

# State and Local

A&M to get new class-scheduling system

## Phone registration possible in 1987

By Rodney RATHER  
Staff Writer

A telephone registration system allowing students to register for classes from anywhere in the United States should be available at Texas A&M in 1987, said Steve Williams, director of A&M's student information management system. A&M will be one of the largest universities to have such a system, Williams said. Phone registration systems currently are operating at 12 other colleges and universities in the United States. Students will use touch-tone phones to dial a campus number and a taped message. The message will explain and

direct them through the registration process.

After the student punches in the phone code numbers for the courses and sections available, the registration system interprets the signals and checks to see if the desired classes are available, Williams said.

If a course or section is full, he said, the system will tell the caller and an alternate course or section may be chosen.

If a student calls and all 32 phone lines linked to the system's computer are busy, the phone will keep ringing until a line becomes available, he said.

"We hope that will help students who are calling long dis-

tance in the sense of having long distance charges," he said.

Detailed instructions explaining how the system operates will be included with the 1987 spring class schedules, he said.

Students also may use the new system for the drop-add process for the spring, he said.

Williams said although the system should be ready for spring 1987 pre-registration, several details need to be worked out.

Two unanswered questions concern whether or not to retain the present seniority system and also determining how students will get adviser approval before registering, he said.

Seniority, which currently al-

lows students with a higher classification to register first, can be kept in the new system, Williams said.

"Exactly what kind of control procedures will be implemented, if any, hasn't been decided yet," he added.

Decisions involving adviser approval will probably be left to the individual departments or colleges to decide, he said.

Furthermore, departments can decide not to use the system, but Williams said he doubts that option will be used.

"I expect all departments will use the system because there's no additional overhead for the departments to use the system," he said.

## Donahue to be taped in Dallas

DALLAS (AP) — "Donahue" does Dallas this week, showing that Texas — the place where they do things big — is a lot more than oil.

At least that's what Phil Donahue, the inquisitive host of the sometimes controversial television talk show "Donahue," promises in his previews.

The remote studio is Southfork Ranch, just north of Dallas, but discussions won't center around J.R. Ewing's latest scandal.

"Obviously, we try to strive for variety, so people can have fun and learn," said Pat McMillen, executive producer of Multimedia Entertainment, which produces the program. "It's educational, I'd like to think."

"We're not going to Texas looking for stereotypes. There will be an exciting interest in topics. I think it's going to be a diverse audience."

One thing's for sure — the audiences will be standing room only.

More than 1,500 spectators are expected to attend the live one-hour shows that will be broadcast live in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The shows will be aired on a one-day delay across the rest of the country.

The topics for discussion, as are typical with Donahue's show, run the gamut. Today, the audience will discuss the relationship between older women and younger men.

Nuclear disasters will be the topic Tuesday, while the sanctuary movement for political refugees will dominate discussion Wednesday. Donahue takes on the gun control issue Thursday before wrapping up the week with "Men Who Left Their Wives for Other Women."

"We thrive on spontaneity. The only thing he (Donahue) walks out with is a list of guests so that he can know where they're sitting."

The show, which is in its 19th season, aired in Dallas in November 1980 with Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin and Dolly Parton as guests discussing the movie "9 to 5."

This week marks the 87th time the show has left its home base of New York or Chicago.

## City consultants used as planning resource

By Craig RENFRO  
Staff Writer

Although the College Station City Council may not agree with some of consultants' recommendations, it still considers the consultants a valuable resource.

In January, the College Station City Council paid \$10,000 to Jack Hopper, a rate consultant in Austin, to decide if McCaw Cablevision was entitled to a rate increase.

Hopper recommended that the city give McCaw a rate increase. However, he said, the increase should not be as much as the city requested.

The council gave the cable company the full increase despite the consultant's findings. Bryan-College Station city manager offices conducted a rate-of-return analysis, which said McCaw ran an efficient operation and was entitled to the full rate.

Hopper did not do a rate-of-re-

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— Van VanDever, College Station assistant city manager.

turn analysis before making his recommendations.

Van VanDever, College Station's assistant city manager, said it is not uncommon for the city staff to do some work with the consultant, although the city paid the consultant to perform the services.

VanDever said the city uses consultants mainly to make up for a lack of staff expertise. The staff either doesn't have the time to do the necessary studies or does not want to add people to the staff, he said.

He said the city uses the Texas Municipal League reference guide

to research consultants before hiring them. The city also uses lists compiled by architectural and engineering firms to search for consultants, VanDever said.

He said consultants were used in the planning process of many of College Station's utility programs. They also were used extensively in the city's comprehensive land use plan, VanDever said.

But some problems arise when consultants are used, VanDever said.

Sometimes the consultant takes longer than originally planned to make recommendations. In Feb-

ruary, College Station hired Self Insurance Resource Inc. of Richardson to look into the feasibility of a self-insurance program for the city.

For \$10,000, a company's consultant will analyze the current market conditions and recommend what the city should do, VanDever said.

Glenn Schroeder, assistant director of finance for the city, said the consultant's report was supposed to be ready April 1.

VanDever said the city staff was still waiting for the report on May 1.

The city also paid a consultant \$400 to recommend a type of computer system for the city's use, and it paid \$60,000 to another consultant who worked on the city's comprehensive land use plan, he said.

VanDever said the consultant's pay comes from city revenue funds. They are worth the money, VanDever said, but sometimes they don't do a complete job.

"From time to time, as in any business, you don't get the job you prefer," he said.

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