

Cheater recalls expulsion

By DEBRA CANTU
Reporter

Three years ago Jeff was doing what every college-bound 18-year-old student does after high school graduation; he was choosing a college.

In 1982 Texas A&M accepted Jeff as a student. Three years later, Texas A&M said goodbye. Jeff was caught cheating.

Jeff said he had no idea he would get caught. Getting caught wasn't supposed to happen, not to him anyway.

"I never thought my college career at A&M would just come to a stop," he said.

Jeff looks uncomfortable as he remembers.

He remembers auditing the class that got him expelled from the University. He said he was helping a friend, or so he thought.

"I didn't think it would be such a big deal to wait for the test to be handed out and walk out with it," he said.

Jeff said it would help his friend who would take the same test an hour later. His friend didn't get expelled.

Jeff stares out of the window. He remembers the professor.

He said the professor wanted Jeff to learn a lesson.

Jeff appeared before the University's disciplinary appeals panel to plead his case. He was tried and convicted. Guilty.

Jeff remembers the six pairs of eyes from the members of the panel. He said they were piercing, questioning, knowing. The panel consisted of students and faculty. They were there to give Jeff a last chance.

"I felt like I was being executed," he said. "Things didn't look so good and I knew it."

Jeff's eyes are downcast and he remembers.

He remembers how cheating in high school was commonplace.

"High school was a joke. Nobody paid any attention to cheating," he said. "I thought I could do it here and get away with it. I was wrong."

Three years of work at the University were taken away. Jeff's future was redealt to him. His friend's future was unchanged.

Jeff can't talk about it anymore. He said it happened, but it wasn't supposed to.

A&M officials will prosecute cheaters

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If cheating sounds appealing, think again before risking the chance of getting caught.

At Texas A&M, administrators are not reluctant to prosecute cheaters, the supervisor of student judicial affairs at the University said.

"Roughly six cases of cheating came through my office last year," Supervisor Brent Patterson said. "I know because I'm the records keeper for student's disciplinary files," he added.

He said students normally receive an F in the course if they are caught cheating; however, the professor can take the case to the dean of the college if he feels a more drastic measure needs to be taken.

"If a professor feels the student is

a habitual cheater or needs to be taught a lesson, he can bring the case up with the dean. A decision is then made whether to put the student on probation, suspension, or even expulsion," Patterson said. "The dean makes the decision."

If a student is 'convicted' of cheating by the dean, he has a right to due process under the University's rules and regulations. At Texas A&M, due process consists of a hearing.

The University Appeals Panel, consisting of faculty members and students, hears the case and makes a decision based on the student's argument.

The procedure requires the student to file a written request for an appeals hearing within three class days of receiving the dean's decision. The student must show unjust punishment or a violation of due process in his case against the college.

He is allowed legal counsel at the hearing.

After the hearing, a decision is reached by the Panel at a closed session and a formal letter outlining the decision is sent to the student.

Now you know what Texas A&M does for those who get caught, but what is the University doing to avoid the situation entirely?

Ethics and values courses are offered at universities across the nation and are placed at the conclusion of a program of study. Many colleges are incorporating lectures on ethics in freshman orientation.

Presently, Texas A&M is not offering such programs.

"We can't hit ethics on freshman," Director of Student Activities Carolyn Adair said.

Adair said freshmen need programs on assertiveness, time management and grade awareness be-

fore plunging into ethics. However, she said the University is considering a course that touches on ethics as one of its topics.

"As far as an ethics course being offered at the University, plans are on the burner," Adair said. "We'd start small and expand the program if it became popular," she added.

Adair said the potential for high enrollment in such a course is great and she'd like to provide enough sections to accommodate the demand. She also said staffing the course would be a mammoth task.

Adair said the class would be geared at maximizing the college experience.

"The course would touch on more general topics than ethics," she said. "Perhaps one or two sessions would be sufficient to cover the topic."

Adair said a department at the University has not yet been chosen to credit the course.

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