

Center aiding liberal arts majors

By SCOTT SUTHERLAND
Assistant City Editor

Some say the centralized placement center at Texas A&M is too large and isn't helping liberal arts majors who need special attention. But officials say A&M's placement center is the best way to give students a wide range of job choices in a competitive job market.

At the University of Texas, liberal arts majors have a special placement center that seeks jobs specifically for them.

Dr. Richard Pyle, associate director for the University of Texas placement center, says the center is promoting liberal arts as a valuable career.

"I want people to understand that liberal arts skills are still important," Pyle says.

have luck in securing a job with one of the 750 companies that interview on campus.

But over the past 10 years the demand for liberal arts majors has continued to decline. The Occupational Outlook handbook, compiled by the Bureau of Labor statistics, cites a steady decline in the availability of jobs for liberal arts majors.

And job opportunities for most fields that have traditionally hired liberal arts graduates, are expected to grow at only an average pace for the next 10 years.

Skip Sturman, director of career placement at Dartmouth College, wrote in the December issue of Career Magazine that liberal arts majors are suffering from today's competitive business world.

Sturman says although chief executive officers often rave about the value of a liberal arts education, students are finding it rough going in the job market.

"It's difficult to understand," he says, "why many CEO's issue glowing testimonials about liberal arts grads while corporate doors are being slammed in their faces."

Stueman says the problem is that CEO's rarely make low-level employment decisions. Instead, he says, middle managers do the hiring and liberal arts majors aren't tops on their lists.

These middle men are not concerned with hiring someone who might pay dividends somewhere down the road, Sturman writes. In today's economy, managers are pressured to get a big return on their investment in a short amount of time.

Liberal arts majors who need training before they get the hang of the system are simply not worth the investment, he says.

But Sturman says CEO's are starting to take a closer look at the hiring practices of their firms.

"Belatedly, many CEO's have come to the realization that it may not be enough to talk about the valuable contributions that liberal arts graduates can make without taking a look at the hiring practices of their own organizations," he says.

Vuillet says liberal arts majors could increase their salability by choosing a specific minor field of study.

In the recruiting survey, 32 percent of the recruiters said accounting and finance backgrounds make liberal arts graduates more employable. Writing and communications skills also were listed by recruiters as being very helpful.

And recruiters said internships and cooperative education programs can be very helpful.

In that category Vuillet says specialized placement centers do have an advantage. She says they are very adept at placing students in co-op and intern programs that often provide the key to job placement.

Vuillet praises these programs as "try-before-you-buy programs that employers and students can benefit from."

Sturman agrees that along with an academic background, internships and cooperative education programs provide exceptionally good experience.

"Career planners on both sides of the fence recommend business internships as one of the best ways to showcase talent and test long-range interests," Sturman says.

Vuillet says students should start researching the placement center long before they graduate, looking for companies that are coming to interview.

Each company that recruits at A&M must apply for a date to interview at the placement center. Most of those reservations are made early in the semester because companies

want to get the best dates and times, Vuillet says.

Companies fill out application cards with the type of major they will be interviewing and a description of the position they want to fill.

Lutes says liberal arts students are often intimidated by the requirements on these job descriptions.

"Students should look at these requirements and ask themselves 'Can I do this job?'" Vuillet says. "Too often they count themselves out because the description looks too technical."

And if students feel they are qualified to interview for a position even

if the company does not list their major, Vuillet says, they should call the company and ask for permission to interview.

Lutes added that students might even consider contacting the company later and asking to interview.

Regardless of how a liberal arts major gets his foot in the door, Lutes says that selling yourself is a key element in landing a job.

"Liberal arts students will not fare well," Lutes says, "if they expect to be treated like an engineering major. They're going to have to show a little extra initiative."

Vuillet says liberal arts majors need to have a clear idea of what they wish to accomplish in a job. Vagueness or uncertainty is a real turnoff to recruiters, she says.

Sturman concurs, saying that too often liberal arts majors come across like the Zonker Harris character in Doonesbury.

"Too many times interviewers hear, 'I don't know what I want to do,' or 'I wanted to be such-and-such,' lots of negatives, too hard to find the positives," he says. "Lots of liberal arts majors don't know what they want to do."

Along with encouraging liberal arts majors to sell themselves, the placement center has also been trying to sell recruiters on liberal arts majors.

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In the Fall, the placement center hired Danny Parsley as director of liberal arts programs.

Parsley monitors the schedule of companies that will be interviewing in the placement center, watching for job descriptions that liberal arts majors are qualified for.

If he sees something encouraging, he tries to influence the company to see liberal arts majors also.

And this semester Parsley, in coordination with the liberal arts college, helped organize a four-part workshop. The workshop explored the options available to liberal arts majors after graduation and offered hints from Aggie liberal arts graduates.

Lutes says the program attracted a large turnout and she hopes that in the future more programs like the workshop will be offered.

Vuillet says that liberal arts at A&M is still growing and maturing, and she hopes that it will develop into a more career-oriented program.

"The liberal arts program at A&M is very academically oriented," Vuillet says. "We need stronger business oriented programs like advertising, media communication and public relations."

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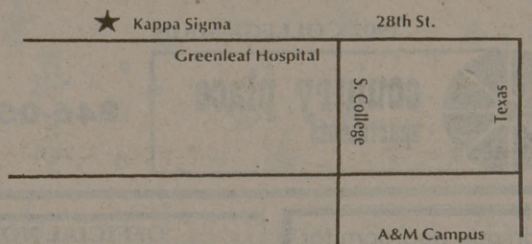
Kappa Sigma Fraternity



Spring Rush '86 Party Schedule

- Thurs. Jan. 23 - Open House
- Sat. Jan. 25 - Open House
- Thurs. Jan. 30 - Open House
- Sat. Feb. 1 - Open House

All parties will be held at the Kappa Sigma House:
606 West 28th Street (Bryan)



For more information call: 822-0548

Three men arrested in firefighter's shooting

DENTON — Texas Rangers and police arrested three men Tuesday in connection with the shooting of a firefighter who stopped on a Denton county road to help motorists.

The firefighter, Kenneth Ewing Blakey of Cooke County, was in stable condition Sunday at Westgate Medical Center in Denton, where he was taken after being shot in the liver back.

Peace Justice James Erwin set bonds of \$75,000 each for Kenny Dean Wheeler, 24; Michael Jeff Colwick, 18; and Larry Joe Richardson, 17, all of Denton. The trio, arrested early Tuesday by Denton police and Rangers, were charged with aggravated robbery and attempted capital murder.

Blakey, a Love Field firefighter, had stopped along Farm Road 455

in northern Denton County to assist motorists on his way to work about 5 a.m. Sunday, Sheriff Randy Kaisner said.

Money was taken from Blakey and he was left in the bed of his pickup truck.

Police acted on information from a CrimeStoppers program, Kaisner said.

"The second lead which helped us was the 7-year-old son of Kenneth

Blakey taking a tape recorder when he visited his father in the hospital," Kaisner said. Blakey has not been able to speak with investigators since entering the hospital.

"The boy recorded his father's words while in the hospital and passed the tape on to investigators who were able to use the information to help identify one of the suspects," Kaisner said.



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