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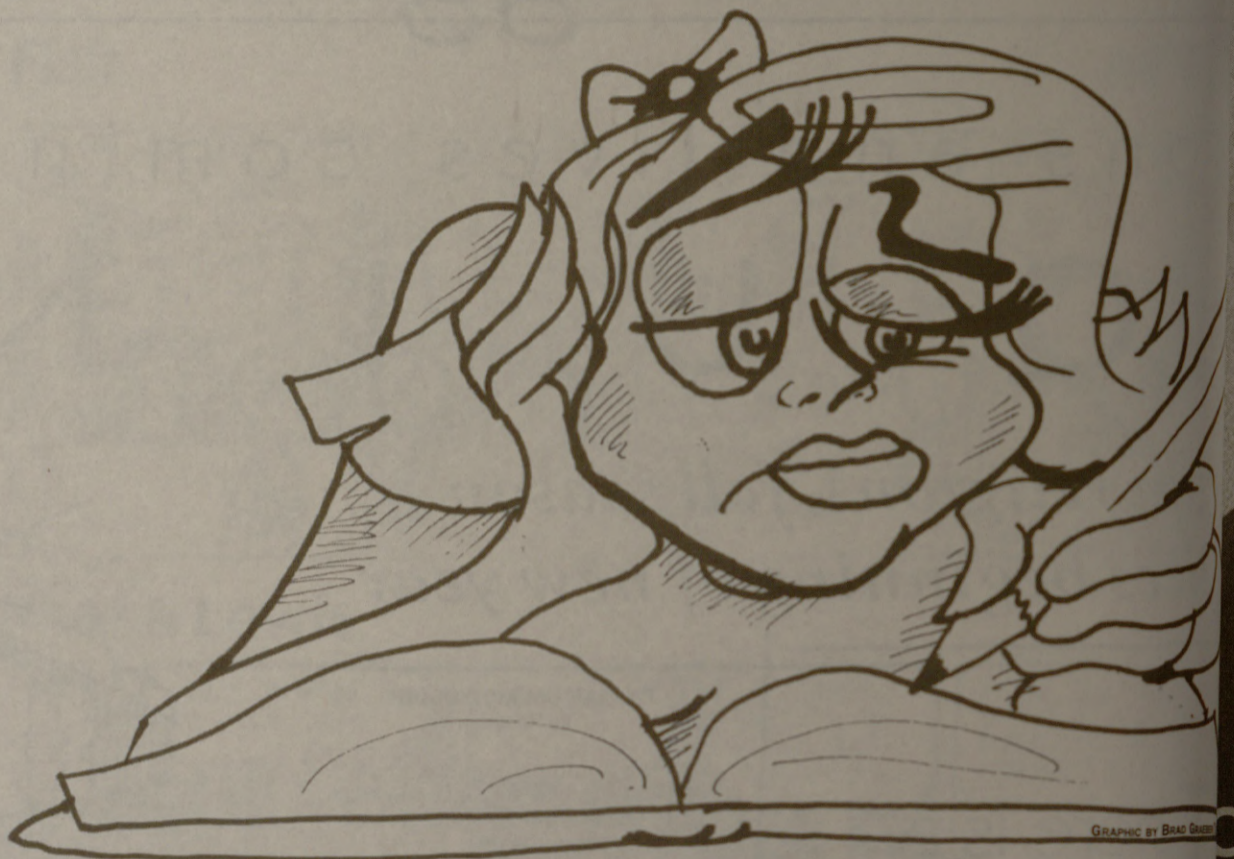
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Hitting the books

Outlets available for students suffering from learning disorders

BY MEREDITH HIGHT
The Battalion

For some students at Texas A&M, obstacles to studying do not come in the form of procrastination, student organizations or a job. For students with learning disabilities, studying in and of itself is the obstacle.

Learning disabilities include a variety of disorders, ranging from dyslexia to conditions affecting math comprehension.

The National Center for Learning Disabilities defines these disorders as "impeding a person's ability to store, process and/or produce information."

"Learning disabilities can affect one's ability to read, write, speak or compute math and can impair socialization skills."

Learning disabilities are intrinsic disorders, meaning they are not caused by an outside influence, such as poor instruction or a physical handicap.

The National Center for Learning Disabilities does not consider attention deficit disorders and hyperactivity as learning disorders.

Anne Rebe, coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities, said help is available to students who are diagnosed with a learning disability.

"Our mission is to help the student understand and advocate for themselves if necessary," she said. "We are certainly there to back them up and support them."

The Americans with Disabilities Act defines a person with a disability as "a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities." Learning is considered a major life activity.

Students with disabilities are protected against discrimination under the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. These laws "guarantee equal

educational opportunity to any otherwise qualified individual with a disability."

About 300 students have registered with Services for Students with Disabilities so far this semester.

An estimated 32 percent of these have learning disabilities, and typically, more students come to the office seeking help when the first round of tests hit.

The two major categories of learning disabilities are math and language disorders.

Rebe said the majority of those reported at A&M are language based.

In order to qualify for accommodations through SSD, a student must apply and be accepted to Texas A&M through the regular admissions process, provide medical documentation of the disability and register with SSD at the beginning of each semester.

According to the SSD's brochure, the medical documentation has to include a specific diagnosis, the level of severity of the disability, current medications, functional limitations due to the disability and recommended academic accommodations.

After those criterion are met, SSD starts working with students to determine the kinds of accommodations needed.

If a student does not have medical documentation, the counselors will sit down with a student to discuss their problems.

Reber said there is usually not an immediate referral to testing for a learning disability.

"Maybe they are not used to college life; they may be using poor study habits," she said. "If we suspect a disability, we recommend they see a psychologist, or someone certified to administer testing."

SEE DISORDERS ON PAGE 7.

Services offer students help improving study

BY KATIE MISH
AND TRAVIS IRBY
The Battalion

Freshmen may often come into college with a little harder than their high school peers to realize the level of the differences.

Many have to learn the best way to study. As students get older, they acquire the skills to earn them a degree at Texas A&M.

A&M offers several avenues for students to solve study problems.

The Center for Academic Enhancement offers apartments on campus helping students to solve their problems.

The Center offers a two credit-hour course in College for freshmen and sophomores to improve reading, note taking and study skills.

Joel McGee, program coordinator of the Center for Academic Enhancement, said although improvement is a certain attitude needed, "Skills like taking notes are important."

"Motivation and determination are major factors in academic performance."

The Learning Skills Center located in Hester Hall offers workshops and labs that give study tips.

Lyle Slack, coordinator of the Learning Skills Center helps students assess why they are having trouble with their study habits.

"Many students have trouble managing their time and organizational skills to succeed," Slack said.

He said he believes many students are not recognizing the cause of deficient study skills.

"Not knowing what the problem is can be frustrating," he said.

Many student see their study skills enhanced. Peter Duong, a junior chemistry major, said that setting goals can keep students on track.

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