

Student leaders face issues

Presidency offers chances to learn

by Cheryl Maynard

Battalion Reporter

Being student body president gives you a chance to work with a wide range of people in all levels of life, says Student Body President Ken Johnson.

"It gives you the chance to do constructive things here at Texas A&M, and I've found it to be a real learning opportunity and personal challenge," he said.

To become a student body president, a person must have a minimum grade point ratio of 2.5, and must have been a student at the University for three consecutive semesters.

But Johnson said some unwritten qualifications are involved as well.

He said it's important for candidates to be knowledgeable of student government and what occurs at Texas A&M. The student body president must be able to communicate and "tell it like it is," he said.

Further, he suggests that candidates be aware of the commitment and willingness necessary for the job. He added that a person has no business seeking office unless he can put service above self.

"You're always going and doing as student body president," Johnson said. He estimates that he puts in about 50-60 hours a week for the office, including the luncheons, meetings and dinners he must attend.

The job has had him rub elbows with University administrators at all levels, students, former students and chancellors of other universities with whom he would have never come in contact.

"Student government has to accurately represent the needs and wants of the entire student body," said Johnson.

To do this, he has helped to initiate a campus canvass system in which senators visit monthly with as many students as they can in their constituencies for input on campus issues.

Though the canvass gave student government knowledge of some on-going campus problems, there was no way of knowing that it was truly a representative sample of students being interviewed. Thus, Johnson said, student government is beginning to solicit opinions from the student body face-to-face.

Student senators each solicit 25 opinions in person from their constituency. The most common problems mentioned by these students will be put in priority order. Then, by phone or mail, members of student government will question 395 students randomly about these priority problems.

Although the results are statistically invalid, they do give student leaders a better case to present to University administrators who can work on changes, Johnson said.

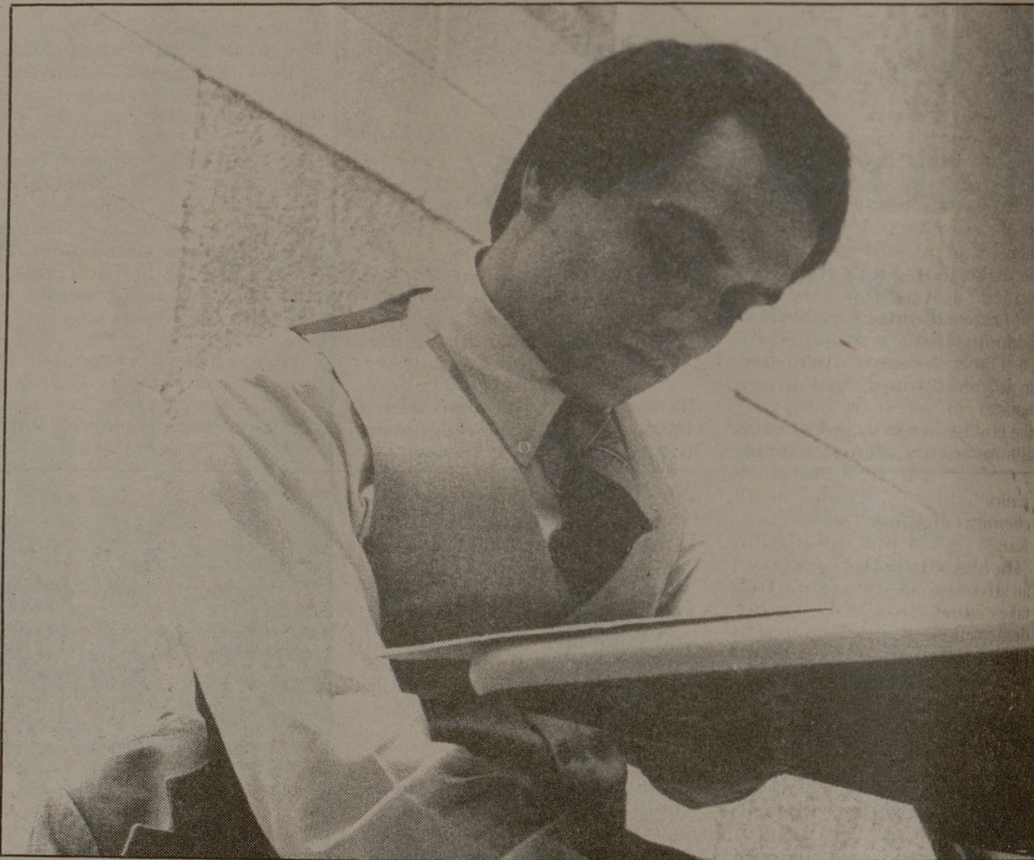


Photo by Todd Woodard

Student Body President Ken Johnson reviews his notes before the start of a meeting of the Student Senate.

