

Center to help Texarkana College students hone leadership skills

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Texas A&M University-Texarkana students can go one step further during fall 2006, as the Student Leadership Center to help develop better leaders begins.

"We expect that as our student body will grow ... that our students will be engaged with not just Texarkana, but because they come from surrounding communities that they will be engaged in leadership roles in those communities," said Ann Lotven, TAMU-T provost and vice president for academic affairs.

Though classes offered through the program will be non-credit courses, students can graduate with leadership certification on their transcripts.

Each module is a semester long and builds on the prior module.

The modules in the voluntary three-step program are: developing traits for leadership, meeting community members; and implementing leadership traits.

During the first two modules I and II, students will have the opportunity to participate in a leadership luncheon and success seminars, said Carla Snyder, TAMU-T's institutional effectiveness director.

"Each would be about one hour a month, and they would cover such topics as negotiations, meeting leaders, presentation skills—anything that would have to do with leadership development," she said.

In the third module, students will use the skills they learned by par-

ticipating in a community-based program.

There are also plans to integrate the ideal of leadership into the fabric of the courses.

Not only will the students learn about leadership, but the faculty will go through leadership training.

Developing the overall plan brought in focus groups made up of alumni, current students, employers and TAMU-T faculty and staff, said Snyder.

"We tried to understand what would make their learning experience a better experience," she said of the current students.

"We wanted to know what did the employers want out of the students ... and they wanted to show a way to get better leadership, to show creativ-

ity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, or the ideal employee."

The program will make students more marketable, but will also give them a network of contacts.

"I see this as a step towards making leadership something that is throughout the curriculum and something that we expect all graduates to demonstrate," said Dr. Stephen Hensley, TAMU-T president. "I think that you will see, as that happens, this university will develop leadership as its mantra."

The program is in the planning stages, but Snyder said it will include sessions led by community-based organizations and leaders. Though topics will vary, the purpose will be the same—to develop leaders.

Southern Association of Colleges

and Schools Accreditation requires schools have a Quality Enhancement Plan. Through this, school officials developed their own plans for student leadership development.

"In a sense we are looking at four different areas: One of those is the student leadership component, and the second one is the courses, which the faculty develop; a third is faculty development and the fourth is a service learning in the community," said Lotven.

What came of this planning process through TAMU-T's Quality Enhancement Plan Leadership Team is a program enabling students to become better leaders, something that will prepare them for life after college, said Snyder.