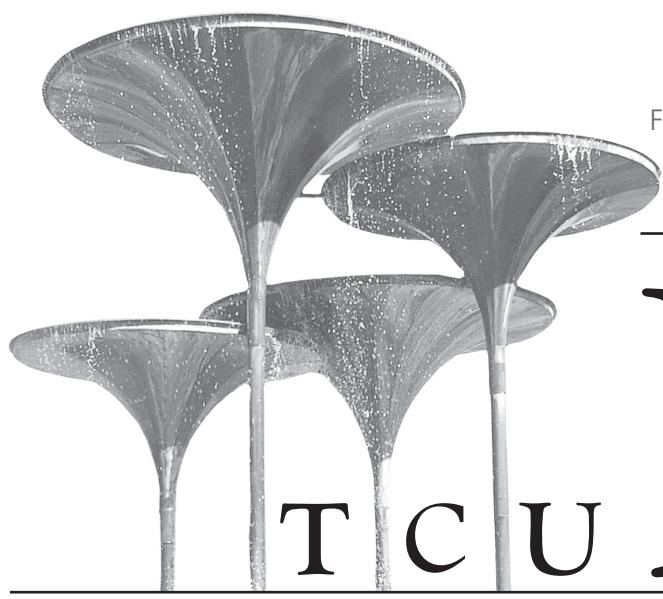


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Find out how the Frogs do in their game against the Utah Utes.



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REGAINING RETENTION

Committee looks to boost university's retention rates

Nonreturning students assist and answer questions

By AMY KITCHEL
Staff Reporter

One out of every six freshmen who start their college careers at TCU don't finish them here, leaving after their first or second semester for reasons ranging from not fitting in socially to not being challenged enough academically, TCU researchers said.

To boost TCU's retention rate of 83.9 percent, Chancellor Victor Boschini created a task force to study the issue. The Retention Data Analysis Committee studied expectations students had of TCU when they enrolled versus the actual experiences they had.

Dean of Admissions Ray Brown said the retention rate is average for an institution of TCU's size and stature when compared nationally, but is lower than other private universities, like SMU and Baylor.

The committee's study followed 106 freshmen who started at TCU in fall 2004 and chose not to return for the spring semester, said Catherine Coghlan, assistant director of the Center for Institutional Research.

"We want to find out what it is about the group of students who are leaving that is off skew," Coghlan said.

According to the study, nonreturning students were studied based on college, ethnicity and gender, and were surveyed about both academic and social issues related to their experiences at TCU.

The study's questions about academics included level of academic challenge, academic advising, student-faculty interaction, staff interaction and classroom interaction with other students.

Social expectation questions covered campus environment, social opportunities, the residence halls and student interaction. Students who participated in recruitment were asked about that experience also.

The study found that concerns for nonreturning students included lack of order and discipline in the residence halls, and students wanting more direction and guidance in academic advising.

According to the study, social problems were mentioned often. Coghlan said nonreturning students felt a student had to be in the Greek community to have a good social experience.

According to the study, 66 percent of students who chose not to return for their second semester cited academic reasons and 67 percent named social reasons. (Some students cited both social and academic reasons.)

"There is a combination of factors for each student,"

EXTRA INFO

Retention Rates:

TCU - 83.9 percent

Baylor - 84 percent

SMU - 88 percent

UTA - 70 percent

UT-Austin - 93 percent

— College Board 2006 Handbook

Coghlan said.

The study reports that differences between students who stay and those who leave, correlated to how well social experiences matched expectations.

The most common response from students who chose not to return to TCU had to do with an inability to make connections with others, the study found. These nonreturning students also had the lowest rates of co-curricular participation, according to the study.

The study also found differences in the reasons students left after one semester and those who left after two.

According to the study, students who stayed at TCU for their entire first year, but were not enrolled in fall 2005, most frequently cited finances as the primary reason they did not plan to return.

Coghlan said financial reasons came up often during the surveys, but were not always the No. 1 reason students chose not to come back.

