

sheet for matching employers with prospective candidates, he says.

Van Pelt advises students to be careful in the accuracy of the information. If it's wrong, he says, they can get passed over for an opening for which they may have been suitable.

Once students have completed the questions on the disk, they turn it in to the placement center. Personnel will feed the information into the main computer and give students a printout of their information a few days later, Van Pelt says. Students should double-check this printout for accuracy. Once it's approved, the bidding process can begin.

The bidding process is the most common recruiting system used in major universities, Van Pelt says.

"I like the bid system because everybody will get a shot at some interviews, and you can influence the ones you want the most by throwing the most points out," he says.

It sure beats the old system of standing in line for three hours waiting to get a chance at an interview, he says.

Students start out with a finite number of points. When a job opening is posted, students fill out bid cards with the number of the opening, their identification number, and the amount of points they are bidding for a chance to get the interview. Basically, he says, the top bidders that match the interviewer's prerequisites are granted interviews. Those who did not get an interview keep their points.

Van Pelt says inflexible schedules can keep a student from getting an interview. The student's schedule for availability on his or her information disk must fit the interviewer's schedule.

The placement center serves between 2,000 to 3,000 registrants a semester and conducts over 30,000 interviews a year. "It's a massive volume business," he says.

Van Pelt says the placement center actively recruits employers to interview at A&M. Those companies who have been coming are encouraged to keep coming and also courted to expand the disciplines they look for. The placement center also goes to conventions, seminars and makes plant visits in order to attract employers that don't currently recruit at A&M.

Employers have thousands of universities to choose from, Van Pelt says. Only a few of the largest corporations recruit at more than 100 schools.

Van Pelt says that Texas A&M is fortunate because of the large student body, supportive alumni and good track records of A&M graduates. Most

They look for the quality of students, and ours is extremely good," he says.

Being a student from Texas A&M is a good starting place. A&M former students often say that, if other factors are equal between two candidates, they prefer to hire the Aggie. Also, Van Pelt says that A&M's size and diversity is a great advantage.

"An equal student here would have a larger number of interviews than a student somewhere else," he says.

Even though the placement center does a good job in bringing prospective employers to A&M, the ultimate responsibility for finding a job falls upon the student.

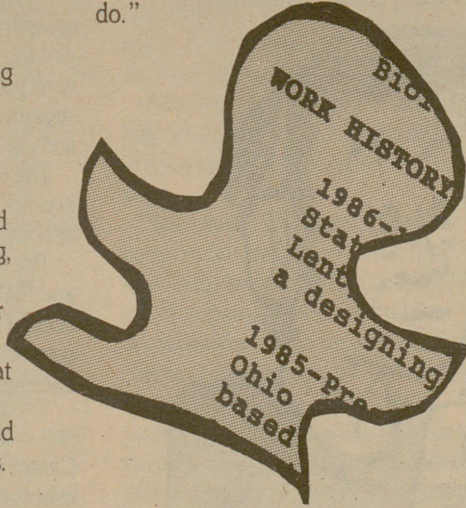
Van Pelt says students should start early, thoroughly research the companies they want to interview with, and make good contacts with their departmental faculty.

"Your own faculty should be a very, very important part of this process," he says.

The departmental faculty has good contacts in the industry, and can give good advice about the companies a student may want to interview, he says.

Van Pelt also advises students to use every means possible to get a job.

"It's OK to get a job from who you know," Van Pelt says. "You will only keep it because of what you know and do."



However you go about getting your interviews, the critical part is how you perform in the interview itself.

The initial interview at the placement center usually lasts about 30 minutes. Van Pelt says this is primarily a session where the students are trying to get the employers to take a deeper interest in them.

