

## 50 Years Ago (Volume V, No.2) 1961

In his President's Message, John T. Carter wrote: "If we as teachers are to grow, develop, and become more proficient in our respective fields of endeavor – if our departments and institutions are to rise in stature, the burden of responsibility in accomplishing such is placed upon us as individuals. The purposes for which NACTA was born and for which it exists have been stated; and many dedicated educators have given liberally of their time and experience in bringing it along during these early years. What has been your association? As in other organizations, members will receive in proportion to their giving and that those who feel their "receiving" has been rather skimpy, will find, upon self-analysis, that their "giving" was of the same caliber."

*This message is still valid today as we strive to increase our endowment, recruit members, serve NACTA, and reward fellow educators.*

## 30 Years Ago (Volume XXV, No.1) 1981

Eugene Ross from New Mexico State University published an article: *What Characterizes a Good Teacher?* The characteristics students mentioned most frequently were: "Presents well organized notes and lecture," "Answers your questions and does not embarrass you," "Is interested in teaching," "Can relate to the student," "Has the ability to get the information across," "Gives clear explanations," "Speaks clearly," "Helps students when asked, and "Personally knows students' names".....on the personal side, students mentioned: "Is concerned about students," "Is friendly, talks to you in and out of class," "Helps you when you need it," "Shows respect for students," "Is honest with students," "Has patience," "Enjoys teaching," and "Tells students where they are according to their grades." Characteristics for a good advisor were: "Helps pick out classes," "Helps you meet your requirements," "Helps you with problems (personal and academic)," "Is understanding," "Knows students personally," and "Takes time to visit with you."

*Food for thought, 30 years later. I don't think students have really changed all that much.*

## 20 Years Ago (Vol. XXXV No.1) 1991

"What Skills Do Undergraduates Need?" That was a title of an article written by Andrew Barkley

from Kansas State University 20 years ago. He reported in his summary: "That over 97% of the responding alumni of the College of Agriculture at KSU found communication skills to be important in their current positions....the ability to deal with others may be difficult to deal effectively with others may be difficult to teach in the classroom and may be most easily learned through extracurricular activities and interaction with other students. However teacher influence can have an impact on student development within the classroom environment by providing a positive role model. Computer skills appeared to be important, but less so than communication and people skills. This result was encouraging from the standpoint that the workplace is not totally depersonalized for the majority of agricultural graduates."

*Communication and people skills still top most of the "want lists" for our employers. Concern that we are depersonalizing the work place was a concern then.*

## 10 Years Ago (Vol. 44 No.1) 2001

Bryan Garton et al. published a paper in the March 2001 Journal: "Factors Associated with the Academic Performance and retention of College of Agriculture Students." The concluded that learners preferring a field independent (students that view concepts more analytically, finding it easier to solve problems, and favor learning that requires individual effort) learning style exhibited greater academic performance, measured by GPA, than their field-dependent (students who tend to perceive globally, are more attuned to their social environment, learn better when concepts are humanized) peers during their first year of college. However a higher percentage of field-independent learners did not continue in college past their first year of enrollment. The question remains: Why did field-independent learners have greater success yet have a tendency to discontinue their enrollment in college? The best predictor of academic performance during the first year of college was high school core GPA and ACT score. Field-independent learners tend to favor careers in areas such as agriculture. Field-dependent learners outperform the field-independent learners in courses commonly referred to as "general education," which largely comprise the course load in which freshmen and sophomore students frequently enroll. During the first two years of college students

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in colleges of agriculture are typically exposed to more non-agricultural curricula than agricultural class work. As a result, courses required for a specific major study are often limited to the last two years of a student's academic career. Perhaps a more uniform mix of course offerings—or the postponement of selected general education courses to later years—would facilitate increased retention of field-independent learners.”

*With all the concern about enrollment and retention in our colleges, this article should be revisited and used as a reference point for addressing curriculum development.*

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