



The Off-Campus Bachelor of Science in Professional Agriculture Degree Program: A Final Alumni Evaluation

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to conduct a final program evaluation of the Bachelor of Science in Professional Agriculture Degree Program from the perspective of recent alumni. The typical graduate of the Bachelor of Science in Professional Agriculture degree program was male (54%), 46 years old, and took 60 months to complete the program. Most (87%) graduates had completed the program within six years. Graduates' highest-ranked factor for enrolling in the program was pursuing a degree followed by career advancement. Graduates were asked what specific aspects of the program that they liked best. The most frequently (65%, n = 15) cited strengths had to do with flexibility and convenience. The most significant obstacle faced by graduates was the limited number of course offerings, which was also the most frequently listed weakness of the program. It is recommended that persons responsible for distance education programs continue to pursue strategies (e.g. sharing course revenue with departments and faculty, sharing courses with other universities) that will ensure sufficient numbers and variety of courses.

Experiential Learning through Industry Interaction in a Large Lecture Agribusiness Course

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Abstract

Budget pressures in many colleges of agriculture are resulting in larger class sizes. Large lecture classes often come with a sacrifice of individual interaction between instructor and learners. This article presents an innovative approach for incorporating industry interaction into a large agribusiness class. A project called "Ready, Set, Sell!" provides a structured interaction in which students work with an individual industry coach with support from instructors. At the conclusion of the semester, students and industry representatives collaborate in a role play. The event results in positive outcomes for learners, companies and instructors. Suggestions for teachers who wish to

utilize a similar approach include ways to develop industry resources and considerations for monitoring student experiences.

Virtual Education Center for Biorenewable Resources: Humanizing Distance Education

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Abstract

Despite the obstacles to traditional distance education courses, distance education and social learning theorists suggest effective distance education courses can be developed. For this study, we designed a new distance education course model and attempted to 1) Test the effectiveness of the virtual education center model, understood through the lens of social learning and distance education theories; 2) Discuss potential improvements to the model; and 3) Build upon distance education and social learning theories. To achieve these goals, distance education courses were offered using the new model. Participating faculty and graduate assistants responded to a survey asking about their experiences with the model. Undergraduate learning was assessed by examining students' quiz grades, the number of times they attempted quizzes and their ratings and comments for each class period. Students demonstrated learning regardless of whether lectures were live or recorded. Faculty members and graduate assistants learned about biorenewable resources and offering courses through distance education; they also made suggestions to improve future distance education courses. The distance education model used in this study is an effective means of educating students, teaching assistants, and faculty members. Implications for distance education theory and distance education efforts are discussed.

An Exploration of College of Agriculture Ambassador Programs

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Abstract

Through this grounded theory case study, researchers sought to explore the structure and organization of College of Agriculture ambassador programs. The population consisted of all four-year



public universities with an identifiable College of Agriculture ambassador program. A total of 31 ambassador programs and 74 participants were included in the final sample. The study revealed the common components of an ambassador program as leadership development, promotional activities, relationship building, student benefits and standardized college presentations. Participants reported gains in leadership skills, academic knowledge and self-confidence in the many events offered through the program. A structured retreat and continuous training were important leadership development components. Being a knowledgeable expert was a major responsibility as ambassadors were considered the “face” of the college, particularly in recruitment. There were many incentives reported that made involvement worthwhile, including networking with key people. It was hoped that ambassador programs can utilize results to improve organizational functions and overall student leadership.

When Students Design Learning Landscapes: Designing for Experiential Learning through Experiential Learning

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Abstract

Learning landscapes such as teaching arboretums and demonstration gardens are effective learning sites for teaching and extension activities. Landscape design students in environmental horticulture recently participated in the planning and design of a demonstration landscape on the University of Florida campus. The class assignment, which is grounded in experiential learning theory, helped students understand the basics of experiential learning and the application of it to the design of learning landscapes. This article presents the framework for developing and designing learning landscapes by linking the experiential learning process to the landscape design process and to key design features of learning landscapes. Key questions are also provided for instructors and program directors that are considering designing and implementing a learning landscape as a class project or for their program. In this case study students worked with campus administration, faculty committees, facilities and planning and campus extension programs to gather information and ideas to create a design that reflected the university needs and the educational goals of extension. The students

demonstrated their understanding of experiential learning and the experiential learning/design process link by applying the concept and creating a practical, effective and visually pleasing demonstration landscape.

An Exploratory Study of Computer-Based Instruction Utilizing iFARM Modules in a College Introductory Agronomy Course

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe an educational agronomy curriculum developed for an introductory crop production course at a land-grant university. The iFARM (Interactive Fundamental Agricultural Resource Modules) modules were created to display a similar teaching platform for an introductory agronomy course, which is offered in both the Fall and Spring semesters. The Spring course is often limited to inside labs due to inclement weather. The iFARM modules were a set of 13 agronomy-related modules developed to provide educators an alternative form of instruction to enhance students' experiences. Five semesters of 226 individuals consisting of primarily freshman or sophomore males from the College of Agriculture completed a questionnaire at the end of the course. Of the 226 students 79% reported the modules were useful for their learning; while 21% thought that the modules did not contribute to their learning in the course. When comparing students' perceptions of the learning experiences using post-test scores for the Fall and Spring semesters average post-test scores, there was a noticeable difference which could be attributed to the modifications in instruction from the Fall semester to the Spring semester ($d = 0.83$, large effect size). The study concluded that students experienced an overall positive learning experience while using the iFARM modules and the modules were somewhat effective in teaching the participants new material.



