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## University of Texas Considers Student EMS Force

By Patrick George

When a medical crisis strikes on the University of Texas campus next fall, it could be students who respond with lifesaving treatment.

Known as Longhorn Student Emergency Medical Services, the student-staffed program would assist Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services with on-campus emergencies, typically getting to patients and starting treatment before professional paramedics and fire units arrive.

A university decision on whether to finance the \$95,000-a-year operation is due next month.

"We will operate as a part of Travis County EMS, with the same operating guidelines and medical director," said Brandon Glenn, a sophomore who is studying nursing and leading the emergency-response project. "We're really excited about this."

As one of about 35 first-response units in Travis County, Longhorn Student EMS would provide preliminary medical care on campus and help professional paramedics with everything from treatment to loading ambulances, said Larry Arms, clinical coordinator in the Austin-Travis County EMS medical director's office.

"Given that they're extremely familiar with campus, the hope is that they would facilitate access to patients and provide care as well as help (other emergency) units get there faster," Arms said.

Glenn, who rode with paramedics in Liberty County before attending UT, said he was surprised the university didn't have its own program.

"Most major universities have one," Glenn said.

More than 100 major colleges and universities - including Texas A&M University, Baylor University and Duke University - have student-run paramedic services, ranging from medical treatment to ambulance transport services.

UT's Student Government approved a bill supporting the program last week.

Texas A&M's EMS program has been around since 1980, has two ambulances and serves about 900 patients a year. Duke's program began in 1994 with only a few members and has evolved into an all-hours emergency-response team.

"We're five to 10 minutes ahead of the county EMS on every call out to campus," said Greg Heller, director of Duke EMS and a senior studying structural engineering. "It's been very successful. That kind of response time can make an enormous difference, and it has in the past. It's a good investment for a university to make."

Last week, Glenn and the EMS hopefuls presented their plan to the Student Services Budget Committee, a group of administrators and Student Government representatives who oversee programs financed by student fees.

If the committee agrees to spend \$195,000 in startup costs and \$95,000 a year thereafter, Longhorn Student EMS will have two Ford Explorers stocked with medical supplies and 40 students trained and certified as emergency medical technicians or paramedics.

Glenn said he hopes to set up a training program at UT, but it wouldn't be for class credit.

Tony Abraham, a pre-med sophomore who started the program with Glenn, said he hopes the program would attract students looking to gain practical experience before applying to medical school.

Student paramedics and emergency technicians would be unpaid but receive a meal stipend every shift, Glenn said. Commanders working 24-hour shifts would be paid \$25 a day.

"I think it will make students more confident should anything happen to them on campus," said Nicole Trinh, the Student Government representative who sponsored the EMS bill.

The Austin Fire Department responds only to high-priority emergencies and did not send units to about half of the 524 requests for medical help made from campus in the 2005-06 school year.

Any of those requests could have turned into a life-threatening problem, the Student Government bill said.