

Student Interest Revealed in First Study of Guidance at A & M

Student Opinion of Guidance Reflected in Survey Remarks

By FRANK WELCH

In September, 1946, there appeared at A&M a service administered by the Veterans Administration designed specifically to help students who were either confused or unsure about their choice of a profession.

This guidance program (Veterans Appraisal Service) received very little publicity, but as a result of the service offered, many A&M students, both veteran and non-veteran, have been able to choose their field of study with a better understanding of their abilities.

After nearly three years of service to over a thousand students, the office sent out questionnaires recently to all men who received counseling between April 1, 1947, and September 1, 1947.

Remarks on the questionnaires indicated what students who had received guidance and counseling thought of the service. The students were asked not to sign their names to the remarks unless they desired to do so.

Many students who had received counseling felt that such a service should be offered for all freshmen students. Typical examples are:

"I believe that the Veterans Appraisal Service should be an integral part of the college program, especially for boys entering college directly from high school. Without the help of some sort of appraisal service, few boys at that age really know what course to follow in their college career."

"I feel that a guidance service should most certainly be made a part of the orientation service for incoming freshmen. It should be invaluable for an incoming student to start in the field that he is best suited for. . . would avert the possibility of losing a lot of time and work."

"Most freshmen are taking courses suggested by parents. I was, and I did not care for the course. I struggled along mainly to please my folks. I knew I need to be in a different field, but did not know which one, nor how to find out. I feel sure that, had I been tested earlier, a few years of expense could have been put to better use."

"I firmly believe this service should be made available to men when they first enter college. Many are not certain as to the exact field they would be best satisfied in. I wish I had had this service early in school."

"I have recently accepted a job which conforms to the test results. I believe that 75% of freshmen failures and course changes could be avoided if all freshmen could have the benefit of testing. I took the wrong course for one year and I feel certain that the tests I took would have helped me avoid that mistake."

Other students reported personal benefits from the program, and some regretted that they had not received counseling earlier.

"Helped me to better appreciate my own inclinations toward a course of study. If I had had this service earlier, I am sure that it would have helped me to choose a course of study that I would have enjoyed much more. I heartily vote for this service to become a requirement for all men entering A&M."

"I changed my course from engineering to architecture. Not too enthusiastic about freshman test, but guidance should be more accurate and indicative of potentialities because of the personalized and informal testing."

"Upon re-entering A&M after discharge from the service, I had a difficult time getting back into the swing. Results of appraisal tests. . . lifted my morale out of the dumps. . . Grades since testing reflect the boost. . ."

Restoring of confidence, motivation to do better work, and a better understanding of interests were reported by some students as the chief benefit gained from guidance.

"I am deeply grateful for the guidance and testing which helped me to restore my confidence. Although. . . I wanted to change courses, I was not sure of my abilities in the alternate course selected. Testing assured me that I could do the work. . . Grades have gone from low to high."

