

Other campuses support cooperative ventures

By Dana Green

Student co-op programs across the country exist in varying stages from development to deterioration, according to university sources. However, a common problem hindering them is getting area businesses to sponsor or affiliate with the discount programs.

The University of Wisconsin student discount program doesn't include any affiliation with community businesses. According to Wisconsin Student Association (WSA) representative Jay Koritsinsky, the WSA student discount program exists through an underwriter's insurance agency.

"We (WSA) sponsor a student group insurance plan in conjunction with the company," Koritsinsky said. "Students are issued a WSA card automatically when they apply for the group insurance."

WSA charges four dollars to the student who purchases the card independently without buying the health insurance, according to Koritsinsky. This card enables Wisconsin students to get discounts at concerts, symposiums and other activities sponsored by the WSA.

Discontinued agreements

Koritsinsky said several years ago some area businesses offered discounts to student card holders. They since have discontinued the discount agreements. Koritsinsky said that "maybe later" the WSA would try to reenact the store discount arrangements.

"Numerous problems" caused a WSA-sponsored student discount store to fold, Koritsinsky said.

"Three to five years ago the WSA store averaged about \$500,000 worth of business annually," he said. "However, employer-employee relationships weren't very good and then a reinsurance caused some flooding that did considerable damage to the store."

Along with the WSA store, which sold packaged grocery items, students could use their cards at a WSA pharmacy.

Koritsinsky said the pharmacy is now independently operated, but still carries the WSA name.

Starting program

The University of Pittsburgh is just starting their co-op program, according to student government finance representative Larry Platt.

"The biggest problem is in staffing," Platt said. "We don't know how to maintain continuous student operation with the high degree of turnover."

"About 30 freshmen are earning college credit here in a program that enables them to do projects instead of taking conventional classes," he said. "We'd like to get them to take on the operation of the co-op program as a continuing project."

Platt said three co-op categories exist—food, bicycle and book co-ops. The bicycle co-ops would order bikes wholesale for students.

Food buying club

"The food co-op would actually be a food buying club," he said. "We'd like to get people to join, then order food in large quantities to save money, and do our own pickup."

The food co-op also would enable us to eliminate the business middleman, because we would buy our products directly from the producer, like in farmer's markets."

Platt said that a student discount program with Pittsburgh businesses "isn't quite as important here."

"We're on the fringes of the city," Platt said, "few students shop regularly in the business district because they're across town. It just isn't that appealing to the businesses."

Platt said that Georgetown University, Penn. State and Michigan University have long-standing co-op programs similar to the one being designed at Pittsburgh.

Cater to elite

Although Princeton University supplies the city businesses with a high percentage of business, "they prefer to cater

to the elite instead of the student, which is really too bad," according to a Princeton Dean of Students spokesman.

"Because of this we don't have a discount co-op with the businesses," said the spokesman. "However, the students do have an independent food co-op they organize themselves."

According to the Dean of Students source, students volunteer time to man a food co-op store. They buy natural foods from area businesses and farmers which students can buy at wholesale prices.

"It hasn't been started yet this year, but I know there are plans to reorganize it," the source said. "There isn't as much interest in it now as when it was started a few years ago."

Paid administrator

The Princeton co-op administrator is paid for his work as if he held a student aid job. The co-op is not affiliated with any student government program.

There aren't plans at Princeton to form any business co-ops but the students have formed various "agencies" from time to time, the Dean of Students source said.

"The students will get a bunch of things together occasionally and just sell them," according to the source, who added students often sell jeans, shirts and other used clothing articles.

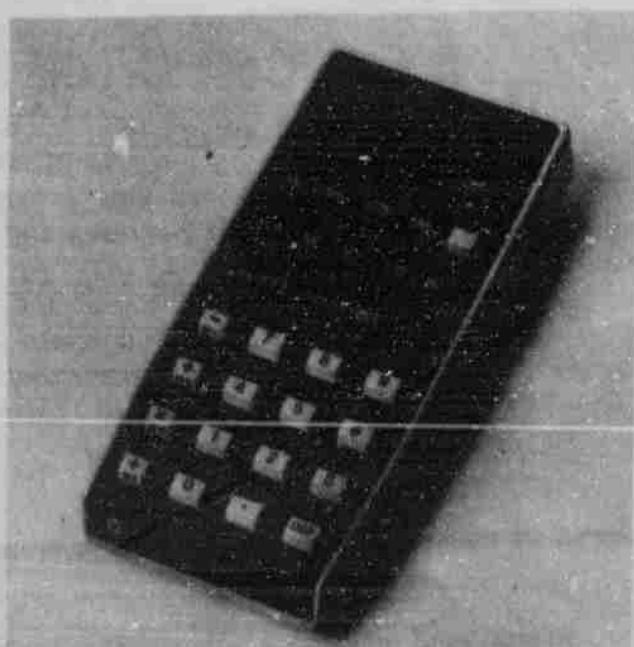
The University of Iowa doesn't have a co-op program as yet, "but we're very interested in starting one," said Steve Muncenmaier, IU Activities Board member.

"The Student Activities office does sell coupon books enabling students to get discounts from area businesses," he said. "But the only other similar program we have is our sale of homecoming buttons."

According to Muncenmaier, student government committees sell buttons at homecoming that some Iowa City bars and lounges recognize for student discounts.

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