolate the ammonium nitrate by storing it in a noncombustible bin made of concrete, stone or metal, and keeping vegetation away from it.

"Ammonium nitrate is pretty stable in its normal state, and as long as you keep fire and those things that could catch on fire away from it so it doesn't travel and get to that bin, you've largely fixed the problem," Connealy said.

Connealy said he recommended that agricultural businesses be given a three-year time frame to comply

and accumulate funds to pay for the equipment.

Williamson County Grain in Taylor, Texas once delivered and stored ammonia nitrate but stopped doing so in July because of the West explosion, according to manager Joe Mueck. The facility is near a school, which is part of a greater residential area.

Pickett said he worries people will stop working to regulate ammonium nitrate storage in the future.

"I think that is our responsibility and our duty," Pickett said. "Knowing this committee and the makeup of this committee, I think we've got enough people here that can give us a perspective to do something that makes sense and keep the business acumen alive."

SCHOOL

continues from page 1

hair done. I decided to go elegant this year."

Last year, on Saturday, April 13, prom guests enjoyed the last big event the old school building, which was located a few hundred yards from West Fertilizer Company, would hold. Four days later, the school was destroyed in the blast from the plant.

Many residents in the small town lost homes, cars, pets and other belongings in the explosion. For the junior class, the loss included traditions such as a senior hallway, senior pranks and energetic pep rallies in their old gym.

"I wish I could go back and just walk the halls one more time," Wernet said. "If I had known what was gonna happen, what we know now,

I would go back. I'd give anything to go back to that place and walk the halls one more time."

The week after the explosion, the students of West resumed classes with their former rivals at Connally Independent School District in Waco.

"When we got there that day, first day of school, they had the whole school decorated with [West's slogan] 'Home of the Trojans' — all the Connally kids did that," said Jan Hungate, chief administrative officer of West ISD.

The junior high and high school students whose buildings were destroyed by the blast were bused to Connally every day for the last six weeks of the 2012-2013 school year. According to Hungate, attendance the first few days back was higher than average.

"The commissioner of education said, 'You're going to probably want to apply for a waiver for attendance when y'all start back,' and I said, 'No, no, I don't think I will,'" Hungate said. "We had 96 percent attendance, and the next day we had 98 percent. More than normal."

Almost every administrator, teacher and counselor around the West campus described the students as resilient, although the return wasn't easy.

"I'm going to be honest — I didn't want to go," Wernet said. "But after a few days, I was like, 'Wow, I really needed this.' I needed to go back and make sure my friends were OK."

West High School senior Cordell Clark remembered calling friends the night of the explosion, making sure everyone was safe. But just hearing their voices wasn't

reassuring enough.

"I didn't physically see them," Clark said. "Once I physically saw them, it reassured me that they were OK and I could relax."

Today, West ISD is in the early stages of planning and rebuilding a new campus that will hold both the junior high and high school students, set to open in a few years. In the meantime, students attend classes in a maze of portable buildings connected by wood decking.

"We haven't gotten to really see people as much as we would've because we don't have that senior hallway, but we still have gotten closer," Wernet said.

This year's prom was one of the school's most decadent. Fundraising by the junior class, combined with a \$6,700 donation from James Martin High School in Arlington, provided the school



Charlie Pearce / Daily Texan Staff

Students and residents painted memorial stars in support of the West community shortly after the plant explosion.

with all of the trims and tassels necessary to transform the hall into a party fit for Jay Gatsby.

For high school seniors, spring semester is a time for banquets and celebrations. Although springtime in West stirs up memories of last year's events, the students of West High School find

time to relax and enjoy their last days of school — and of course, to spend a lavish night with friends at the prom.

"We just needed a night to ourselves to have fun — not really like forget about it but not have it on our mind," Wernet said. "I think we just needed to have that night to have to ourselves."

HORNS UP: TEXAS' RATE OF UNINSURED DIPS SLIGHTLY



The percentage of uninsured adults aged 18 to 64 in Texas dropped slightly from 24.8 percent in September 2013 to 23.5 percent in March 2014, according to a report released by the Bakers Institute for Public Policy and the Episcopal Health Foundation. Though the change resulted from an increase in employer-sponsored health care and not from new sign-ups in the federal marketplace, we see the uptick as positive news. More than 5 million adults in our state lack insurance, according to the Bakers institute. Even a 1 percentage-point decrease in that amount deserves attention. The report also projected that 746,000 Texans had signed up for insurance on the exchange, which is certainly a good start considering Texas has consistently had the highest percent of uninsured residents among the 50 states for several years, and the insurance exchanges in Texas have only recently been rolled out.

HORNS DOWN: OFFICER USES TASER ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT



An officer who had been called to break up a fight between students at Stony Point High School in Round Rock on Monday used a Taser on a 16-year-old boy during lunchtime. Though the boy was not badly injured, he was taken to the hospital to have the Taser probes removed. If the use of a Taser on a minor wasn't upsetting enough, the child who was tased actually did not take part in the fight — rather, he was trying to restrain one of the students who was taking part. This is the second instance of a high school student being tased this year, and although this instance didn't result in a death like the previous one, there is no excuse for the use of a Taser in either situation. As we said in an editorial earlier this year, there is simply no logical reason why school resource officers should carry and use weapons as forceful as Tasers on children in Texas schools. The sooner our police realize this, the better it will be for all Texans.