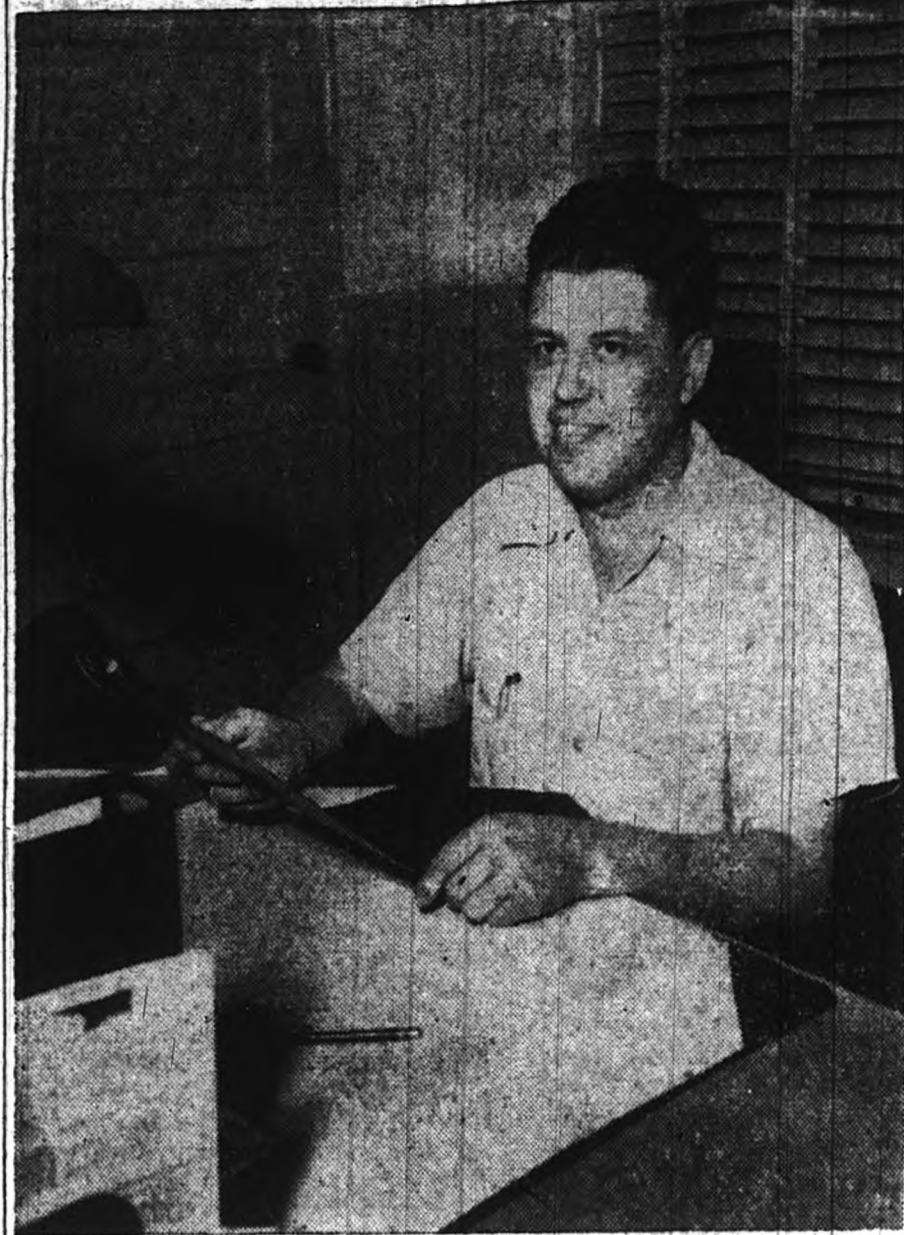
"I believe the guidance program should be expanded and more notice given to it. Too many students that I have talked with do not know we have a guidance service on the campus."

"I do not believe guidance motivated me to do better work. . . but I do believe that my work has been better due to the confidence given me by the results of the tests. I believe every person that enters school should take these tests and have the results explained. . . Confidence gained a great help."

"Guidance would help all young men to evaluate their capabilities, and interests."

"Guidance is a time-saver for both students and instructors."

"I sincerely believe that every student should receive this guidance and counsel. I believe that the tests should be carried on even past the initial testing service to compare advances students have made."



R. H. HUGHES, Director of the Veterans Appraisal Service.

FOUR ROOMS IN HART HALL

Appraisal Service Director Interviews Each Man Twice

By LOUIS MORGAN

Each student who applies for testing and guidance at the Veterans Appraisal Service is interviewed twice by R. H. Hughes, director.

Before the first interview, the student fills out special forms which gave the counselor a brief biographical background.

In the first interview, the student chooses the tests he wants to take with the advice of the counselor.

After the tests have been completed, results are carefully studied by Hughes, and a profile, based on the student's interests and aptitudes, is drawn up.

Hughes explains the results of the tests, and counsels with the student regarding his interests, aptitudes and abilities as reflected by the tests. Different occupational and educational objectives are then discussed with the student in order that he may make further investigation on his own initiative.

An A&M graduate of the Class of '37, Hughes does not believe that "anybody can do anything he wants to if he wants to bad enough." Results of testing and counseling, he believes, have proven this adage to be fallacious.

