

7. There is a need to consider new approaches to teaching agriculture to our students. The National Agriculture and National Resources Curriculum Project initiated in 1981 has had as its primary goal strengthening education programs in renewable natural resources and agriculture which are offered by U.S. colleges and universities. The national project's first activity was a needs assessment. The assessment identified the need to incorporate within the curriculum a course(s) on food and agricultural systems. The systems approach to food and agricultural problems uses different styles of learning and problem solving. It attempts to bring together concepts and methodologies from philosophy, cognitive psychology, experiential or problem-based learning and a variety of approaches within the so-called "systems movement."

Courses developed in support of this approach are based on the premise that individuals can change their learning styles in ways which can make them much more effective as improvers of complex problem situations. The course and curriculum materials have been presented to faculty and administrative participants at three workshops in 1986 with two additional workshops scheduled for 1987. Course and curriculum materials are currently being developed in a second area on "Ethical Aspects of Food, Agriculture

and Natural Resource Policy." Workshops for this course are scheduled with the first one being held in Lexington, Kentucky in June, 1987.

Conclusion

The five-year plan for the food and agricultural sciences by the Joint Council on Food and Agricultural Sciences states as one of its goals is to "strengthen higher education degree programs in the food and agricultural sciences in order to graduate professionals at the forefront of knowledge and technology." To meet this goal, a major objective is to stimulate colleges and universities to pursue curricular revisions and development. Therefore, the challenge for agriculture faculty of today is to continue to modify curricula in order to provide the very best education for students to meet our society's agricultural employment needs now and in the future.

References

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ELDERHOSTEL PROGRAMS

A Case Study of a Nontraditional Way to Teach a Course to the Nonagricultural Public

A.J. Pescatore and
J.M. Harter-Dennis

Introduction

The American population is uninformed about agriculture. Mawby (1984) indicated that this ignorance is rooted in the social changes that have taken place in the United States. Less than three percent of the population lives on farms and 90 percent of the population have been nonagricultural for 30 years.

Even though the nonagricultural public lack a technical knowledge of agriculture, they are becoming increasingly concerned about agricultural policy and other agriculturally related topics such as nutrition, animal welfare and environmental pollution. The American public obtains what little information it has on agriculture from the popular press or from various activist groups that exist today. Numerous authors have expressed concern over this lack of reliable information. Black (1972) stated that agricultural

scientists have an obligation to inform the public about their specialties. Mawby (1984) reiterated this statement by calling for the land grant universities to take the lead in ending the ignorance about farming. However, the traditional roles of teaching, research and extension at land grant universities are not enough to reach the nonagricultural population. Nontraditional programs need to be developed to fill this void.

Elderhostel programs provide an excellent non-traditional vehicle for educating and informing the nonagricultural public on agriculture production. Elderhostel is a network of over 700 colleges and universities throughout the world which offer special low cost, short term, residential academic programs for older adults. These programs are coordinated through Elderhostel Inc., a nonprofit organization which is responsible for coordinating the network of available programs, publishing catalogs and registering participants.

The participants in Elderhostel must be 60 years of age or older. However, younger people can attend if accompanied by an eligible member. A study of 900 participants of Elderhostel programs at 31 colleges in New England indicated that the typical Elderhostel participant was 68 years of age, retired, and had above

Pescatore is assistant extension professor, Department of Animal Science, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40540. Harter-Dennis is head of the Department of Poultry Technology and Management, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Princess Anne, MD 21853-1299.

average income when compared to other retirees (Brady, 1983). Of these participants, sixty-five percent were women and ninety percent of the participants had some type of post-secondary education. The education of the participants was strongly rooted in the humanities.

A typical Elderhostel program lasts for one week, with most programs beginning on Sunday evening and finishing on a Saturday morning. The host institution provides accommodations and meals for the participants during this week. In addition to food and lodging, the university provides educational courses. The participants are guaranteed three courses per week. Traditionally, the education courses of Elderhostel programs have dealt with the humanities and social sciences with very few programs on agriculture. The need to offer a variety of courses gave rise to the opportunity to offer a poultry production course through the Elderhostel program.

Program Specifics

The poultry production course was conducted as one of the three courses during the Elderhostel program. The objectives of the course were 1) to provide accurate information on poultry production, 2) to promote the local poultry industry, and 3) to provide consumer information on poultry products.

To provide accurate information on poultry production the course included sessions on broiler production and commercial egg production. The broiler sessions described all the facets of broiler production from the hatchery to the processing plant. Included in this portion of the course was a presentation on the history of the development of the broiler industry. The sessions on commercial egg production included a discussion of the production and marketing of eggs and a comparison of the structure of the commercial egg industry to the broiler industry.

The need for accurate information on poultry production was evident by the many misconceptions which the participants expressed during the course. These misconceptions ranged from the harmless type, such as, the need for the presence of a rooster for egg production, to the more serious type, such as the use of hormones and growth promoters in broiler production. These types of misconceptions and misinformation can adversely affect consumer acceptance and opinions of poultry products and production.

The second objective of this course was to promote the local poultry industry. The majority of the course participants lived within the marketing areas of the local poultry industry and had previously purchased poultry products produced in the area. This relationship was beneficial in stimulating the participants' interest in the local poultry industry. A representative of the local poultry trade organization was invited to address the participants and to explain the purpose and function of the organization. A discussion of the organization's lobbying activities were included in this session. The concerns of the poultry industry were expressed and rationale behind the in-

dustry's opinions were explained. The participants were very receptive to the industry's viewpoints and appreciated this type of information. The end of this session included a promotion of the organization's local festival and cooking contest.

The third objective was to provide consumer information on poultry products. The consumer grades of poultry and eggs were explained as to their meaning and purpose. In addition the nutritional content of poultry products were discussed. This was a very popular subject with the Elderhostel participants because they were very diet conscious and were very interested in learning about the nutritional value of the food they ate. The audience was concerned about dietary cholesterol. Therefore this topic was addressed in this section. The final area addressed in the consumer information session was food preparation and recipes. Food preparation tips and recipes were shared with the participants. The participants were particularly interested in recipes for one or two people. Ample supplies of poultry and egg recipes were provided to the participants.

The poultry production program has been offered with or without field trips. The use of field trips to processing plants, farms or hatcheries has enhanced the Elderhostel experience. In scheduling field trips, it was essential that appropriate facilities were chosen. The safety of the participants was of the upmost concern due to the age factor and the mobility of the participants. The facilities were well managed and clean and presented a positive image of agriculture. The field trips have a lasting impression on the participants. To make this positive impression the facilities must be of outstanding quality.

Summary

The incorporation of a poultry production course into the Elderhostel program has been successful in meeting its objectives of providing accurate information on poultry production and promoting the poultry industry and its products. The success of the poultry production course is an indicator that the general population is interested in learning about agriculture. The misconceptions and the participants' lack of knowledge about agriculture are indication of the need for providing information to the general population. The Elderhostel program is one example of a nontraditional program that can be used to educate the nonagriculture public. Additional agriculture disciplines need to become involved in Elderhostel programs or other nontraditional programs in order to promote agriculture and to educate the nonagricultural public on the concerns and facts about U.S. agricultural production.

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