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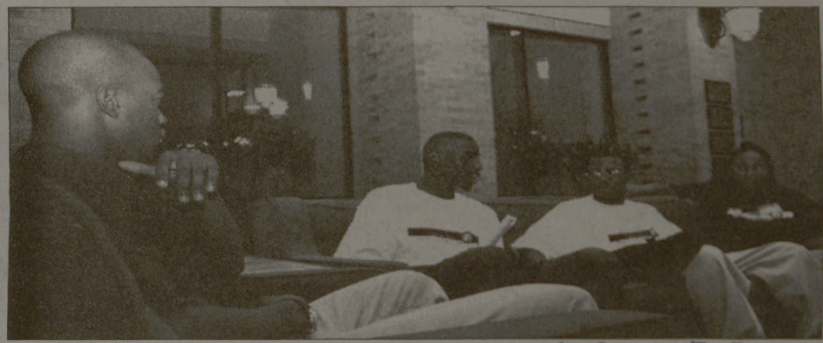
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JAKE SCHIRCKING/THE BATTALION

ExCEL team leaders **Eric Durham**, a senior speech communications major, (far left) and **Paula Hardeman**, a junior biomedical science major, (far right) talks to **Macco Faniel**, a freshman speech communications major, and **Steve Edwards**, a freshman biology major, (left to right) during a discussion session Saturday.

ExCEL conference helps students adjust

BY NONI SRIDHARA
The Battalion

With a theme of "Carpe Diem — Your Future Starts Now," the 11th annual Excellence uniting Culture, Education and Leadership (ExCEL) conference drew 250 participants Friday and Saturday at the Memorial Student Center.

ExCEL is a conference organized primarily by upperclassmen to help minority freshmen make the transition from high school to collegiate life at Texas A&M.

Zuleika Carrasco, director of public relations for ExCEL and a senior Spanish major, said that although the conference is designed to help minority students, any student may attend.

"The conference is not only there to help students, but to help ease parents' fears as well," Carrasco said.

Rafael Lara, assistant head of the Educational Curriculum and Instruction department said the main objective of ExCEL conference is to promote a work ethic among students.

"We want to let the participants know that they have the same opportunities as everyone else if they are willing to work at it," Lara said.

Alvin Larke, a professor in the department of agricultural education, was the keynote speaker at this year's conference.

"In life decisions cost you. Success may even cost you a few friends, but you have to go against the grain sometimes," Larke said. "Success comes when you get rid of your fears."

"The conference is not only there to help students, but to help ease parents' fears as well."

— Zuleika Carrasco
ExCEL director of public relations

The ExCEL weekend included various seminars and workshops for the incoming freshmen.

One program, "What You Don't Know Can Hurt You," had upperclassmen performing skits dealing with issues such as loneliness, alcohol abuse and violence.

Melinda Hill, an ExCEL participant and freshman business management major, said the conference has already affected her college career.

"This session really helped me because you get to know some of the professors before the start of the school year," Hill said.

Record number turn out for

BY AARON MEIER
The Battalion

The largest pool of women in A&M history turned out for the fall rush last week.

Nine-hundred-fifteen women showed up for the rush last week. Before its conclusion on Saturday, 180 dropped out.

Jessica Townsend, the chair for Delta Zeta sorority psychology major, said that she dropped out for various reasons.

"A lot of girls realize that the rush just isn't for them," Townsend said. "Some really don't like the whole rush process, some are cut from the sorority because they're not looking to join and decide not to be part of the Greek community at all."

On the fourth day of rush, the Hellenic Council decided each sorority would allow a maximum of 27 girls in each pledge class.

The entire rush process concluded with Bid Day on Saturday. The bid process was altered to ensure the privacy of the women participating.

"In past years, we all would be at Oak Park and the girls would be bidding," said Karen Barger, Panhellenic chair and a senior education major.

One problem was when guys would be on their front porches with keys to the girls on Bid Day. If the girl didn't go from the sorority she wanted, she would be crushed. We wanted to change the process about the girls."

This year, each girl was called to a room in the Memorial Student Center where rush counselors would discuss the bid to the girl, Barger said, then the counselors would then ask if they were with their situation. If not, the girls would be able to openly discuss any concerns they might have with their rush counselors.

This fall's Bid Day was changed to a national level as well.

Barger said all the sorority's presiding bodies decided to eliminate the cohort and men from the Bid Day process.

"This would make it about the women," Barger said. "We have been lucky that the men have respected this decision."

Barger said this year's rush had no minor violations of the rush rules, thus nothing significant.

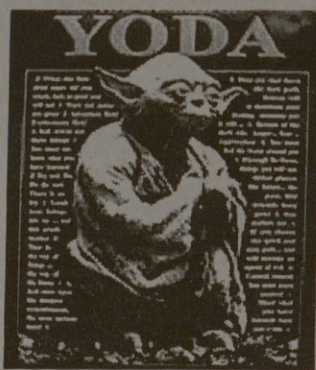
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