

A&M Minorities

To effectively correct the imbalance of white, black and Hispanic students at Texas A&M, officials would need to make the University's population 66 percent white, 12 percent black and 21 percent Hispanic, which were the population percentages for Texas in 1980.

The ideal situation would be to have the ratio of whites to blacks and Hispanics at A&M equivalent to the ratio of whites to blacks and Hispanics in the state of Texas, says Dr. John Koldus, vice president for Student Services.

"A&M needs to keep up," Koldus says. "We are interested in educating the whole population and this is a figure we are attempting to work toward."

But University administrators still have a long way to go, because the figures at A&M are not this high. This semester, the student population is 85 percent white, 2.5 percent black and 6 percent Hispanic.

Lynn Brown, associate director of the Office of School Relations, says the minority recruitment goals are not being met as quickly as planned. One reason is the limited number of minority students who are qualified and prepared for college.

"Only a finite number of qualified black and Hispanic students are out there and every college and university in the state of Texas is competing for them," Brown says.

"A very outstanding black or Hispanic student with a very outstanding record may get offers from all over the United States."

Texas A&M's minority recruitment goals are the result of a plan set forth by the U.S. Office of Civil Rights several years ago. The Texas Equal Educational Opportunity Plan for Higher Education was formed to increase the number of black and Hispanic students at Texas colleges and universities.

The five-year Texas Plan, now in its fourth year, set guidelines for the state public institutions to eliminate segregation and to increase the enrollment and retention of blacks and Hispanics.

"This is an area the University is very concerned with and we've gone out and tried our best to attract these students to A&M," Brown says. "We have made a concerted effort to identify blacks and Hispanics earlier to try to get them to come to A&M."

Currently, the University is not meeting the goals set by the Texas plan, but it is progressing each year, Brown says.

"Everyone is in the same ball park," she says. "All universities are about the same."

However, A&M does have the highest retention rate of all Texas colleges for minority students. Most of the minority students who dropped out cited financial reasons for leaving, and most indicated that they wanted to come back, Brown says.

Many efforts have been taken by the University to change the minority situation at A&M. The Texas Plan has caused it to work harder at attracting these students. As a result, new programs are used for recruiting and retaining qualified students.

Demographics show that by the year 2000, about 45 percent of the state will be Hispanic, Brown says. If more Hispanics are not educated, a very large percentage of the population will be uneducated. It would benefit everyone in the long run to educate the minorities, Brown says.

Brown says some of the methods being used to convince minorities to choose A&M are more minority scholarships, the newly formed Multicultural Services Center

and the University Outreach Centers.

The University Outreach Centers, which A&M and the University of Texas have jointly established in four regions of Texas, play a major role in the University's minority recruitment efforts.

The first center was established in San Antonio and officials are still searching for locations for the Dallas and Houston centers. An additional center will be built in the Valley, probably in McAllen. All the centers are expected to be open by Christmas, Brown says.

"The purpose of the centers is to contact potentially good academic black and Hispanic students," Brown says. "A very large percent of what would probably be qualified students don't take courses necessary to be able to go to college."

Shallie Sheppard, associate provost for the

Honors Program and Undergraduate Studies, says the main thrust of the joint centers for A&M and UT is to work with the students in junior high school and counsel them about which high school courses will prepare them for college.

"Many of the minorities haven't taken the right classes," Sheppard says. "They come here and have a rough time or can't get in. We want to talk to them while they are young and tell them they can go to (colleges like) A&M or UT."

A&M has been criticized for not having enough minority students and there has been a general feeling on the part of the faculty that recruiting more minorities is necessary, Sheppard says.

"The recruitment was designed to alleviate some of the inequities and balance the student body," Sheppard says. "The students will be with a more heterogenous group and

