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A&M sociologists look at the changing state

by Brigette Crossland
Battalion Reporter

Texas is changing and Texas A&M sociologists are examining the public's perceptions of those changes through a statewide survey.

John Thomas, rural sociology research scientist, says the survey is unique because it covers critical areas in need of information.

"Most public surveys done in Texas are part of nationally syndicated surveys," Thomas said. "The state sample sizes are so small and the data has such large sampling errors that they are somewhat meaningless."

"In a state with 14 million plus people, you can't take a sample size of 75 subjects and expect representative results," he said. "We are calling 1,000 people in our survey, which gives it a better basis for being statistically representative."

Stephen Sapp, a graduate stu-

dent working on the project, pointed out the pertinence of the survey to Texas: "The survey is not a unique one in terms of questions asked because the questions are grounded in previous research, but the issues are geared towards the Texas public."

The survey is conducted and funded by the Department of Rural Sociology.

Thomas said the study is necessary because of the amount of people moving into the state. Someone must plan for and provide services for those people, he said.

"People are migrating into the state and bringing with them expectations of all the urban conveniences in a rural town," Thomas said. "Taxpayers have to pay for these services and local governments have to plan for them. We hope our survey will help decision makers by getting the Texas public's perceptions."

Besides decision making, a survey could be useful in industry. For example, the public's food consumption, what types of meat are most often, how much is on food in the past year, what is anticipated will be in the future.

"That means big business, or a meat producer, is concerned with the rural industry."

"We are trying to get on the public image of the cultural industry," Thomas said.

Preliminary results of the survey should be ready in a few weeks, Thomas said. He sees the survey as a search to prepare for a changing population in

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