



UNA students conduct market research for local business, hoping to boost job prospects

By The Associated Press

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FLORENCE, Ala. — Ultimately, Matthew Langston wants to work in marketing for a commodities organization.

First, he has to graduate from the University of North Alabama, but having a little practical experience doesn't hurt.

With a marketing research project for a local business, D&D Case Management, completed, the path should be a little easier.

"I gained a greater appreciation for what goes into marketing a new product or a new business," Langston said. "It's an in-depth process, that's for sure."

Giving students that little boost in experience was part of the reason Andrew Luna, director of institutional research, planning and assessment, wanted to incorporate the project into his junior- and senior-level marketing class. Luna said he hoped, too, that local businesses might get help with shaping their marketing plans as a result of the research.

"You can't teach a class like this solely out of a textbook," he said. "Students really need to know these skills before they get into the real-world environment, so, when you combine the two things, it's a win-win situation."

Luna said he started planning for the class last summer, asking for help from UNA's Office of Advancement in finding local businesses that would support the university. Luna then contacted the business owners to determine if they were interested in having students work on a marketing plan.

At the start of the fall semester, Luna compiled a list of eight businesses, from flooring company NAFCO to Weichert Realty. Students, in groups of five or six, developed marketing plans based on issues the business owners wanted to see addressed.

Jay Klos, owner of Grogan Jewelers in downtown Florence, said he wasn't sure what to expect, but he's been impressed with the results.

"We're a 97-year-old business, and everything is changing, so if we don't change, we'll be left behind," he said. "We wanted the students to find out how people had heard about us, what they thought about us, all kinds of things that would help us direct our marketing plan for next year."

Klos said he'd be happy to participate in the program in the future. Luna said he's already lining up businesses.

"We were able to get some real data out of this; we all learned from the process," Luna said. "I'll be teaching it every semester from now on."

(This report was written by Michelle Rupe Eubanks of the TimesDaily.)

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