

50+/- Years ago (Volume V, No 2, 1961)

In their article on the “Role of the Agricultural Research in NACTA Colleges” Burton and DeVau discussed the value of undergraduate research. “One of the most important responsibilities of the teacher is to help students clarify their values and to teach them to think critically more effectively. A technique which may be used to accomplish this responsibility, particularly with the more gifted student, is the utilization of student research projects. One purpose of student research is to provide an opportunity for the able student to achieve a greater depth in learning than possible in an ordinary classroom situation. Providing an opportunity for students to achieve a greater depth of learning is vital in teaching them to think critically and developing versatile minds capable of dealing with the social, economic, and political problems of our era.”

It's amazing how similar the view is today as we encourage undergraduate research, critical thinking, and how to deal with “the social and political problems of the era.”

30 Years Ago (Volume XXIV, No. 4)

In the **Current Reflections** section of the December issue of the NACTA Journal in 1980 Dr. Neil Harl from Iowa State wrote an article titled “Toward Excellence in teaching.” An excerpt about the role of the university states, “Maintaining a sense of perspective as to the function of the university that are vital to the continued uniqueness in terms of contribution to the human family should be an important criterion in the resource allocation process. For example, other institutions may be able to carry out part of the research function, possibly with unrivaled intensity and singleness of purpose. Others may be in a position to undertake public service activity, perhaps with greater efficiencies than could be attained by a university. And this is not to say that research or public service are unworthy or inappropriate adjuncts of a great university. Their value to society is not seriously questioned. Rather, the point is that the one function that is central to the mission of the university is the renewal of civilization by developing the potential of creative minds capable of critical and independent thought, with the ability to communicate effectively. This function has been the unique responsibility of higher education. This is not to say that learning, development of minds, creative thought, and detached criticism cannot take place elsewhere. They can and do but the university

more than any other institution provides an environment for developing in its students creativity and the facility for critical thought—.” (Editor's note: Harl's article is the featured reprint in this issue of the NACTA Journal.)

Food for thought as we compete for funds in difficult economic times, and need to explain the role and value of the residential university and its value to society.

20 Years Ago (Volume XXXIV, No. 4)

Dr. Dan Eversole contributed an article published under the **Communication Skills** section of the December 1990 NACTA Journal entitled, “Video Provides Essential feedback for Course in Livestock Judging.” His ideas about the use of the new technology, the video camera, and traditional training in livestock judging reasons follows, “My philosophy in training livestock judging students is to develop their ability to think, reason, and communicate with others. Because of the diverse background among students, the basic fundamentals and skills of livestock evaluation and selection are established first in the teaching process. Once these fundamentals are established in the minds of my students, I proceed in the expansion of their livestock terminology and begin developing their written and oral communication skills in livestock judging....The inability of college graduates to communicate effectively is recognized by educators and employers as a primary factor that hinders job performance. It has been my experience that livestock judging students are provided opportunities to expand their critical decision- making and communication skills which are necessary for job survival. One educational technique that I found to be effective in developing advanced interpersonal skills among livestock judging students is the use of video. Videotaping oral reason presentations is a unique learning experience that allows graphic feedback and self-evaluation. Students are able to critique their style of delivery and witness any mannerisms such as eye contact, head bobbing, or poor enunciation which is distracting. Video is an excellent instructional medium to illustrate the importance of voice inflection and the persuasiveness of oral reason delivery.”

This article illustrates a specific experiential learning experience that Harl alluded to in his article published 10 years before (above).

10 Years Ago (Volume 44, No. 4)

From **Teaching Tips** in the December 2000 NACTA Journal, Lynne Hamilton, former Regional Director for the West suggests, “The most important day of class is the first one. That day you have a golden opportunity to set the tone of the class, and to get your students excited about learning. In addition to going over the syllabus, text, and course objectives, it is well worth the time to allow both you and the students to get to know each other a bit. I ask students to pair up with the person across the aisle from them and give them a short list of questions to

ask each other: typically their name, hometown major, year in school, hobbies, as well as a “fun” question, like what they did over quarter break. They talk about five minutes. Afterwards I ask each pair to introduce each other. This helps in several ways. The students on the first day now know at least one person in class and feel more comfortable.”

This short tip rounds out the theme of communication and student development.



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