Hughes received an M.S. Degree in Genetic from A&M in 1940. He has also completed enough work in education and psychology for a Master's Degree.

He spent five years in the Army, most of that time during World War II. He was with the Coast Artillery for a time, but later transferred to the Air Corps and became a pilot. He served overseas in Africa and Italy.

After discharge from service, Hughes returned to his home in College Station and worked a year with the Athletic Department, plus one semester with the Biology Department. His father, W. L. Hughes, now retired, was head of the Education and Psychology Department here for 25 years.

In addition to giving tests and timing students, the secretaries look after the files and grade the tests.

A grading machine was added to the equipment last February. Before that time all papers were graded individually.

When asked how the machine operated, Mrs. Boatwright said, "It works fine when it is set on the 'right key'."

Tests for checking mechanical aptitude are also included in the Appraisal Service equipment.

In these tests, the student's ability to handle hand tools is checked. Testing results are sent to the Veterans Administration Office. Otherwise, results are strictly confidential.

Records of Over Two Hundred Students Included in Survey

Have you passed a Hart Hall doorway over which hangs a sign which reads "Veterans Administration Appraisal Service"? That doorway leads to one of the newest and fastest growing services to the students at A&M.

Since the inauguration of the Service, which is devoted to giving vocational guidance to all students, hundreds of men have been counseled and in many cases, guided into the fields for which they were better suited.

R. H. Hughes, director of the service, recently prepared a report on the results of the guidance program and it shows that, despite its present success, it is still in its early stages of development at A&M.

For the information of the many interested students Hughes' report on the effectiveness of the program, as determined by the men who have taken the tests, is reprinted below:

This report is a resume of one part of an effort to evaluate the effectiveness of the Guidance program as now constituted. At present the Guidance program at A&M College is small and completely subsidized by the Veterans Administration. The fact that our program is far too small, and that we have no personnel to handle cases in the Emotional area, must be taken into consideration.

In making the analysis, the author determined that not only objective data should be taken into consideration in any evaluation of this type but also subjective opinion by the students who have voluntarily sought the services offered by the Guidance program.

The survey includes all of the students who voluntarily came to this office for testing and counseling from April 1, 1947, through August 31, 1947. There were approximately 212 students in all. Of this number 145 were still in school in the spring of 1948. The other 87 had either graduated or dropped from school.

The survey was in the form of a questionnaire, and the student was instructed to answer truthfully and frankly the questions asked. He was directed against signing his name unless he so desired. It is believed, therefore, that the results are colored by as little prejudice as it is possible to obtain.

Out of the possible number of 145 (students still in school) a total of 117 responses were received. This response of 80 percent is large enough to be significant.

Attention is called to the fact that this is only the first draft of this study showing the prima facie evidence. Further study will be made in the hope of revealing all the ramifications of the data. Case studies will be made and objective evidence collected in the future.

One of the first objectives of Guidance is to help the student evaluate his capacities and limitations in such a manner as to enable him to make wiser choices in all areas of his life.

There are three major areas in which college students find a need for guidance. These are Educational, Vocational, and Emotional. There is really no sharp line of demarcation but rather an interrelationship of the three areas.

In Educational guidance the objective is to find the student's capabilities and limitations regarding academic work. The study of individual differences leads us to believe the old philosophy "that anybody can do anything he wants to do if he wants to do it badly enough" is false.

We readily recognize and admit physical differences but are slower in admitting mental differences. Some students find the abstract courses like Mathematics and Physics much easier than others.

On the other hand, some students do well only in content courses like English, History, and Natural Sciences. Before the student tries study in either of these lines, it is well to find his limitations as nearly as possible and to counsel with him. A slip here may lead to maladjustment in both of the other areas.

The Vocational area is one in which the student's background, college study, capabilities, and limitations, plus other occupational features, come into play. The pressing need for terminal education in the case of those students who are not college material should be given more and more consideration as we progress. Here guidance and counseling is needed in consideration of the student's abilities, aptitudes, academic work, and interests. Then it is desirable to discuss with him the various types of occupations in which he could successfully be trained.