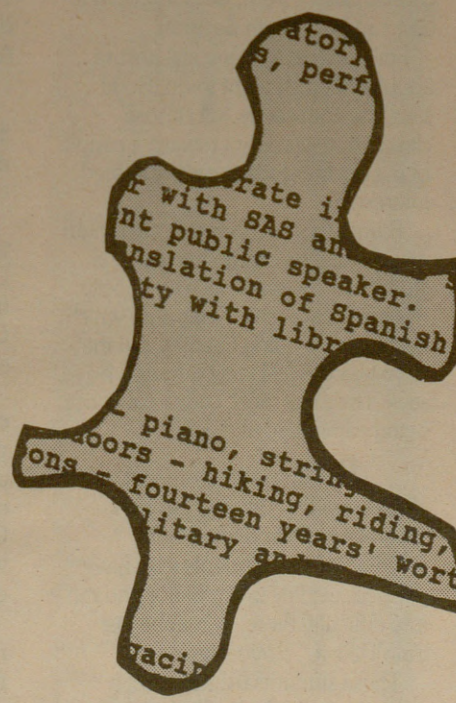
Harris also believes the on-campus interview is a pre-screening. Students need to do something to help themselves stand out. When students give a little extra effort, it's helpful. People really start to blend together after so many interviews, he says.

Extra effort shows sincerity, Harris says, and he recommends bringing a supplemental resume, in addition to the resume you provide the placement center. Also, he says, students should bring a copy of their grade transcript, ask the interviewer for his business card, and come equipped with a list of questions to ask the interviewer. After the interview, the student should follow up with a thank you letter to the interviewer and express further interest in working for that firm.

Each company has its own personality," he says. "It's very important for students to find out about the company. Not just the annual report, but really about the company.

Stewart says research should be thorough.

Each company has its own personality," he says. "It's very important for students to find out about the company. Not just the annual report, but really about the company.



"Talk to people that know the organization or who are from the organization," Stewart says. "Find out some of the personality characteristics of that organization so you'll know how to present yourself."

McGregor says one of the best things a student can do is project a positive self image to the interviewer. Punctuality, active-listening, effective speaking and appropriate dress help project a positive image.

Confidence plays a big roll in how the interview goes. McGregor says confidence is something a student should work on long before interview time. She recommends students practice visualizing the interview going well and getting the job.

If positive visualization doesn't sound like enough to keep them from seeing you sweat, a club on campus is organized especially to help students get over the jitters.

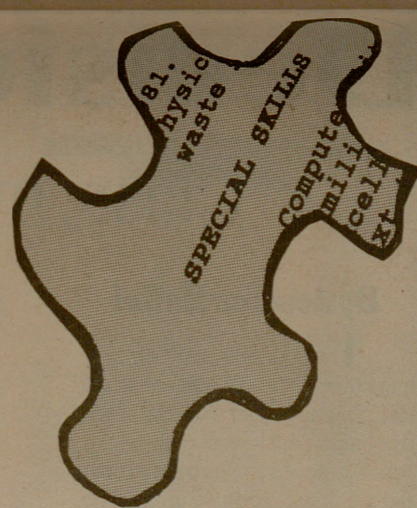
The Aggie Toasters is designed to help people gain confidence in speaking. Susan Kelly, faculty adviser for the club, says one of its goals is to help students learn interview skills. She says they have guest speakers on how to interview, and they give members the opportunity to speak at the meetings. You can work up from some very basic and short talks to very complex speeches she says.

"It's a good, non-threatening way to sharpen your skills," Kelly says.

The methods students choose to project self-confidence are not important, as long as they are sincere, McGregor says.

"You can't project (self-confidence) if you don't have it," she says.

It's important to show confidence when answering the interviewer's questions, she says.



"An interview is a terribly awkward conversation," she says. "It's not necessarily what you say, but how you approach the question. If you want to show your personality, let it out. That's where you let yourself stand out."

All the recruiters agreed that appropriate dress is important. Harris recruits mostly engineers and technical people. He says that interviewing for an engineering or scientific type position does not mean casual dress is acceptable. He says that, regardless of the chosen field, students are still entering business and should dress appropriately.

A good rule of thumb on hair length and clothes style, he says, is to dress and groom oneself similarly to others so that the interviewees don't appear to be trying to make a statement.

Maybe if you read this article carefully enough, the moment will come when a job offer has your name on it. All of the recruiters say, when deciding whether or not to accept a job, one should heavily consider factors besides the starting salary.

Fields says students should think about the long-term goals.

"When you consider a career, you're considering where to spend a large part of the rest of your life," he says. "Starting salary is not the critical thing. It's how successful and happy you think you can be with that company long term."