COLUMN

Base your summer plans on your passions, not future pay



By Olivia Berkeley
Daily Texan Columnist
@oliviaberkeley

Recently, a particularly annoying question has been swirling around campus. “What are your summer plans?” my friends ask. Unfortunately, my answer is often met with judgment. When asked how I plan to spend my summer — nannying full-time and taking one measly online course — I am confronted with questioning looks. By some standards, it would appear that I am wasting a three-month period designed to further my education and get job experience. But my summer plans should not indicate that I am any less motivated or driven than the next person. I just don't succumb to the peer pressure surrounding the need for excellence.

Monica Jackson, a Moody College of Communication career adviser, said she tells students who express concerns about finding jobs after they graduate that “it really just depends on how prepared the student is with their transition, the number of internships they have had, the research they have done and how aggressive they are with their job search.”

When students ask Jackson how they should spend their summers, she says it “depends on their situation and if they have done an internship in the previous fall and spring academic year. If so, taking the summer off is acceptable.”

“For most [students] depending on [their] major, taking advantage of an internship during the summer ... would be beneficial,” Jackson said.

College is a competitive atmosphere, and I completely understand why students forsake fun in order to make their resumes more impressive. Many college students believe summers should be used to take classes, work, get an internship and forgo relaxation to make themselves more employable individuals. In a competitive environment such as UT's, having a high GPA and belonging to student organizations is not enough to be successful after graduation. The goal of getting a degree from UT is to have a career, and having internships is viewed as the way to attain one.

“This summer I'd like to experience the



I think that working over the summer is a great way to advance both [your] education and your own future marketability — you can learn so much from a summer internship and sharpen your resume at the same time.

—Travis Lenz,
electrical engineering sophomore

design side of [civil engineering], to understand the logic concerning the planning of a building,” civil engineering sophomore Chi-Chih Chen said. “I'm not sure if I'll get paid this time for my work, but I'm eager to learn nonetheless. [My motivation to intern is] more interest-driven.”

It's a student's prerogative to choose how to spend his or her summer, but to treat it exclusively as a time to increase employability is neglecting to acknowledge an entire subset of students who use their summer time differently. I encourage everyone to re-evaluate the motivations behind how they spend their summers. If you want to be a camp counselor but feel the pressure of your peers influencing you to seek out a prestigious internship instead, explore that dynamic. I may be old-fashioned — and doomed to be unemployed for life — but I believe people should do what they love. If that happens to be a full-time job or resume-boosting internship, then so be it.

Of course, it is hard to ignore the benefits of spending summer working and interning rather than tanning and sleeping. Using the three months between the end and start of school is invaluable in terms of career exploration, especially with half of college graduates working jobs that aren't worth the prices of their degrees. About 48 percent of employed U.S. college graduates are in job positions that the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics suggests require less than a four-year college education. According to The Huffington Post and a May 2013 study from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, the overall unemployment rate for recent graduates is 7.9 percent. So, as college students lose faith in an unreliable job market, internships and summers spent frantically improving resumes are understandably becoming the baseline expectation.

“I think that working over the summer is a great way to advance both [your] education and your own future marketability — you can learn so much from a summer internship and sharpen your resume at the same time,” said Travis Lenz, an electrical engineering sophomore who will intern at Cadac Group in Houston this summer. “It's not always a bad idea to relax during the summer and prepare for the next year — whether it be work or education. I just decided to take this summer as an opportunity to get a head start in the [engineering] world.”

We will all fall victim to the rat race at some point in time, but I urge everyone to make sure it is for the right reasons. College is one of the few times in which we get to pick and choose what we want to do and shape our classes and jobs to what we are interested in, and summertime should be no exception. Instead of judging one another based on the contents of our summer agendas, we should be encouraging each other to seek out opportunities that excite, entertain and challenge us. There are numerous summers during the college experience, and spending one away from a work environment isn't all that bad. Catastrophizing the implications of taking a summer off is not a productive use of time and is certainly something I am tired of hearing about. The decision to craft your summer as you see fit is entirely yours. Don't let anybody tell you otherwise.

Berkeley is a Plan II Honors and advertising freshman from Austin.

COLUMN

UGS courses are a mixed bag for UT undergraduates



By Suchi Sundaram
Daily Texan Columnist

Students will register for classes for the next two weeks, a process that is difficult enough as it is. But many students will face the additional burden of trying to find an Undergraduate Signature Course, known as a UGS, that is both open and interesting to them. Unfortunately, not many will succeed, and those who do will have to deal with the courses' nonstandard grading platforms and a host of other frustrating problems.

According to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, nearly 60 percent of first-year college students in the U.S. are unprepared for post-secondary studies. UT's solution to this problem was the UGS. It was designed to help transition students from various secondary institutions to the University by introducing them to the resources the campus offers. Emphasizing discussion and core interpersonal skills for topics ranging from Odysseus to President Barack Obama seemed like a foolproof solution to address the growing problem of college readiness.

