

Parking and Students: Making a Change

How can Parking on the University of Mount Union's

Campus Change to Increase Student Satisfaction?

Final Report

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MKT 471 and the Commuter Student Association

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Executive Summary:

To begin, our MKT 471 Marketing Research group had to decide on what problem to address. We had several great ideas, but the majority ruled to tackle an issue they felt students would be most passionate for. Our group worked with the Commuter Student Association (CSA) to conduct research for use in improving parking for students. Every summer, there is a parking committee that meets to discuss parking changes for the upcoming school year. The committee makes changes as needed, votes are made for or against proposed changes, and the parking map and regulations are posted online and given out in pamphlets before the school year begins in August.

About the Research:

The Commuter Student Association asked us to survey the student population and ask them one basic question: **What needs to be changed about student parking to make the students happier and parking easier?** Though this was a double-barreled question, our group created a survey of fifteen questions that covered both the emotional and simplicity aspects of the parking issues seen on campus. The survey was administered through Google Forms via the Internet, and in person by the team members of this group, each member being responsible for conducting 10-15 physical surveys and 15-25 Google Forms surveys to create a diverse pool of respondents. This resulted in over 150 samples that have fully completed the survey for analysis using IBM SPSS Software to give results and suggestions to the CSA.

Key Results:

- 40.1% had a purple pass, 20.4% had a red pass, 5.3% had a green pass, and 34.2% had no pass at all
- Over half of the students surveyed have gotten tickets while at the University of Mount Union. (53.29%)
- 74% of those surveyed for our marketing research project said ticket prices are too high
- 22% of students have felt unsafe while walking to their vehicles

Recommendations:

- Further research should be conducted to understand why students aren't registering their vehicles
- Patrol the lots more often that were identified as least safe on campus
- Add more lighting to the Bica-Shields and Gulling lots
- One free ticket per semester
- Further research implementing a text message alert system to alert students before they receive a ticket
- Ticket prices for a violation as a student parking on the University of Mount Union campus should equal what the city of Alliance parking tickets cost

Introduction:

When it comes to market research, trying to figure out what to ask those you wish to survey is hard, coming up with what to survey for, though, is even harder. This is why when the Commuter Student Association came to us asking for some information for parking, we were relieved and excited. We knew creating a survey for the University of Mount Union students to discuss their parking issues would be challenging for us, as we are part of that demographic we wish to survey, but we knew getting responses would not be very difficult.

The Commuter Student Association has been an organization on campus for many years, but due to lack of interest by the commuter population, it has come and gone over the years. Two years ago, though, the organization found a student willing to take on a presidential role, and since then the organization has been a major influence on campus. The CSA has been given a house for commuter students to use as a lounge between classes, they have partnered with other organizations on campus to create fun events for commuters to attend such as board game night or glow soccer on the Quad, and they have even had a hand in changing the parking for this current school year.

The president of the CSA, Nicolle Wilson, and Dean Frazier, the advisor of the CSA, have requested we survey the student population that has a vehicle registered on campus, and see what parking issues they face. We surveyed the students to see what we could do to change the parking to make the student population happier, and based on this information, made suggestions to make parking on campus easier for all who use a vehicle on campus.

The president of the CSA communicates with mostly commuter students, but she received emails from on-campus residents discussing issues they have had with parking on campus this year. Below, she has given us an overall list of complaints she had received for the 2017-2018 school year as of November, 2017.

