

Hey, batter batter!



ADRIAN McCANDLESS | THE WICHITAN

A construction crew clears the way for the new campus softball field. To make room for the addition, workers have demolished a section of student parking on Louis J. Rodriguez Drive.

Tuition

In grants, \$7,145,144 was awarded and 2,403 people received them. In loans, \$17,532,109 was awarded and 3,065 people received them. In scholarships, \$3,307,937 was awarded to 1,864 people. The total number of students receiving financial aid was 4,617. The amount exceeded \$28 million.

According to Sherri Helms, university cashier of the business office, in 2003 tuition for a Texas resident was at \$46 per credit hour,

\$282 per credit hour for a non-resident, and \$39 per hour designated. Designated tuition is tuition with all fees including classroom fees. In fall 2004 tuition rose to \$48 per hour for a Texas resident, \$306 per hour for a non-resident of Texas and \$45 per hour designated.

In spring 2005, tuition increased from the fall from \$53 per hour designated to \$66 per hour. In fall 2006, tuition for a Texas resident was \$50 per hour, and remained at \$66 per

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hour designated.

Gail Ferguson, CPA and controller of the business office, said there are no plans at this time to raise tuition. Tuition is remaining steady for the time being, but Ferguson said this could change.

"If the Legislature does not fund us, in time tuition will raise," Ferguson said. "The Legislature funds about 40 percent of the cost of education."

Parking

"If you come to class early enough, you can get a parking place," said junior Cameron Rodriguez.

Research on constructing a multi-tiered parking garage was conducted a few years ago, Hagy said. But the cost would come to approximately \$10,000 per parking slot, and there is no space available at this time to build a new garage, he said.

The aggravation of parking does not stop with the students. "Most students want someone to hear their frustration," Hagy said. "I get frustrated when students get parking tickets. Students understand that without rules, there's chaos."

All of the money earned from fines helps fund the police department, half toward the staff's salary,

and an operations budget for police equipment. The operations budget is approximately \$244,000. Police officers are not paid by the amount of tickets they give out. There is no quota to be met, Hagy said.

An appeals process exists if a student wishes to contest a ticket. An appeal can be lodged in the Dean of Students Office in the Clark Student Center. On the appeal form, students must state why they believe the ticket was unfairly given.

A committee made up of students decides whether to uphold a ticket appeal or reject it. The dean's assistant, Debbie Coughran, reads tickets to the committee so the students' names remain anonymous.

In fall 2004, out of 291 appeals, 61 were upheld. There are

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strict parking rules in the student handbook. If a student breaks those rules, then the ticket cannot be upheld. Student handbooks are available to any student with a current MSU I.D. at the information desk in the Clark Student Center.

In spring 2006, 95 appeals were submitted. Sixteen of these appeals were upheld, and 79 appeals were denied.

One reason some students' tickets were upheld was because the parking lot between the Clark Student Center and the residence halls was not clearly marked on both sides of the lot, indicating it was a residential parking lot, said Coughran. Students were unaware that they were parking in an undesignated area with their non-residential sticker.

Groupo fans soon to be delighted

MELISSA DOS PRAZERES-SILVA
FOR THE WICHITAN

Austin, Texas' newest Latin music sensation, Grupo Fantasma, will be heading things up at MSU on Thursday at 7 p.m. in Akin Auditorium.

The 11-man band has been dubbed "one of the all-time great Texas dance bands" by Pop Culture Press for their ingenious makeover of traditional Latin music into a fusion of Afro-Latin funk, cumbia, salsa, meringue, dancehall and hip-hop that translate into exuberant live shows.

"We're a hybrid of Latin dance music from old school to new school," said Jose Galeano, songwriter and percussionist.

He said it's a sound that demands that audiences move.

"Just flow," he said. "Dance how you want to dance. If you don't dance to our music, something is just not right. When in doubt just follow the cowbell."

The talented troupe includes a double rhythm section and a four-piece horn brigade.

The versatility of their music is symbolic to their backgrounds. The members of Fantasma come from some far-stretched places such as New York City and Managua, Nicaragua (Central America). Many

members are Texans from cities like Laredo, San Antonio, El Paso and Pharr.

Fantasma members are vocalist Rodolfo Rodriguez; drummer and backup vocalist, Johnny Lopez III; percussionist Matthew Holmes; Jose Galeano on vox and percussion; trombonist Leo Gauna; guitarists Adrian Quesada and Beto Martinez; Gilbert Elorreaga on trumpet; Greg Gonzalez on bass, and saxophonists, Gengee Centeno and David Lobel.