The Emotional area is the most difficult to diagnose and the most delicate one to handle. This should be done by competent professional men trained in Mental Hygiene. The student may sincerely believe his problem is only educational or vocational. The emotional factor is too often disregarded.

Table I

Table with 2 columns: Answer, Percent. Question: When you came to the Veterans Appraisal Service did you intend to change your course of study?

Table with 2 columns: Answer, Percent. Question: Underline one or more. Do you think the guidance service?

Table II

Table with 2 columns: Answer, Percent. Question: A. Did you change your course of study? B. If so, was it a result of the testing service?

Table II will again bear out the above challenge when it is noted that the distribution of students changing course is approximately equal. Of those that changed, approximately one-half did so as a result of testing. With one exception these claimed to have benefited greatly or considerably, and to be more satisfied with their new course of study.

Table III

Table with 2 columns: Answer, Percent. Question: Whether or not you changed your course of study, do you feel that you benefited from the guidance service?

Table III, in the opinion of the author, really gives us an insight into the reaction of the students who have sought help. The table in general is self explanatory. As noted in the previous discussion, some 50 percent of those who changed courses did not do so as a result of testing. However, a large majority of all cases claimed to have benefited either greatly or considerably. Considering this fact carefully, it would be reasonable to assume that most students could benefit from



MRS. J. R. STREET (right), and MRS. C. M. BOATWRIGHT (left), Appraisal Service secretaries, take care of the files and administer the tests. MRS. STREET has worked at the Guidance Center since January, 1947, and MRS. BOATWRIGHT joined the staff in November, 1947.

the testing and counseling service. If this is true, it certainly must lead to the conclusion that full services due the students are not being offered by this institution.

TABLE IV

Table with 2 columns: Answer, Percent. Question: Please indicate your feelings concerning your course of study since testing and guidance (whether or not you have changed your major).

Table IV is also self explanatory. The students, in general, seem to be more satisfied with their course of study regardless of change. Nearly all the students who changed course of study appeared to be better satisfied. Of the six percent who are less satisfied, those students who did not change courses are in the majority. These claimed they were too far advanced in their present course for a change to be practical. However, without exception they thought they had either benefited greatly or considerably. They had been able to choose electives more wisely.

TABLE V

Table with 2 columns: Answer, Percent. Question: Do you think guidance services should be made available to all students during their freshman year?

Table V most clearly indicates the students' thoughts on Guidance. A great majority of the students underlined the yes and followed it up by further comment in the space left for remarks. Part of the two percent who answered the question in the negative thought guidance should be given in the last three years of college.

If the significance of the response to this question is overlooked, then we must be charged with nothing short of criminal negligence to our incoming first year students. This raises the question whether to expel the student who is scholastically deficient or help him find some suitable curriculum or vocation as the better course of action.

The first may lead to the removal of some individuals not fitted for academic work but also it will remove quite a few students who have the capacity to do some other curriculum well. This is a waste of mental potentiality.

The psychological effects on the personality of the students expelled would pose the question as to the wisdom of the expulsion method. The defeatist attitude, the inferiority complex and the loss of motivation would only be a few of the psychological effects. Any such method that leads to maladjustment is indefensible.

TABLE VI

Table with 2 columns: Answer, Percent. Question: Underline one or more. Do you think the guidance service?

The sixth question is difficult to put into tabular form because quite a few of the students underlined more than one of the answers. In general, a great majority underlined (2) Caused you to think about and investigate more seriously your future objective?

Additional choices added in the space left for that purpose were these:

The student claimed it gave him more confidence in his ability to do his college work.

The student claimed it enabled him to take a more objective view of his capabilities and limitations.

The student claimed it helped him find the course of study in which he could do the best and hence the most interest.

The space left for remarks yielded a very good response in a majority of the cases. In the remarks made by students nearly all reiterated their belief in the need of having a Guidance program during the freshman year.

