In the May meeting of our Faculty Senate, we elected Martyn Gunn as Speaker, John Fike as Speaker-Elect, and Jeannie Miller as Secretary-Treasurer.

Texas A&M University's Vision 2020 plan is being forwarded in several respects. The Faculty Re-investment Plan has led to an increase of 101 new (i.e., in addition to replacements) faculty positions filled this year. We are planning to have filled a total of 245 new positions by next fall. In order to create office and laboratory space for these new faculty, we have moved most administrative functions off campus, thus freeing up several complete buildings and additional space in other buildings.

Another goal set out in Vision 2020 was the enhancement of the undergraduate experience through such activities as undergraduate research. President Gates recently announced the formation of a task force to explore all aspects of undergraduate education. Focus areas include revision/enhancement of the undergraduate curriculum, development of a common freshman experience, enhanced honors opportunities, learning communities, summer school, leadership, and extracurricular experiences. The chairs of the task force and its subcommittees have been/are being selected with advice from the Faculty Senate and other constituencies. The task force has already begun its work.

In a related effort, we are examining the core curriculum courses and the philosophy involved in approving courses for the core curriculum. Should we allow just a few core curriculum courses, which every student should take, or should we have a distributed core curriculum, with many choices of course for each requirement? This question is being debated.

During the past year, we have put very substantial resources into the job of increasing diversity in our student body. This has paid off: At the undergraduate level, we have seen an increase of 35% in African-American students, of 22% in Hispanic students, and 11% in Asian students. There were similar increases in the ethnicity of new graduate students. Our efforts in this direction are continuing this year.

We attempted to keep the tuition increase as small as possible, given cuts in state funding. As a result, many deferred maintenance projects are still deferred. Funds were found for a merit pool of about 3% for the faculty. Operating budgets have held steady. The funds from the tuition increase went to new scholarships and the cost of the Faculty Re-investment Plan.

Enrollment has not been significantly affected by tuition increases. We continue to receive about 20,000 undergraduate applications each year, and we admit about 10,500; of these 10,500, about 6500 matriculate as new freshmen. There seems to be no effect on these numbers as a result of the tuition increase.

Graduate applications have declined about 30%. As this is a national problem, it is not clear that the cause is tuition increases. Our graduate enrollments have declined only about 10%.

We have seen no substantial effect on international student enrollments as a result of the war in Iraq. However, the various immigration rule changes have been having a growing negative impact on international scientific exchange. In March, our Senate passed a statement of support for President Gates' plan to try to get these rules modified.

Our new branch campus in Qatar is now well-established with two cohorts of students enrolled.