But by forcing students to take classes that range widely in size, quality and difficulty of grading, UT has actually forced students into an academic lottery: You can only hope you'll get a UGS that actually increases your knowledge and inspires you to learn. Otherwise, you're forced to join the growing crowd of discontent students who don't benefit from the requirement.

One of the main problems with the courses is that the diverse nature of topics creates an inconsistent grading platform for professors and students. If a student takes Fitness for Life, the professor assigns grades based on that student's ability to perform a physical activity. But if another student takes Sustaining the Planet, that student would be graded on his ability to create a lab portfolio. Ultimately, each class is based on an entirely different grading criterion. Is that fair for an incoming first-year or transfer student who does not know what to expect in the class? It's not.



By forcing students to take classes that range widely in size, quality and difficulty of grading, UT has actually forced students into an academic lottery: You can only hope you'll get a UGS that actually increases your knowledge and inspires you to learn. Otherwise, you're forced to join the growing crowd of discontent students who don't benefit from the requirement.

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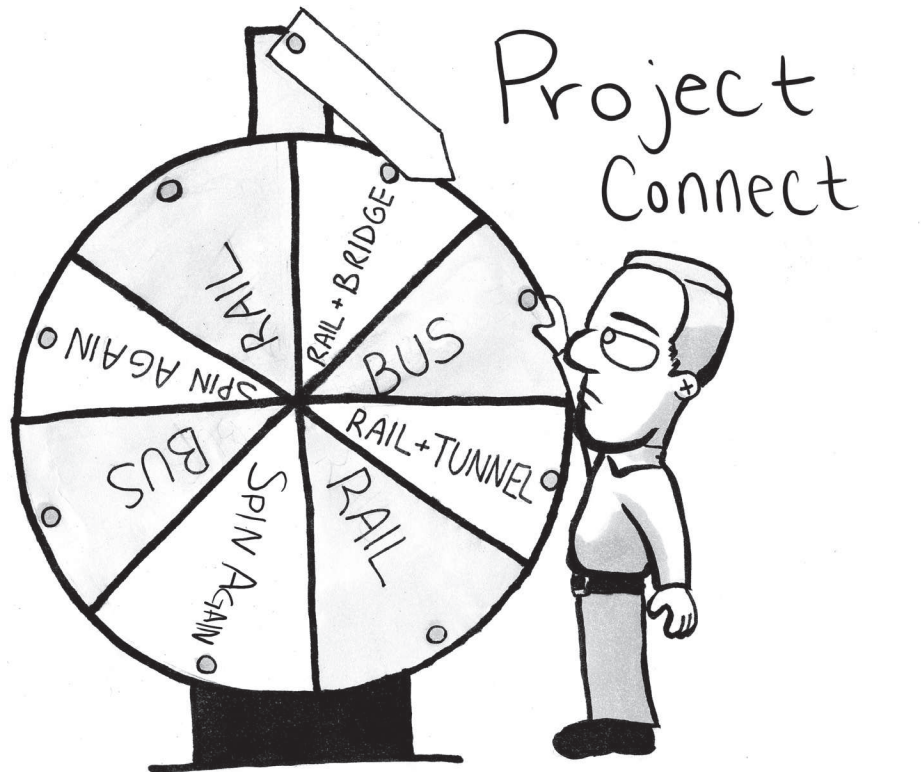


Illustration by Albert Lee / Daily Texan Staff

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TEXT
continues from page 8

April 18 at the beginning of the Fusebox Festival.

“It made me feel like a player in the play in this great way,” Lynn said. “It’s fun to get seemingly private messages on your phone from a character.”

Over a period of six months, participants will sporadically receive five or six text messages each week from Boyd. Moore worked to make sure the texts are not so frequent that they become obnoxious, and audience members are free to unsubscribe at anytime.

“Computer Stimulation of the Ocean” touches on the paradoxical idea of personal technology. On one hand, technology can reduce human interaction; on the other, it can simultaneously connect people. Moore said that a text message can often be more intimate than an in-person discussion.

“We have to be careful to remember how to have a conversation with a person face-to-face,” Moore said. “But if we consider all technology and ways of communicating that are based on technology as bad, or put them in one category, then I think we’re simplifying things too much.”

Moore said he has thought a lot about whether or not this piece can be considered a theater performance since it lacks a venue, costumes and props. He has come to the conclusion that the show is theater in the sense that it unites an audience in the same story at the same time, just like a traditional play. The main difference is that the play is viewed on your phone rather than on a stage.

“Think of theater as a communal experience where you go into a space and watch



Photo courtesy of Stephen Pruitt

Playwright and UT alum Steve Moore’s play, “Computer Simulation of the Ocean,” will not take place in a physical venue. Instead, the entire play can be experienced through a six-month text messaging subscription.

something happen with other people,” Moore said. “In a sense you still have some of that going on because you’ll have [these texts] happening to multiple people at the same time even though it doesn’t happen on a theatrical stage.”

Fusebox Festival chose to feature the play because of its unorthodox outlet.

“For us, this is a really interesting place to think about art,” said Brad Carlin, Fusebox Festival’s managing director. “It’s art that’s happening in the tools in our everyday lives — in our pockets and in our purses.”

