

United Way gets boost

Payroll deductions for state employees make charitable contributions easier

By Lisa Messer
THE BATTALION

The creation of the State Employee Charitable Campaign and the introduction of payroll deduction privileges for all state employees has dramatically changed the annual United Way campaign for 1994-95.

Bob Fleischer, executive director of the Brazos County United Way and SECC local campaign manager, said understanding the changes is critical.

"Traditionally, 80 percent of the contributions from this area are made by individuals instead of corporations," Fleischer said. "The University is the principle reason for that. A&M employs a quarter of the labor force in this area. All those employees are affected by these changes because they are all state employees."

In past United Way campaigns, state employees made direct contributions to the United Way and other local charities. Now, state employees will make their contributions through the SECC.

The SECC provides individuals with a wider variety of charities to choose from than in the past. Employees will now be able to give locally to the United Way and its agencies or to any of 182 state-approved agencies.

Fleischer said the payroll deduction privilege offered to state employees should make contributing easy.

"With payroll deduction, you can give a little bit each time," Fleischer said. "That won't hurt as much."

Linda Johnson, Texas A&M System fund-raising chair, said

payroll deductions will probably increase contributions.

"It's less painless than to give a flat amount each year," Johnson said. "This way, you can spread it out, and you don't have to write a separate check."

Fleischer said another advantage of payroll deduction is the opportunity to designate where a contribution should be funded.

"You can keep your money local," Fleischer said. "Agencies in your area will be accountable."

Tony Barone, chair of University fund-raising, said he hopes payroll deduction convinces more people to get involved.

"It's a new opportunity that allows more people to get involved in charitable organizations," Barone said. "Whatever your interests in the community are, that's what you write down on the form, and that's where your money goes."

Johnson stressed the importance of designating donations.

"I really hope people will designate their gifts," Johnson said. "If they don't designate, then their money will be distributed proportionately wherever the designated money goes. It's real important to pick a charity."

Fleischer said he hopes the difficulty of the form that state employees are required by the SECC to fill out does not stop them from contributing.

"It's intimidating, it's not entirely good-looking, and quite frankly, it's not very functional," Fleischer said. "I'm concerned it will deter employees from making a donation. That shouldn't be a reason not to give, though. The needs are severe enough for that not to matter."

Fleischer said the University and System goal this year is \$200,000. Last year, the University and System contributed \$171,000.

Students who contribute separately from the University through a student United Way organization on campus donated more than \$10,000 last year.

Ashley Winkelmann, United Way student chairwoman, said their goal for this year is to raise \$10,000 and create an awareness of community responsibility among students.

"Our goal is to get every aspect of student organizations involved," Winkelmann said. "We want every student to volunteer their time to a fund raising activity or to a volunteer program. That way, after students graduate they will be aware of the United Way or other local or national charities."

Barone said A&M students have always been active contributors to local charities.

"Students have always been very involved in the past," Barone said. "They're big contributors to charitable organizations."

Fleischer praises students' involvement with the United Way Campaign.

"Students have always been to some degree supportive, but they've been really active the last few years," Fleischer said. "The program is refined and well-organized."

"This tradition of community support is probably unheard of at other universities," he said. "This student body is really different and unique. I'm thoroughly impressed."



Nick Rodnick/The Battalion

What a set of wheels!

Eric Oliver, left, a senior marketing major, talks to Jess Succop, a freshman general studies major, about his 1968 Pontiac Firebird at the Texas A&M Sports Car Club's Car Show on Tuesday. The car show will be held again today by Rudder Fountain.

Off-campus program broadens

Newly organized center gets new name, focus

By Stephanie Dube
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M's Off-Campus Center has undergone a change in structure and focus in an effort to broaden its services.

Now entitled the Office of Student Life Programs, the newly organized center will focus on services for off-campus housing, non-traditional age students, and women's programs.

Dr. J. Malon Southerland, vice-president for student affairs, said he wants the center to take a new direction.

"We wanted the emphasis from the Student Life Programs to be on areas that did not have as much emphasis in the past," Southerland said. "They needed a different structure to respond to that."

Dr. Brent Paterson, senior associate director for student affairs, said the name change was a result of the center's new areas of emphasis.

