

State and Local

Engineering forum tries to recruit more women

By Jamie Russell
Staff Writer

The number of women pursuing careers in engineering has dropped each year since 1982, Jeanne Rier-son, A&M's administrative assistant of engineering, said.

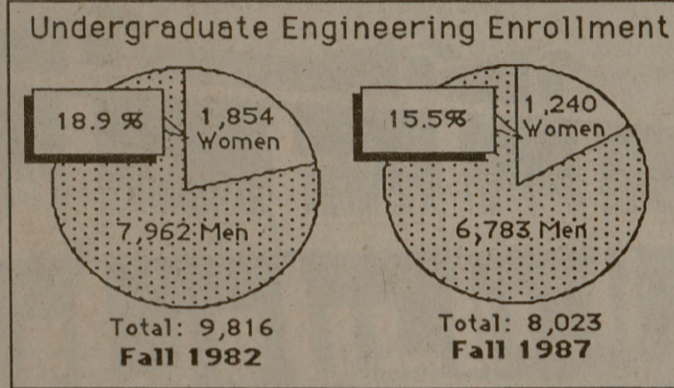
But if the 375 Texas high school students who attended an engineering conference Friday evening in Rudder Tower have anything to say about that, the figures might change.

The conference was sponsored by the Texas A&M chapter of the Society of Women Engineers.

Last semester the engineering department at A&M had an undergraduate enrollment of 8,023 students, with 1,240 of those students being women — 15.5 percent.

In comparison, in Fall 1982 there were 9,816 students in engineering with 1,854 of those being women, or 18.9 percent.

"There has been a national decline of about 0.5 percent per year in female engineering enrollment," Rier-son said. "There is a national concern because of that."



Graphic by Susan C. Akin

A 1986 College Placement Council survey of 33,000 graduating seniors indicated that 49 percent of the jobs offered went to engineering students and that the starting salary average was \$28,000.

Dr. Robert D. Chenoweth, assistant dean of engineering, said in a conference welcome speech that A&M engineers with a bachelor of

science degree received about \$29,000 as a starting salary last year. But only about 3 percent of the nation's engineers are women.

Melanie Sattler, president of SWE at A&M, said engineering students must take charge of their futures.

"Engineer your own horizons," Sattler said. Sattler told the prospective A&M

engineering students about what A&M has to offer, not only in engineering, but as a world-class university.

"Texas A&M has one of the best engineering colleges in the nation," Sattler said.

Chenoweth said students must be prepared for the challenges of engineering.

"Engineering, as in any profession, requires a commitment, requires sacrifice," Chenoweth said.

An engineering student must be able to deal with math, physics, chemistry, biology and English. But the compensation that comes from engineering is immeasurable, he said.

"The opportunities are not the total number of jobs out there, but it is the opportunity for development," Chenoweth said.

Engineering is a life-long education with a wide range of opportunities, he said.

"It is that wide range that sells me on engineering," Chenoweth said.

"Opportunities in the type of work are all the way from field engineering — where you get down and



Photo by Jay Janner

Dr. Robert D. Chenoweth, assistant dean of engineering, addresses the declining number of female engineers.

grubby and have your hands right in it — to management level, to planning level," Chenoweth said.

The conference is held to introduce the beginning college student to the extensive field of engineering,

said Dr. Richard Thornton, associate department head of mechanical engineering and faculty advisor of SWE.

"The conference does well and is very productive," he said.

Colorado plane crash kills Aggie

By Richard Williams
Senior Staff Writer

A May 1986 Texas A&M graduate was among those killed in a commuter airplane crash Tuesday night in Colorado.

Lee Ann Larson Vollmer, 25, of Longmont, Colo., died Wednesday morning from head injuries received in the crash, according to a spokesman for Mercy Medical Center in Durango, Colo.

Vollmer, who received her degree in agronomy, was nominated for a Rhodes Scholarship in 1985. She was a member of the Soil Conservation Society and the Agronomy Society.

Vollmer was employed by Farmland Industries as a marketing specialist and was flying to Denver for a meeting. A spokes-

man for Farmland Industries said Vollmer usually drove to her appointments across the state, but time constraints resulted in her decision to fly to the meeting.

The accident killed nine; eight others survived the crash.

The Associated Press reported Thursday that an investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board said the plane hit a snow-covered ridge and then slid 200 yards before it came to rest in an upright position.

The Associated Press also reported the investigator would not speculate on a possible cause but said investigators would look into factors such as possible mechanical failure, pilot experience and the weather.

There was light snowfall in the region at the time of the accident.

The plane that crashed was owned by Colorado Springs-based Trans Colorado, which leases planes and crews to Rocky Mountain Airways, a continental subsidiary that flies under the name of Continental Express.

Funeral services for Vollmer were held Saturday.

Vollmer is survived by her husband, Kevin Vollmer, from Longmont, Colo., and her parents, Dean and Sandy Larson, from Evergreen, Colo.

Kevin Vollmer said donations in her memory can be sent to the Children's Hospital Foundation, Attention: Lee Ann Larson Vollmer Fund, 1800 Emerson Street, Denver, Colo. 80218.

Kevin Vollmer also said a scholarship fund will be set up at A&M in his wife's memory.

Police officer shot to death while on routine traffic stop

DALLAS (AP) — A police officer pleaded for his life as a homeless man took his gun during a routine traffic stop and shot him to death, with some onlookers encouraging the gunman, authorities said.

Officer John Chase, 25, who last month switched from an evening to a day shift to spend more time with his wife, was shot shortly after 8:30 a.m. Saturday before a crowd of about 30 people, some of whom urged Chase's killer to shoot, witnesses said.

The suspect in the shooting, 34-year-old Carl Dudley Williams, was shot by off-duty police officers who responded to the call. The man died a few hours later at Parkland Memorial Hospital, police said.

Chase pleaded for his life before he was shot, Police Chief Billy Prince said at a news conference. Witnesses indicated some people in the crowd watching the incident urged the suspect to shoot the officer, the chief said.

"The officer was saying 'Don't shoot me. I'll help you whatever way I can.' But the guy shot him in the head," witness Melitha Johnson said.

Investigators said they knew of no motive for the Saturday shooting, but Prince and some of his officers blamed recent criticism of the department by some city council members for creating a dangerous environment for police.

"This is very tough on the officer on the street," Prince said. "Constant bashing" of the police department had created a volatile situation, he said.

Williams, described as a street person with a history of mental illness, began arguing with Chase, who was preparing to give a traffic ticket to the driver of a vehicle he had pulled over, police spokesman Vicki Hawkins said.

Williams, who didn't know the driver of the car, began fighting with the officer and took his .44-caliber Magnum gun, Hawkins said.

After the shooting, witnesses said Williams strolled down the street, dangling the gun from his hand.

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