

Abstract # 187

Fostering Political Activism in Animal Agriculture Courses

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Introduction

Younger voters consistently fail to engage in American politics. College students rarely view political issues as pertinent enough to warrant active participation. A proposed animal welfare issue on the November 2009 Ohio state ballot presented a unique opportunity for agricultural educators to encourage active student participation in the political process. The proposed constitutional amendment (Issue 2) would create a Livestock Care Standards Board responsible for establishing animal care guidelines. This proposal, the first of its kind in the U.S., was in response to animal rights legislation passed in other states.



Materials and Methods

- 59 Students enrolled in three introductory animal science courses participated.
- Students completed a pre – and post-test to assess their comprehension of ballot issues.
- Students were presented with factual information concerning Issue 2 including arguments, pro and con.
- Students conducted a public survey to determine voter awareness of the issue.
- Students were encouraged to be creative in developing, implementing, and documenting a program designed to educate voters on Issue 2

Objectives

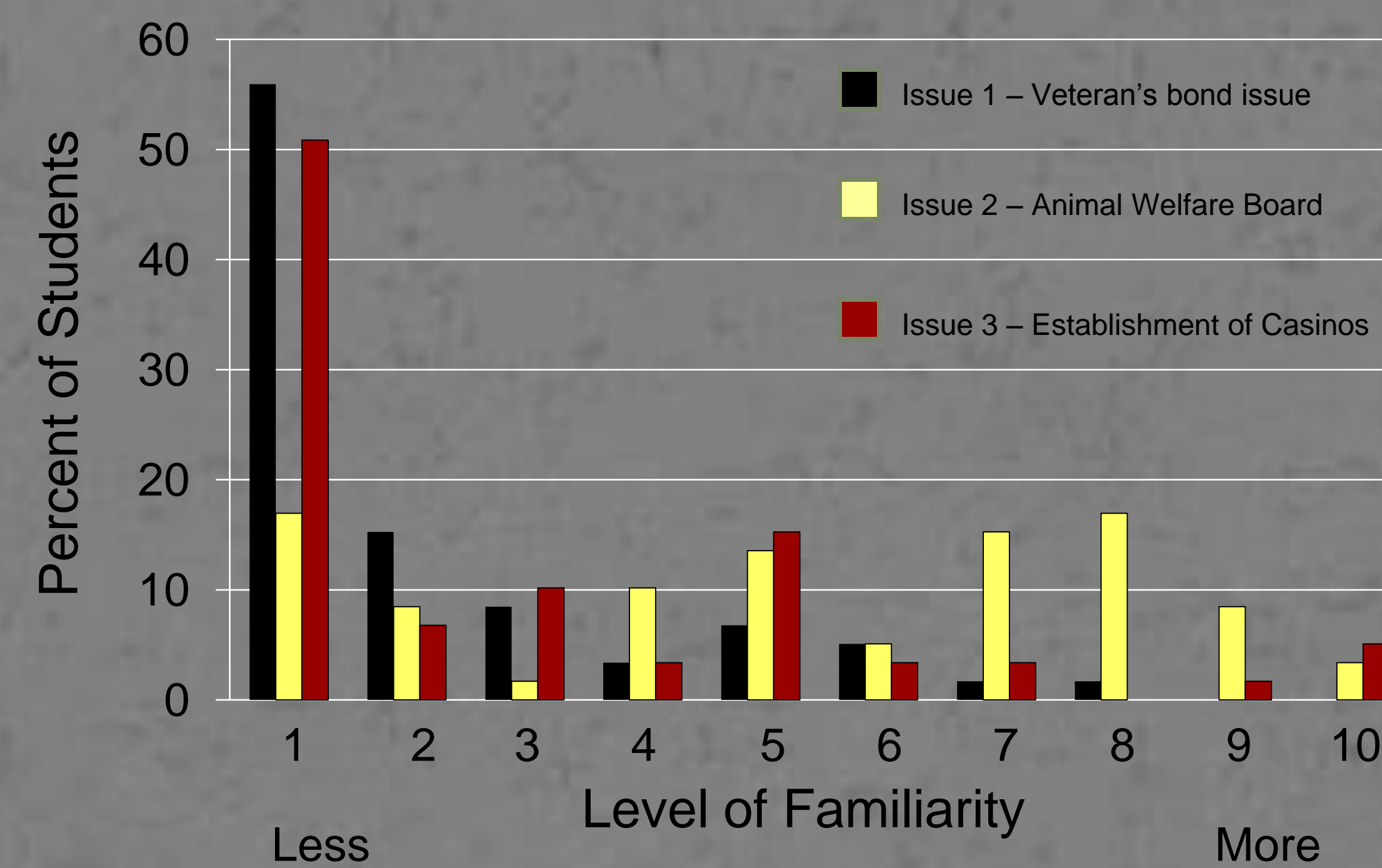
- Determine student familiarity with ballot issues (particularly Issue 2)
- Measure community awareness and support for Issue 2
- Direct student-led educational initiatives raising public awareness of Issue 2