Lynn said the merging of theater and technology is nothing new.

“I think theater always loves technology, and it

“
Think of theater as a communal experience where you go into a space and watch something happen with other people,

—Steve Moore, Playwright

loves innovators who want to manipulate the technology,” Lynn said. “Frankly, so much of our communication with one another is through text message that having characters text message you makes perfect sense.”

PHONES
continues from page 8

that in some respects, the subjects on cell phones actually drove worse than the drunks. The most noticeable effect was on reaction times, which were slowest when subjects used their cell phones.

Over the course of the experiment, which involved 40 participants, only three accidents occurred, and they all involved sober subjects using cell phones. This is not to say that driving drunk is not dangerous — it is. But so is driving while talking on a cell phone, which is still legal in Texas.

The researchers found no correlation between a person’s perceived ability

to drive while using a cell phone and his actual ability, but they did find evidence suggesting that the ability to talk and drive does not improve with practice. This is probably because driving requires immediate reactions to sudden, random changes — an ability that does not benefit from repetition.

As for the other possible driving distractions, such as the radio, audiobooks or even another passenger, experiments suggest they don’t make much of a difference at all. One study even asked subjects to repeat words said to them via a cell phone as they were driving — which required them to hold a cell phone, listen to it and talk back into it — and even this

did not have a significant impact on their ability to maneuver the vehicle safely. In other words, listening and speaking into a cell phone does not impair driving, nor does holding a conversation with someone else in the car. But if a person has an active conversation with someone on a cell phone their driving will suffer. And, since this is a result of the brain’s limited resources and not control of the wheel, using a hands-free device does not help.

Our modern electronic devices are wonderful — they keep our best friends and closest family a few buttons away at any given time. But there is also a whole world around us that screens can prevent us from experiencing.

MENTORS
continues from page 8

the path toward college begins early, so she expanded the program to mentor students starting in their freshman year.

“We can help them a lot when they are juniors and seniors, but if they haven’t worked since freshman year to get the grades and to get involved, then it won’t really matter,” Srivastava said.

The program assigns each high school freshman a college freshman mentor. Srivastava said the objective is that both mentor and mentee graduate at the same time.

“I think what’s going to be unique about this is that, rather than one person evaluating the progress of a whole class, it will be just me and my mentee for all four years,” Srivastava said. “I will be able to really explain in detail what she’s improved on.”

Plan II Honors freshman Missy Glasenapp is a mentor with Project Activate.

Glasenapp said she was drawn to the idea of a student-run organization helping younger students.

“I had done something like this in high school, and it wasn’t very successful, and I was a little bit disappointed in that,” Glasenapp said. “I really wanted something like this to work out.”

Srivastava said she wants the mentors to be a source of stability and reliability in the students’ lives, as well as to help them academically.

Project Activate currently meets four days a week with different sets of students at Reagan and Lyndon B. Johnson Early College high schools. The group has partnered with other academic initiatives, such as AVID and early college high school programs, which also target low-income high school students. Project Activate currently helps around 25 students, but it plans to mentor around 200 by next year.

Esmeralda Macedo de Paz, a freshman at Reagan High School, joined Project

“
I had done something like this in high school, and it wasn’t very successful, and I was a little bit disappointed in that. I really wanted something like this to work out.

—Missy Glasenapp, Plan II Honors freshman

Activate this school year.

“I wanted to get help,” Macedo de Paz said. “You can also really increase your communication skills with this.”

Srivastava hopes to implement Project Activate in more high schools around Austin and possibly expand it to other cities in Texas. Mentors such as Glasenapp have committed to helping these students for four years.

“I think we could do a lot of good,” Glasenapp said.

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By DAVID OUELLET

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SOFTBALL

Red River Rivalry isn't just for football

By Jacob Martella
@ViewFromTheBox

The phrase “Texas versus Oklahoma” conjures up images of a packed Cotton Bowl in October, but the rivalry between the two schools on the softball field has been just as fierce. For every “Colt McCoy versus Sam Bradford,” there has been a “Blaire Luna versus Keilani Ricketts.”

“It doesn’t matter what sport — when you match up the Longhorns and the Sooners, it’s always a rivalry,” head coach Connie Clark said.

In 49 games, the Sooners hold a slim 26-23 edge, and the teams have combined to win 10 regular season conference titles and eight conference tournament titles. With the departure of Missouri, Nebraska and Texas A&M, the rivalry has had a bigger role in determining the conference champion.

That will likely be the case this season. Oklahoma and Texas have each lost a game in conference play, but the Sooners hold a slight edge on percentage points.

Last year, the rivalry went to

a new high as the teams faced each other in the Women’s College World Series for the first time. Texas took a 2-0 lead in the top of the third before Oklahoma came back with six in the bottom of the inning, including three on a throwing error by Kim Bruins, to win 10-2 on its way to the NCAA title.

In all, the Sooners took three of the four games the teams played last year.

“They were extremely tough,” senior shortstop Taylor Thom said.

Like the Cotton Bowl, both softball stadiums are sold out for each game of the series. Marita Hynes Stadium in Norman presents a unique situation, as there are bleachers also beyond the outfield wall, creating a “surround sound” of noise for the players to deal with.