"I think it goes back to the combination of reasons," Coghlan said. [more on RETENTION, page 2](#)



Lana Hunt / Staff Reporter

Barbara Herman, associate vice chancellor for student affairs (center), answers a question posed by an audience member at the town hall meeting Wednesday in the Brown-Lupton Student Center. The other panelists are Catherine Wehlburg, director of the Center for Teaching Excellence (left), and Andy Fort, chairman of the Faculty Senate.

Campus involvement has impact

Students, faculty say link with university helps retention rate

By LESLIE WINCHELL
Staff Reporter

Improving TCU's retention rate was the topic of discussion at a Town Hall meeting Wednesday in the Brown-Lupton Student Center.

"The 83.9 percent retention rate last year is not where we need to be, but we're constantly improving," said Catherine Wehlburg, director of the Center for Teaching Excellence.

Approximately 25 students, staff and faculty members attended the meeting.

"We have to get and keep the students involved," said Barbara Herman, associate vice chancellor for student affairs. "We need to figure out why students leave and how to prevent that from happening."

Among the issues that students were concerned about were tuition increases, racial diversity and organizational involvement.

Many students leave because they do not find their "niche here or feel comfortable," said sopho-

more premajor Austin Uebele. TCU needs to advertise the organizations to the student body better because students who are socially engaged more often choose to stay, Uebele said.

Freshman premajor Ashley Bachmayer had a different opinion as to why students leave TCU.

"My biggest concern is tuition increase," Bachmayer said. "I am undecided about my major and may be here for five years, and I'm afraid each year is just going to get more expensive."

The panel also discussed faculty involvement.

"We need to get the faculty involved and make connections with the students to keep retention rates up," said religion professor Andy Fort, chairman of Faculty Senate. "The problem is to figure out what exactly are the primary duties of the faculty and how to implement those duties outside the classroom."

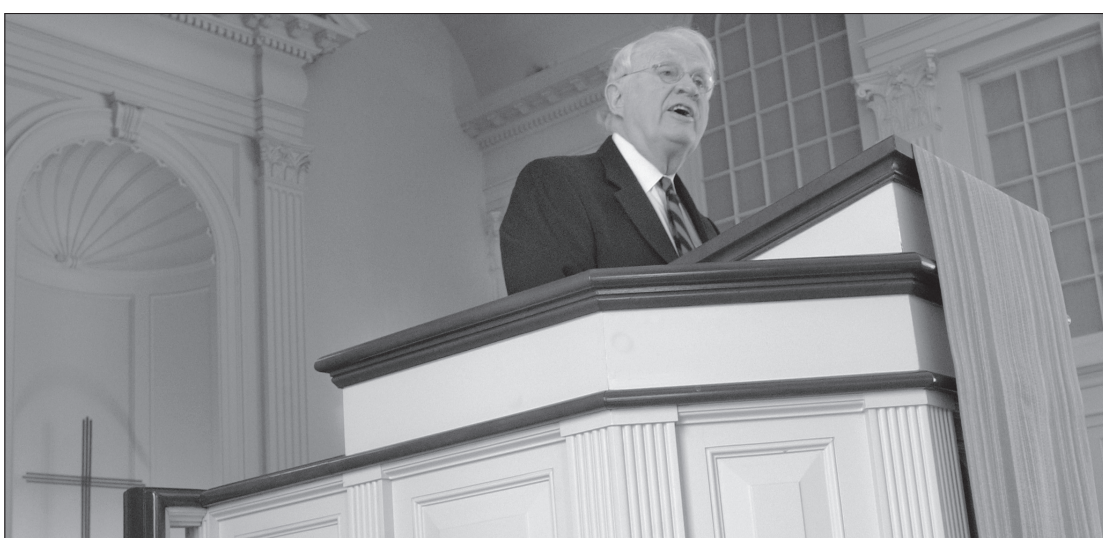
Bachmayer echoed Fort's statement.

[more on TOWNHALL, page 2](#)



Lana Hunt / Staff Reporter

Sophomore premajor Austin Uebele questions the panel during Wednesday's town hall meeting in the Brown-Lupton Student Center. Discussion topics ranged from the retention rate to racial diversity at TCU.



