

Fewer southern students look to college

A rural sociologist at Texas A&M University says early marriage can get negatively on career aspirations of both the husband and wife, not just the woman as is commonly believed.

Dr. Arthur C. Cosby, associate professor, also says that fewer Texas and Deep South high school students expect to go on to college than in the past, but that encouragement by parents, teachers and classmates is a significant factor in helping them aspire to higher achievement levels.

Cosby has been conducting research on factors that affect the career decision-making process since his graduate student days at

Mississippi State University in 1966. Since coming to A&M in 1971, he has received major support for his work from the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station and recently was awarded additional funds from Health, Education and Welfare (HEW's) National Institute of Education.

His studies include long-term reviews of the careers of people who were high school sophomores in 1966.

Over the years, the research has expanded to compare high school students of the early 1970s and late 1960s, to examine the role of women in agricultural colleges (28 per cent

of agriculture students are female); of urban students (half the agriculture enrollment comes from cities); and of blacks (who have a disproportionately lower percentage of students enrolled in agricultural colleges).

More than 200 papers, articles and book chapters by various researchers have been produced by the studies which cover thousands of students from 100 Texas and Deep South high schools. Forty Southern universities with agricultural programs, including Prairie View A&M, also participate.

Cosby says that the positive influence of encouragement in high

school often stays with the students. "Those who wanted more education tended to get it."

A high sense of optimism also seems to be a factor. Youth in their mid-20s tended to retain the high achievement goals they had in high

school, although attainment of the goals seemed realistically impossible.

Research shows that youth in Texas and the Deep South increasingly prefer to reside in rural areas, said Cosby.

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