Despite the tough environment and there being seven freshmen on the team, Clark said she enjoys taking this type of team up to Norman.

“You talk a lot about hostile environments, but, until you get into it and feel it, you can’t really get that experience,”



Shweta Gulati / Daily Texan file photo
Former pitcher Blaire Luna pitches against Oklahoma at home last year. Texas went on to face Oklahoma in the Women’s College World Series and lost 10-2.

Clark said.

Both teams come into this year’s edition of the rivalry riding a wave of momentum. Despite losing star first baseman Lauren Chamberlain for six weeks and having gotten a slow start to the season, the Sooners have gotten off to a hot start to Big 12 play, highlighted by their series win at Baylor last week.

The Longhorns also got off to a slow start, going 20-15 in non-conference play and struggling to score with runners on base. But Texas has scored 82 runs in its last eight games, including 38 in the series against Iowa State. Thom has led the charge, hitting five home runs and 17 RBIs in the last seven games.

Texas is 6-10 in games played in Norman, but, despite that record and the rivalry, senior catcher Mandy Ogle said the Longhorns are focused on just winning another Big 12 series.

“We’re just going to take it as another Big 12 series and not going to focus on our opponent and focus on us,” Ogle said.

BASEBALL

Barrera lives up to the hype

By Evan Berkowitz
@Evan_Berkowitz

There were high expectations for freshman catcher Tres Barrera coming in to the season.

Head coach Augie Garrido slotted him into the four hole from the get-go. Barrera was behind the plate that first night while senior catcher Jacob Felts, who led the Longhorns to the College World Series in his freshman season, watched from the bench.

“Augie had a lot of faith in me from the beginning,” Barrera said.

But as the season began unfolding, expectations turned to frustration. The highly touted freshman was batting .128 just over a month ago.

“I was [in the four hole] for a reason: RBIs and to bring guys in,” Barrera said. “At the beginning I was trying to do too much and that’s why I think I started slowly.”

He had no multi-hit games in the first 15, and his average was the lowest on the team. Sophomore catcher Jeremy Montalbano and Felts began getting reps behind the plate, and all of a sudden, the catching job was up for grabs.

“Of course it got into my head,” Barrera said. “But I took a step back and realized there were a lot of ball games left. Ever since then, things

have been going my way.”

A three hit performance on March 11 against Texas State broke him out of that slump, and since that game, he has had nine multi-hit games while batting over .400.

“Augie said he knew it was going to come,” Barrera said.

Barrera’s power that Garrido talked about early on has also begun to rear its head. Barrera had just one extra-base hit in the first 15 games; in the next 21 games, he had 11.

But he is not just making a difference at the plate. He is making one behind it also. He is calling pitches for the a pitching staff that has a 2.12 ERA, which is fifth best in the country.

“It’s fun working with them,” Barrera said. “I study the hitters a lot



Mengwen Cao / Daily Texan Staff
Freshman catcher Tres Barrera got off to a slow start after being put into the four hole to start the season, batting .128 in the first 15 games. Since then, he’s hitting over .400.

before the games. They are all pretty confident in me.”

As Barrera’s bat started coming around, so did Texas (30-8, 9-3 Big 12), winning 17 of 21 games since March 11. The team has climbed all the way to No. 6 in the country.

“Winning: That’s all that matters to me,” Barrera said.

Barrera heads into the TCU series this weekend with the team’s most doubles and its third best average and slugging percentage.

The opening game will be Thursday at 6 p.m. at home, as the weekend series was moved up a day for Easter Sunday. TCU (23-13, 7-5 Big 12) is third in the Big 12, two games back of Texas. It also sports a 2.69 ERA, second to Texas.



Charlie Pearce / Daily Texan file photo
Freshman Tyrone Swoopes’ redshirt was burnt last year. Now, he will battle to start from day one for Texas.

FOOTBALL | COLUMN

Dilemma at the helm: the next quarterback

By Drew Liebermann
Daily Texan Columnist
@DrewLieberman

79-12.

That is the record Texas compiled during a seven-year span when it started legends Vince Young and Colt McCoy at quarterback. Texas played for two national titles — winning one — in addition to winning two more BCS bowls in 2006 and 2008. Young beat teams with his feet and arm and made the team “inVINCEable” during the latter part of his career. McCoy was one of the most accurate passers in NCAA history and the winningest BCS-conference quarterback.

But over the past four seasons, with the quarterback carousel of Garrett Gilbert, Case McCoy and David Ash in full swing, Texas has gone just 30-21. During this time, the Longhorns missed a bowl game while only winning two of three minor bowls from 2011 to 2013. Gilbert was highly touted but flamed out. McCoy will be remembered for his late game moxie but struggled in his last few games. Ash can play brilliantly when healthy, but his durability appears to be a nagging concern.

The quarterback position at Texas has been a mess lately and will likely remain so in 2014. The Longhorns will play their spring game Saturday with three active quarterbacks who have completed 5 of 13 passes for 26 yards in their careers combined.

