ITEC's new building causes controversy

Engineering dean looks for new department head

by Marlos Ochoa
Contributing Writer

The Industrial Technology Department "moves into the high-tech age" with a newly built facility and the appointment of a new Department Head.

On March 14, Dr. James Reeves, dean of the College of Engineering, addressed a group of about 90 students to discuss the selection of a new ITEC department head and the future of the department.

Reeves said that with a new building and new equipment, "the department is quickly moving into the high-tech age."

According to Reeves, the new building is 97,000 square feet, about the size of Madison Hall, which currently houses the College of Engineering. With a building this size, "you will find a very equitable sharing," Reeves said. This means that the ITEC students will have to share the new facility with mechanical engineering students.

Some students voiced concerns about sharing the new building. Michael Tatman, a junior majoring in ITEC, said, "We feel like the stepchildren of the Engineering Department; the building is not ours."

Students were also disturbed with the existing animosity between the engineering faculty and student body. Some said they feel "like the trash of the Engineering Department."

Reeves addressed those concerns and said he will do his best to put an end to the situation.

Other students were preoccupied with rumors about the possible phase-out of the ITEC program. Reeves assured them that "the program will not be killed nor will it be incorporated under the engineering curriculum."

Questions were also raised about students not being able to utilize the third floor of the new building. According to Reeves, the third floor will be an Internal Combustion Laboratory, but equipment for the room is not available yet. Reeves added that only $1 million allotted to buy furniture and equipment is just "not a whole lot of money." He said that about $400,000 has already been spent on furnishing the facility, and he expects the remainder of the funds to become available in May.

Reeves told the students, "We are doing the best we can, the third floor can't be utilized until new equipment for the lab arrives."

Questions about the new department head were also brought up at the meeting. With only two applicants for the position, students argued that there will be some limitations. Reeves said that right now "the department head has to come from within; we can't afford to conduct a national search, especially since enrollment in our program keeps dropping."

The two candidates for the job are Gary Amy, currently serving as temporary department head and James Comeaux, an ITEC professor.

Reeves said that he is looking for a department head who can "best accomplish the goals that I have laid out for the department." He added that he is not necessarily looking for someone with an ITEC degree. Many students frowned upon this statement.

According to Reeves, the most important goal for the department is to change its image on campus. He said that the Industrial Arts Shop was so poorly equipped that "many people actually thought the ITEC department was an auto-repair facility."

The second goal for the department, according to Reeves, is to create an Industrial Relations Advisory Committee to "support, train and offer opportunities to ITEC graduates."

Reeves said that his third goal is to recruit students throughout the state and to see the program become number one in Louisiana within two years. He added that in four years the program should be recognized at the regional and national levels.

According to Reeves, "We are facing difficult times," because the State Board of Regents have identified 11 similar technical programs in the state, about one in every school. "If they are looking to avoid duplication, we are still under a threat," Reeves explained.

He said that the new building will be visited by the Regents in the near future to see which programs remain, but he is confident that the facility is a step forward in the right direction.

Students thanked Reeves for allowing them to participate in an open discussion and for addressing the rumors about the future of the program. Reeves said that it will take a while for the department to stand on its own two feet, but "plans are heading in that direction."

---

Vermilion Honor Society would like to thank the following people for making the 1988 SGA presidential debate a success: Cliff Aucoin, Michael Flarety, Maggie Vincent, the SGA presidential candidates, the panel members and all of those who were in the audience. We hope that the debate was beneficial to those who were undecided in their choice of candidates, and we congratulate the newly chosen SGA representatives.