

# Academic Interest in Competitive Undergraduate "Professional" Paper Presentations

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*Survey data collected from Animal Science department heads, students and faculty of Land Grant Universities comprising the Southern Section of the American Society of Animal Science (ASAS) were used to determine level of interest in a proposed undergraduate paper competition to be held at the annual Southern Section ASAS meeting. Results indicate that support for the competition is widespread but opinions on presentation criteria are diverse.*

### Introduction

Recent surveys of graduates of undergraduate programs in agriculture indicate the need to emphasize oral communication (Barkley, 1991) and public speaking (Riesenberg, 1988). A possible place for students to experience speaking in public, as well as exchanging scientific information, is at professional organizations' undergraduate paper competitions where students give oral presentations. Several organizations currently have undergraduate paper competitions, including the Southern Region of the American Society for Horticultural Science, the Midwestern Section of ASAS, Southern Section of the Institute of Food Science and Technology and the Southern Section of the American Dairy Science Association.

The Officers of the Southern Section of ASAS raised the question of whether they should sponsor an undergraduate paper competition at their annual meeting. They requested that one of the authors (Friend), who was chair of the Teaching Committee of the Southern Section ASAS, determine the amount of interest for such a project. In order to determine the level of interest for such a contest, heads of Departments of Animal Science, students at three universities within the Southern Section, and faculty members attending the Teaching Session at the 1991 Annual Meeting of Southern Section ASAS were polled.

### Survey of Department Heads

A questionnaire was developed to poll, via telephone, the heads of Departments of Animal Science at thirteen universities located in the Southern Section. Departments surveyed were located at Virginia Tech, University of Florida, Auburn University, North Carolina State, Oklahoma State University, Texas A&M University, University of Tennessee, University of Arkansas, Clemson University, University of Kentucky, Mississippi State University, Louisiana State University and Texas Tech University.

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Multiple choice answers were provided after each question to limit the range of responses. Respondents were afforded the opportunity at the end of the survey to make additional comments or suggestions. All thirteen department heads chose to respond personally to the questionnaire. The questionnaire and responses are given in the appendix.

Ten of the thirteen respondents thought ASAS should sponsor an undergraduate student paper competition at its annual meeting. Those who responded negatively elaborated that such an endeavor would detract from the graduate student competition; they were then eliminated from further questioning.

Seven of the ten remaining department heads favored holding the competition as a separate block during the meeting. Three department heads expressed concern that the competition might interfere with the Academic Quadrathlon Competition, which is held the Sunday before the annual meeting. One department head felt that few faculty members would attend oral presentations given by undergraduates.

There was much discussion on the question of whether the presentations should be based on data-oriented research or literature review. Five of the department heads mentioned that some undergraduate students might not participate if they were required to undertake a time-consuming research project. These five favored the students choosing whether they wanted to engage in research or present a literature review as well as having the two groups compete in one competition rather than have two separate competitions. They also felt that a literature review could not effectively compete against original research, although it would provide experience presenting a seminar in a professional setting. Four of the ten department heads felt that the presentations should be based solely on data-oriented research and that literature review presentations should not be an option. One of the ten chose literature review to the exclusion of research. All ten department heads felt that the students should submit an abstract, but reasons given for this opinion ranged from publication of the abstracts in the meeting's program to quality control.

### Survey of Students

Approximately 15% of the Animal Science majors at three universities (University of Tennessee [n=26], University of Arkansas [n=32], and Texas A&M University [n=80]) were polled regarding their interest in participating

in a competition at the annual Southern Section ASAS meeting. Sophomore, junior and senior level students were told to assume the department would pay travel expenses and that there would be a \$100 award for first prize. Of the students polled, 5 of the University of Tennessee, 6 of the University of Arkansas, and 6 of the Texas A&M students ranked their likelihood of participation in such a competition at over 80%.

### Survey of Faculty

The results of the surveys of department heads and students were presented at the 1991 Annual Meeting of the Southern Section ASAS. Drs. J. Morris of the Southern Region of the American Society for Horticultural Science, R. Lemenager of the Midwestern Section of ASAS and R. James of the Southern Section of Dairy Science made presentations regarding the benefits and disadvantages of the undergraduate competition(s) sponsored by their respective professional organizations.