Johnson, a senior agricultural economics major, was elected during last year's elections.

He said that when he entered office in 1981, he wanted to address tough issues, yet he had no idea just how controversial the 1981-82 year would be.

Issues such as limiting enrollment, parking problems and Gay Students Service Organization law suits against the University required the attention of

student government. Johnson said these complex issues are on-going and they will be of concern to the next student body president as well.

Seniors recall year

Yell leaders motivate

by Lori Weldon

Battalion Reporter

Spirit and tradition are common fare among Aggies. But for Texas A&M University yell leaders, those words have special meaning.

Yell leaders are the personification of Aggie traditions and it's the yell leaders' responsibility to preserve them or to instigate changes to reflect the University's changes, said Head Yell Leader Mike Thatcher.

Motivating crowds at football and basketball games and setting an example of good sportsmanship are both important to the role of yell leader. And since they are probably the most visible student leaders, their job entails much more than just leading yells at games.

Senior yell leaders coordinate yell practices — reserving Kyle Field, arranging for use of the Rudder Tower sound system and planning for security.

For out-of-town games they must make arrangements with the Chamber of Commerce in

that city to have yell practice there, said Norris Hodgkin, senior yell leader. Away games also require financial planning, time schedules and transportation arrangements.

Another job of the yell leaders is to speak to groups of former students concerning changes at the University. They also meet with new students to tell them about Aggie traditions.

Keeping tradition alive at Texas A&M is more difficult now, Hodgkin said. Because of the University's fast growth, a lot of people are uninformed about traditions, he said.

Thatcher said that being involved is what being a yell leader is all about. Hodgkin said that when he was an underclassman he looked up to the yell leaders because they enjoyed what they were doing and were involved with the University.

"You're caught up in what Texas A&M really is — you're in control," Thatcher said. "I like to be in a position where I can have an influence. You have a

lot of input at activities other than those concerning yell leaders."

The head yell leader meets about twice a month with other student leaders, and in the fall he speaks at about six meetings a week. Last fall Thatcher was scheduled to speak at four or five meetings a day, five days a week.

Occasional meetings are with former students.

The yell leaders traveled to football games in San Francisco and Boston last semester and had the chance to talk to former students from the classes of 1920 and 1930, to hear them describe what Texas A&M was like when they were students.

"Aggies are the greatest people in the world and it's really neat communicating with them," Hodgkin said.

"There actually is a twelfth man," Thatcher said.

"You're not out there for yourself, you're representing the Twelfth Man," Hodgkin said. "That's what Texas A&M is. It's tradition."

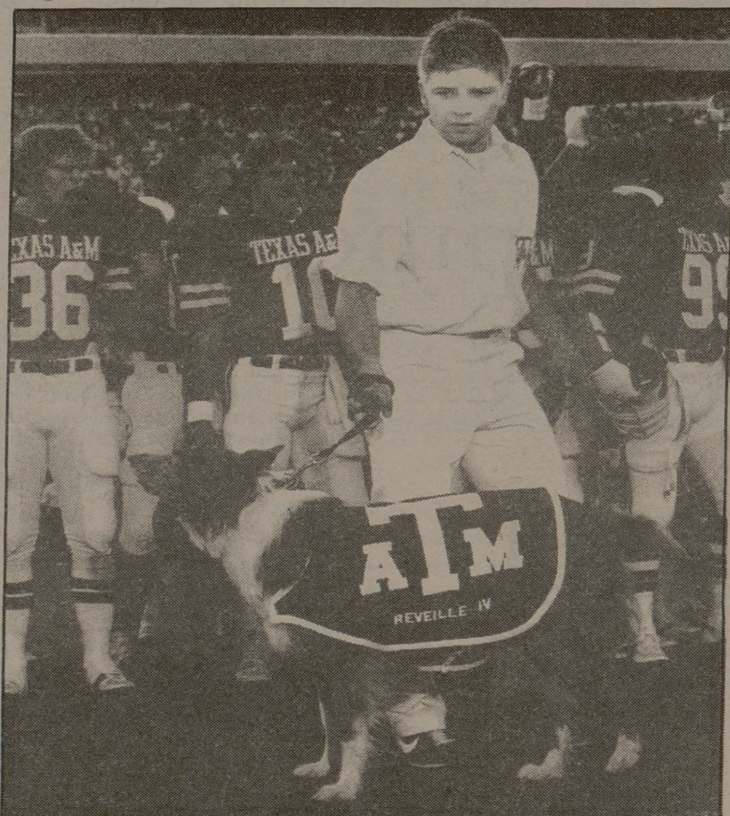


Photo by Bob Sebree

Head Yell Leader Mike Thatcher holds onto Aggie mascot Reveille IV before kickoff at a football game on Kyle Field. Reveille and the yell leaders boost the Twelfth Man spirit during all home games.