Results

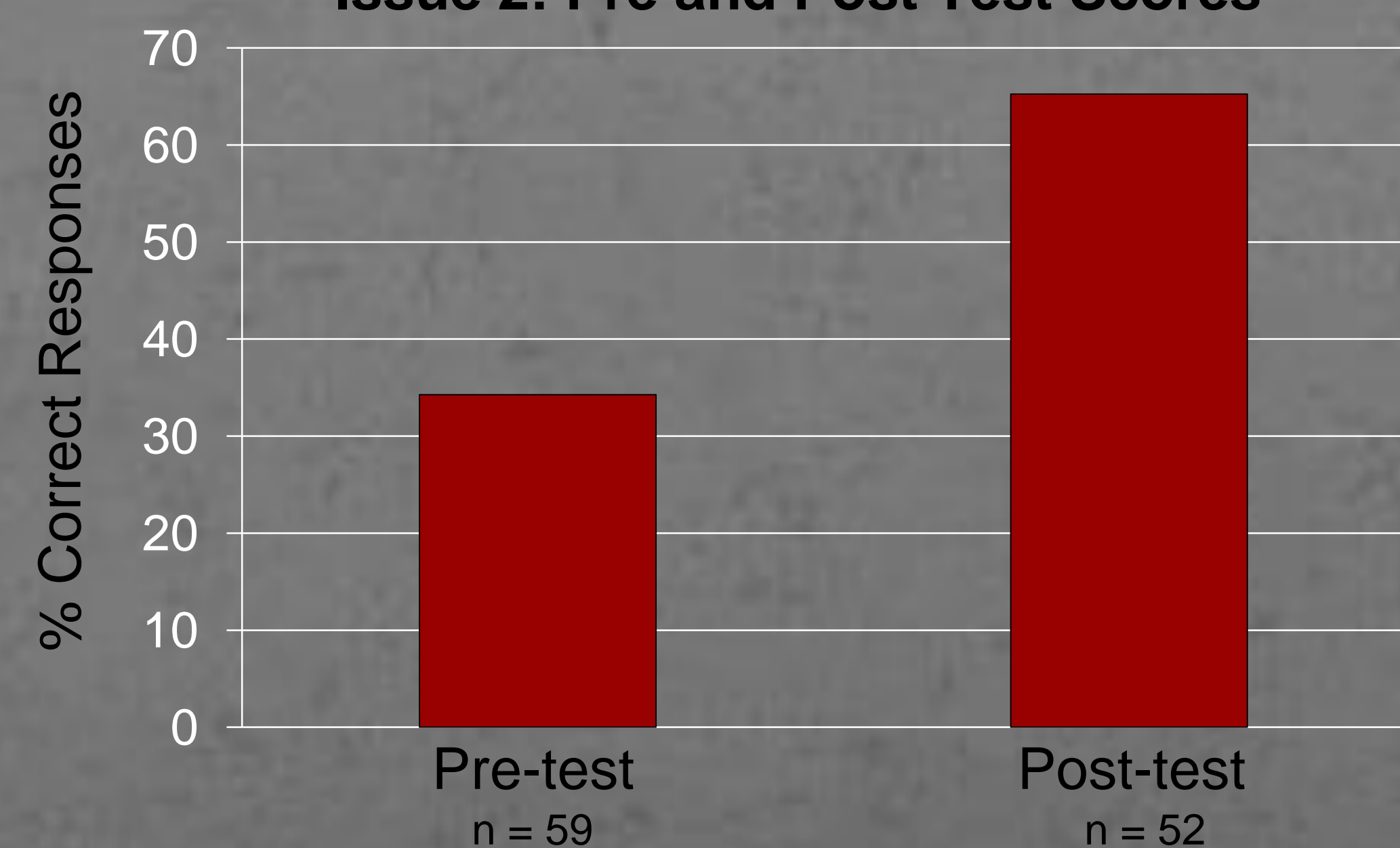
Student Involvement in Politics

- Percent registered voters 71%
- Voted in past election 56%
- Plan to vote in upcoming election 80%

Self-Reported Awareness of Political Issues



Issue 2: Pre and Post Test Scores



Student Initiated Approaches to Voter Education

- Direct voter contact
- Social media (Facebook)
- Flyer distribution
- E-mail distribution
- Billboards / Marquee
- Radio
- Website development
- Participate in organized rallies
- Community presentations
- Public displays



Summary and Conclusions

- Student knowledge of non-agricultural political issues was very limited.
- This assignment doubled student understanding of Issue 2 as evidenced by test scores.
- Students were very creative in their approaches to voter education.
- Students reported the project stimulated their interest in political issues.