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Texas A&M University-Commerce has pursued disciplinary action for the football players involved in the East Texan thefts that occurred across campus Thursday, Feb. 25.

“A&M-Commerce does not stand back idly when crimes like these are committed,” said Dr. Dan Jones, A&M-Commerce president. “We hold our students and staff to a high standard, and will take appropriate action to remedy the situation.”

According to the University Police Department, copies of the East Texan, the university’s student-run newspaper, were taken in a coordinated effort from every campus distribution location shortly after their distribution Thursday morning. The East Texan’s front page featured a story about the recent arrests of two A&M-Commerce football players for drug-related offenses.

Carlton Cooper, A&M-Commerce athletic director, said that while disciplinary actions have been taken, the athletes and coaches are determined to learn from the situation and move forward.

“I am very disappointed that members of our football program made an error in judgment. We are sorry that this happened, and will continue to cooperate and assist the campus administration with their investigation,” Cooper said. “We have a tremendous respect for our school newspaper, the students who produce it and freedom of speech. This situation will assist in our development both personally and professionally.”

A&M-Commerce football coach Guy Morris was quoted as saying he was “proud” of his players in a story published online by The East Texan on Monday, March 1.

Under the sub-head “Head coach advocates football team stealing newspapers,” James Bright wrote about the theft of The East Texan newspapers on Feb. 25. The next day, Feb. 26, A&M-Commerce Crime Information Officer Jason Bone interviewed Morriss, who said he advocated his players’ actions.

“I’m proud of my players for doing that,” the article quotes Morris as saying. “This was the best team building exercise we have ever done.”

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Bone also told The East Texan of an encounter with Morris in the office of Assistant Chief of the University Police Department Bryan Vaughn. According to the article, Bone asked Morriss if he had seen the most recent issue of The East Texan.

“I don’t read that crap,” Morris was quoted as saying.

Bright also wrote that Bone said he met with Athletic Director Carlton Cooper about the thefts and was told Cooper did not think the players involved could have planned the theft.

“I don’t think they are smart enough to do this on their own,” Cooper said.

The investigation by Bone ultimately implicated the majority of the football team, according to the article.

“I would say almost all of the football team would have to be involved to do this,” Bone was quoted as saying.

Bone also told the newspaer said he was able to obtain video of football players stealing the weekly paper. The video shows football players Stephen DeGrate and Dakota Burch taking multiple copies from the University Police Department office. Bone said he continued his investigation, which led him to witness reports saying football player London Hamilton was seen pulling papers from the Sam Rayburn Student Center.

None of the issues distributed outside of the university were stolen.