He said the center was already doing work with graduate and non-traditional age students, which are defined as students over the age of 24, so the transition was not difficult.

Allison Smith, coordinator of the center's off-campus student programs, said the change was prompted by the changing university population.

"As the University has grown, its population

has changed as the average age of students across the country has changed," Smith said. "There is an increased population of students over 24, and we have provided services for them as well."

Victor Romero, lease specialist for the Office of Student Life Programs, said many non-traditional age students have utilized the office in the past.

"There has been a high increase in the number of adult students returning to school, and this is usually the first place they come to look for housing," Romero said. "Adult students and graduate students need a place to identify as covering their needs."

Paterson said the Office of Student Life Programs is currently interviewing for a women's programs coordinator who would supervise women's issues programs such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, educational awareness, and seminars.

"She will advise several student groups focused on women's programs, be involved in women's week, individual consultations, establish periodic or one-time programs and serve as a liaison to different areas as a representative of women's issues," Smith said.

Paterson said the program was added to the Office of Student Life Programs because many believed the women's groups were not receiving the attention they deserved.

"As a group, the women on campus were not highly recognized and needed a support network," Paterson said.

Enrollment rates skyrocket

Students, fees continue to flow into South Texas colleges, universities

BROWNSVILLE, Texas (AP) — A burgeoning population is pushing big increases in enrollment at Lower Rio Grande Valley colleges and universities.

Border educators say they'll need more money to keep up.

"The (Rio Grande) Valley has grown in the past 10 years at twice the rate of the rest of Texas, and it's projected to grow in the next 10 years at twice the rate of Texas," University of Texas-Brownsville President Juliet Garcia said Tuesday.

The Brownsville campus, which operates under a partnership with Texas Southmost College, is expected to see a 16 percent increase in enrollment over last fall, Garcia said.

The school has already surpassed next year's enrollment projections by 13 percent.

And, if the younger generation is any indication, more growth is on the way. The Brownsville Independent School District has skyrocketed by about 2,300 students this fall alone.

Since UT-Brownsville became a member of the University of Texas System in 1991, it has generated a 17 percent increase in bachelor's degrees and a 52 percent increase in master's degrees, Garcia said.

Education officials say the predominantly Hispanic, relatively young and low-income population

of the border is creating a demand for more higher education opportunities closer to home.

"Both the economic and social aspects of families staying together makes people want to get their education locally, and they tend to remain here after they graduate," said William Morris, assistant vice president for academic affairs at the University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg.

Garcia is to appear before the Legislative Budget Board on Wednesday in San Antonio to make a pitch for funding beyond what's doled out by the state's complicated higher education formulas. The meeting is a prelude to the 1995 legislative session.

She's asking for another \$6 million in "special item" funds for fiscal 1995 and \$9 million for each of the next two years.

So far this fall, UT-Pan American is up 22 percent over last fall in graduate program credit hours, Morris said. The Edinburg campus is pushing for more graduate programs, especially in medical fields. About 80 percent of the school's 13,800 students receive financial aid.

Enrollments are also up at the Rio Grande Valley's technical and community colleges.

South Texas Community College in McAllen became a full-fledged community college only

last fall, drawing 1,055 students in the first semester. Enrollment had doubled as Friday, to 2,188.

"I see enrollment doubling for a three-, maybe five-year period — just in response to pent-up demand and tremendous amount of interest in higher education in the Valley," said Shirley Reed, the school's president.

"It's not inconceivable that South Texas Community College will have 20,000 students by the year 2000," she said.

Reed said the school's technical programs are already meaning she already needs seek expansion funds.

"It's absolutely critical," she said. "If we don't respond to the needs of businesses to provide trained, literate workers, I believe that businesses will assess locating in South Texas."

Pat Hobbs, associate dean of instruction at Texas State Technical College in Harlingen, said that the North American Free Trade Agreement will likely generate a bigger demand for skilled workers along the Mexican border.


Hobbs expects a 10 percent enrollment increase in technical programs during the next year, but he said state compensation isn't keeping up.

Hobbs said his school is lobbying for better compensation for technical programs, especially expensive new fields such as automation maintenance, digital imaging and environmental technology.

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