

Two A&M offices help students choose majors, careers

By Denise Thompson

For students who can't decide on a major or what to do with the one they have, Texas A&M offices may help them find answers.

Kris Boyd, director of general studies, said the department handles three categories of students. Freshman make up the largest group. "One-sixth of all incoming freshman go into general studies," she said. "These are people who have no idea what they want to do. There are 85 departments here, and maybe they've only been exposed to 10 or 12 in high school. They don't want to commit to something they're sure about, so they come in as a general student."

Then we work with them in terms of what they can register for that will count toward any major. At the same time, we talk to them about a course they might take to try out a major.

The general studies department also helps students who have some idea of what they want to do but are not ready to commit themselves to one subject, she said.

"These are the students who say, 'Well, I may want to be a management major, but I may want to go psychology,'" she said. "What we do is give them courses that will give them a feel for both and still keep them on track."

Although selecting general classes is possible for all majors, Boyd said, some major courses of study require making a commitment more quickly than in other fields.

"There are always majors where there aren't common classes a student can take without getting in that major," she said. "For instance, in environmental design, you have six hours of design classes each semester. If you don't take them now, you're going to be behind later, and

they're fairly tough classes to take during a summer semester. In this case, we may encourage a student to make a decision by the end of their second semester just to keep them on track."

Students who have experimented in a certain major and are not satisfied with their choice make up the third group of students who go to general studies for advisement.

"Sometimes a student has tried one or two semesters in a major and decides it's not for them," she said. "In this case, they may want to hold off a semester before they jump right back into the frying pan."

Although general studies students are not required to declare a major until the second semester of their sophomore year, Boyd said finding classes applicable to all majors becomes more difficult after the second semester of the freshman year.

"It gets tough after the second semester to take courses that you know are going to count," she said. "By the fourth semester, it gets really tough. By then, the student is just going to have to take some risks on classes that will count if he chooses a certain major and that won't count toward any other major."

Perry Liston, a junior business administration major, did not declare his major until the end of his sophomore year.

"I chose business more or less because I had to choose something, and this major offers a variety of different fields," he said. "I talked to counselors, and they didn't pressure me, they just worked with me. We talked about what I wanted to do with the rest of my life, and she told me what I needed to do in school to accomplish those goals."

"I still want to go into broadcasting, so I don't really know if I'll stay in business... just don't tell my parents!"

For students who remain indecisive after working with the general studies office, testing is available to help them choose a major or career, Boyd said.

"I've had seniors come in here and say, 'I'm not really sure what I want to do,' and all I can say to that is 'Didn't you wait a little late?'"

Roberta Whinant

"A lot of times we ask students who are having a difficult time making a decision if they've had any interest or vocational testing done recently," she said. "If they haven't, we encourage them to go over to the Student Counseling Service and get testing done because it's a part of your student services you've already paid for, and it's foolish not to use it."

Roberta Whinant, a psychometrist with A&M Student Counseling Service, said that three tests are available to help students having trouble choosing a major or career.

Strong Campbell Interest Inventory is a computer test that identifies a person's interests. After taking the actual test, which lasts about 45 minutes, the student participates in a group interpretation to discuss the results.

"Strong Campbell is directed more to students who aren't sure what they want to do or what major they should choose — for students whose decisions are still up in the air," Whinant said.

For students who have a general idea about

what they want to do, Student Interactive Guidance and Information, or SIGI, is recommended. SIGI is a computer test that evaluates students according to interests, skills and values.

"I suggest students take SIGI because you get a lot of in-depth information," she said. "But I recommend it more for students who have a general idea of what field they want to go into because it asks a lot of questions."

Requiring about four hours to complete, SIGI gives lists and descriptions of occupations and describes the training needed for each one. Also included is information about salaries and the regions of the country in which the occupation is most needed.

"All of this information is important because it helps students weigh the pros and cons between different alternatives," Whinant said.

Jodie Ernst, a sophomore education major, started her freshman year in general studies. After taking the SIGI test, Ernst learned that she was suited for either an education or business major.

"I couldn't decide between the two of them, so I stayed in general studies," she said. "Last semester I took two business classes, and I did fine in them. But I took two education classes this semester, and I really enjoyed them. Also, I've always loved working with kids, so that had a little to do with it."

For students short of time, Self Directed Search is a paper version of the Strong Campbell test that students can complete at home.

After completing any of the tests, students can discuss the results in a confidential conference with an academic counselor. Appointments are on a first-come, first-served basis Monday through Thursday from 1-4 p.m.

Suzanne Lee, a sophomore community health major, was a general studies major for two se-

esters. Counselors from both Student Counseling Service and the general studies department helped her make a final decision on a major.

"The counselors talked to me and helped me make a decision based on my interests," she said. "One of the things that played a big role was that I've always wanted to be a nurse, and they helped me go from there."

Whinant suggested that students who are undecided about majors should take one of the tests before the end of their sophomore year.

"I would say you shouldn't wait any longer than your sophomore year," she said. "I've had seniors come in here and say, 'I'm not really sure what I want to do,' and all I can say to that is 'Didn't you wait a little late?'"

After completing testing and counseling, students can return to the general studies office to decide where to go from there.

Boyd said, "The student can come back to the general studies office after testing and tell us what occupational groups showed up strong and which ones showed up weak on the tests. Then we'll go from there and decide which majors lend themselves toward those areas."

"Sometimes a student isn't even aware a program exists. I'll look at their interests and ask them if they know about a certain program dealing in that area, and they didn't even know that it existed."

Regardless of whether a student is having problems choosing a major or deciding what career to pursue, Boyd said, the counselors usually can provide help.

