

Local

Tight funds make computer classes a hassle

By ERICA KRENNERICH
Battalion Reporter
Inadequate funds for student use of Wylbur, a component of the Texas A&M System computer, is affecting the quality of instruction students receive, but will not prevent students from completing required projects, Dr. John Dinkel, head of the business analysis and research department, says.

Dinkel said that because the university doesn't own the computer, it must buy computer time. The Texas Engineering Experiment Station owns the computer. The University did own the computer, it could have its computer free.

He said the vice president for academic affairs allocates money each college for instructional computer use, or student use, and students happy hour time from the Data Processing Center. Happy hour is from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday. It's small student jobs, and the students aren't charged for their computing time.

Dinkel said that the College of Business gets \$20,500 a year for instructional computer use. The business analysis and research department gets most of the money because it has the most students to use Wylbur.

Biana 217, an introductory computer course, has 1,200 to 1,500 students each semester. Each student receives \$3.50 for the semester for computing, he said. If 1,500 students enroll in the course, \$250 is used each semester. In a year, about half of the business college allocation is used by this course, he said.

Dinkel said the computing money is usually used up in the first semester of the year. After that, the department supports the computer classes using departmental money.

Department money is used to pay its bills, support faculty travel to attend meetings and support faculty and instructional computer use.

"When we get to departmental operating expenses, not only do we have to support instructional use of the computer, but we also have to support faculty use of the computer," Dinkel said. "We simply don't have enough money to satisfactorily cover either of those. So we're in a conflict and both suffer as a result."

"We don't have enough money, but that's not only in (the) Bana (department); that's every department in the College of Business Administration and probably in most departments around the University. Part of the issue in the business college has been our rapid growth in the last couple of years. We've had enormous growth in terms of students and new faculty."

Dinkel said he assessed the impact that the lack of funds caused and found the situation worse than he thought it would be.

"The University allocation for computing this year is exactly the same number of dollars as last year," Dinkel said. "Our growth in the department is about 16 percent over last year in terms of student credit hours. So we're looking at covering about 16 percent more students, with increased costs from the DPC, with the



Staff photo by Greg Watermann

Four computing centers, like this one in the Sterling C. Evans Library, are available to students and faculty for instructional, research and administrative purposes.

same number of dollars. So each student gets less money."

Lack of funds does have an impact on courses, he said. "First, we're forcing students to rely on happy hour," he said. "Second, without exception, all of the courses are cutting back on the programming exercises that are being done. Instructors simply don't have the resources, and they require less of the students, which means students are getting less exposure to the computer."

Dinkel said that if a student runs out of computer money, the student's files are removed from

Wylbur and he can run keypunch cards at happy hour, which effectively means free computing. The problem, Dinkel said, results when the student has to compete with many other students who use happy hour, and when he has to find a working keypunch machine.

"No student has been unable to complete the required projects because he's run out of money," Dinkel said. "But he has been put at a disadvantage in having to go to cards and use happy hour."

Dinkel said he is confident the University will deal with the computer problem.

Multi-faceted system

By JOHNA JO MAURER
Battalion Reporter
Texas A&M University students and faculty have access to two sophisticated computers through the Texas A&M Data Processing Center network.

Four campus computing centers in the Sterling C. Evans Library, Teague Computing Center, Zachry Engineering Center and Kleberg serve as access points to the main computer system.

A fifth center will open in July in the Academic & Agency Building.

The local network is used for academic, research and administrative purposes.

Dick Simmons, director of the Data Processing Center, said students can use the computer network for statistical analysis and simulation routines.

He said electrical engineering students can simulate circuitry with one of the many programming systems in the computer, architecture students can simulate structural design, and aeronautics students are able to simulate rocket and airplane design.

Jack Foster, manager of the University computer network, said students also use the campus network to learn the many computer languages.

He said Fortran is the most widely used language, but others such as COBOL, PL/1, SAS, and PASCAL also are used extensively.

Foster said the Data Processing Center has tapes with statistical information on certain areas that students use to analyze data.

About 600 courses use computer time for problem solution. A computer happy hour that is offered from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday allows free usage to students for computer jobs.

The computer network is used for administrative purposes also. The Fiscal Office, Housing Office, Academic Counseling Center and Student Records are among many offices on campus having direct access to the computer for data collection, accounting and information filing.

Simmons said the University computer system is the regional center for the state computer network, whose users include University of Texas at Tyler, Tarleton State University and Texas State Technical Institute in Waco, Amarillo, Sweetwater and Harlingen.

These network users are connected by telephone lines to the Data Processing Center.

Today's almanac

Today is Friday, Nov. 20, the 28th day of 1981 with 41 days to follow.

On this date in history:
In 1620, a baby girl was delivered aboard the Mayflower in Massachusetts Bay, the first white child born in the New England colonies. She was named Peregrine White.

In 1945, 24 German leaders went on trial at Nuremberg before the International War Crimes Tribunal.

In 1968, an explosion entombed 78 men in a coal mine at Farmington, W. Va.

In 1975, Generalissimo Francisco Franco of Spain died. Also that day, Ronald Reagan announced his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination in 1976.

A thought for the day: Scottish writer Thomas Carlyle said: "Music is well said to be the speech of angels."

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