

Continuing Education Office Handles Short Course Assignments

BY JAMES BASINGER
Special Writer

The Memorial Student Center — sometimes called the "living room of the campus" — appears at times to be the living room of everyone except the students.

On occasions the MSC is so crowded that it is nearly impossible for many to find seats in the coffee shop or sometimes seats in the lounge areas.

This crowded condition is often caused by special short courses sponsored by various departments on campus and usually held at the Student Center.

Before any student feels these courses should be held somewhere other than in his "living room," he might think about the services it renders.

If a person really considers how the MSC pays for all its student services, he might realize that buying a cup of coffee and a couple of doughnuts really doesn't go far in keeping the Center in existence.

Without revenue obtained from the short courses, the MSC could cease to function.

These courses are scheduled and organized by the Office of Continuing Education, whose director is F. W. Hensel.

How does a short course come into existence?

"A group of individuals contact a department and indicate an interest in a particular field and from this a conference will grow," Hensel said.

He added that a department that has received a request for a subject will send out feelers to see if there is enough interest to warrant a course. If there is, the course will be scheduled by the Office of Continuing Education.

A&M, being a land-grant college, is obligated to offer these kinds of courses. Also, the extension services, both in agriculture and engineering, are made up of many teachers and instructors who hold conferences in their various fields.

Some of the courses are aimed at students while others are offered to help businessmen stay up with new trends in their businesses.

Hensel estimates the short courses enroll from 15,000 to 20,000 annually. The number is difficult to calculate, he said, because of additional students and staff members who attend.

Length and size of the conference varies. Some last only two or three days, attracting few people, while others will last a week or more and register several hundred.

For example, a Naval Seminar held last summer lasted 11 days. The Pest Control Operators Conference, on the other hand, lasted only two days.

The 4-H Roundup Conference draws about 2,000 people. The Firemen's Training School attracts about 1,800 people. Other conferences are considerably smaller: Only 22 people were on hand for "Make it with Wool," and the Municipal Police School attracted only 15.

"There have been no real hard feelings in a number of years," Hensel said a longtime versus short course student conflicts.

"We have attempted to work it out so the facilities of the MSC are used during the weekdays because student groups hold their meetings at nights."

Hensel also said the facilities are left for students during weekends for dances and other activities.

Not only do the short courses offer services to many businessmen, but they also benefit the students.

"The Center couldn't exist without conferences or students," Hensel said.

"The money spent on meals and board keep things going that normally couldn't go on with only student usage."

He added that priority of the MSC facilities are reserved for students, then the former students and finally to conferences.

Although no credit courses are offered, the conferences award some recognition to those attending. Also, some industries require employees to attend refresher courses.

The Office of Continuing Education, although not having anything to do with the programs offered, is responsible for scheduling the conferences and registering those who lodge at the MSC.

Future plans for the Continuing Education call for the office to expand into a division with a new wing of the MSC to house it.



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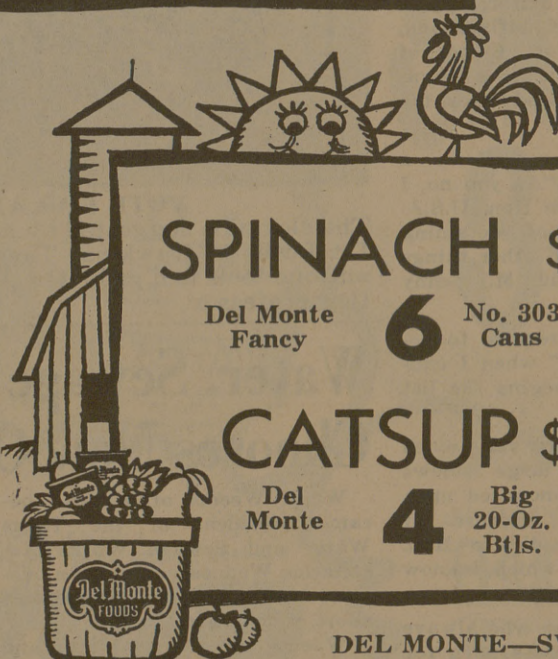
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