In general, students believed that a comprehensive Guidance program would, to a large extent, save students from entering into some course of study for which they had no aptitude or ability. Many expressed a wish that they could have had guidance earlier. The students thought this service would help the freshman develop an objective. This would be a definite aid to those who have no idea why they are coming to college.

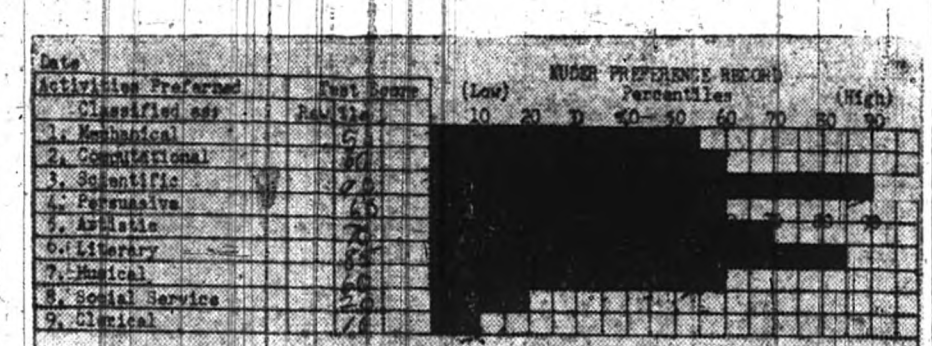
One student thought the whole program was a waste of time because of the many personal factors involved. This is undoubtedly true in some cases. Again we face the problem of emotional maladjustment where the lack of facilities and personnel hinders the helping of such students. Others would no doubt have benefited more if they had had counseling with regard to emotional problems.

In conclusion, after taking into consideration the lack of personnel in certain areas and the facilities with which to work, the response to this survey is very heartening. From the above tables and discussions it seems certain that most of the students concerned have been helped considerably. They seem most eager to see A&M take further steps to insure the proper guidance of students.



CHARLES MAISEL, senior student from Phillips, Texas, poses above with the hand tool dexterity test which is used by the Appraisal Service to test men going into auto mechanic work. Testing results are strictly confidential.

The Kuder Preference Record



The Kuder Preference Record, pictured above, is only one of the methods used at the Appraisal Service to determine student aptitudes.

The imaginary student represented above rated high (90) on the Scientific test, and 85 on the Literary test. His Social Service score was low (20) and his Clerical test even lower (10).

By checking on a file of occupations to fit the student with these interests, the counselor finds that the student has the necessary qualifications to become a scientific journal editor, an entomologist, a literary critic, or a meteorologist.

Frustrated Aggie Joe Finds A Way to Check His Aptitude

By CHUCK MAISEL

Joe Aggie was a math major. But Joe had taken 101 three times and still had not broken a 45 average.

"I wonder," Joe thought, "if I'm cut out to be a math major?"

Joe had a chance to find out. He could go to the Veterans Appraisal Service and take an aptitude test.

After getting permission from the Veterans Advisor, Joe skipped into the office of the Veterans Appraisal Service located in Hart Hall. There he was met by two young ladies, Mrs. J. R. Street and Mrs. C. M. Boatwright, secretaries to R. H. Hughes, chief of the Veterans Appraisal Service.

The secretaries gave him a case history form to fill out. This confidential questionnaire delved into Joe's background and environment. Sample questions had to do with divorce in his family and what adjective he thought best described himself.

Then Joe was ushered into Hughes office. Here, Hughes gave him information on the available tests and let Joe himself choose the proper one. Among others, Joe could find how he stood in such manual dexterity, personality, music, trades, or general intelligence. Joe passed up this last named test and decided to take the quiz in math aptitude.

Joe was happily turned over to one of the secretaries once more to be administered the test. This he sweated out and handed back in to be graded on the grading-machine owned by the service.

After one week, Joe returned to have his test interpreted. He was told of his limitations and capacities in the chosen field and interests were pointed out. However, Hughes never suggested for a minute that Joe go jump off the water tower. Any decision made from the test is made by Joe himself. Hughes only showed him the facts and Joe made up his own mind.



"Sorry, Miss Hill, your aptitude test does not indicate that you are cut out to be an engineer!"