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Board seeks to encourage diversity across campus

By **BRANDYE BROWN**
Staff writer

The Student Leader Advisory Board (SLAB) is starting its second year by looking for different ways to expand the diversity of Texas A&M.

SLAB, which advises the student body president on campus issues, is comprised of 18 student leaders from different A&M organizations.

Curtis Childers, student body president and a senior agricultural development major, said SLAB, formerly the Student Body Executive Council, is concerned about campus diversity and cross-organization involvement.

"The best outcome for this year would be that all the members of our own organizations would have increased awareness of other groups and realize the cooperation that is involved as we all sit on a unified board together," Childers said.

Martin Hodges, Student Government director of minority affairs and a senior journalism major, said the diversity of A&M helps create more traditions and a broader Aggie spirit. He encouraged SLAB members to continue to address diversity issues on campus.

"SLAB has the opportunity to set a precedent for universities across the nation," Hodges said. "We are more unified as student leaders. By promoting the diverse interests of the entire student body, we show the nation that Texas A&M is a world-class university."

Childers said that in the wake of the Hopwood decision, the issue of diversity requires more than discussion.

"We need to work with Aggie recruitment services to let future students know this is a state school open to everyone," he said. "We might not have large offers of money, but we can offer Aggie spirit and hospitality. This is a big step for A&M's unity and a tremendous opportunity for the student body."

Childers said he plans to use SLAB to increase his exposure to student body opinions.

"First, it will make me more effective at decision making," Childers said. "I will share the information discussed at SLAB meetings with the Senate and the Executive Council. Secondly, we plan to be a proactive

body. If there is an important issue we feel should be addressed by the University, we will take it to the administration or whomever it concerns. Because SLAB is such a representative group, it will be very influential when we present our opinion."

Laurie Nickel, SLAB chair and a senior business analysis major, said SLAB is backed by enthusiastic and visionary student leaders despite being a new organization.

"It is wonderful to see the cooperation between the student leaders, who have been wanting unity so badly," she said. "We listen to the challenges of each organization, and we are working together to address these issues. The student leaders in SLAB are motivated enough to find out how we can best be utilized to benefit Texas A&M students."

Childers said that SLAB has an important role in passing on information from the student body to Student Government.

"The more face-to-face interaction, the better success we will have in communication," he said. "We want student input on all University decisions. Student Government wants to know what students want. Our goal is to advocate student opinion, to make sure it is heard and to hear what Student Government can do for the students of Texas A&M."

Alice Gonzalez, speaker of the Student Senate and a junior agricultural development major, said SLAB helps her gain insight on the opinions of other student groups.

"It's easy to get caught up with a small group and not realize that there are so many other small groups out there," she said. "With everyone pulling together to affect our campus, it makes for better organizations and better relationships with other organizations."

Nickel said the entire quorum of SLAB is available to the student body president to look to for advice and support.

"I am amazed and excited about the way we work together, forgetting our own factions," Nickel said. "It is inspiring to see the direction that A&M is going, which in my opinion is the only way left to go to improve the University. Unity of the student body is the key link that has been missing."

COURSES

Continued from Page 1

David said 31 education students are taking classes at Crockett or Rock Prairie this semester; 200 education students are taking the classes at A&M.

Charity Greer, a senior elementary interdisciplinary studies major, was part of the program last spring. She said the program has helped her as a student teacher at Crockett. "It (PDS) has been very crucial to my effectiveness as a student teacher," she said. "I feel more confident going into the classroom, and I feel more at ease with the leadership role."

David said other universities offer programs in which students go to elementary schools two or three days a week; A&M students are at the schools five days a week.

"I think we have one of the best programs because it is so intensive," he said. "I know of no other

public universities that require these students to spend as much time in public schools (elementary schools) as A&M does."

David said the program needs to be approved by some A&M organizations and state agencies before education students will be required to take education courses at local elementary schools. He said he hopes PDS will be a part of the elementary education curriculum by Fall 1999.

Greer said elementary education students should be required to participate in the program because it raises standards for teachers.

"I think this will help teachers in the long run acquire more respect because they go through more training," Greer said.

Cindy Gordon, a first-grade teacher at Crockett Elementary and A&M Class of '79, said PDS is a good program because it gives students more experience in the classroom before they student teach. She said she can tell the difference between

student teachers who participated in the PDS program and students who did not.

"Most beginning teachers get only 14 weeks of experience in the classroom," Gordon said. "PDS students are in the classroom for 14 weeks and then student teach for 14 weeks. These beginning teachers will have been in a classroom for over a year (before they teach in their own classroom)."

Gordon said these teachers are more confident in the classroom and know how to discipline students. She also said PDS students know what methods of teaching and discipline work in real life, not just in textbooks.

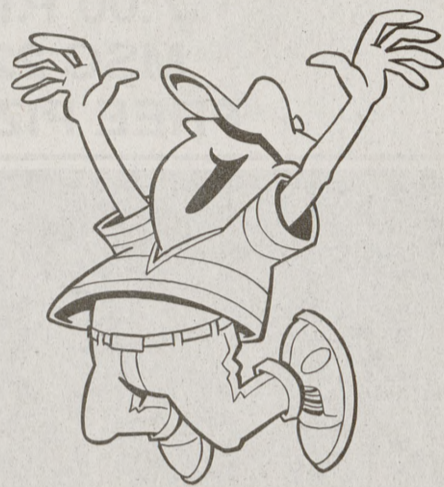
She said PDS students help by giving teachers more one-on-one time with students.

"I can't imagine being without the PDS students," Gordon said. "I wish every school would participate in this program, but I wouldn't give my PDS students up to another school."

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