CSA Parking Issues:

- Tickets for parking in lots after dark as a commuter
 - They stay with friends to study overnight for exams and get tickets during the night due to the commuter tags in their windows, even though they are commuters in a commuter lot

- There have been complaints in the GPAC lot of residence students parking in the commuter spots, and the faculty/staff doing the same
- Distance from commuter lot to MACC
- Parking policies for after 6pm are confusing and most students get tickets because of it.
- Lighting of walkways used to get to parking lots is scarce at night
- Lack of parking available behind HPCC, when it is the central building for the campus
 - There are only 4 commuter spots behind this building
- Abundance of spots for visitors and faculty/staff when there is a shortage of parking for residents/commuters
- Parking is limited where it needs to be
 - Commuters park fairly far away from classrooms, but close to the dorms (GPAC being the new exception)
 - On-campus residence park far from the dorms, but close to the classes

As you can see from this list, there were many factors that had played into the overall dissatisfaction of parking for University of Mount Union students. Reviewing this information, we advised the CSA allow us to research with a discovery-oriented survey to address the two specific issues targeted in the overall problem the CSA wishes to address: **(1) Determine what issues students face while parking, and (2) What changes the students suggest to increase parking satisfaction.** We created a survey to help alleviate these issues for the next school year, as the CSA (specifically Dean Frazier) has a hand in helping the parking committee that meets in the summer months change parking for the upcoming school year.

On the following pages, we describe not only the methods we used to obtain our data, but we have also detailed results from our IBM SPSS analysis. Then, based on the information and data we gathered, we also have offered recommendations based on our work that we believe highlight the not only the problem, but key issues we had discovered while conducting our surveys.

Method:

Research Design:

To begin, we chose to collect data using **exploratory research**. Then, we created a first draft of a survey to pretest with, using a sampling frame of 15 individuals, including a graduate student working with Nicolle and Dean Frazier to grow the CSA member numbers. Our survey is exploratory, as well as **primary**, because we conducted research using a **communication** method for a question that hasn't been researched before. Because our research is exploratory, forming a first draft of the parking survey was easy for us, as we had no previous survey to compare ours with. We chose to administer the pretest survey in person so we could get direct feedback straight from our survey takers the moment they had something to say, rather than beginning with Google Forms.

We found this form of pretesting to be highly effective, specifically for answering questions or clearing up some confusion in the questions as the survey takers had them, rather than sending

the survey out electronically and possibly having incorrect data given back to us. The data could have been incorrect through an electronic submission due to lack of interest, confusion, or pressure from the group to complete the survey by a certain time frame for our analysis to begin. Listed as Appendix A, we have our rough draft and the pre-test surveys attached to this document for the CSA and Dean Frazier to review if needed.

Results:

Section One: Determine what issues students face with parking.

Overall Demographics. Though we knew we were using Mount Union students as our demographic, because it was given information as a basis for all marketing research projects conducted for Professor Evans, further information is required to understand the results from our survey. An average Mount Union student can be described as a male with a purple parking pass, and a senior, based on the 152 students surveyed for our marketing research project.

Because increasing student satisfaction with parking is important to the CSA and Dean Frazier as they look towards the next school year, investigating class rank is important variable to consider. Assuming seniors have been consistently parking on campus for a longer time frame than a freshman or sophomore student, their opinions and surveys were valued more than a freshman students to us as we analyzed the results of all surveys conducted. When collecting the data, we selected students at random to complete the survey in either format provided, and we were careful to try and include a balance of class ranks and genders to make our data truly applicable to the University of Mount Union student population that drives a vehicle to campus.

SPSS Data

Once the data was collected, our group ran several crosstab analysis' to determine what relationships we could find within the information gathered. This project revolved around a non-probability sample, and that allowed us to find statistical significance still, but note that it still can not be reflected back upon the entire student population at the University of Mount Union.

Of the students who completed the survey, we found that 40.1% had a purple pass, 20.4% had a red pass, 5.3% had a green pass, and an astonishing 34.2% had no pass at all. This means about 35% of the students we had surveyed did not have their vehicle registered. This is an issue that Campus Security should have a great interest in.

The next statistic to catch our interest was the number of tickets received per gender. Though we listed male, female, and other as genders, 100% of the students who completed our survey identified as either male or female. 81 students of the 152 surveyed have received a ticket. This number is very important, as 81 of the 152 students surveyed receiving a parking ticket is 53.29% of our sample. Over half of the students surveyed have gotten tickets while at the University of Mount Union. We wanted to see which gender had received the most tickets, and we found the result to be 38 females and 43 males.

