

# Student fills gap between students and faculty

By Staci Finch

It's been the year for issues. The students and faculty of Texas A&M have been addressing a multitude of questions, ranging from senior finals to the faculty club, over and over again this year. The Faculty Senate has discussed these problems, the Student Senate has discussed them and, with the help of liaisons, they have discussed the problems together. Such is the role of Paul Stafford. Stafford is the student government's representative to the Faculty Senate.

"I have been the student representative for one year come May," the sophomore aerospace engineering major says. "I was asked by one of the vice presidents in the Student Senate to be the faculty senate rep for this year."

Stafford says his job is one of communication.

"I sit in on meetings and serve as an information source," he says. "I speak at faculty meetings on the position of student concerns and report back. I mainly keep up with things that are going on."

Stafford says communication between the two groups is getting better, but there is still work to be done.

"I think there is a lack of communication between faculty and students," he says. "We are still trying to learn how to communicate. We are learning how to open channels, but it's not an easy road. We have done a lot of work with big issues, and are opening up a little bit better, but there is still a ways to go."

Stafford says there are things he would like to see changed for his position.

"I don't have a vote in the Faculty Senate, and I don't particularly think the liaison should have a one," he says. "But I do think he or she should have more of a voice in executive matters — the things that happen behind closed doors."

Stafford takes his job very seriously, and thinks the relationship between the faculty and student senates is extremely important.

"The Student Senate has channels into the city council and the state government in Austin," he says, "but the faculty senate/student senate relationship is perhaps more important than these, because it deals with the students right now."

As far as qualifications go, Stafford has been involved in student government since high school.

"I was student council president in high school, and I really learned a lot there," he says. "I was also very active in sports, and was salutatorian of my class."

After high school, Stafford, who is from Prairieview, decided to come to A&M for a change.

"They don't offer my major at Prairieview," Stafford says, "but also I wanted a change of scene. My father teaches there and I didn't want any special treatment because of his position."

Since coming to A&M, Stafford has continued to be active in campus activities.

"My major requires a lot of studying, but I try to get involved as much as I can," he says. "I am a member of the National Society of

Black Engineers, where I serve as programs chairman.

"I am also a recreational sports employee. I check IDs at the intramurals office. I play intramural football and tennis for my dorm, McGinnis, as well."

But wait, there's more.

"I was asked to participate in the MSC Freshman Leadership Dynamics seminar, which is a sort of year-long orientation program for freshman with leadership qualities," he says. "Last year I was also in the Freshman Leadership Program, which is the same as the MSC one, only it's sponsored by RHA. I also won my Buck Weirus spirit award last year."

As if that wasn't enough to keep anyone busy, Stafford's major keeps him dreaming of his future in the field of aerospace engineering.

"I would love to be an astronaut," he says.

But for the immediate future, Stafford wants to stay involved in

student government, but not as the Faculty Senate representative.

"I like the job, but I wouldn't want to do it two years in a row," he says. "I would like to keep working in the executive branch of student government, and also keep working with faculty to some extent. I have been a worker for COSGA (Conference on Student Government Associations), and I would like to move up to being a delegate."

As far as the rest of the student body, Stafford says he wishes more students would get involved in student government.

"Many students are apathetic about student government because they don't think they are qualified for anything," he says. "Maybe they think student government can't do anything for them, or is a resume builder. But I think a lot of people do have something to contribute if they just would."

