

Thursday, January 26, 1989

ARCO gives A&M \$50 thousand Company's grant helps support Minority Engineering Program

By Melissa Naumann
REPORTER

Texas A&M's Minority Engineering Program has received a \$50,000 grant from ARCO to help retain minority engineering students.

Jeanne Rierson, assistant to the dean of engineering and coordinator of MEP, said the money will be used in a program called Phase One. "This is a bridge program for incoming freshmen during the second summer session," she said. "We con-

centrate on their math, chemistry and English skills to prepare them for Math 151 and Chemistry 101 (in the fall semester)."

Rierson said the program, which began in July 1988, was designed to keep minority engineering students at A&M.

"The first year is the hardest for any student," she said. "This gives students a chance to see what college is all about. The whole idea is to keep more minority engineering students here. I think that when a student comes to A&M and sees we have a program like this, they are likely to stay."

The 30 freshmen who attended

Phase One last summer had a higher average grade-point ratio for the fall semester than those minority engineering students who did not attend, Rierson said.

In the past, A&M has been successful in retaining minority engineering students through graduation. In 1987, the College of Engineering had 79 Hispanic graduates, more than any other university. A&M also ranked third in the nation for the total number of minority engineering graduates with 98 receiving bachelor degrees. Howard University topped the list with 129 graduates while City College of New York had 116.

"We have found that even with scholarships and other financial assistance, many minority youngsters enrolled in science, engineering and business courses never complete their college education," Lodwick Cook, ARCO chairman and chief executive officer, said in a statement. "While no single funding source can solve the growing problem of minority under-representation in science and engineering, we believe the spotlight must stay focused on the retention issue."

Hays challenges student senators to look around

By Kelly S. Brown
STAFF WRITER

In the Student Senate's first meeting this semester, Student Body President Jay Hays challenged the Student Senate to make the most of their positions and to take a good look around campus.

"The changes we do or do not make today will have an effect on what the University will be like many years from now," Hays said.

One of the changes discussed in the fall semester by two Senate members concerned abolishing the 'grode' stories told by yell leaders at midnight yell practice. The bill was sent to committee but later was rescinded by its authors.

Although that bill never passed, Ty Clevenger, a sophomore genetics major and senator from the agriculture college, said the possibility of Texas A&M having collegiate license plates is almost a reality. The idea for the specialized plates originated in the Senate last semester.

"The bill is going through the Texas Legislature now, it looks good and hopefully we won't have any problems with it," Clevenger said.

Alleged rape victim testifies, hospitalized after becoming ill

SAN DIEGO, Texas (AP) — An alleged gang-rape victim forced under threat of jail to testify at trial was taken from the courthouse on a stretcher Wednesday, but hospital officials declined to say why she fell ill.

Meanwhile, a prosecution witness who admitted he once told a psychiatrist the alleged attack victim "loved it" testified Wednesday that she cried and tried to resist the men who sexually assaulted her on the hood of a car March 26-27.

An ambulance took the woman to Alice Physicians and Surgeons Hospital at 9:30 a.m. Wednesday, just as she was to begin her second day of testimony in the aggravated kidnapping trial of Felipe Chew, who also faces a separate sexual assault trial in the case.

The woman was reported in stable condition. Hospital emergency room personnel and nursing supervisors said the woman's physician refused to release further information.

After the woman was taken to the hospital, District Judge Gilberto Hinojosa explained to the jury she had "fallen ill" and would testify later.

Her testimony was cut short Tuesday after she reported fainting during an afternoon break and said her stomach and head ached.

Witness Jose Carlos Briones, speaking Spanish as a court interpreter translated, testified Wednesday the woman "didn't want to do it. She was complaining. She had tears."

Briones, 29, was indicted on a sexual assault charge in case, but his trial date has not been set. All 10 men indicted have pleaded innocent.

Briones said he saw Chew sexually assault the woman with a beer bottle while other men held her down on the hood of a car that night at the ranch where an illegal cockfight was taking place.

"He just laughed," Briones said of Chew's behavior, adding that the woman clearly did not appear to enjoy it.

He admitted Wednesday, however, to Chew's court-appointed defense attorney, Jaime Garza, that in the course of a court-ordered mental-competency examination last

June he told a Corpus Christi psychiatrist that the woman "loved it" that night and that she was a "run-around."

Later, under further questioning by Assistant District Attorney Rodolfo Gutierrez, he denied telling the psychiatrist the woman was a willing participant.

Briones said he had consumed two cases of beer on March 26 and admitted being convicted for heroin possession 10 years ago. He also said he fondled the woman and tried to have sex with her that night, but the alcohol rendered him impotent.

He said the others tried to force him to perform oral sex on her, but he resisted.

Briones said he then tried to stop the men from raping and sodomizing her, but they did not listen.

Garza asked Briones if he knew anything about a reported arrangement by the prosecution to recommend probation for him if he testified against his co-defendants, but Briones said he was not aware of such a deal.

Co-op experience gives opportunity to practice job skills

By Fiona Soltes
STAFF WRITER

How do you get a job without experience? And how do you get experience without a job?

Students involved in Texas A&M's Cooperative Education program may have discovered the answer to this riddle.

Dr. Steve Yates, director of the office of cooperative education, said the program is an ideal way for companies to train and develop students for prospective employment upon graduation. It's also an ideal way for the student to get the experience he needs for the job he wants, while getting college credit.

The co-op program began at the University of Cincinnati in 1906, Yates said. Soon afterward, it moved to Georgia Tech, MIT, and other large schools, but it didn't come to A&M until 1958, he said.

Yates said the first A&M co-ops were from the college of engineering. In 1978, the program expanded to other colleges, but engineering students still make up 70 percent of the co-ops, he said.

John Vandegrift, a senior aerospace engineering major, will hold his fourth co-op position with NASA this summer. Vandegrift said his first position with NASA was in Shuttle Requirements Management.

"It was basically just learning what NASA did," he said.

During his second and third terms, Vandegrift was involved in the extra-vehicular activity training of astronauts.

"EVA means space-walking," he said. "Every crew must be taught the emergency contingency tasks, which is what they do when something fails in order to ensure a safe return. An example of this is contingency payload bay door closure. The astronauts need to know how to put on their

suits, step out into space, disconnect drive motors, hook up winches and then crank the doors shut."

Vandegrift's group also trained some crews for special missions such as capturing satellites to replace instruments on them.

"Becoming certified to teach courses is a long process," Vandegrift said. "Only after three or four years can you be qualified to teach all the courses that my group taught."

But through the program, Vandegrift was able to sit in on these classes and assist in the teaching any way he could.

"I was eager to teach, but I was not given the opportunity to be thrown into it," he said. "NASA was not exclusionary with me because I was a co-op. But it's like being in any company; you must pay your dues."

Being a co-op with NASA taught Vandegrift more than just aerospace engineering skills.

"Co-oping gives you a break from school and a chance to see what the real world is like," Vandegrift said. "It's not all technical learning, because you learn about income tax, budgeting and things like that, that you wouldn't learn if you hadn't worked through school. Of course, you also get the chance to find an area that interests you, doing career hunting while you're there."

Co-oping also has made the prospect of graduating seem less threatening for Vandegrift.

"Co-oping helps eliminate 'senior nerves,'" he said. "I don't have to be thinking, 'Oh, no, I've got to interview, make a resume and take finals while trying to figure out where to work.'"

Vandegrift said that as a co-op with NASA, he should receive a job offer from them after graduation.

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