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MSC programs provide culture at A&M campus

By Susan Stubing
Staff Writer

Despite rumors that Bryan-College Station is a cultural black hole, culture in an array of styles does make its way into the Texas A&M community through the efforts of the MSC Student Programs.

At the base of this programming council is 27 committees that provide the A&M student and the A&M community with a taste of culture that ranges from opera singers to discussions of international terrorism. The committees are divided into categories of education, culture, entertainment and recreation.

For the classical music lover, the Opera and Performing Arts Society (OPAS) provides students and community members with performances by soloists, orchestras and musicians, while Town Hall satisfies the student who craves performances by popular rock or country western bands and artists.

Committees in the cultural division such as the Committee for the Awareness of Mexican American Culture (CAMAC) and the Jordan Institute for International Awareness, seek to provide the University community with programs that broaden cultural awareness and involvement.

Educational programs such as the Political Forum, the Student Conference of National Affairs (SCONA) and the Wiley Lecture Series provide general interest programs and ones of educational benefit.

"The MSC has some kind of program offered every night of the week," MSC President Frank Muller said. "This year we have more than 14,000 programs scheduled."

With so vast a collection of programs, it should be easy for students to find something they are interested in, Muller said. But he does not think students take advantage of all that is provided.

"Student involvement varies," he said. "Sometimes it is standing room only in a performance and sometimes the room is empty. Students don't take advantage of all the programs we bring."

Every committee begins the process of getting performances or lectures to A&M differently, but the bottom line for them all is hard work and organization.

For OPAS, a committee comprised of about 190 students and hundreds of community members, the planning process may take up to a year, committee member Bob Brown said.

The OPAS Board of Directors meets in the fall to discuss which programs they would like to see come to A&M the next year, Eric Trekkell, the OPAS program coordinator, said. The 30-member board of students and community members then present these recommendations to the Program Approval Committee, which must approve them.

Then, with these suggestions in mind and a \$600,000 budget to adhere to, the OPAS advisor and a few students book the following year's music and theater series. This group travels to New York to review and book their theater series performances and to a national conference to book their music series.

Although there is no average price for a performance, Trekkell said that perfor-

mances can range from \$5,000 for a soloist to \$200,000 for a Broadway musical.

Brown said that while the OPAS budget is large, only about one-third of it comes from ticket sales. The rest comes from community fundraising and donations.

On the opposite side of the committee spectrum are organizations such as CAMAC, with only an \$11,000 budget that mostly comes from student services fees. This committee, which brings Mexican-American educational and political programs to campus, usually has only one program a semester, CAMAC Chairmen Michelle Alvarado said.

"We are limited by our budget," Alvarado said, "because our programs must revolve around our available money."

Programs of the Political Forum, however, are selected on the basis of relevance and current issues, Matthew Wood, director of the Political Forum's E.L. Miller lecture series, said.

"We try to select relevant issues that will affect the students," Wood said, "or that are of particular interest to them."

The purpose of the committee, Wood said, is to provide a non-partisan forum for a variety of political issues to be presented to students. There are about 15 programs a year, dealing with national, international and state political issues.

The committee usually contacts the desired speaker two or three months in advance, depending on the topic and who it is they want to speak. The average cost of a program is about \$2,500, and the since all lectures are free to the public, the committee depends on student services fees and some donation money to give them their \$23,000 budget.

Town Hall, the committee that brings popular bands and performers to campus, has a budget of \$500,000 and concert expenses of sometimes up to \$40,000, Chairman Keith Spera said.

Booking a band can be a lengthy process, Spera said, that usually starts about four months in advance.

The committee must first set a date that is not conflicting with other University events, Spera said, and then must see what groups or performers are available that would interest students. Other details the committee must consider are the costs of the performance and whether A&M has adequate facilities to host them.

The committee tries to bring two big shows and two smaller shows to campus each semester, and Spera says that although the committee has a "wish list" of who they would like to bring, it is usually difficult to grant those wishes because of the many details that must be considered.

Town Hall, along with the other 26 committees, comprise what Muller calls the best union in the country.

"No other union in the United States has programs on the scale or the caliber we do," Muller said. "Nobody has 27 committees that are completely run by students."

Texas S&Ls miss out on Hawaiian meeting

DALLAS (AP) — As 4,500 officials from savings and loans throughout the country gather for an industry convention in Honolulu this week, executives from ailing Texas thrifts are staying home.

The Federal Home Loan Bank Board has told operators of insolvent thrifts they may not use company money to pay for their executives to attend industry

gatherings like the 96th annual convention of the United States League of Savings Associations. That means executives from insolvent thrifts who attend the convention are paying their own way.

Other savings and loans failing to meet regulatory minimums face other restrictions on travel as well.

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