

University services offers ways for students to deal with problems of college life

BY KASIE BYERS
The Battalion

Texas A&M University offers a taste of independence to students as well as an education. Despite this new-found freedom, students do not have to face their college problems alone.

The Student Counseling Center and Student Conflict Resolution Center offer multi-faceted services that focus on the education of the student and their personal growth.

The Student Counseling Center, located in Henderson Hall, provides its main services: academic counseling, career counseling, personal counseling and crisis intervention. All services are covered through the Student Service Fee.

Dr. Wade Birch, director of Student Counseling Services, said the service focuses on helping students make it through A&M.

"Our main purpose is to do everything we can to help students graduate from Texas A&M University," Birch said. "That's the only reason we exist."

SCS is staffed by 15 psychologists, counselors and one psychiatrist.

Birch said the SCS staff is there to help serve the students needs.

"The SCS staff are not academicians, and they're not researchers. They all were hired because they prefer to work with students," he said. "It is absolutely required that the staff care about the students."

Academic counseling, learning skills resources and personal counseling are offered Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Group counseling and special workshops are set up at various times throughout the semester.

A student-manned HelpLine is available 24-hours a day for students, and a 24-hour Counselline allows students to call and listen to informational tapes on a variety of topics ranging from depression to choosing a career.

Resources in the Learning Skills Library, including videos, computer programs and cassette tapes, can be accessed after normal operation hours, Monday through Friday 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. by appointment.

Birch said any student who even questions whether or not they should seek counseling should use the Student Counseling Service.

"If that thought, 'I wonder if I need counseling,' crosses a student's mind, it is probably a good indicator they need to come visit us," he said. "I suggest to students to get in as early in the semester as they can because we frequently have a long waiting list."

Birch said despite the waiting list, emergency situations and crisis intervention situations do not require an appointment.

"Emergency services are available to students day, night and on the weekends," he said. "An emergency is whatever the student defines to be an emergency."

Emergencies after normal business hours are referred to the SCS HelpLine (845-2700), which is manned by students and backed by five psychologists.

"There is not a minute in a seven-day, 24-hour week a student cannot get a human voice here," he said. "They are going to get someone. The HelpLine is here to be supportive and give students advice and referrals."

"For serious things, the students [workers] do not take the calls, they are patched on to the psychologist who is on duty."

Birch said crisis intervention is required when a suicide attempt or other emotional trauma has occurred.

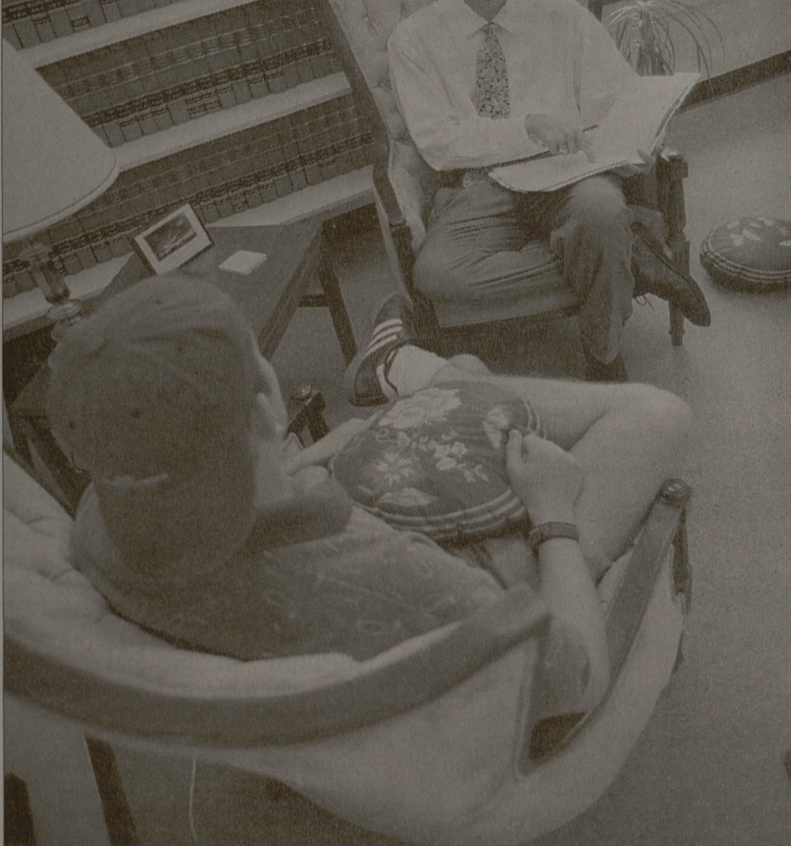
"If someone kills themselves, that is the only problem we can't solve," he said. "If a student is feeling that desperate, there are things we can do to help them."

