

The games people play:

College game room draws crowds ... and criticism

By Scott Starnes
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It is debatable what campus area lures the most people. Some say the cafeteria, while others vote for the financial aid office. But the game room is a close competitor as it attracts hundreds through its open portals each day.

College students have been accused of negligence by skipping classes in favor of wiling away their hours within hearing distance of the addictive "ping-ping-plunk" of the game room machinery.

One college faculty member labeled the game room as a "teen-age tavern." Another staff member, Kent Heaton, counselor, said the College is turning into a "sleazy joint" because of the activities associated with the game room.

Located in the Community Center adjacent to the cafeteria, the game room offers a myriad of mind teasers and dexterity testers from pinball and pool to foosball. All of the "games" are coin-operated and an attendant distributes pool cues and oversees minor "policing" of the area.

Dave Simpkins, department chairperson for adult basic education/general educational development program (ABE/GED), felt that it is not the instructors concern to retrieve his or her students from the game

room during their class time, although several instructors have been making serious efforts.

One evident problem, Simpkins said, is that many students financially funded by such programs as the Comprehensive Employment Administration (CE-TA), GED and WIN, a federal work incentive program, have been skipping from mandatory classtime and retreating to the game room instead.

"My General Education Development (GED) students are expected in class from 8:30 to 11 a.m. and 12 to 2 p.m. They should not be involved with the game room during these designated hours," Simpkins said.

According to Simpkins, the GED program is federally as well as publicly funded.

"As of now, our federal budget has been used up and we are entirely dependent upon financing from local contributors interested in the College's program."

Many of these local contributors frequent the College's campus and immediately see the game room, Simpkins said. Therefore, what these people see at the game room reflects an undesirable attitude and could possibly hurt the College financially.

"I feel these people have a valid concern," Simpkins said.



Photo by Ted McKenna

Heaton agreed by indicating the game room as "not good for public relations."

Another problem arising is the visiting of non-college students in the game room. Heaton said that junior high school students as well as others have been tempted to the College's

director of student activities at the College, the game room is a big revenue maker for Associated Student Government.

"Gross annual earnings last year for the game room were approximately \$9,500 to \$10,000," Roberts said. Half of this income is deposited into

a game room. It's the student's own discretion as to whether he or she attends classes or not."

According to Roberts and Simpkins, measures are being taken to regulate the flow of students in the game room.

"Any student enrolled in my program that is attending the

'... the College is turning into a 'sleazy joint' because of the activities in the game room ...'

campus for the sole purpose of using the game room facilities.

Stan Johnson, chief of security at the College, said, "If we could keep the non-students out of the game room, we could solve a lot of immediate problems."

After counseling with various students, Heaton said that they reported a number of drug transactions going on in or around the game room.

As for drugs, Johnson said that no apparent drug problems existed except for casual usage of marijuana.

It's been said that the game room lures the high school students to enroll at the College. One college faculty member said that many high school students think the College is a leisure resort and a place to socialize because of the game room.

"In contacting various high schools in the area, they expressed unfavorable reactions to the College because of the game room," said a faculty member.

According to Jim Roberts,

the ASG revenue fund while the rest is paid to the companies who rent the pinball machines to the College.

"Two flipper machines and one race car driving machine reportedly made \$208 in one week and a half," Roberts said.

Roberts said that he has been notified that financially-aided students have been neglecting mandatory classtime and spending this time in the game room. Therefore, stricter supervision will be administered to the game room, he said.

Roberts expressed concern that the game room is a good facility and "not a haven for students to cut out of class."

The general consensus is that the game room should be regulated rather than abolished.

Heaton said he would rather see the game room strictly controlled than totally abolished. Johnson agreed, and said that the outcome of the game room should be decided by a vote of the student body.

Ellie Headrick, college student, said she "liked the idea of

game room during designated hours will be asked to leave the game room premises and their names will then be forwarded to me by game room monitors," Simpkins said.

Simpkins said that they will have to resort to police and disciplinary actions in order to control the game room. "I'm cheating the students in my classroom by constantly trying to retrieve my other students out of the game room," he said.

Evidently, similar problems are occurring at various other college game rooms throughout the state, Johnson said. Only their problems are more advanced and drastic, he added.

Heaton said solutions to the problems arising from the game room should be determined by the student body.

"If the students have any concern for the College's reputation as an academic institution, they should take some time to analyze each problem created by the game room and express their attitudes by taking some sort of action for or against it."



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