Liberty Hyde Bailey: Agricultural Educator and Philosopher

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Abstract

Liberty Hyde Bailey was a pioneer in American agriculture. Bailey studied agriculture at Michigan Agricultural College. He returned to MAC as chair of the new department of horticulture. He moved to Cornell University where he advanced to become Dean of the College of Agriculture. Bailey was instrumental in the development of horticultural science in America, and is considered the “Father of American Horticulture.” He was a prolific writer of books related to horticulture, agriculture, nature and environmental philosophy. Bailey pioneered the use of nature study in schools to encourage youth to investigate nature and their environment. As rural life was facing severe challenges at the turn of the 20th century, President Roosevelt called on Bailey to chair his Country Life Commission. The commission made numerous recommendations on ways to improve rural life, agricultural production and standards of living in the early 1900s America. Liberty Hyde Bailey was a monumental figure in the development of modern horticulture, agricultural education, nature study and rural life in America. His writings should be required reading for anyone interested in improving their knowledge of horticulture, sustainable agriculture and environmental philosophy.

Crisis Communication Needs Assessment: A Delphi Study to Enhance Instruction for Agricultural Communicators and Other Stakeholders

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Abstract

Agricultural communicators and industry stakeholders need to develop, prepare and implement crisis communication plans to help assure the sustainability of the agricultural industry. This study sought to determine competencies, traits, skills and tools

needed by agriculture crisis communication professionals who manage public communication during times of turmoil. The researchers used a five-round Delphi to identify crisis communicator needs and the extent to which the identified competencies, traits, skills and tools exist in and with industry professionals. Eight major crisis communication need areas were identified and verified in the first two Delphi rounds: (a) areas of experience; (b) communication, media and technical skills; (c) contingency plans and preparedness; (d) learning/training needs and opportunities; (e) media and technical skills; (f) networking opportunities; (g) personal traits; and (h) supplies and tools. Round three employed a five-point Likert-type scale to rank the eight identified need areas. Eleven independent items from the eight need areas for crisis communicators were noted with 100% acceptance for being highly important ($M = 5$, $SD = 0$) competencies, traits, skills and tools. There was no single crisis communication competency, trait, skill and/or tool where 100% of the participants ranked themselves as expert. Final rounds created a succinct, yet comprehensive and validated list of competencies, traits, skills and tools needed to train crisis communicators. Strategies and recommendations for improving crisis communications education and training are noted.

A Case Study of the Search Phase of College Choice as Experienced Prospective Students Visiting a Midwest College of Agriculture

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Abstract

Each year higher education institutions seek to recruit and attract high school graduates to their institutions. Millions of high school seniors each year are in the midst of the college choice process, attempting to determine which institution is “right” for them. This study explored college choice factors important to high school seniors in the search phase of the college choice process. To carry out this study purposeful sampling was used to select 11 high school seniors participating in individually scheduled campus visits. An interview process was used to investigate what college choice factors were important to them when choosing a university/college. Student responses were ultimately categorized into six areas: interest in a specific



major/program area, reputation, ideal distance from home, family interaction with institution, factors related to paying for college and campus environment.

The Effects of an Agricultural Communications Workshop on Self-Efficacy and Career Interest: A Comparison between Agriculture and Non-Agriculture Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the effects of a one-week workshop on urban agriculture and non-agriculture students' self-efficacy and career interest related to agricultural communications. Non-agriculture students experienced increases in self-efficacy for agricultural communications tasks, self-efficacy toward overcoming obstacles for pursuing a degree in agricultural communications and interest in agricultural communications careers. Agriculture students decreased in all three constructs. The differences in the changes between agriculture students and non-agriculture students were statistically significant for both self-efficacy constructs but not for career interest. Based on the results, similar programs should focus efforts on non-agriculture students to expand the recruitment base for colleges of agriculture. Efforts should continue to increase urban agriculture programs to provide more long-term exposure to career opportunities in agriculture and natural resources.

Engaging Students in Service Learning Through Collaboration with Extension: A Recipe for Success with Community Partners

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Abstract

Service learning (SL) is a well-recognized teaching approach that integrates meaningful community service with classroom learning. Plate It Up! Kentucky Proud is a successful SL activity that connects student and faculty expertise with Family &

Consumer Science (FCS) Extension agent programming. Students develop and test quality, nutritionally-sound, recipes using locally grown fruits and vegetables. Student interest in the project and knowledge of FCS Extension were significantly enhanced during the course of the semester. As well, 99% of students would recommend this project to a peer. On a scale of 1-7 (7=incredibly important), students rank the importance of real-life applications in coursework as 6.31 ± 0.97 ; 35% of students would take a section of a course just because it incorporates such applications. Students developed their nutrition knowledge, team building skills and communication skills through the project. Agents also positively reflected on this collaboration with 100% of surveyed agents recommending the project to their colleagues. On a scale of 1-7 (7=incredibly interested), agents ranked their overall interest as 6.40 ± 0.52 . This successful collaboration serves as an example of students, faculty and administrators engaging with well-established community partners to have a significant impact on community health and student learning.

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