Working to Improve Faculty Support
For Collegiate Chapters of the
American Marketing Association

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Abstract

The effective use of extra-curricular activities by students can aid greatly in the educational process. American Marketing Association chapters expose students to marketing activities and individuals that classrooms fail to adequately provide. The problem facing many marketing departments that sponsor organizations like the AMA centers on getting good advisors and faculty support of the organization’s activities. Suggestions are made detailing how departments can improve their faculty support of student groups such as AMA chapters.

INTRODUCTION

Participation in extra-curricular activities can be beneficial and aid students in preparing to cope with real world endeavors and challenges. Participation in organizations such as the American Marketing Association Collegiate (AMA) program allows students an opportunity to gain first hand knowledge of their chosen field as well as gives them the opportunity to develop leadership and communication skills so vital to their career development. The benefits of such organizational participation was recognized in a recent national survey of marketing professors which showed that the great majority felt that active participation in AMA Chapter activities played an important role in the development of academic and career success (Budden, 1985).

An active and well-managed AMA chapter can facilitate and be an adjunct to the learning process. It can also be a catalyst for the development of understandings, friendships and other positive relationships between the student members and the faculty who support and participate in its activities. A well-managed and active chapter can aid in departmental recruiting of majors and faculty. Yet in too many universities, faculty participation and support of A.M.A. chapters is less than needed for optimal program and student development.

To encourage faculty support and participation, it is imperative that marketing faculty and administrators recognize the importance of AMA chapters and work to improve their situation. Such efforts will result in the ability of the chapter to contribute to both the learning process and even the quality of campus life for the students. A marketing department can do much to increase faculty involvement in the local chapter and needs to concentrate on developing its faculty’s interest in and support for the chapter. This will result in furthering both the chapter’s development and the
faculty's development by providing new outlets for faculty contributions to the department's goals. Several activities are suggested in this paper which have improved and increased faculty support of the A.M.A. and other student organizations at various universities. Most of these activities are simple to implement and do not require a large financial investment.

PLAN OF ATTACK

A concerted effort that is broad-based is necessary to maximize the benefits that an active, well-managed AMA chapter can bring to a department and university.

Socials and Initial Meetings

First, the faculty advisor can have a regular "soft drink social" for the faculty and the officers of the AMA. It was the experience at one university that such socials provided a friendly, common ground to get both faculty and students interested in the chapter's development. The department involved held the hour-long social at the department head's home located not too far from campus. Having the social at the home of the department head tended to emphasize the department head's belief that the chapter was worthy of development and support and that such support would start at the top.

The amount of faculty participation increased each semester to the point where within two years all marketing faculty were attending the socials. The social's purpose was to let the faculty and the officers meet and talk amiably about the plans of the chapter for the coming semester. During the social, the advisor without fail would eventually suggest projects and ideas involving the faculty which could help the chapter in its endeavors. This small, beginning-of-the-semester gathering has proven to be a real success and is credited with a substantial increase in faculty support at that university.

Benefits of Banquets

Second, each semester the AMA chapter should have an end of the semester banquet. Ideally, the banquet should feature a guest speaker. To encourage faculty involvement, the chapter president can visit faculty and request suggestions from them on the choice of a speaker. The chapter should strive to have exciting, powerful speakers at these banquets so as to improve both faculty and student interest and support for the chapter. The speaker at one semester's banquet was a dynamic alumnus whose real estate business had captured some 60% of the real estate market in the area and was doing more that $100 million in sales per year. That particular banquet had only one faculty member not to show up (and he was at a marketing conference in another city).

A point needs to be made about banquet seating.
This particular chapter's banquet seating allowed individuals to select their seats on a voluntary basis. As a result, the faculty tended to congregate with faculty and students sat with students. It was decided that to maximize student-faculty interaction, banquets would have faculty members' seating assigned so that each table would have both students and at least one faculty member. With a recent banquet's seating so arranged, it was apparent to both the officers and the department head that this assigned seating is paying off.

