A new marketing campaign from Anheuser-Busch uses university colors on cans of Bud Light, which isn’t going down smoothly for Purdue officials.

The team-colored ‘Fan Cans’ feature 27 different color combinations nationwide. Locally, the cans are black with two gold stripes.

Teri Lucie Thompson, Purdue’s vice president for marketing and media, said the use of Purdue colors is infringing on Purdue’s image.

“The colors are part of what we call on our mark,” she said. “By association, it’s connecting Purdue with that promotion.”

Thompson said Anheuser-Busch should have tried to get permission before they undertook this campaign.

“Well of course we would have preferred if they tried to get in touch with the universities through the Collegiate Licensing Company, or with the university directly,” she said.

Thompson said Anheuser-Busch is using Purdue’s colors to help sell their product.

“There are two issues. One is Budweiser using our mark without our permission to market one of their products,” she said. “And the implicit association with underage drinking.”

Thompson said Purdue does not want to be associated with alcohol in this case because the University also represents underage students and other non-drinking clubs and activities.

“We don’t want to be seen as a university that contributes anything to underage drinking,” she said. “The objection is that we feel that using these marks implies that we associate with and endorse Anheuser-Busch’s product.”

Shannon Duda, general manager of Jake’s Roadhouse, said the cans don’t infringe on Purdue’s image at all.

“No, it’s colors,” she said. “You can’t say you can’t use certain colors; that’s crazy.”

Duda said the advertisements for the cans don’t mention anyone specific.

“The ads say ‘black and gold can for the black and gold fan,’” she said. “And that they’re limited edition.”

Rolando Lopez, general manager of the Vine Street Village Bottle Shop, said the ‘Fan Cans’ are filled with the same Bud Light as normal cans and cost the same amount. He said, at first, people were amused by the new color, but now it’s commonplace.
“People know what they are; it’s on our normal spot on the floor, people see it when they walk in,” he said.

Lopez said the ‘Fan Cans’ don’t encourage underage drinking.

“All the distributors have regional point of sale ads, nothing out of the ordinary,” he said. “I don’t think it encourages underage drinking, but it’s just a fun gimmick. People are going to buy what they want.”

Lopez said Village Bottle Shop does not tolerate underage drinking. In fact, he said he doesn’t even like it when young-looking people hang out around the store.

He said the cans do not trespass on Purdue’s image.

“Not at all. Purdue didn’t say anything when Maker’s Mark came out with the black and gold dipped bottles,” he said. “And that’s 90 proof whiskey.”

Lopez clarified that if you drank a whole bottle of whiskey, it would hurt your chances of survival “more than a couple beers (would).”

Lopez said whatever problems the University has with the campaign, all parties should collaborate rather than exchange criticism.

“Pull together as a team,” he said. “Not just pick on and blame Anheuser-Busch.”