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EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AS APPLIED AT TEXAS A&I UNIVERSITY-CORPUS CHRISTI IN ADVERTISING AND BUSINESS APPLICATIONS

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Texas A&I University-Corpus Christi is committed to providing an innovative teaching environment. To pursue the objective of offering a meaningful and realistic learning experience for each student in the College of Business Administration, two courses are dedicated to the experiential learning concept. The purpose of each course is to provide the student with pragmatic business situations which require the use of classroom concepts in the business environment.

The Experiential Business Application course is a core course which requires all business majors to be exposed to a real world problem solving situation. Advertising Theory and Practice is an elective course available to all majors in business administration as well as students from other colleges in the university.

Texas A&I at Corpus Christi is unique in several respects. Partly because the university is only in its third year of existence, there is a more flexible and adaptable environment in which to develop course concepts while attempting to satisfy needs which exist in the student market. The student population is extremely heterogeneous and course content and concept must satisfy the variable student needs. Approximately 40% of the student body attends evening classes and almost every individual is a mature student with some work experience. A number of the day students are also mature students with work experience, however, many are similar to the more traditional college student with no experience and little maturity. Being an upper level university in which 100%

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of the students are transfer students, an additional problem is posed in that foundation. education is totally uncontrollable by the university itself.

Given this university environment, the College of Business Administration faculty were challenged to develop and teach courses useful and meaningful to students with these divergent backgrounds, which serve the needs of evening and day students, which can be translated by the student to business reality, and which will further enhance the image of the university and stimulate future student population growth.

In response to this challenge, two specific courses evolved which are dedicated to providing real world experiences for the students. The experiential learning course is supported by the entire faculty in providing actual problem situations from each discipline and by a faculty member with expertise in a given area reviewing student solutions when the course instructor requests assistance. Similarly, the advertising course is the result of efforts by the instructor to provide realistic and workable advertising problems for each student.

The objectives, content, technique, and evaluation of the experiential learning experience at Texas A&I-Corpus Christi is presented in this paper. The experience the instructors have acquired in teaching these courses have done as much to broaden their teaching capability as it has to develop "experienced" business students.