Only sophomore Tyrone Swoopes got reps at quarterback in a game last season, playing in six games after a controversial burning of his redshirt against TCU. With such limited opportunities, it’s hard to tell whether Swoopes will be successful at this level, but it’s encouraging that head coach Charlie Strong sees Swoopes already taking advantage of Ash’s absence.

“He did a really outstanding job last Saturday,” Strong said. “I know I don’t know his numbers, but he had really good numbers and threw an unbelievable ball to Marcus [Johnson] down the sideline where he beat one of our defensive backs. It was a big throw, but he did a really good job, and he settled in and had the confidence and just a different air about him when leading the offense.”

Texas’ other quarterbacks Saturday will be former wide receiver and tight end Miles Onyegbule, a senior, and sophomore Trey Holtz, both of whom should play to give Swoopes time off the field.

Many fans believe salvation is on the way with the enrollment of touted recruit Jerrod Heard on campus this summer. Heard led his team to two state titles in high school, but, while there could be temptation to play him early, Texas’ smartest move may be to redshirt him this season. Young and Colt both redshirted during their first seasons on campus, and that may be the best way to set up Heard for a successful career.

Texas’ best hope in 2014 is to keep Ash healthy, but it should be prepared in the likely event he misses time. Perhaps it will nab USC transfer Max Wittek, who is a talented quarterback looking for a change of scenery. The Longhorns are thought to be the frontrunners for Wittek’s services, which would provide them with a solid backup in the likely event Ash suffers yet another setback.

The team will likely struggle until assistant coach Shawn Watson can develop his quarterback, but Heard may be the answer in 2015 or 2016. Until then, Texas fans need to remain patient as the Longhorns search for their next world-beating signal caller.

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SPORTS BRIEFLY

Astros' top prospect gets called up to bigs

HOUSTON — Prized prospect George Springer will join the Houston Astros from Triple-A Oklahoma City on Wednesday.

The 24-year-old outfielder had 37 homers and 108 RBIs with 45 stolen bases combined in Double-A and Triple-A last year. He was off to a strong start in Triple-A this season, too, hitting .353 with three homers and nine RBIs.

“It’s just an indescribable feeling,” Springer said. “I’m speechless right now.”

The Astros officially announced the move Wednesday and sent outfielder Robbie Grossman to Oklahoma City.

Springer was selected 11th overall by the Astros out of UConn in the 2011 amateur draft.

“As a player, that’s your ultimate goal and that’s your dream,” Springer said. “And when it becomes a reality, you’re blown away.”

—Associated Press

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The Daily Texan Managing Editor (Fall)	4/21/14	August '14 - December '14

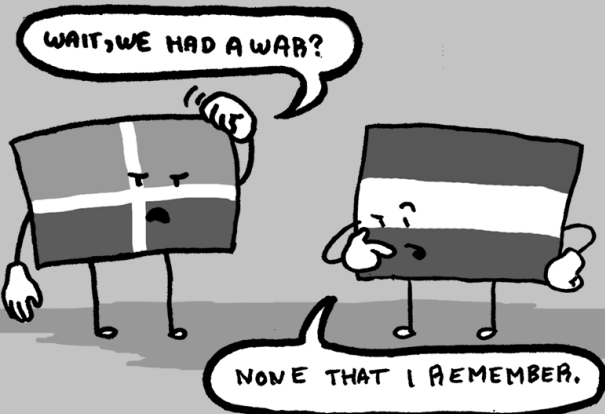
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TODAY'S REASON TO PARTY

TODAY IN 1986, THE THREE HUNDRED AND THIRTY FIVE YEARS' WAR BETWEEN THE NETHERLANDS AND THE ISLES OF SCILLY ENDS.