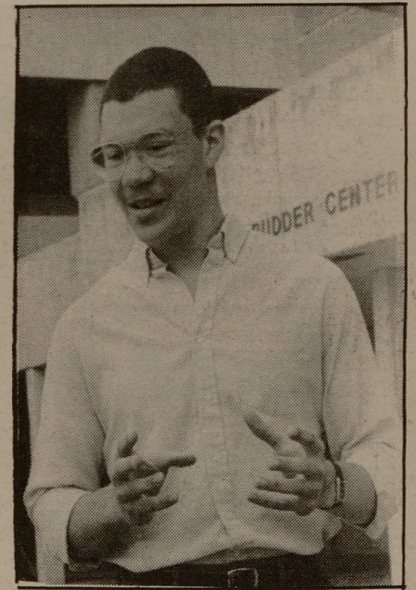


Photo by Fred Joe

"... I think a lot of people do have something to contribute if they just would" — Paul Stafford

## aggenizing answers

### How do you feel about class evaluations?

By Staci Finch

As the semester comes to a close, students start studying for finals, registering for the next semester's classes, looking for job opportunities and filling out class evaluations. Wait a minute. Class evaluations? Oh yeah, those forms you fill out to evaluate the performance of the teacher and the class.

Boy, have you been waiting for this one. You are just dying to tell one prof you hated every moment in his class, and to tell another that if it hadn't been for her class, you would never have made it through the semester. You have visions of your teacher intently pouring over your comments, taking the good ones to heart and planning ways to improve the bad points. Well, that may be true, but as far as some Texas A&M students are concerned, that isn't the way it is at all.

"I like being able to write comments down about teachers, but I don't think I get anything out of it," Karen Siegel, a freshman elementary education major, says. "I think the evaluations are something administrators thought had to be done, but not much is going to happen about them."

"I think they are just put down in a file, but if they were really looked at they would really have an impact."

Many students agree.

"I think a good teacher will take into account what the students say," Shane Stelmach, a junior electrical engineering major, says. "But that doesn't really do any good, because it's the bad teachers who need to change, and the good teachers don't really need the evaluations. It's the bad teachers who need to pay

attention to what the forms say."

But Stacey Scheel, a junior psychology major, sees a major problem with the evaluations.

"I think they're a good idea, but most people don't tell the truth on them," she says. "Even if they do, I don't think the evaluations do any good. If you had a bad professor you didn't like, and you wrote the problem down, it probably won't get back to the people it needed to be effective."

Cheryl Mutschelr, a senior philosophy major, says she likes the forms, but agrees that they might not be too effective.

"I think the new forms where we can write our own comments are good," she says. "I think the general format of the evaluations is good. The questions that are asked and the comments we write down can really be helpful."

"I only hope that departments would say something to professors who get bad evaluations, but I know that doesn't always happen. I mean, if the professor has tenure, he or she is not going to change, and really doesn't have to worry about what the evaluations say."

Several students say they think the evaluations might get looked at by the professors, but still don't have any impact.

"I think evaluations serve a purpose, but I don't know how many profs really take them seriously, Greg Strzdel, a senior agricultural economics major, says.

"I usually blow them off unless I really have a particular problem with a prof," he says. "Once I had a teacher whose accent was so bad I couldn't understand her at all. I took that evaluation seriously."

Chris Elmer, a senior business management major, agrees.

"I don't think anybody pays any serious attention to them," he says. "The same professors in a lot of majors teach the same way year after year, no matter what their evaluations say. I know this happens a lot in my major. I don't take the evaluations seriously for that reason."

Meg Jankowski, a freshman business major, says she thinks professors take the evaluations so lightly that they don't hand them out.

"I question whether they get looked at at all," she says. "Out of all my classes, I have only filled out one evaluation this whole year, so obviously they aren't very important to the professors I have had."

Some students say the evaluations don't serve a purpose, because the students can't see the results of the input.

"I think the evaluations are worthless," Lori Leeds, a junior Spanish major, says. "Students never get to see the results, only the profs do, so students can't see which teachers are good and which aren't."

"Students can go and look at the grades different professors give, but that doesn't really help much. I don't even know if professors look at the evaluations or not so I really don't think they do any good at all."

Kirsten Hamacher, a junior business major, shares this opinion.

"I think evaluations are stupid," she says. "I've never seen any results from them. I think administrators or professors should do something with the evaluations so students could see the results. That would really help in selecting classes."