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Completion of orientation program required for new University employees

All student workers hired for the fall are required to attend an orientation to acquaint them with their new responsibilities.

By Kasie Byers
THE BATTALION

Beginning this semester, student workers must attend an orientation before getting on payroll with the University, but the orientation sessions are meeting resistance from new student workers.

Students who are being added to payroll for the first time, or have previously been paid by the University and are rejoining the payroll, must go through the orientation.

The student payroll orientations, which began Aug. 21, are

held twice a day and will continue through Sept. 13. The orientations last anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour depending on the number of students attending.

The program was initiated by the Department of Student Financial Aid and discussed with several other departments, including the Division of Student Affairs, earlier this year.

Felicia James, assistant to the vice president for student affairs, said that with more than 12,000 student workers, payroll orientations were needed campus-wide to inform students of their importance and responsibilities as University workers.

"An orientation is needed for students to know their responsibilities, as well as rights, when becoming employees of the University," James said. "As student

workers, they are part of the University System, and they need to know basic job expectations. It is also important to show them that, as a worker within this System, they are valued and we need them."

After discussion this summer about the possibilities of an orientation, the staff of the Student Financial Aid Department developed the program.

Molly Georgiades, administrator of scholarships and student employment, said the orientation tells student workers what to expect as a University employee.

"The purpose of the orientation is for ease of processing and to let the students know what it is like to work on campus," Georgiades said. "The entire packet of paperwork is filled out like a

real job, and then the rest of the orientation is spent going through basic office procedure and job expectations."

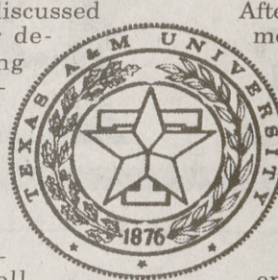
Students who have gone through the orientation though, said they don't see need for the program.

Marty Zahlenkamp, a junior animal science major who attended an orientation, said he found it to be useless.

"We basically filled out forms the entire time, which could have easily been done on our own," Zahlenkamp said.

"The speaker at the orientation touched on the responsibilities of working for A&M, little bit, but not a whole lot," Anja Dabelic, a junior biomedical science major who was recently employed with the West Campus Library, said the orientation was hardly insightful.

"We could have gotten the paperwork and done it ourselves. We are in college," she said.



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Many await benefits of NAFTA's promises

Several supporters of the 1993 agreement have not noticed a significant increase in jobs or trade.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The North American Free Trade Agreement's promise of new jobs and increased exports to Mexico isn't being realized — even by many of the corporate cheerleaders who were eager to see Congress ratify the pact in 1993, says a new study.

Public Citizen, which lobbied vigorously against the agreement creating a free trade zone from the Yukon to the Yucatan, contends that American workers are feeling the pinch.

Commerce Secretary Ron Brown took issue with the findings.

"NAFTA clearly has had a positive impact on U.S. jobs and exports," he said. "It's time to stop playing the 'blame NAFTA' game every time there is a 'shock' felt in the international financial markets."

Public Citizen examined the goals set by 81 companies before the pact's approval, then interviewed company officials this summer to find out if projections had been met.

The pre-NAFTA promises were culled from company comments in National Association of Manufacturers and USA NAFTA publications or those made to government officials and Congress.

Of the 66 firms providing follow-up informa-

tion, 89 percent said they haven't made significant progress toward fulfilling their job and export projections in the first 20 months of NAFTA's implementation, according to the study.

"The real-life evidence after a year and a half of NAFTA shows quite clearly that NAFTA is not working," said Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch.

"New jobs have not been created and a lot of existing jobs have been lost. And, U.S. wages are at their lowest point in 20 years and declining."

Mexico's economic woes, prompted by the abrupt peso devaluation, make it difficult to assess NAFTA's impact, critics of the study said.

"New jobs have not been created and a lot of existing jobs have been lost."

—Lori Wallach
director, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch

"Is there some disappointment generally in the Mexican market? Undeniably, but that doesn't mean NAFTA is a bad idea. If anything, it means it is more important," said Judge Morris, the National Association of Manufacturers' senior policy director for international trade.

The Commerce Department agreed, pointing out that unlike 1982 — when Mexico's economy last suffered a major jolt — the coun-

try isn't slapping new tariffs on imports.

Wallach brushed off criticism that the analysis fails to take into account Mexico's economic problems. "You can't separate the two — and you shouldn't because ... this is the real peso reality," she said.

Reflecting the continued fallout from Mexico's troubles, the United States' traditional trade surplus with Mexico has vanished. For the first six months of the year, the U.S. trade deficit with Mexico reached \$8.5 billion.

Public Citizen cited the toy manufacturer Mattel as one example of NAFTA's failure to deliver.

In 1993, a Mattel vice president told a House trade subcommittee that NAFTA would have "a very positive effect" on the more than 2,000 U.S. Mattel workers.

The Labor Department has certified that 520 workers at a Mattel-owned facility in Mexico, N.Y., were laid off due to increased imports from Mexico. A Mattel spokeswoman didn't return a call seeking comment.

"Those companies that we have surveyed were the poster children of NAFTA," Wallach said. "Where the hell are the jobs?"

The Mattel workers were among the 28,147 people in 48 states who have been certified by the Labor Department as having lost their jobs because of NAFTA.

Despite the job losses, trade officials said NAFTA remains a net gainer for U.S. workers. Increased exports to Mexico and Canada will support some 3 million U.S. jobs this year, up some 500,000 from two years ago, according to the U.S. Trade Representative's office.

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