One of the most important statistics we found centered around the question about ticket prices. 74% of those surveyed for our marketing research project said they somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement we presented to them in a question, which had them rate on a scale of 1 to 5 their agreeance level with several statements. The statement for the question about parking tickets simply stated “The price of parking tickets given by Campus Security are too high.”

The last statistic we found to be most useful for the summer parking committee meetings was about safety. We asked the students in our survey if they had ever felt unsafe while walking to their cars on campus at the University of Mount Union. While we know Campus Security, as well as staff and faculty, would like this number to be incredibly close to 0%, our respondents gave us a shocking 22%. 26 females and 7 males stated they have felt unsafe while walking to their vehicles on campus, and this is an issue that will be addressed in the recommendations section of this report.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Now that the results have been presented, there were several issues we have found that can be addressed by Campus Security, as well as the University of Mount Union itself. Beginning with the first result, we recommend further research into why so many students are not registering their vehicles. Due to the strong statements about the students feeling on Campus Security and the pricing of the parking tickets being too high, we believe students are not registering their vehicles so they do not have to pay for a parking ticket. To ensure students register their vehicles, some more research should be conducted to find other reasons for the lack of registrations.

The next major issue to address is safety. 22% of students said they felt unsafe while walking to their vehicles. We suggest to lower this number and to increase student’s feelings of safety, patrolling the lots the students that took our survey found to be the last safe on campus would be a good place to start. The lots that were found to be the least safe on campus were identified as Gulling and Shields. To add to this issue, we recommend adding additional lighting to the Bica-Shields and Gulling lots to increase the student’s feeling of safety.

We asked students what they would recommend to better the issues they have had with parking on campus, and from this question we have received many unique responses. One of the most unique answers we received suggested each student should get a free ticket each semester, so there wouldn’t be a ticket given for a first offense. Many students struggle through the semester to find parking where they need it, and sometimes they park where they shouldn’t because of it. Allowing every student one free ticket per semester would give both the students a chance to mess up once without a monetary consequence, and save Campus Security the trouble of giving a ticket.

Another unique response we received involved using a text message system to send an alert to a student that they will receive a ticket if they do not move their vehicle within a specific time

frame. Much like the first suggestion of allowing students one free ticket a semester, this would give students a chance to fix their mistake before having to pay a monetary fine. Most of the campus is run on technology, and this text message alert system would bring Campus Security into the present.

The last suggestion we found to be the most important. Not one, but several students suggested that the ticket prices given by Campus Security should be equivalent to the parking ticket prices given by the city of Alliance. Research should be conducted so the students can understand why the prices of tickets given for parking on campus are so much higher than the city of Alliance's parking tickets, and if there is a way to close the gap between the two prices, it should be done.

To conclude, our recommendations were based off of our data collected from the parking surveys. We feel these recommendations will enhance the learning and safety of current and future students, and will lead to an increase in student satisfaction with parking, and change how students feel about Campus Security as a whole.

Appendix A Pretest Survey

Draft for Parking Survey:

1. Do you drive and park a motor vehicle on campus?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. What color parking pass do you have?
 - a. No don't have
 - b. Purple
 - c. Red
 - d. Green
3. On a scale of 1-5, rate your understanding of UMU's parking policies
 - a. I have no understanding of the parking policies
 - b. I have little understanding of the parking policies
 - c. I have a moderate understanding of the parking policies
 - d. I have higher than moderate understanding of the parking policies
 - e. I have a full understanding of the parking policies
4. How were you informed about UMU parking policies?
 - a. I have not been informed
 - b. Email
 - c. Campus Security
 - d. UMU Website
 - e. Residential Advisor/ CE
 - f. Other Students
 - g. Faculty
 - h. Other _____
5. Have you ever gotten a parking ticket on campus?
 - a. Yes (If yes go to question 6)
 - b. No (If no go to question 8)
6. How many parking tickets have received?
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4+ How many? _____
7. What was the reason for getting the parking ticket?
 - a. Incorrect zone/space
 - b. No valid permit displayed
 - c. 15 minute/restricted space
 - d. Other _____
8. Do you know where you can go to get information about parking policies? (Security, website)
 - a. Yes
 - a. No
9. What issues have you had with parking on campus? Select all that apply:
 - a. I can't ever find a place to park
 - b. The lots I have to park in aren't close to class