Necessity of Good Speakers

Third, at the regular meetings, the chapter should strive to have speakers which will interest and educate not only the students but the faculty. Faculty need to be notified in advance about the meetings' agendas, encouraged to attend, and reminded about the meetings and the importance of faculty attending. Business contacts of the faculty and the School's advisory board members can be asked to speak thus encouraging the faculty to attend and participate. In addition, the time and dates of the meeting need to be scheduled to minimize interference with faculty teaching and committee duties.

Administrative Support is Necessary

Fourth, the chapter needs to get the support of the administration. The department head, the dean and the higher administration should be made aware of the activities and the importance of the AMA chapter. On many campuses, the AMA is among the larger organizations. On one campus in particular, the AMA chapter is the largest non-Greek organization on campus. More and more chapters are writing and supporting their own newsletters. One chapter, besides being involved in marketing-oriented activities (writes the newsletter and sells advertising to support it, sells coupons for insertion into the bookstore's textbooks, and conducts marketing research projects for local businesses), also conducts several community service projects each year. Collecting food for the local food bank, promoting the campus blood drive to supply the local blood bank, and participating in high school days on campus are among the many activities the chapter has sponsored. Such activities reflect well on the chapter, the college of business and the university. These activities receive much favorable publicity. A smart advisor would do well to make sure copies of relevant news releases reach the departmental desk and the dean's office as well.

As a rule, administrators should always be invited to participate in the chapter's major activities. After several years of trying, one semester the President of a university attended his university's AMA banquet. This was the first time in the ten year history of that chapter that the President had
elected to attend. The officers felt it was a direct result of the many good speakers the chapters had brought to campus, the quality activities which supported the community, and the favorable attention all of this brought to the College and University. Cultivating this administrative support is important in encouraging faculty participation and support of chapter activities.

**Encourage Dual-Benefit Projects**

Fifth, the American Marketing Association as a fundraiser can encourage faculty to let them assist in either academic or consulting research and other activities that are marketing-oriented. This semester one chapter did a major phone survey for one of the professors who was working on a consulting project. The chapter earned approximately $1,000 and the experience of participating in such a survey, and the professor was able to work closely with many of the chapter’s members. Additionally, the chapter conducted a survey for the local Chamber of Commerce to determine attitudes towards a local festival that the Chamber sponsors. The Chapter earned several hundred dollars for this effort. This chapter is already seeking other projects for next semester and is actively touting its ability to conduct and complete major research projects.

**Reward the Effort**

Lastly, to encourage maximum faculty support, the administration needs to recognize the value of the American Marketing Association chapter to the school and act accordingly. Active faculty advisors will spend numerous hours tending to a seemingly endless list of minor and major problems associated with the activities and management of the chapter. A well-run, active chapter is the result of hard work and dedication. It does not happen merely by accident. The college and departmental administration should reward such effort and activity on the part of the advisor when it comes time to evaluate merit. A conscientious faculty advisor will probably not be as productive a researcher as someone who does not have a corresponding drain on his/her time and energies. Paying lip service to these activities does nothing more than breed resentment. A college may even consider giving release time for active advisors as a sign that such activities are important and appreciated. It is imperative that good advisors be rewarded. More and more, researchers are finding that student retention is related to the positive effects one gets from interpersonal relationships with both students and faculty. These effects can best be developed by working to recognize and reward dedicated, hard-working advisors.

**SUMMARY**

The existence of an American Marketing
Association chapter on a college campus can add much to both the learning and social environment. Faculty should be encouraged to participate and support the activities of the department's AMA chapter. Having soft drink socials, inviting and encouraging faculty and the administration to attend the activities of the chapter, making sure the activities are relevant and interesting, encouraging joint faculty-chapter research support, and recognizing and rewarding the valuable activities of active chapter advisors are all activities that can be easily implemented to improve faculty-chapter interaction. The American Marketing Association chapter can add much to a College of Business. It is imperative that the chapter be supported in its activities by both the faculty and administration.

Reference