Emily Goodson / Photo Editor

Ron Flowers, the John F. Weatherley Emeritus Professor of Religion, addresses the crowd at a worship service Wednesday in Robert Carr Chapel celebrating religious freedom in America.

Worship service celebrates religious freedom on campus

Former professor praises Constitution

By AMY WILLEY
Staff Reporter

"The most distinguished part of the Constitution is the separation of church and state," Ron Flowers, the John F. Weatherley Emeritus Professor of Religion, said Wednesday.

Flowers was part of the first "Celebration of the Constitution" at TCU. About 20 people attended the event, which focused on

religious freedom in the First Amendment and the intent of the Constitution's founders.

Donald Jackson, professor of political science, said Congress passed a requirement that any university receiving federal funds for pro-secondary education, such as student loans, will hold a program about the Constitution on Sept. 17 or within a few days.

The service, held in Robert Carr Chapel commemorated Sept. 17, 1787, when the founders signed the Constitution.

Jackson, who coordinated

the event, said Flowers was chosen as a speaker because he is a national expert on religious freedom.

Centuries of religious persecution, Flowers said, created the need for religious protection.

The authors of the Constitution were aware of the history of persecution and resolved that it wouldn't happen in America, Flowers said.

"They avoided that result by avoiding the beginning," Flowers said.

The founders made religious [more on RELIGION, page 2](#)

Groups volunteer time, energy to assist hurricane evacuees

Nursing students, faculty provide aid to upset, injured

By ADRIENNE LANG
Staff Reporter

When Susan Weeks received a call from the American Red Cross, she knew the Harris School of Nursing could play a different kind of role in helping the thousands in the Fort Worth area displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

"I got a call saying cargo planes of patients were being flown to Fort Worth hospitals," said Weeks, MS, RN. "Red Cross asked me to get a group of nurses together for Disaster Welfare Inquiry."

Groups of one to three nursing faculty members and three to five nursing students went to area hospitals to gather information from the evacuee patients to be put into a database, so family members who were separated and searching for each other could be matched up, said Weeks, clinical facilities coordinator for the nursing school.

Weeks, who has worked with the Red Cross for several years, said the groups were headed by herself and

Lea Montgomery, MS, RN and nursing school lecturer.

"We didn't have a choice," said Dr. Kris Riddlesperger, a maternal-child nurse and lecturer in the nursing school. "It's what we do."

Due to the nurses' efforts, a man with chronic illnesses was reunited with his son in Houston a day after the inquiry started, said Dr. Dennis Cheek, professor of gerontological nursing.

Weeks said the students are not just performing community service, but they are adding to their knowledge as future nurses.

In addition to sending students to area hospitals for inquiries, the department also sent students to clinics where they performed health evaluations. Senior nursing majors Jennifer Lauderdale and Karen Collins said the work in the clinics gave them a chance to use the skills they have learned in class in a real-life situation before they graduate.

Some of the duties included setting up doctor's appointments for the patients, checking their blood pressure, making sure they had necessary medications and just paying attention to them, Collins said.

"We played patient-advocate," Lauderdale said. "We

didn't let them slip through the cracks. It's so easy to get lost in a big disaster."

Riddlesperger said the students are also learning how to communicate with different types of people. She said the students who were helping with the inquiry encountered a blind man who was partially deaf. He could not sign or speak and did not have any identification.

Collins said she had to figure out the needs of people, so she could assure them that they would be taken care of, regardless of their disabilities. To do this, Collins said she had learned to feed off of her peers and work as part of a team.

The nursing faculty and students have not just been taking the opportunity made by Hurricane Katrina to help, but many have been volunteering in their spare time as well.

Weeks taught a course at TCU at the beginning of September to train nurses to work in shelters dealing with disasters, training the Red Cross requires before letting nurses volunteer in its clinics. She said about 10 to 12 members of the faculty took the course and went to work in the shelters as soon as they could.

"We're really looking at [more on NURSE, page 2](#)