



## Off-Campus Center provides help for students

Services provided by center focus on promoting successful living experience at A&M

By Jill Radenbaugh  
Reporter

Welcome back to Texas A&M. If you're an off-campus student, then welcome to the majority.

Nearly 30,000 Aggies out of about 39,000 students will be living off campus this semester. For most, finding a place to live that meets all needs and expectations is hard work.

But those that didn't make the dorm list or can't find a place to live still have an alternative — the Off-Campus Center.

Located in Puryear Hall lounge directly across from the YMCA Building, the Off-Campus Center tries to meet the needs of homeless students by providing a variety of services and programs that promote a successful living experience at A&M, says Kristin Sayre, coordinator of the Off-Campus Center. The center will help students find a place to live, solve roommate problems and inform students of their basic legal rights as tenants.

More and more freshmen are liv-

ing off campus because on-campus housing isn't available to them, Sayre says. Increased enrollment has left more than 50 percent of the freshmen living off campus.

The number of upperclassmen living off campus is even higher, she says.

"Upperclassmen usually wait until the day before school starts to find a place to live," Sayre says. "So we're very busy the weekend before school starts."

Services provided by the Off-Campus Center include:

• **Housing Vacancy Listings:** The center maintains up-to-date listings of available housing in the

Bryan-College Station area. A list of available houses, apartments, duplexes, rooms in homes, mobile homes, condominiums and townhomes is updated every three weeks. The center also conducts periodic surveys of housing prices and off-campus living costs to provide students the most current information.

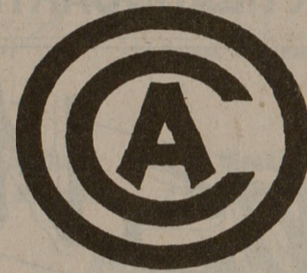
• **Roommate Referral Service:** The center helps students find compatible roommates. Although the center makes no guarantees, the service does make the connection easier. A list of students needing roommates is compiled and updated every few weeks.

• **Roommate Counseling and**

**Conflict Mediation:** If students encounter roommate problems, the Off-Campus Center staff will help find ways to deal with the situation. The center helps students explore other living alternatives and makes them aware of their legal responsibilities.

• **Information on Tenant and Landlord Rights and Responsibilities:** The center helps educate students of their rights and responsibilities as tenants. Basic lease information and answers to questions concerning maintenance problems, security deposits and other subjects are provided.

• **Programming:** The center periodically sponsors programs and workshops on such topics as tenants' rights, budgeting strategies and off-campus security. It also has programs to orient and welcome incoming freshmen. The "Off-Campus Students' Spirit Rally" is a yell practice held only for off-campus stu-



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dents before All-University Night. The program "Living Off-Campus at A&M" is conducted at the beginning of each fall semester. Twice a semester off-campus freshmen receive a newsletter, "Gimme Shelter," that contains information on programs and services for off-campus students.

• **Off-Campus Aggies:** Off-Campus Aggies is an organization especially for off-campus students. OCA organizes activities for off-campus students and provides information

about upcoming events and special services. Parents' Weekend, intramural sports and bonfire are just a few University functions in which OCA takes part.

• **General Information about Off-Campus Living:** The Off-Campus Survival Manual contains information on leases, transportation, food costs and utilities. In addition, the manual provides students with apartment inspection forms, roommate tenancy contracts, sublease agreements, shuttle bus information, security and budgeting.

## Official says new skills test shouldn't affect A&M students

By Kirsten Dietz  
Senior Staff Writer

A basic skills test for entering college freshmen won't have much effect on Texas A&M students, says Tom Matthews, associate director of A&M's Measurement and Testing Services.

The test, approved by the 70th Texas Legislature, will go into effect in Fall 1989. It will identify students who need remedial work or special placement in reading, writing and math.

Matthews said that because about three-fourths of A&M students come from the top quarter of their high school class, he expects to have few remedial students identified at A&M.

"The idea of having good information about a student is a sound one," he said. "This particular test, though, is designed to identify students that we don't have a lot of at A&M."

He said his office tests entering freshmen to determine which math course they should enroll in and also conducts credit by examination for a number of subjects.

The bill creating the basic skills test was written by Rep. Wilhelmina Delco, D-Austin, chairman of the House Committee on Higher Education. Sen. Carl A. Parker, D-Port Arthur, chairman of the Senate Committee on Education, introduced the bill in the Texas Senate.

While Matthews thinks A&M doesn't

have a problem with remedial students, Parker thinks many college students in Texas are not adequately prepared to succeed in college and, therefore, do not get the full benefit of their college courses.

"We've graduating a lot of college graduates who can't read or write," Parker said. "It's embarrassing. We are letting a lot of people stumble through college that were not adequately prepared when they got there to succeed."

"With this basic skills test it will identify the problem areas for students and mandate that various colleges and universities to address those deficiencies so they can succeed and they can recognize the full benefit of the courses they take."

Parker said that the burden of instilling these basic skills really rests with the secondary schools. But he says, "We can't get to them."

While high school seniors are required to pass an exit test to graduate, Parker said, "But that's just a test to see whether they function in society more or less, not one to determine whether or not they're adequately prepared to succeed in college."

"We finally decided without regard to whose responsibility it should have been that this (the new test) is a practical way to address the problem."

Sen. Kent Caperton, D-Bryan, a member of the Senate Committee on Education, and Rep. Richard Smith, R-Bryan, voted for the

bill mandating the test.

While it is known what skills the exam will test, it is not yet known how they will be tested.

The first steps toward the development of the test begin today at a Texas College and University System Coordinating Board meeting in Austin. It is expected that a liaison committee between the Board and the State Board of Education will be authorized to begin screening bids from six companies competing to develop the test.

While the committee will recommend which company to award the bid to, the State Board of Education will make the final decision, said Janis Monger, a spokesman for the Coordinating Board.

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