Their individual influences that inspire their music arrangements and songwriting, are just as far-flung from modern artists to legends, in different genres. Carlos Santana, Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri, Dizzy Gillespie, Curtis Mayfield, Jimmy Hendrix, Ravi Shankar, Bob Marley, and even Dave Chapelle are to name a few of the guys' influences.

"When GF (Grupo Fantasma) came into fruition approximately 7 years ago, we were very influenced by a number of Columbian cumbia bands on the 'golden age,'" guitarist Adrian Quesada, of Laredo, said in his blog entry on the band's official website.

Grupo Fantasma has received wide recognition for its talent and style. Its first self-titled album, released in 2001, took off immediately, earning them spots on inter-

nationally distributed compilations.

Their second album, Movimiento Popular, was just as successful, earning raves and year-end kudos from the Austin media, and also publications in Atlanta, Memphis, Philadelphia and New York.

Their third album, "Grupo Fantasma Comes Alive," took them to another level of recognition as they became more adventurous with mixing unexpected styles to create a genre of their own.

"Their catchy sounds straddle so many musical genres that putting them in a particular niche seems pointless." —Pop Culture Press

Fantasma's style has been described as the future of Latin music that is "likely to explode the notion of the country twang and imaginary rock band that comes to mind when people think of the music scene in Austin, Texas."

Grupo Fantasma was named the Austin Music Awards' Best Latin Contemporary Band for five years in a row, adding Best Horns in 2005. "Grupo Fantasma Comes Alive" finished at number six as Album of the Year and their song "Utility Rock" also finished at number six as Austin Song of the Year.

"One of the finest live albums to come out of the ATX," Austin Chronicle commented on the group's third album.

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approximately 100.

"That's significant," she said. "That tells you raising the standards worked."

Rogers said that seeing the number of freshmen on probation being cut in half is most encouraging.

According to Merkle, the type of students admitted into the university is noticeable as well. She said the new students seem to be more focused, have a better idea of what they want to study and know what they are looking for.

"The plan is that with better qualified students we'll have more sophomores at the end," Rogers said. "We then will have more juniors and more sophomores after another year. Most schools get over that initial drop, then the class size starts up again because you're retaining more of the freshmen class."

According to Rogers, the freshmen class did drop about 220 students, which had been anticipated. Although enrollment has suffered from the change, Merkle said some people misinterpret the fact that the change is the only reason for the drop in enrollment.

"We have to not only replace the graduating class, but we have to bring in enough new students to cover the current students that don't come back," she said. "That's a big task."

Merkle said it is scary because the university enrollment did fall, but she and Rogers knew they would lose some students.

"Now we have to get more aggressive on those we admit," she said. "We've got to make sure we have housing for them, financial aid set up. So, it's going to be more work, but worth the effort."

Now that the new admissions changes have been put into effect, Rogers said the administration is looking into making some additional changes on campus.

"We are beginning to take a hard look at our core curriculum and upgrading it," he said. "Also, broadening it, giving students more options and stressing courses that involve critical thinking. It's going to happen. We're working on it now."

Admissions

ern, we're just the backup. And if I don't get into my first choice, I can definitely get into Midwestern."

If a student is denied admission, however, he or she has the ability to appeal the decision. To do this, a student must write a letter, which is given to the admissions committee. The committee consists of MSU faculty, who review the student's entrance exams, transcripts, letters, and other information to make a decision on whether the student should be admitted or not.

According to Rogers, MSU rejected about 300 beginning freshmen for the fall semester because they didn't meet the standards.

Merkle said less than 30 of these students appealed the decision. Another group of less than 30 students opted to go to summer school. These were students who applied for Fall 2006 and were denied because they didn't meet the new requirements. However, they did meet the

old ones and were invited to attend summer school.

"If this is their first choice, then we'll try to get them here," Merkle said.

Rogers said the university is going to assist those students who had to be turned away.

"We'll help them find a university to show them they can do academic work, then invite them back," he said.

Merkle believes the change is a positive one for the university, in regards to enrollment management.

"If we act like the University of Texas instead of Midwestern State University, I don't think we'd be anything special," Rogers said. "A lot of our opportunities come from the size of this university and one-on-one instruction from our faculty."

Also, Merkle said the number of first-year probation students declined from more than 200 to ap-

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