- c. The lots I have to park in aren't close to my dorm
 - d. I have been given a ticket when I parked where I should have
 - e. I got a ticket for parking in a spot I shouldn't have
 - f. Other (written response)
10. Do you think Campus Security gives too many parking tickets?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
11. What suggestions do you have for changing on campus parking?
12. Gender
- a. Male
 - b. Female
13. Class Rank
- a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
 - e. Graduate student
 - f. Other (Faculty/Staff, Alumni, Dual Enrollment)
14. Enter your e-mail for a chance to win a gift card

After the 15-20 pretest surveys were completed, we were given the following as feedback, which shaped the final draft of our parking survey:

- Some minor grammar issues were found in our questions
- Classification of parking tag colors should be a 'select all that apply' for students that have different tags for specific reasons (commuting only half a year as an example)
- Question #3 will be reworded to remove the 1-5, instead asking 'what is your understanding'
- Question #9 will have to be reworded, reword the campus security giving tickets option to target pricing of tickets, not campus security. Also change least important and most important to I completely disagree and I strongly agree.
- Remove question #5 and #6, and adding a zero to question #7
- Question #4 will become a 'select all that apply'
- Based on question #7, question #8 will give a text box per ticket to explain the reasoning for the ticket
- Question #13 should stay open-ended
- Question #12 (new, 12 is now 13) we will ask which lot they were walking to when they felt unsafe, giving them options

After making these adjustments, we sought guidance from our professor to ensure our survey was complete and ready to be administered. Once he finished reviewing the final rough draft, and making some suggestions, we were able to finalize our survey. Appendix B contains the final survey used to conduct our research.

Appendix B Final Survey

Subject for Google Forms Administration Email: Have parking issues? Take our Survey!!

Text Box:

Hello!

We are a group of Marketing Research students and we are currently researching parking on Mount Union's campus. We want your feedback, too! Please take 3-5 minutes of your time and complete the brief survey below. Your individual responses will be kept anonymous.

Once complete, you will be entered to win a FREE \$5 Applebees gift card!

Thank you!

Parking Survey:

Do you drive and park a motor vehicle on campus?

Yes

No

What color parking pass do you have?

I do not have a parking pass

Purple

Red

Green

What is your understanding of UMU's parking policies?

1 No Understanding

2

3

4

5 Full Understanding

How were you informed about UMU's parking Policies? Select all that apply.

I have not been informed

E-mail

Campus Security

UMU Website

Residential Advisor/CE

Other Students

Faculty

Other

How many parking tickets have you received while at Mount Union?

What was/were the reason(s) for getting the parking ticket? Select all that apply.

Incorrect zone/space

No valid permit displayed

15 minute/restricted space

Other

I can't ever find a place to park on campus

1 I strongly disagree with this statement

2

3

4

5 I strongly agree with this statement

The lots I have to park in aren't close to class

1 I strongly disagree with this statement

2

3

4

5 I strongly agree with this statement

The lots I have to park in aren't close to my dorm

1 I strongly disagree with this statement

2

3

4

5 I strongly agree with this statement

The prices of parking tickets given by Campus Security are too high

1 I strongly disagree with this statement

2

3

4

5 I strongly agree with this statement

What suggestions do you have for changing on-campus parking?

Your answer

What is your gender?

Female

Male

Other:

What is your class rank?

Freshman
Sophomore
Junior
Senior
Graduate student
Other (Faculty/Staff, Alumni, Dual Enrollment)

Have you ever felt unsafe while walking to your car?

Yes

No

Which lot do you feel is the least safe on campus?

Enter your e-mail for a chance to win a \$5 gift card to Applebee's!