Immediately following the presentations, a discussion was held regarding what recommendation should be made to the Southern Section ASAS Officers on this matter. The issue of the presentations being based on research versus literature review was debated thoroughly. One faculty member said that in his years of working with an undergraduate paper competition in another region, he had never seen a literature review presentation win first place. Another faculty member responded that the only way to involve undergraduates in research would be to have them work with faculty assistance rather than on independent projects.

The discussion also included how the competition should be incorporated into the structure of the annual meeting. Two people said that they did not believe the competition would interfere with the Academic Quadrathlon, and one added that even if it did, the competitions are "looking at separate/additional groups of students". The eleven faculty members attending the session then filled out the same questionnaire the department heads had responded to via telephone. Faculty responses to the questionnaire are presented within brackets.

In most cases the most popular response by the department heads were the same for the faculty. Exceptions to this trend were found regarding the basis of presentation on research or literature review (question 4) and how participants in the competition are determined at the local level (question 9).

### Conclusions

Almost everyone surveyed responded that the Southern Section ASAS should sponsor an undergraduate paper competition at its annual meeting, although many surveyed did not anticipate their institution participating. Eight of the eleven faculty respondents indicated that they would likely be one of the faculty members organizing the competition at the department or section level; of those eight, six indicated the likelihood of their institution's participation at 80% or less. More department heads (6 out of 10) than faculty indi-

cated a greater than 80% likelihood of participation.

### References

- Barkley, A.P. 1991. What Skills Do Graduates Need? *NACTA Journal* 35-1:53-57.  
 Riesenber, L.E. 1988. Future Curriculum Emphasis for College. *NACTA Journal* 32-2:34-37.

### Appendix

#### Questionnaire Regarding Proposed Southern Section of American Society of Animal Science Undergraduate Paper Competition with Department Head and Faculty Responses.

1. Should the Southern Section ASAS sponsor an undergraduate student paper competition at its annual meeting?
  - a. yes (10)<sup>1</sup> [9]<sup>2</sup>
  - b. no (3) [1]
  - c. try for a trial period [1; write-in response]
2. How would the competition best be incorporated into the meeting?
  - a. the day before the meeting (2) [1]
  - b. as a separate block during the meeting (7) [6]
  - c. interspaced between other talks at the meeting (1) [4]
3. By whom should the presentations be evaluated?
  - a. teaching committee (6) [4]
  - b. randomly selected faculty (0) [4]
  - c. interested faculty (3) [4]
4. Should the presentations be based on data-oriented research or literature review?
  - a. research (4) [4]
  - b. literature review (1) [1]
  - c. either, at the student's discretion (5) [6]

If you answered research or either, should the presentation be based on:

  - a. research conducted by the student (i.e., student sole author) (4) [0]
  - b. research the student was assisted/given by faculty (2) [7]
  - c. either a or b (3) [3]

If you answered either, should there be a separate competition for each category (literature review and research)?

  - a. yes (0) [0]
  - b. no (5) [6]
5. How much weight should be given to content versus style of presentation?
  - a. content is more important than style (1) [1]
  - b. content and style should carry equal weight in evaluation (8) [10]
  - c. style is more important than content (1) [0]
6. How important is quality of visual aids during the presentation (i.e. multi-colored slides versus black and white)?
  - a. should not be a consideration in evaluation (3) [4]
  - b. should be a consideration in evaluation (7) [7]
7. Should graphics meet a minimum standard? In other words, should the evaluation committee be allowed to disqualify papers on the basis of quality of graphics?
  - a. yes (8) [10]
  - b. no (2) [0]
8. Should the student submit an abstract?
  - a. yes (10) [10]
  - b. no (0) [1]
9. How should the contest be sponsored at the student's university? (Who would determine who is sent?)
  - a. by the department (6) [2]
  - b. by student clubs (0) [1]
  - c. decided at the individual departments (4) [8]
10. How would the contest be funded (who would pay for the student's transportation, registration, meals and lodging)?
  - a. student's department (5) [3]
  - b. club (0) [1]
  - c. student (0) [0]
  - d. decided at the individual departments (5) [8]
11. How many students should each institution bring to participate in the

