

A modern drama for a mass of graduates

By PATTI FLINT
Staff Writer

The time: Altogether too near graduation and a rude awakening into reality.

The place: Rudder Tower, 10th floor, Texas A&M Placement Center, early in the week.

The setting: Chaos among sardine-packed students, some about to be interviewed, some who have just been interviewed, others conducting miscellaneous business. On a hot day, sweat prevails.

The sentiment: "It actually smells like a high school locker room" — Dillard Stone, graduate student in business administration and a prospective May graduate.

"As far as I'm concerned, the basic purpose of the Placement Center is to allow me to interview with a large number of firms before I graduate," says Stone, who is going through the Placement Center for the second semester.

Is it helping him?

"I don't know," he says. "I don't have a job yet."

Stone chalks a big part of his bad luck up to the presidential election in November and also to companies that interviewed May and December graduates,

intending only to hire the latter.

"I think everybody was waiting for the election to see if the economy was going into a recession," Stone says.

But he asks companies, "Why the hell did you say on your schedule that you were going to see May graduates when you knew damn good and well that you were only hiring December graduates?"

Stone seems to think that the biggest problem with the placement center is a lack of space which is obvious on the busy days.

John Speed, who will graduate in May with a degree in civil engineering, also believes space is one of the placement center's big problems. But not the only one.

"If you really want to get a job you don't go through the Placement Center," Speed says. "The best way is to go through individual companies."

Last semester, Speed had seven interviews through the placement center, but he says only one of them panned out. He has been much more successful on his own.

"I've gotten probably 50 percent of the people interested in

me that I've talked to on my own," he says. "Companies like go-getters."

He still interviews through the placement center when it's more practical, as with companies that are "too far away to even think about going to see."

He does think the placement center does one thing well.

"The placement library is really excellent," Speed says. "A lot of time I use the placement library to find out about companies I want to use on my own." But he complains that they need to provide more schedule books because it can take up to 20 minutes to look through one.

Speed says the best way for the placement center to serve students is by having a bigger desk with more workers, so questions can be answered more quickly.

"A good thing about the people that work there is once you get to the counter, they bend over backwards for you," he says.

For Liz Carr, an accounting major graduating in May, the placement center has been a positive experience.

"It's been a good experience as far as interviewing," Carr

says. "It kind of forces you to get your thoughts together; it forces you to get yourself together."

Carr believes the placement center is successful.

"I don't see how they could not be successful," she says. "It's not up to them if you get the job or not. It's your qualifications."

She says bidding for interviews makes dealing with the placement center a game.

"It just takes a while to get to know where everything is and understand everything," Carr says. "It's just like everything else at A&M: It really takes time to learn the system."

Carr's only suggestion for the placement center is for them to make individual help more easily attainable.

"Even with the orientation that they give you, it's still not enough," she says. "They need a little more individual help."

Tracie Holub, who graduated last December with a degree in journalism, also complains that the placement center is understaffed. But as a graduate in liberal arts, Holub also complains that the placement center didn't have much to offer her.

"Liberal arts interviews are few and far between," she says.

She says the placement center more adequately serves students in more technical majors, those who are looking for jobs with oil companies, banks and such.

"If you're interested in those types of jobs, that's where they are the most helpful," she says. "That's where they do the most good."

She suggested that the placement center make the library more efficient for the liberal arts major and others who aren't engineering or business.

Although Holub got her job as an assistant area manager for Palais Royal through the placement center, she says that liberal arts majors, especially those looking for jobs outside of their majors, are going to have to go out and do some footwork.

"You've got to go out there and prove yourself," she says. "You can't rely on the placement center to do everything for you. And that's even for business people."

"I don't think your career search should begin and end with the placement center. It can't." ♪

But it's really not that much of a hassle

By SHAWN BEHLEN
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Now then, I'm going to take you through the procedural aspects of the placement center. Or in plain English, tell you how the place works. I must ask that you bear with me, because to be honest, this should set a new standard for the phrase, "the blind leading the blind." But hey, I know that with patience and teamwork, we can do it.

First, you have to register. Go to the main counter and tell one of those people who look like they haven't sat down for a week what your major is and when you hope to graduate. They will give you a packet chock full of papers to be filled out, which you must return to the same place.

These papers include a yellow Placement Center Registration Card. On this one goes such stuff as name, phone numbers, addresses, major and the times during each day that you are free to expose your psyche. There's also a Consent To Release Form that's pretty easy to fill out. It lets the staff show your stuff to prospective employers — that is what we're here for, you know. Then you have to fill out a Resume Form/Synopsis Resume — type it, please. This one gets down to business and requires putting four years of college into exactly 73 blanks. Oh, and they want 25 copies.

When you take all this back, along with three extremely biased letters of recommendation, you are nearly official. The next day, go back and pick up your Placement Center Identification Number — now, you're official. It's time for business, folks.

Actually, it's time to look through a zillion datasheets. These jewels are found in ugly binders lying all over the center. They list employers coming to interview, the majors which they'll accept, the dates they'll be here and usually a brief job description.

If you find someone who needs your services like College Station needs a place to party, then fill out an Interview Sign-Up Card and drop it in the drop slots (aptly named, I must say). Use a No. 2 pencil and justify right, filling in preceding zeros. Not too hard to do since we've all taken thousands of scantron tests, but the big test here is to turn it in before the deadline, which is always the Wednesday three weeks before your prospective employer will be here.

Also, on this card, you have to bid points to increase your chances of getting the interviews you really want. And there is a limit on the number of points you have to work with. Now this can get a little confusing, so I'll just quote awhile. "For the spring semester, May/August 1985 graduates will have 200 points. December 1985 graduates will have 150 points for the spring semester and 250 points during the fall semester. All students receive 400 points during their graduating year and no points are carried over from one semester to the next." What all that means is you have to choose what you want and gamble for it.

The next Monday, interview schedules will be posted in the lobby. If your Placement Center Identification Number is there, then you're in. Bring out the Dress for Success suit, shine the shoes and dazzle 'em. At Ease wishes you luck. ♪