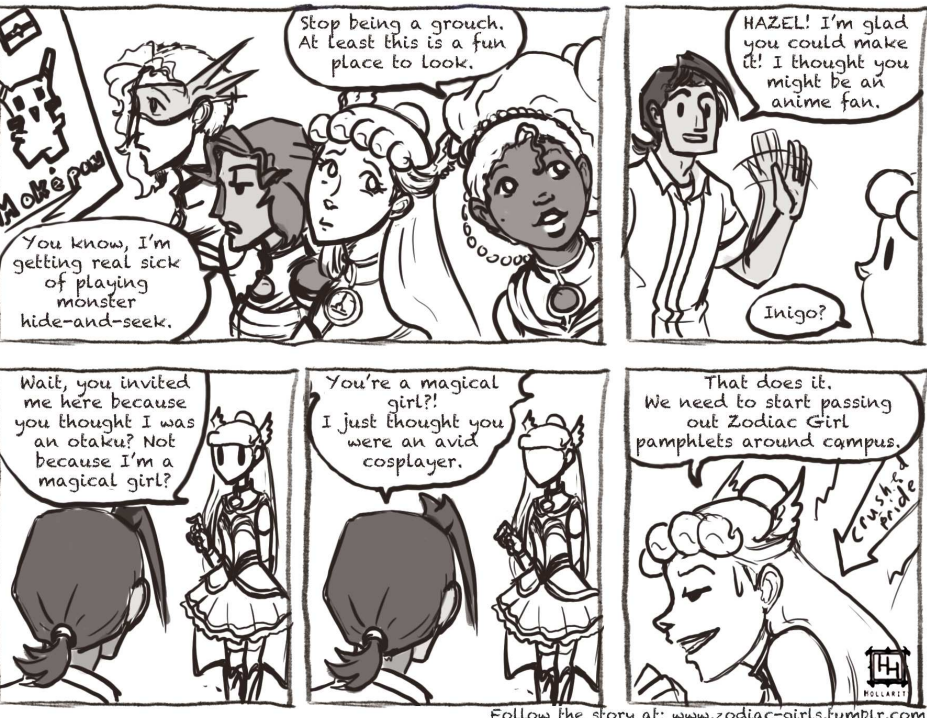
Snail Hat Comics



A. McManon

Zodiac Girls

By: Holly Arnold



Follow the story at: www.zodiac-girls.tumblr.com



BT: CALHAN

SUDOKU FOR YOU

	7	9				1		
					7		9	3
1						2	7	6
			8			4		9
	4	8		9		3	1	
2		5		4				
9	5	7						1
3	6		4					
		1				5	3	

Today's solution will appear here next issue

3	4	9	6	8	2	5	7	1
1	6	2	9	5	7	4	3	8
7	5	8	4	1	3	2	6	9
4	8	6	2	7	1	9	5	3
2	9	1	3	6	5	7	8	4
5	3	7	8	4	9	6	1	2
8	7	4	1	2	6	3	9	5
6	1	3	5	9	4	8	2	7
9	2	5	7	3	8	1	4	6

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STEPHANIE VANICEK

LONG NECK BEARS

SHANNON BUTLER



macelles.tumblr.com

Candlebot Comics: Stay Awake

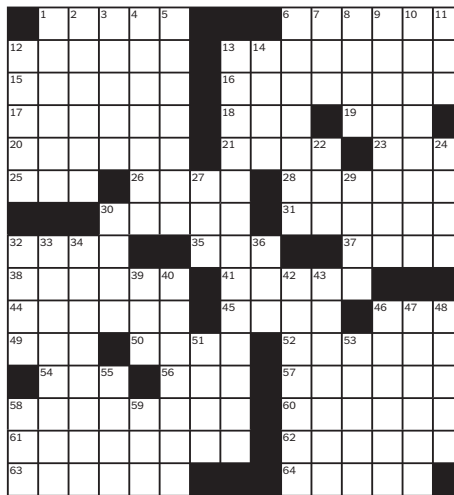


Isabella N. Palacios "candlebot.tumblr"

The New York Times Crossword

Edited by Will Shortz No. 0313

- ACROSS**
- 1 Swine
 - 6 "Giant" novelist, 1952
 - 12 Country that calls itself the "Abode of Peace"
 - 13 Shakespeare character who says "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave / My heart into my mouth"
 - 15 Like only one Best Picture in Academy Award history (1969)
 - 16 Essay locale
 - 17 Stylish 1960s luxury coupe
 - 18 Louis Malle's "___ Amants"
 - 19 Scottish exclamation
 - 20 Fruit juice
 - 21 Like much music, starting in the late 1980s
 - 23 Gold units: Abbr.
 - 25 2000 Richard Gere title role
 - 26 D
 - 28 Mycobacterium, e.g.
 - 30 One of the vertices of the Summer Triangle
 - 31 Start to break up a fight, say
 - 32 Boston legend Phil, to fans
 - 35 Rembrandt van ___
 - 37 Foundation stone abbr.
 - 38 Dirty dog
 - 41 Conrad of the silents
 - 44 Noted part of a book?
 - 45 Eye part
 - 46 Diamond stats
 - 49 Operative: Abbr.
 - 50 Subj. of 1991's Start treaty
 - 52 Women's shoe style
 - 54 Line score inits.
 - 56 Highball?
 - 57 Approval of an order
 - 58 Play to the balcony?
 - 60 Latitude
 - 61 Faint
 - 62 11th-century founder of Scholasticism
 - 63 Not hypothetical
 - 64 "___ lift?"
- DOWN**
- 1 Like the Cowardly Lion at the end of "The Wizard of Oz"
 - 2 Best on stage, say
 - 3 Re
 - 4 Bureaucracy
 - 5 Mashie niblick
 - 6 Some diet drinks
 - 7 Teacher's advanced deg.
 - 8 "___ Man"
 - 9 2010 installment in the Call of Duty series
 - 10 Like some primitive game graphics
 - 11 "The Facts of Life" actress
 - 12 Leave a lasting mark on
 - 13 Kid's art activity ... or something seen four times in this puzzle's solution?
 - 14 Public
 - 22 SFO opponent in the 2012 World Series
 - 24 Elate
 - 27 Key preposition?
 - 29 Line holder
 - 30 Vietnamese currency
 - 32 Title character from the village of Highbury, 1815
 - 33 Teal relative
 - 34 Not too hard a golf hole
 - 36 Part of U.S.N.A.: Abbr.
 - 39 Certain grandson
 - 40 Vatican City vis-a-vis Rome
 - 42 Sunbathe
 - 43 "Piece of cake!"
 - 46 Hung
 - 47 Radio activity?
 - 48 ___ whale
 - 51 Foreshadow
 - 53 Breviloquent
 - 55 Reef dwellers
 - 58 Kind of trail
 - 59 Rejections



PUZZLE BY ALEX VRATSANOS

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CAMPUS

Group mentors low-income college hopefuls

By Brigit Benestante
@BBenestante

During an after-school study session at John H. Reagan Early College High School, students struggled to finish their geography homework because the school wouldn't allow them to take textbooks home. One student, a senior named Ivan, worked on an Austin Community College application with the help of two UT student mentors, who are members of the student-run group Project Activate. Ivan said he wants to go to art school one day, but he is undocumented. He is looking to his mentors to help him apply to college and for financial aid.

