

Testing, Testing ...1, 2, 3

Graduate school hopefuls turn to prep courses and self-study

By Beth Brown
THE BATTALION

John Sommers, a junior management and finance major, recently decided he wants to go to graduate school. Sommers plans to take the GMAT but is not sure when he will prepare for it.

"I am worried about having to study for a test while taking a full load of class," Sommers said. "I heard it is worth taking if you don't have the time to prepare for it, and that means studying every night for a couple of months."

For students like Sommers, graduating with a bachelor's degree is not enough. Many Aggies set their sights on business, law or medical school to get jobs that pay big bucks. But before they can happen, there is one obstacle for students who want to go to graduate school — the entrance exam.

Tests such as the LSAT, the GMAT and the MCAT determine the fate of many students and can be intimidating. The key to beating them is preparation, and students have tried several methods to get ready for possibly the hardest test they will ever take.

Sommers is not sure whether or not he will take a preparation course before the exam. He said he has heard mixed reviews about them.

He may just buy a book of practice problems. Whatever he decides, Sommers said he has a great deal of work ahead.

"I am motivated to go to graduate school, but I am not looking forward to the extra work and stress involved in taking the GMAT," Sommers said. "Hopefully I will get a good grade on the test. I would hate to have to take it twice."

Donnie Perdue, a junior biology major, hopes to go to medical school and is preparing for the MCAT by taking a preparation course. "My plan consists of four classes a week, each of which is two

and a half hours long," Perdue said. "We are also assigned homework and have five full-length exams on Saturdays."

Perdue said the classes are making a difference in his grade and he has seen improvement in his scores. In addition, Perdue uses the course as a motivator.

"I think (preparation) classes help because they are a scheduled time to study," Perdue said. "You have to go to the classes because you are paying so much money for them."

"I basically understand all of the information we are going over, but I am taking the course because I don't think I would do the work on my own."

A. David Brown, the vice president of business development at a start-up company in Houston, recently took the GMAT and scored very well. Brown said the tests are definitely the type that can be studied for and taking a course is not always the best option.

"I spent the money and took a course, but I think what helped me the most was the practice problems," Brown said. "I highly recommend buying a book of practice problems from the old written tests; it made all the difference for me."

Brown decided to wait a few years before taking the test so that he could gain work experience on Wall Street. Brown said many people decide to do this, and graduate school exams do not have to be taken right out of school.

"Many business schools like to see their applicants have four or five years of work experience," Brown said. "Since the scores are only good for five years anyway, it isn't necessary to take the test right after graduating from college."

Brown said the most important thing is to allow plenty of time to study and practice.

"I studied for months before my exam," Brown said. "It's a huge time commitment, but it definitely pays off in the end."

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— Donnie Perdue
junior biology major



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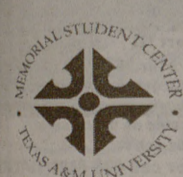
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