# Promotion and Tenure Issues for Two-year College Faculty of Four-Year Institutions

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## Introduction

Two-year colleges historically have been teaching institutions with a strong tradition of community and industry involvement [AACJC, 1984]. Many universities and four-year colleges operate satellite campuses offering two years of traditional liberal arts, business, engineering or agricultural technology and an associate degree. Faculty at these satellites (community colleges/technical colleges that are part of a larger university) face a special concern when their faculty appointments and accomplishments are evaluated by faculty and administrators at the parent institution for tenure and promotion. Will the faculty at two-year campuses be judged against their own faculty role and mission or against the broader university faculty role that emphasizes teaching upper-level courses, directing and teaching graduate students, and traditional scholarly activity and research?

Standards and expectations for promotion and tenure have been rising during the 1980's in higher education especially in the area of scholarly activity (Mooney, 1990). At our own institution, The Ohio State University, new committees of full professors were appointed at the College of Agriculture and university levels to screen and evaluate all candidates for promotion and tenure including those from the Cooperative Extension Service, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, and The Ohio State

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University Agricultural Technical Institute (a satellite campus offering associate degrees in most aspects of agriculture). Because of rising expectations for tenure and promotion, and because these new committees of professors at the college and university levels were not totally informed of our duties and mission, our director appointed a faculty committee and charged it with rewriting our campus guidelines for promotion and tenure. We surveyed 32 member institutes of the AACJC Two-by-Four Year Council. A review of tenure and promotion issues for two-year colleges and the survey results are presented here.

## Recent Surveys On Tenure And Promotion

The issues of faculty qualifications and faculty growth and development are interwoven into the matters of tenure and promotion. Many community and technical colleges hire faculty with master degrees, and such schools place a high value on business and industry experiences as an important aspect of faculty qualifications. Comprehensive and research universities normally hire as regular faculty only those with the Ph.D. or highest, appropriate academic degree. These schools value traditional academic scholarship as they search for faculty. Candidates are asked to present evidence of grantsmanship, refereed journal publications, authorship of books, and presentations at professional meetings. It is only to be expected that major differences in appropriate professional development and scholarly activity are going to occur at two-year institutions versus comprehensive and research universities. Faculty of two-year colleges or satellite campuses operated by or administratively nested within comprehensive or research universities face special concerns in the areas of hiring, tenuring, and developing faculty. How can these unique roles and missions of each campus (two-year and university) can be preserved and respected, not ground against one another?

Recent surveys published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Mooney, 1989 and 1990) and conducted by the Carnegie Foundation for Higher Education shed valuable insight into faculties' and department chairpersons' views on tenure and promotion issues. The faculty at two-year colleges (not AACJC Two-by-Four Council members, but a broad survey of two-year college faculty) tend to see their primary role as teaching. Faculty at comprehensive and research universities see scholarly activity as their principal interest (Table 1). Faculty at two-year colleges are most likely to have professional contact with public school teachers (K-12). Comprehensive and research university faculty are the least involved with public school teachers according to the Carnegie Survey (Table 1). Since partnerships be-

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competition?

- a. one (1) [4]
  - b. two (0) [4]
  - c. three (1) [1]
  - d. one or two (4) [0]
  - e. up to five (2) [0]
  - f. set no limit (1) [2]
12. On a percentage basis, what do you think is the likelihood that your department would send students to participate in an undergraduate competition at the Southern Section ASAS annual meeting?
- a. less than 30% (0) [2]
  - b. between 30-50% (2) [2]
  - c. between 50-80% (2) [4]
  - d. greater than 80% (6) [3]

If you answered less than 30% or 30-50%, what factors do you foresee as being a deterrent to your participation?

- a. too much time involved (0) [2]
- b. too little student interest (0) [0]
- c. too little faculty interest (0) [2]
- d. all of the above (2) [0]

1 Parentheses ( ) indicate department heads' responses.

2 Brackets [ ] indicate faculty responses.

