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UT, A&M face similar issues



Photo courtesy Texas A&M media relations

UT President Larry Faulkner and Texas A&M President Ray Bowen hold a teleconference with the press Friday in College Station and Austin. Bowen

and Faulkner "switched places" Friday, visiting each others' respective campuses.

Opportunity gives presidents chance to discuss problems

By Verena Isensee
Daily Texan Staff

UT President Faulkner switched jobs with Texas A&M President Ray Bowen on Friday and found out the two schools are dealing with similar issues, specifically free speech.

The two presidents took part in the event to show that while there is competition between the two schools, both are confronted with similar challenges.

Over lunch in Rudder Tower, Faulkner shared his thoughts with A&M student leaders on key issues facing the two flagship universities.

During the meeting, Faulkner enumerated some of the issues that "students have been squawking about," including the hotly debated infrastructure fee and the free-speech problem on campus, which the Laycock Committee on assem-

bly and expression is addressing. "We have had several controversial events over the last several years and groups that have tried to shout down speakers," Faulkner said. "There was also the stormy visit of Justice for All."

Faulkner's statement of the scope of the Laycock Committee is inconsistent with the scope that Doug Laycock, the chairman of the committee, has stated — that the committee will not study past campus events in which First Amendment rights might have been obscured.

"The Task Force on Assembly and Expression is not investigating individual incidents," Laycock said. "Our charge is to propose an improved set of rules going forward, not to resolve disputes about who did what to whom in the past."

Some past events where First Amendment rights might have been muddled include the de facto dismissal of two Texans for Israel students from a Palestine Solidarity Committee meeting, the heckling of speakers Ward Connerly and David Horowitz by audience members, and English professor Alan

Gribben's 1990 departure from the University after reportedly feeling ostracized by his department for objecting to changes in the syllabus of Rhetoric and Composition 306.

John Ruskiewicz, the director of the Division of Rhetoric and Composition who also objected to the proposed changes of RHE 306 curriculum, also said it sounded as if President Faulkner has widened the

task force of the committee.

"It sounds like [Faulkner] has extended the charge, but that is in his purview to do," Ruskiewicz said. "Personally, I wish they would look into the Connerly and Kissinger incidents. It was damaging enough to the reputation of the school."

The Laycock Committee, com-

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Photo courtesy Texas A&M media relations

Opposition to project heard by city council

By Peter Walker
Daily Texan Staff

Nearly 500 people attended the city meeting Thursday to debate Stratus Pro plan to build over 1 million square feet of office and retail space in Southwest Austin.

The city clerk's office estimated that nearly 500 signatures were collected on two agenda items. Given the high number of duplicates, the office estimates nearly 500 people attended the meeting, which lasted until 3 a.m. The city has postponed voting on the Stratus Pro development until July 11.

"We had an amazing citizen turnout," said Colin Clark, communications director for the Save Our Springs Alliance.

The SOS Alliance, which is leading the battle against Stratus Properties, filed a lawsuit against the company last week over enforcement of the SOS ordinance.

The ordinance, approved by voters in 1992 to protect water quality, restricts the amount of building and pavement, also known as impervious cover, that can cover land in the Barton Springs watershed in Southwest Austin.

Clark said the large citizen turnout was promising.

"We hope it sends a message to the city council that the citizens aren't satisfied with their repeated deal-making," he said.

Different organizations also argued for each other's interests, Clark said. "It's different and important that you hear from environmentalists arguing for neighborhood preservation and neighbors arguing for the enforcement of the SOS ordinance," Clark said.

Councilmember Will Wynn saw the meeting differently, saying most people came to the meeting with purely environmental motivation. "A lot of people in this community expect us to protect the environment and the springs," Wynn said. "I believe people came out to ask us to protect the environment."

Wynn added that he trusts the opinion of city staff scientists and biologists who "feel strongly about the proposed deal and its minimal impact on the environment."

"I'm encouraged by it, but this is still a complex deal," Wynn said.

Clark disagreed with the assertion by city staff and Stratus' lawyers that the development of non-adjacent tracts of land would reduce impact on the environment. He also

"There's nothing worse than going to a public meeting and hearing one's thoughts here's an issue obviously a people about"

Will Wynn city council

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