



STUDENTS REAP REWARDS BY WORKING IN THE SURVEY LAB

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"A wisely chosen illustration is almost essential to fasten the truth upon the ordinary mind." - Howard Crosby

Exciting learning opportunities for students exist at the A.L. Burruss Institute of Public Service. Thirty Kennesaw State students have participated as interviewers in surveys conducted through the institute's new Hewlett-Packard Telephone-Survey Lab.

If you are not familiar with the A.L. Burruss Institute, it was formed in 1988 to provide technical assistance to local governments and agencies within the 15-county Northwest Georgia region. It is the "public service arm" of the college. The environment, education, solid waste, transportation, ethics, aging, economic development, communications, and land-use planning are among the issues the institute has researched in the past.

Recently, the capabilities of the institute have been enhanced through an equipment grant by Hewlett-Packard and Chancellor Propst for an eight-station

survey-research lab. This new lab is fully-equipped with Hewlett-Packard computers, printers, a plotter, and telephone systems networked for computer-based survey research. In addition, the system currently uses a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) program developed by Michael Holst and Kamal Hmeidan, KSC students.

The telephone-survey lab has been busy during the past four months. Among the surveys conducted were a telephone survey of Cobb County residents' attitudes toward the recent 1 percent sales tax increase proposed for the roads. This timely survey had a direct impact on supporters' successful efforts prior to the November election and accurately predicted the margin of support for the tax. The lab recently completed a survey of voter attitudes toward growth and development in Canton and a survey of senior citizens in Cobb County for Cobb Senior Services. These surveys have a direct impact on the decisions of high-level officials in the 15-county Northwest Georgia region.

The creation of this new lab represents an opportunity for public officials to increase citizen participation in the policy-making process. But of even greater significance to KSC students are the advantages the lab offers them. The lab represents a chance for students to use state-of-the-art computerized survey

equipment. In addition, participation in the lab not only provides students with real-world experience in the formulation and implementation of surveys, but also gives students an opportunity to have direct interaction with community members about their opinions on current local issues.

Response from students has been extremely positive. Paul Rose feels strongly about the benefits he has reaped from working in the survey lab. "You get good computer experience; plus, you get an insight into the problems of the community. It made me appreciate Cobb County and how nice the people are." Susan Bowker-Webb, a recent graduate from Kennesaw State, also felt "a certain amount of personal satisfaction just from knowing that I was helping the community." Lil Giffin commented that "Writing and applying a survey will be a research tool I will be using in my psych classes and possibly my future career."

In addition to the survey lab, the institute's efforts to reach students extend to other areas of the educational experience. Examples include establishing public service internships and co-op programs, advising students about career options, and providing more than 25 faculty members with applied research opportunities, which enrich their classroom activities.