"We are here for students who have no idea what they want to do, and we're here for students who need a little push in the right direction," she said. "Whatever the case, we'll help anyone who needs it because these are the decisions that will affect the rest of their lives."

Mudslinging continues in race for White House

Associated Press

George Bush, signaling he won't sit on his hands in the campaign's final weeks, returned to the attack Monday night as Michael Dukakis should stop making down defenses. Dukakis charged Bush with ignoring the nation's loss of industrial jobs.

Battling the notion that he is slipping helplessly behind, the Democratic presidential nominee began a campaign swing through industrial states crucial to his chances.

He said his Republican rival has sat on his hands while America's industrial base has been fighting for its life.

Dukakis' running mate, Lloyd Bentsen, launched an attack on Bush in the South as the only one of the four candidates who has voted for national gun control.

He referred to a 1968 vote while Bush was in Congress.

With three weeks left in the presidential race, aides to Dukakis said he would seek to sharpen the differences between himself and the vice president, particularly on economic issues.

But as he arrived in Ohio, a big state crucial to his chances, a new statewide poll by the Akron Beacon Journal showed Bush holding a double-digit lead.

Bush, buoyant but cautioning against overconfidence, toured a Denver-area defense plant where "Star Wars" re-

search is conducted.

He used the setting to say Dukakis has a total lack of understanding of our military and is trying desperately to jump into the mainstream by acknowledging a need to modernize land-based nuclear missiles.

"But there is strong reason to doubt that he would do it," Bush said. "He still opposes the MX and he thinks the Midgetman costs too much. So he says he's going to work with Congress to find another way."

"Wake up governor, we've done all that," Bush said.

He defended the Reagan administration's record on conventional forces against Dukakis' past charges that such forces have been slighted in the push for new, big-ticket strategic weapons systems. Bush dismissed that as misinformation.

"Governor, it's time to stop running down our defenses," he said.

He also ridiculed Dukakis for supporting some research into Star Wars while dismissing the proposed space-based missile-defense system as a fantasy.

Dukakis and his campaign staff were embracing the idea of running as the underdog. To underscore his resolve, Dukakis said "My spirits are good" and took trumpet in hand to play "Happy Days Are Here Again," a Democratic standard.

Dukakis declared he was fighting for

the values he believed in and, in a touch of populism, told workers at a copper and brass plant. "I want to be the president who stands up and fights for you."

He pointed to recent trade figures showing imports to the United States were at an all-time high in August and said Bush has not given the American people a clue as to what he would do to

reverse the trade deficit.

"George Bush sat on the sidelines for eight years while America got beaten in world markets, . . . while a piece of America was being sold off every day at bargain-basement prices," he said.

He also disputed Bush's standard speech line that he wants a kinder, gentler nation.

"His record tells rural America, the fewer family farmers the better," Dukakis said. "His record tells middle class families, the glory days are over. Your kids may not do as well as you."

Bentsen, trying to save some of the South for the Democrats, said Dukakis was not planning cuts in defense spending and defended him against television

ads playing in the South that hit Dukakis as an advocate of gun control.

"I saw those ads about Mike Dukakis going to take the guns away from you," the Texas senator said in Texarkana. "I sure wouldn't be running with any fellow if I thought he was going to take my shotgun away from me."

Professor: Ocean may protect earth

By Teresa Carter

A Texas A&M professor believes nitrogen found in the ocean may hold the key to protecting the earth against the greenhouse effect.

Dr. Gilbert T. Rowe, oceanography department head, said that the greenhouse effect started with the Industrial Revolution and is a result of the increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide causing a gradual warming trend. This occurs because the rise of gas prevents the release of heat.

Rowe hopes to find the solution to the greenhouse effect in the ocean's nitrogen, nitrate.

"The ocean, with some form of nitrogen (nitrate), could accelerate the process in which small plants utilize light and

carbon dioxide," Rowe said. "In other words, nitrate allows plants to increase the amount of carbon dioxide it uses. The problem is we haven't determined if the ocean, as carbon dioxide continues to increase its concentration in the atmosphere, will act as a buffer."

Scientists are predicting a gradual rise in the average temperature of the earth because of the the greenhouse effect.

The A&M Ecosystems Research Group is planning its first expedition to the Gulf of Mexico in the spring to investigate the effects of nitrate in carbon dioxide consumption.

"The Mississippi River drains the bread basket of America into the Gulf," Rowe said. "Large amounts of nitrate are found in sewage or fertilizer. It drains off farm lands into rivers and enters the

ocean.

"We've got this natural experiment going on in the river. South of New Orleans, there are tremendous concentrations of nitrate."

"The ERG will take the Gyre (the exploration vessel) to specific points and study the nitrate uptake in the phytoplankton productivity," Rowe said.

From a global point of view, there is little understanding of the role of nitrate and how it ties in to the greenhouse effect, he said.

"The results of the study should enlighten scientists on how the nitrate is recycled in the ocean," he said.

Rowe said the greenhouse effect could have a major impact on Texas.

"The increase in temperature will cause glaciers to melt," he said. "Low-

lying areas such as Galveston and Corpus Christi will be under water."

The rest of Texas also will suffer if average temperatures rise, Rowe said.

"If you look at the eastern half of Texas, it is rich and green in terms of farming," he said. "The west half is dry and barren. The line between the two sides will move east, wiping out some farm land."

Rowe said scientists are predicting that the greenhouse effect will not take effect for about 150 years.

"A lot of people think it's coming soon because of the hot temperatures last summer," he said. "The fact is, the temperatures have varied. We need about 20 years of data showing a gradual increase in temperature before we can assume anything."

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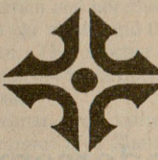
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