

AGGIE life

THURSDAY
April 4, 1996

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Building Courage

Students learn about themselves, others in venture dynamics course

Amy Protas
THE BATTALION

Imagine plunging from a 35-foot pole and trying to catch a trapeze with only a rope to help you. No, it is not the circus, but it is a class students can take at Texas A&M. Venture dynamics was introduced in the late 1970s and has become one of the most popular courses at A&M. Kathy Eissinger, a venture dynamics instructor and a lecturer in the kinesiology department, said venture dynamics, also known as ropes courses, are prevalent throughout the United States. "Venture dynamics started as a program for naval sailors," Eissinger said. "Then it became a part of Outward Bound, which is an organization that takes people outdoors in attempts to challenge them. Ropes courses are part of their program and are now being used in all 50 states."

Venture dynamics classes have students each and are based on the philosophy of building trust and communication among groups. The goal is for students to all feel comfortable being able to rely on one another.

Scott Mendell, who has taken venture dynamics and graduated in 1995 with an MBA, said the class is an excellent way to learn about yourself and other people.

"The class will teach you how to interact with groups and people and deal with group situations," Mendell said. "It shows you how there's all different kinds of personalities as a group. You learn how to recognize this and make everybody feel included."

The MBA program at A&M incorporates venture dynamics into its orientation week. The MBA program is set up in

the lock-step way," Mendell said. "We all have to take the same classes at the same time and carry the same load. You work in a team of five people and go through each semester with that team. You are forced to trust these people and interact to show the weaknesses and strengths of the group."

Perhaps the best example of trust building in venture dynamics is the Pamper Pole.

Christa Noland, a venture dynamics veteran and a senior psychology and sociology major, said the Pamper Pole is scary, but it is a joy to see people accomplish such a feat.

to do anything. We give them the opportunity to build up to it.

"If someone can get out there and do anything, they're not going to get anything out of the class. People just need to be willing to take risks."

Kim Henry, a venture dynamics veteran and a senior accounting and finance major, said the class is popular because the knowledge gained from it can be used throughout the student's life.

"It helps you to grow a lot," Henry said. "You grow not only physically, but emotionally and spiritually. It helps you to get over your fears. You will never be

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— KATHY EISSINGER
venture dynamics instructor

"The Pamper Pole is a 35-foot telephone pole that you have to jump from and catch a trapeze," Noland said. "You have to learn to trust that the other students will be there for you if you fall, and that's a hard thing to do. It's really neat when someone who's scared of heights gets up there and catches the trapeze."

Students on the Pamper Pole are secured by a belay, a rope attached to the student and to three or four other students on the ground. The students on the ground are responsible for the other student's safety.

Frank Thomas, a venture dynamics instructor and associate chairman of physical education activities programs, said people choose tasks based on what they feel comfortable doing.

"The class is challenge by choice," Thomas said. "You choose what you want to do. If a student flat out says no, they aren't forced

able to take another class like this at A&M. It really is a team-building experience."

The class also fosters communication among students.

One of the ways it does this is through readings done at the end of class.

Henry said students bring short stories or quotes they have read that have had profound effects on their lives.

She said students make friends for life in the class.

Eissinger said she would encourage anyone to take the course.

"It's different from anything else in the curriculum," she said. "Everything else is book knowledge. This forces them to work with others and how to handle group situations and relationships."

"In other classes, you're just spouting things back to the professor. In venture dynamics, you're learning about who you are."



Brandon Berend, a junior business management major, leaps from the Pamper Pole during his venture dynamics class.

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		MON Apr 8	TUES Apr 9	WED Apr 10	THUR Apr 11
CHEM 102	3-5 PM	CH 19, 20	CH 30, 21A	CH 21 B	CH 31.4 PRAC TEST
CHEM 101	5-7 PM	CH 9, 10	CH 11	CH 12	
CHEM 102	7-9 PM	CH 19, 20	CH 30, 21A	CH 21 B	CH 31.4 PRAC TEST
PHYS 218	11 PM - 1 AM	CH 9, 10	CH 11, 12	PRAC TEST	

	THUR Apr 11	SAT Apr 13	SUN Apr 14	CHEM 102	SUN Apr 14
PHYS 201	5-7 PM CH 9	2-6 PM CH 10, 13-15	2-6 PM CH 16-19		8-10PM CH 28-29

	MON Apr 8	TUES Apr 9	WED Apr 10	THUR Apr 11	SUN Apr 14
PHYS 202	CH 36	CH 37	CH 38	CH 39	6-8 PM PRAC TEST

	MON Apr 8	TUES Apr 9	WED Apr 10	THUR Apr 11
PHYS 208	7-9 PM OR 9-11 PM	PART 1	PART 2	PART 3 PRAC TEST

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