

Fish Out of Water

Orientation leaders help incoming freshmen make a smooth transition to college life

BY HEATHER BRONDY
The Battalion

Put your howdy face on Ags, because something is fishy in Aggieland — and judging by the influx of tender, fresh faces, it must be freshmen orientation season.

The New Student Conference Committee is a student and faculty governed organization that conducts the conferences focusing on making the freshmen and their parents feel as comfortable as possible during their registration.

Their mission statement reads: "Continually connecting new students to Texas A&M by personally supporting, serving and using all available resources to help ease the transition for them and their families."

Nicole Walker, a junior biomedical science major, and Cindy Brown, a senior political science major, are this year's directors of the New Student Conference Committee. Brown said she and Walker are responsible for selecting an executive committee to help organize the orientation leaders.

"This committee is responsible for the interviewing and training of the orientation leaders," Brown said.

Walker said many leaders are needed because of the large number of incoming freshmen.

"We have 150 orientation leaders volunteering this summer and working very large conferences," Walker said. "There are over 500 students coming in twice a week, so they're really busy."

The orientation leaders are selected in the spring using an application and undergoing an interviewing process. Once selected, the leaders participate in training programs which inform them on everything from Aggie yells to the nearest bathroom from Fish Pond.

Laura Wimberley, the committee adviser and staff coordinator for the freshmen orientation program and a history graduate student, said she is pleased with the student orientation leaders who were selected for this year's program.

"We've got a really enthusiastic group and they've done a great job this summer," Wimberley said.

The actual orientation work load consists of greeting the freshmen at check-in, running mixers and "energizers," giving campus tours, conducting parent programs and leading "Aggie insights." Wimberley said the insights are an important part of the orientation

program.

"We have two orientation leaders randomly select 10 new students who show up to the insight [session]," Wimberley said. "They then take the students out and show them around campus. The purpose is to answer any questions or concerns they may have and not want to talk about in front of their parents."

The energizers and mixers are other orientation events aimed at bringing the freshmen together and getting them out of any shells they may be lurking in. Rhonda Wehbe, an orientation leader and a junior chemical engineering major, said her favorite part of the orientation occurs at the mixers.

"We pull out any of the freshmen we see sitting by themselves and get them to go out and dance with us," Wehbe said. "It's really cool when you see one of those fish later on talking in a big group cause you know you helped them to open up."

Parents naturally need a little new student nurturing as well, so the New Student Conference Committee has made sure to organize a few parent programs for any empty-nest sufferers.

SEE LEADERS ON PAGE 4.

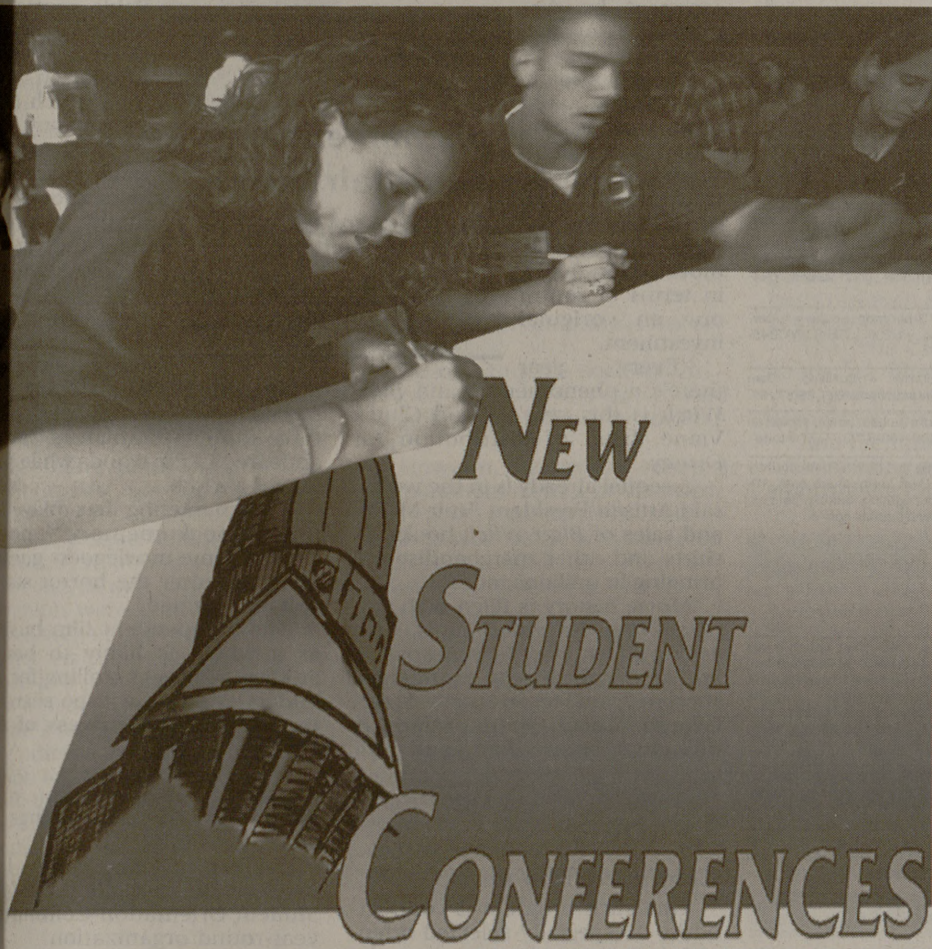


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