



KENNESAW COLLEGE AS A LAB

T. Edward Blick Jr.
Coordinator of Student Publications

Activities outside the classroom can greatly enhance students' opportunities to learn. While we frequently think of internships and practicums as sources of such experience, we shouldn't overlook the experiences available to students in regular classes right here on the Kennesaw College campus.

In winter quarter, I taught Communications 330 — a course in basic reporting and news-writing. The textbook and lectures provided important information about newswriting, but they lacked an important dimension.

Writing exercises used in class had a certain amount of artificiality. In real life, reporters seldom have notes handed to them by someone who says, "Take this information and write a story." Reporters usually have to gather information, organize it and write the story. Thus, total reliance on in-class exercises would have prevented students from gaining that vital experience of interviewing people to obtain information.

To counteract that problem, I developed a list of areas of the campus that I felt would have enough activity to provide a news story of some sort each week. In the first class of the quarter, I gave each student a copy of the list and asked him or her to indicate preferences for areas that he or she would like to cover.

After considering those preferences, I assigned each student a beat. I explained that the assigned beat would be his or her area of coverage for the rest of the quarter. Each student was expected to turn in a story from his or her beat on Monday of each week.

This procedure, which is a standard form of

coverage on most newspapers, helped students to learn something about the life of a reporter. They had to determine which people would be the best sources for certain stories, and then had to find them and interview them.

Students also learned that a reporter's life is not always as simple as it tends to be portrayed in a textbook. They learned that some sources do not keep appointments. They learned that tape recorders sometimes malfunction. And they learned that handling people's words correctly for quotations can be difficult.

Beat coverage also served a second function. Stories written by the students were turned over to the editors of *The Sentinel* for possible use in the student newspaper. Most of them were used. As a result, many of the students in the class saw their writing in print for the first time. Thus, they also had a chance to receive feedback from readers other than the instructor.

Opportunities of this kind are used by other classes as well. For example, about a year ago, a marketing research class conducted a readership study for *The Sentinel*. The project provided practical experience in designing and carrying out research for the class, and it provided useful information for those of us involved with the newspaper.

I'm sure that other faculty members have conducted similar exercises with their classes. These two give a small sample of what might be done.

As the college grows, more people and more activities are associated with it. Many of them could provide good opportunities for students in other classes to gain similar experience to supplement the classroom instruction. Faculty members might want to consider avenues that might be available for their students. ♣