

Local merchants get advice from Aggies

Marketing class practices in real world

Area merchants are using a course at Texas A&M University to gain better insights into what will make their businesses more appealing to college students.

Custom Sounds, T.J.'s, Bill's Garden Center, Swensen's Ice Cream Factory, and the Bank of A&M are a few of the local businesses that have taken advantage of the marketing research offered by students taking Marketing 445.

Dr. Donald E. Stem, Jr., course instructor, recently said the course has been taught here for some time, but that he is responsible for the present format of the class.

Stem said there is no charge for the service unless the business requests very extensive research. When this happens, the merchants compensate the students for the extra work, but a student working on an average project receives no pay for his services.

"This is a typical course in

marketing research technology. The only thing unique about it is that it gets you in contact with the real world," Stem said. "This has been good experience because the local businesses have been extremely capable and more than willing to help the students."

One or more students are assigned a local merchant to work with in an effort to determine if the merchant's advertising and marketing strategies are effective. The students compile a comprehensive research survey at the completion of their study.

A typical research survey consists of an overview that outlines measurable problems in the existing marketing strategy and suggestions for improvements.

Researchers rely heavily on Texas A&M students to provide opinions and suggestions for the data that is included in the surveys. This is done by telephone surveys of the A&M student body. Each re-

searcher contacts approximately 40 students. Their phone numbers are provided by the housing office.

Lynn Harper and Susan Gatlin, senior marketing majors, are working together on a marketing research survey for Swensen's Ice Cream Factory, a new business in College Station that is to open in the late spring.

Gatlin said she is trying to determine if the people she surveys have tried Swensen's Ice Cream in other cities and if they have, how it compared to other ice cream. She is also trying to determine what form of media is most effective for their advertisements.

Harper said the course is entirely different from any that she has ever taken before.

"I'll be able to tie together a lot of the courses I have had in past semesters such as computer science, statistics and all of my marketing courses," Harper said.

"This course is a pain, but it is a good pain," said Gatlin. "You learn an appreciation for what goes into research. I would like to be a buyer for some firm after I graduate, and this research has made me see what customers want. This will help me a lot when I start to work."

Phil Callahan, owner of the local franchise for Swensen's Ice Cream Factory, said the marketing research projects are an excellent opportunity for a small business to get some valuable consultation, free.

"It is an outstanding idea for students to be in a learning experience while in school and at the same time able to apply it to a real-world situation," Callahan said.

Paul Newell, owner of Custom Sounds, said that he is in the middle of the second survey conducted for his business by the Marketing 445.

"It takes a little bit of our time but we get a lot of real good information out of it. I was surprised at how much the students could do," he said.

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Need jumper start or male escort? Ask the man with the yellow tickets

By LARRY PARKER

"Believe it or not, we do more than issue traffic tickets," said Tom Parsons, director of security and traffic at Texas A&M University.

The records for September prove that the police have done more than practice their writing skills on yellow slips of paper. They have assisted 95 vehicles with "jumper starts," escorted 190 women from dark parking areas and recovered about \$8,170 worth of stolen property.

The campus police perform these "good samaritan" deeds as well as many other tasks and responsibilities as a part of their job.

"Some students think we are out to get them," said Otis L. Luther, university police chief. Traffic complaints from some of the 20,754 vehicle owners seemed to agree with Luther's statement. Complaints have poured into the police station at an average rate of 115 per day since Sept. 12. However, 60 percent of the complaints were excused, according to police records.

Forty-six criminal incidents were investigated during the month, 16 of which involved bicycle thefts.

The main crime on campus, is bicycle theft, but in almost every case the bicycle was not locked or registered," Parsons said.

Other crimes on campus have also been misdemeanors (crimes involving \$200 or less). They involved stolen calculators and minor van-

dalism. There were 119 non-criminal (non-offensive) incidents reported such as fire alarms, reports of bent traffic signs, and location of students in emergencies.

"Most of our time and labor force is spent in security patrol," said Luther. They have conducted 945 building security checks.

And of course, the campus police look around campus for illegally parked vehicles. According to parking lot surveys, lot 50 was the most used lot on campus. The police reports stated that students were resorting to illegal parking rather than parking across Wellborn road in lots 56 and 61 (west campus). Survey reports stated that there were 750-900

empty parking spaces daily in lots 56 and 61.

In the staff parking areas, on four consecutive days there was an average of 575 spaces available daily.

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