OWI offenders ‘serve time’ at USL

The Meridional 10/14/1983 pg 4 col 1-3

By JAN GRIFFEEY
Managing Editor

With budget cuts and the pinch on the south Louisiana economy in general, USL has along with everyone else experienced financial woes.

But a little relief has been felt as a result of the new OWI laws which went into effect on January 1, 1983.

How did the OWI laws help USL?

The new law set down prescribed penalties for the operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated violation, said Phil Martin, USL assistant financial aid director who is in charge of the OWI worker program at USL.

“It’s no longer up to the judge to decide penalties for the OWI offenders. The penalties are written into the law,” Martin said.

For the first offense, the new law requires that the defendant spend 10 days in jail or perform 32 hours of community service. Whether or not the person spends the time in jail or doing community service is up to the judge, not the defendant.

In early March, Dean Blanco and 1 (Martin) went to a meeting of district judges to offer the University as a place where the judges could assign the offenders to do their 32 hours of community service. The judges were pleased, to say the least, to have USL added to their list of community service work,” Martin said.

Martin said that in addition to USL, being a good atmosphere for offenders to work, the program also is a good service to the University in these tough times.

USL only accepts those people that are first offenders and also takes no person who has any kind of felony record, Martin said.

“At the request of the judges, we have accepted two people who were second offenders to the OWI laws, but the judges felt USL was where these people needed to be and they were properly checked beforehand,” Martin said.

USL has had about 103 persons to work on campus as a result of the law. Martin said it averaged out to be about five people per week.

“Sixty out of the 103 people that have been assigned to maintenance. The others have been assigned to one of eight other departments on campus, mostly cleaning up, doing clerical duties, making signs, etc.

“Eighty percent of the people who come here to do their community service have been males and 20 percent females.”

Martin said the offenders are closely supervised while working, making sure they are busy for the entire 32 hours.

“Thus far USL has gotten 2,907 hours of labor from the offenders that the school hasn’t had to pay for,” Martin said.

“It’s been a big help.”

USL has spent a total of $80.30 for the OWI community service program on things like copying forms, etc.

“That’s less that 69 cents per person,” Martin said.