The Student Conflict Resolution Center located on the second floor of YMCA offers students legal services, mediation services and judicial services.

Rick Powell, licensed attorney, counsels students on legal issues but does not represent them in court.

He gives advice on issues ranging from automobile accidents to alcohol violations at no charge to the student, but cannot provide advice when the adverse party is another A&M student or the University.

Working it Out



BRANDON BOLLOM/THE BATTALION

Shaun Travers, coordinator of judicial services in the SCRS, discusses SCRS services with Andy Coffey, a senior environmental design major.

Powell said a lot of first-year students get in trouble with alcohol violations.

"Minors don't hesitate to drink in front of the police or walk around with beers," he said. "They don't know it is a crime to hold a friend's beer, even if they are not drinking it."

Powell said students who wish to speak to him concerning legal issues only need to e-mail or call the SCRS office to make an appointment.

"Students should bring any paperwork they have concerning the issue with them," he said. "I'll listen to the student's story to get the facts

and discuss their options with them. They can then choose what course of action they wish to take."

Negotiation and mediation services aids students in working out their personal disputes with roommates, neighbors, landlords or co-workers.

René Harris, coordinator of negotiation and mediation services, said students who do not wish to go through mediation with a problem have the option of getting a consultation.

SEE SERVICES ON PAGE 4B.



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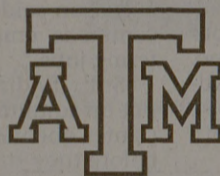
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Beutel seeks to better students' bodies



BRANDON BOLLOM/THE BATTALION

Nan Davis, a Beutel R.N., gives a TB skin-test shot to Bin Lu, a computer science graduate student.

BY KASIE BYERS
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There is no record of when the A.P. Beutel Health Center was first given the honorary title of "The Quack Shack" by Texas A&M students, but Dr. Lucille Isdale, health center director, is working hard to erase it from the students' memories.

Isdale said when she came to A&M in Aug. 1995, the health center needed help.

"I found past evaluations of the health center that had never been opened," she said. "From these evaluations, I found out the front staff was rude and the service was slow."

Isdale clearly saw she had her work cut out for her from the beginning.

"I felt we had a situation where we could really do something," she said, "because it was not a top quality place when I first came on staff."

After three years and numerous changes to create a student-focused health center, the number of complaints by students has decreased by 40 percent.

Regardless of whatever nickname A&M's health center carries, Beutel is a step above A&M's first health center in 1876, which was set up in a series of tents.

The health center was moved four times during A&M's history, its last move was in 1973 to its present-day location.

This health center was named in honor of Dr. A.P. Beutel, a former member of the A&M

Board of Regents and former Vice President and General Manager of Dow Chemical Co., Freepoint Division.

Today's facility, located on Houston Street between the YMCA building and Fish Pond, has eight staff physicians who offer health care Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., a 24-hour Dial-a-Nurse service and 24-hour ambulance service.

The health care services provided by the center include preventive medicine, a women's clinic, an asthma clinic, health education, medical laboratory, pharmacy, physical therapy and radiology.

Most services offered by the health center are covered by the Student Health Services Fee, but those that are not, such as X-rays and prescription medications, are offered to students at costs lower than private health care providers.

Appointments for services can be made Monday through Friday 24-hours a day. From 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., students can make appointments at 845-6111 and after 5 p.m. at 845-2822.

Visits to the health center by students are strictly confidential under the patient/provider confidentiality provisions, and information regarding a students' visit only will be released with the patient's written permission, except in cases specified by the law.

Isdale said she is striving to make the health center student-focused and education-focused.

"My main objective is to educate," she said. "If I can educate and make a difference in a student's lifestyle, I made an impact."

Isdale said she also expects the health center staff to focus on the students.

"We have students to see. If [the health care staff] does not want to see them, [they're] in the wrong place," she said.

SEE HEALTH CENTER ON PAGE 4B.

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