**Student Involvement in the Clubs of the Department of Agricultural Economics**

Student involvement has long been studied as a statistically significant contributor to desirable outcomes of the college student experience (Foubert & Grainger, 2006). The majority of research has focused on how involvement contributes to students’ cognitive development (Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996). It suggests that student involvement in activities outside the classroom contribute to their development in the areas of competence, management of emotions, developing mature relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Others have found that students involved in clubs or organizations score higher than did nonmembers on factors such as educational involvement, career planning, lifestyle planning, cultural participation, and academic autonomy (Cooper, Healy, & Simpson, 1994).

Based on research showing a positive correlation between personal growth and student involvement, a study was initiated in the summer of 2006 to determine students’ lack of participation in the club activities in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M University. The objectives of this study are to develop a profile of the mainstream student in the department and to identify factors limiting students’ involvement in departmental club activities.

Using a qualitative approach the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with 18 students majoring in agricultural economics to identify student attitudes and perceptions toward participation in departmental club activities. The researcher used information from those interviews to construct an instrument that was field tested with 29 students (both majors and non-majors) enrolled in Agricultural Economics 105 at Texas A&M University during summer 2006. External validity of the instrument, the generalizability of the findings based on the design of the study (Tuckman, 1999), was established by staff members from the Departments of Student Affairs and Student Activities. Staff members from these two departments had extensive experience conducting similar research with comparable populations. The researcher proposes to use the instrument to conduct an online study of the 556 students majoring in agricultural economics at Texas A&M University during fall 2006.

Quantitative analysis of participant responses will be performed to identify correlations between student lifestyles, motivations, perceptions, and their involvement in the club activities offered by the department. Data analysis will consist of descriptive statistics and associations between the variables of interest.