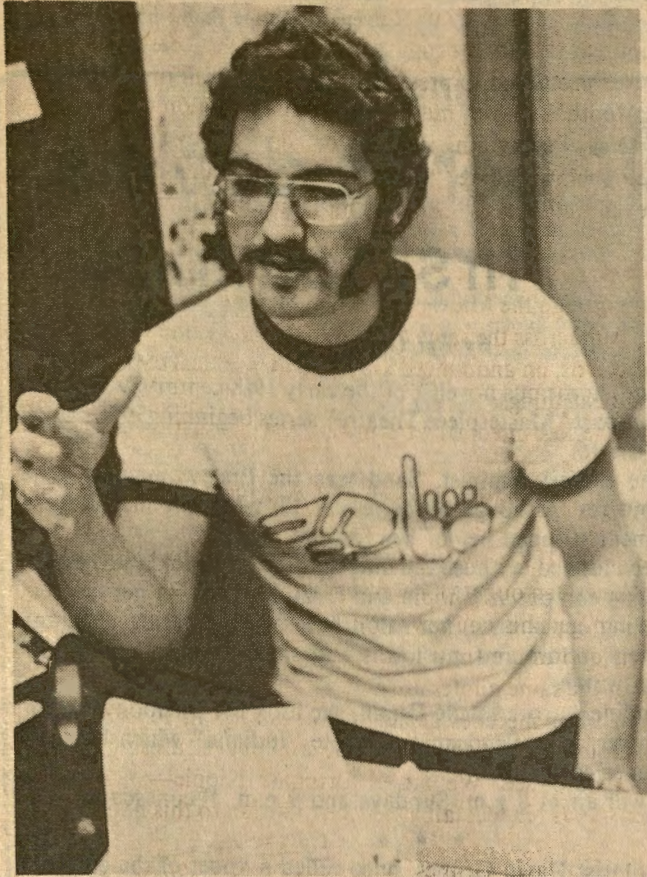


Hopes to start program

Student wants to help deaf hear



Shorthorn: Bill Janocha

KEVIN BENTCH
... interested in helping the deaf

By Lynn Rich

He sits in a chair and talks quietly about his ideas. As he does, his hands move rapidly, demonstrating the silent language of the deaf.

Kevin Bentch can hear but he wants to devote himself to working with those who can't.

"I'd like to major in deaf education," the freshman electrical engineering student said, "but they don't offer any kind of program like that here. If we can't get one started I'm going to have to transfer to another school."

Bentch is trying to generate interest in such a program and has received permission to put up posters around campus publicizing the idea. Suggestion boxes also have been set up in the Student Center.

"The first step would be to start courses for credit in beginning sign language. From that you could tell what kind of interest a broader program would have," he said.

A full major, Bentch explained, would have a wide range of sign language courses, from conversation to interpreting. Other courses might include deaf psychology and a clinic such as one at TCU where students work with deaf children.

"TCU has a good deaf education program," Bentch said. "In fact, a number of former UTA students have moved over there because of the lack of a program here.

"I think that UTA would be an excellent place for one because of its central location in the metroplex and because it has the funds and facilities."

Bentch also has talked to faculty, administrators and Student Congress representatives here and says interest among them appears to be high.

He first became interested in working with the deaf through his girl friend's deaf sister. After that he took some courses in sign language at a local junior college. He is now taking private lessons and interpreting, and works as a volunteer at the Goodrich Center for the Deaf in Fort Worth.

"It's fascinating work," he said. "You learn so much. Did you know that the deaf have their own idiom that is virtually untranslatable through speech?"

"Sign language comes in handy for other reasons sometimes. A while ago I was at a convention for the deaf and the rock music was so loud that those of us who weren't deaf had to use it to be understood."