

# Resolution center doubles caseload

### Mediators help to resolve roommate disputes most often.

By Courtney Walker  
THE BATTALION

Twice as many Texas A&M students sought campus mediation services in 1995 than in 1994, and fewer cases resulted in legal proceedings.

The Conflict Resolution Center reported that 38 mediation cases, 288 judicial cases and 507 legal cases were handled in Fall 1995. Nine mediation cases, 623 judicial cases and 650 legal cases were handled in Fall 1994.

Kim Walter, coordinator for student judicial services, said more students are aware that the consequences of legal action are not always desirable and that mediation services are an option.

Walter said students should consider using mediation services to settle personal disputes before legal action is required.

"(If) students say they want to be treated like adults, then they need to learn to settle their own problems and not let us (legal services) solve problems for them," she said.

A common problem that mediators deal with is roommate disputes.

"When there is a roommate problem and quiet hours are broken, or other residence hall policies are ignored, judicial services will handle the policy aspect, but residents are sent to mediation services to work it out among themselves," she said.

If roommates do not work out their differences, judicial service officials create student contracts, which, if broken, can result in the loss of campus housing contracts.

The only problem mediation services will not handle is sexual assault.

Rick Powell, coordinator for student legal services, said students benefit from choosing

mediation service over legal services.

"There are court costs," Powell said. "And uncertainty of the outcome are things students do not even think about. It is inefficient and uneconomical (to go to court) when you can use first use mediation services and find some common ground."

Powell said mediation works by bringing in an objective third party to facilitate rational discussion.

Students meet with mediators for two-hour sessions until they reach verbal or written agreements.

Jackson said many students mistakenly think that mediators force sanctions on participating parties.

But mediators, he said, simply increase students' communication skills.

"It is teaching them to negotiate, compromise and work with people," Jackson said. "Instead of losing their heads and overreacting, mediation helps them gain control and come out with a win-win solution."

# Construction program focuses on industry

### The four-week long CEP attracts participants from around the globe.

By Pamela Benson  
THE BATTALION

A Texas A&M construction program that began Sunday has drawn participants to campus from as far as New Zealand and Indonesia.

The Construction Executive Program (CEP), hosted by members of the Center for Construction Education (CCE), deals with issues affecting the construction industry. The four-week long program, which will end Feb. 16., examines topics ranging from human-resource management to contract-labor laws.

In 1984, CCE members made a commitment to provide the best professional development opportunities in the construction industry.

The Construction Executive Program evolved from that commitment, and later an entire construction management program was formed.

Kaye Mizer, CEP coordinator, said the program focuses on computer literacy, public relations, effective communication and construction finance.

Dick Sloan, an ARCO Chemical administrator, will address awareness of environmental regulations and the need to be proactive in the workplace.

Course projects include preparing profiles that describe the participants' companies and job roles.

During the last week of the program, participants will apply skills they have acquired to a project called the Capersone Case Study.

The Capersone study, designed specifically for the conference, requires participants to solve real-life problems that could occur in the workplace.

Sonya Miller, a participant in last year's conference, said CEP had a tremendous impact on how she processes information and responds to changing environments.

She said the conference also led her to a higher respect for others in the construction industry.

Participants receive continuing-education credit for the course.

# Student loan default rate drops sharply

WASHINGTON (AP) — The student loan default rate has dropped sharply and government collection efforts have cut net default costs by more than two-thirds since 1992, Education Secretary Richard Riley said Monday.

"These numbers reflect real and substantial progress," Riley said. "They are the product of several aggressive management decisions that were intended to get the default problem under control."

The rate of borrowers defaulting on student loans dropped to 11.6 percent in fiscal 1993, the latest year for which figures are available.

That was the lowest rate since official default rate reporting began in 1988. It has declined steadily since 1990, when it peaked at 22.4 percent. "The program was hemorrhaging," Riley said.

Monday's news conference was aimed at countering congressional criticism by showing the department was improving its management of student loan funds. Republican budget-cutters have suggested closing the department.

Education Department officials acknowledged that an improving economy contributed to the improved rate and that Bush administration programs deserved some credit. But they said they accelerated those programs.

"When the Clinton administration came into office, I declared that reducing the number of loan defaults was our No. 1 priority in the area of federal assistance for college loans," Riley said. "We have done just that."

Increased collections, combined with the lowering default rate, reduced the net cost of defaults to \$400 million in fiscal 1995, down from \$1.7 billion in fiscal 1992.

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