Anisha Srivastava, Plan II Honors and business honors freshman and Project Activate founder, launched the program on March 19. Its goal is to enlist college students to mentor low-income high school students at least once a week.

"I thought about how going through college apps was so overwhelming," Srivastava said. "I started thinking, 'What are students who are first-generation and



Anisha Srivastava, Plan II Honors and business honors freshman, is the founder of Project Activate, a program focused on mentoring low-income high school students and guiding them through college applications. The program has been implemented at two schools in Austin.

Sarah Montgomery
Daily Texan Staff

low-income, who can't afford the resources, whose school doesn't offer the resources — how are they even applying to college?"

According to the Institute of Education Sciences, the dropout rate for high school students in the lowest income bracket was more

than 12 percent in 2011. Reagan High School, one of the two schools Project Activate works with, has a student population that is 90

percent below the poverty line, according to Srivastava. The program currently provides mentorship to a range of students who are low-in-

come, first-generation and in some cases, undocumented. Srivastava realized that

MENTORS page 5

THEATER

Text message-based play takes theater off stage

By Eleanor Dearman
@ellydearman

After receiving a late night text, UT theatre and dance assistant professor and playwright Kirk Lynn looked at his phone expecting to see a message from a family member or friend. Instead he saw a text from Sally Boyd, a fictional character in UT alum Steve

Moore's play "Computer Simulation of the Ocean."

The play, produced by Physical Plant Theater and featured at Austin's annual Fusebox Festival, is viewed entirely through a series of text messages from Boyd. Boyd addresses the receiver directly as if the two are in a relationship and in the middle of a fight. She begins the conversation

by apologizing for an unknown mistake, and the messages gradually reveal more about the plot.

The play does not have a physical venue, rather, it is experienced entirely through a text message subscription that lasts six months.

Similar projects have been done through mediums such as Twitter, but

usually they are presented as episodes in a continuous narrative. While Moore's play does have a plot, it is not just pieces of a story being sent to a receiver. The person on the other end of Boyd's texts is a character in the play.

"The idea is that you, the person receiving the messages, are so mad at the person who is writing

you that you're not going to write her back," Moore said. "So that sets up the sort of one-sidedness of the conversation."

Lynn assisted in editing the piece and served as a test subject for the play's text message delivery system. The public will begin receiving messages on

TEXT page 5

COMPUTER SIMULATION OF THE OCEAN

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Men 18 to 55	Up to \$1800	Healthy & Non-Smoking BMI between 22 and 29	Fri. 2 May through Sun. 4 May Fri. 9 May through Sun. 11 May Fri. 16 May through Sun. 18 May

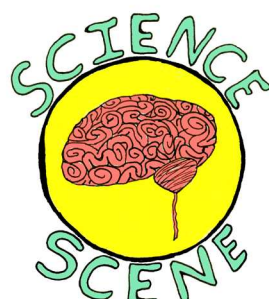
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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY



Illustration by Ploy Buraparat / Daily Texan Staff

Study shows cell phones limit ability to discern environment



By Robert Starr
@RobertKStarr

If you walked around Western Washington University during the spring of 2009, you might have noticed a clown unicycling around the plaza.

But, then again, you might not have.

The clown was definitely there, but when scientists intercepted several students who passed through the area and asked them whether they had noticed anything strange, most of them said

they hadn't.

Even after researchers clarified, asking directly if students had seen a clown on a unicycle, nearly 50 percent of people who were interviewed still said no.

Not all pedestrians are created equal, though. For instance, people who were walking with another person were more likely to have noticed the clown than people who were walking alone. By a wide margin, the most unobservant walkers were those talking on their cell phones. 8.3 percent of them said they had noticed something unusual, and when directly asked about the cycling clown, that number went up to 25 percent.

It may not even be that these chatty pedestrians weren't looking at the clown. Eye tracking studies have shown people who are talking on cell phones fixate on

the same things as those who aren't, but they don't really see them.

Walking around, this isn't too much of a problem. But an overwhelming number of people talk on their phones while operating vehicles.

How dangerous is this, exactly? A paper from 2006 titled "A Comparison of the Cell Phone Driver and the Drunk Driver" provides the answer. Subjects came in on three different days to use a high tech driving simulator. On one day, they used the simulator normally, on another, they talked on their cell phones while using it and, on another, they drank screwdrivers until they reached a blood alcohol level of .08 prior to their drive. That's right, these subjects got legally drunk — for science.

The researchers found

PHONES page 5