

# Teaching International Extension through Undergraduate Service Learning



Paul Ebner and Mark Russell\*  
Department of Animal Sciences  
Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN



# ANSC 49500 - Animals and Food Security: Service Learning in Romania

# Maymester Participants – annually since 2009

- 18 Purdue University undergraduate students majoring in Agricultural Sciences
- 5-8 Banat University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine

**Assignment:** work in binational teams with local livestock producers to develop and implement sustainable solutions to local food animal production issues

**Maymester May 18 depart and meet  
in Budapest, Hungary**



## Course Description: Sem. SS cr. 3.

- follows a one-credit preparation class
- emphasis is placed on Extension methodologies including: conducting needs assessments, developing and delivering programs, survey methods and impact assessment
- students learn about language, intercultural relations, and how to most effectively work with Romanian livestock producers



# Course Learning Objectives

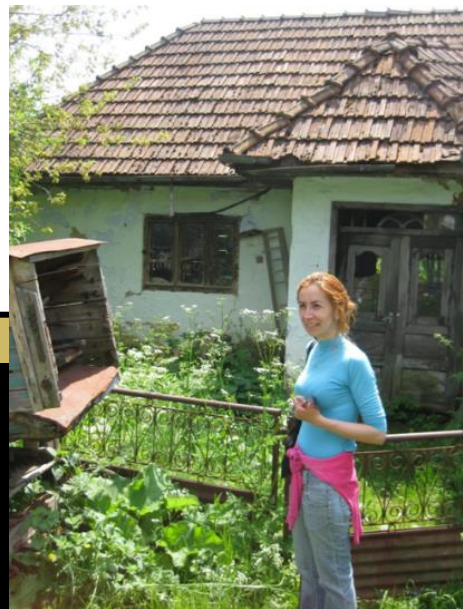
- Develop an international Extension program applicable to rural Romania:
  - Understand and demonstrate methodologies involved in Extension programming
- Further develop behavior competencies:
  - Critical Thinking
  - Communication
  - Teamwork
- Further Develop Cultural Understanding:
  - Demonstrate actual intercultural skills and knowledge
  - Demonstrate ability to agricultural and animal science principles in serving an international rural village.

# Learning Experiences

- one-credit semester prep seminar
- homestays – five nights
- conducting a livestock/farm products exposition
- delivering workshops using appropriate media related to livestock production
- physical production facility improvement
- regular completion of reflections to assess both what was learned and how learning occurred

# Vața de Jos – 13 small villages

- Heifer International Romania-program
  - 65 < 11,000 dairy cow owners
- Introduce all participants to Romania and Romanian Agriculture
  - Homestays
  - Visit large and small farms
  - Work on both individual and community projects



# Vața de Jos

-Live in teams of four with local host families

Learn for their live styles, chores, jobs  
Make hay, milk cows, work sheep,  
make cheese

Work & learn about and share information

- business market analysis
- production practices

milk, cheese, sheep, honey, sausages, etc.

Help conduct a local agricultural Expo and  
business symposium



## Work site #1



## **Move to Pacliša**

- Hospital with 200 patients**
- Produce much of their own food**
- Livestock facility (pork, dairy, eggs)**



**Objective: work with farm managers, patients, administrators to both: 1) identify greatest needs; 2) ways in which the team together could address these needs**



**Work site #2**



# Projects



# Assessments

- **Professional Presence & Participation**
- **Four (4) Sequential guided reflective journals**
- **Presentation at Extension Workshops in Vața and Paclișa**
- **Technical Animal Grand Challenge applications at Paclișa**
- **Qualtrics Assessment Examples from 2015**

# Extension Skill Development?

- **83.3%** of the students stated that they were “confident” or “very confident” in their ability to apply social, economic and environmental principles
- **100%** of the students stated that their ability to communicate and work with individuals from different countries “improved” or “greatly improved”
- **94.5%** stated that the experience greatly deepened their understanding of agricultural Extension.
- **100%** stated that the experience broadened their knowledge of a range of cultures and understanding of human values and diverse world views.

# Extension Skill Development?

- “Please tell whether you feel you have improved or not in the following skills through participation in this course. (0 = not improved at all; 10 = greatly improved)”

Top three: Cultural awareness (**8.74**), oral communications (**8.04**), and problem solving (**7.87**) skills

- Has your experience in this course improved your understanding of the mission of Extension? (**8.79**)
- Has your experience in this course improved your understanding of how Extension programs are developed and implemented? (**8.29**)
- Through this course, has your ability to work effectively in a multi-cultural team to solve problems improved? (**9.00**)

## **If you learned some new skills, what were some examples?**

In this class I learned to be out of my comfort zone. This course taught me about different cultures. The way animals are cared for and treated in different cultures and to work well with others, solving problems through Extension.

I learned to work with others without always having to be the leader. I also learned to take my knowledge of agriculture and apply it to help others.

I also learned to milk cows, make cheese, drive stick, set barbed wire, but these are small compared to communication/team skills working in a team with individuals of different cultures (and communicating effectively).

**“It was the most challenging, aggravating, stressful, wonderful, and rewarding experience of my life. I learned more about myself in the month I was over in Romania than I had my entire life.”**



**Maymester ended June 11 in Budapest  
Hungary**



# Perspectives:

- Could this be done in our own backyard?
- How introspective/reflective are students?
- Is a lower score/response evidence of learning?
- When is the best time to assess outcomes?

Longer-term post-reflective studies are needed

[pebner@purdue.edu](mailto:pebner@purdue.edu)

[mrussell@purdue.edu](mailto:mrussell@purdue.edu)