

A&M animal science professor teaches students invaluable life skills

Students in Dr. Howard Hesby's "barbecue" class learn résumé writing, interview skills and dining etiquette.

By Courtney Walker
THE BATTALION

A Texas A&M professor is helping students learn the not-so-scientific part of animal science in his Animal Industries Studies class.

Also known as the "barbecue" class, because of the barbecue dinner each class attends, it has been taught by Dr. Howard Hesby since 1977.

The barbecue tradition began when the class met at the Quonset Huts restaurant and had a barbecue meal followed by guest speakers.

When Easterwood Airport was built, the class was moved to the Rosenthal Building, but the barbecue tradition is still going strong.

Along with the traditional barbecue meal, the course includes résumé and interview preparation, guest speakers and a seven-course meal at the Clayton Williams Alumni Center with industry representatives.

The course began after Hesby began taking animal science students on field trips to the Midwest. Hesby said the students asked improper questions, used improper manners and dressed inappropriately.

"We took them to a prime rib dinner at the Hyatt Regency hotel one year, and some students were wearing baseball caps," he said.

On the way back to A&M from trips, Hesby and other professors decided it was time to put more professionalism into

A&M's animal science program.

The class is not restricted to animal science majors, and Hesby said he encourages everyone to take the course.

"Students take 132 hours of technical classroom courses and don't have any courses to teach them how to survive in a technical job," he said.

Manda Hays, a sophomore agriculture development and engineering major, said she benefited more from Hesby's class than all of her other classes combined.

"Hesby teaches you the little things that make a difference," Hays said. "He teaches skills I will use in 40 years and not stuff I'll turn in one week and never use again."

Kimi Henard, a senior animal science major, said she heard about the class from friends who found jobs because of the skills they learned from the class.

"I'm really glad I took the class, because it gave me a better understanding of what a company wants from their employees and how to answer interview questions better," Henard said.

On the first class day, students are asked to set career goals and discuss a self-analysis and inventory.

Once students have done a self-analysis, they shoot a 90-second commercial. The commercial is used to sell the students' abilities to prospective employers.

Josh Grahmann, a junior agribusiness major, said he would take the class again because he learned valuable secrets to finding a job.

"Hesby is extremely helpful and gave us as many facets for marketing ourselves as possible," Grahmann said.

Representatives from the community are also brought in to address students on dining and etiquette during interviews and dressing for success.

Lee Ann Massengale, a senior agriculture economics major, said that without

the seminars, she would not have been fully prepared to interview for jobs.

"We (the students in the class) were told what the employers were looking for and the inside track on what they don't like," Massengale said.

Students are also expected to complete one, two and multiple page résumés.

Hesby said résumé writing problems vary from student to student.

"Some people get ready to do résumés and say they have never done anything," he said. "But I tell them you can't be a 23-year-old and have never done anything."

After the résumé process, students begin mock interviews where they sit in front of a camera and are asked pre-recorded questions.

"Dr. Hesby goes above and beyond to help, and he really wants us to succeed."

— Josh Grahmann
junior agribusiness major

While students answer questions, they are surrounded by five cameras that record the students' posture, gestures, facial expressions and any other movements.

After the interview is completed, Hesby said he watches the tapes and critiques the student.

"Dr. Hesby goes above and beyond to help, and he really wants us to succeed," Grahmann said.

The final phase is a live interview with volunteers from different industries who critique the students.

"We just want the kids to be well-prepared for the real world and be really sharp," Hesby said.

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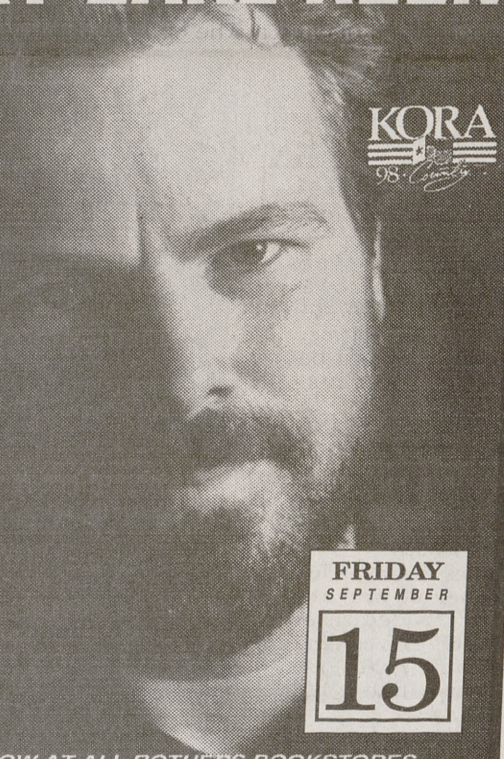
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