



Current State of Beef Education Relative to Future Needs of the Beef Industry (AB 327)



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Introduction

To provide preliminary information for a strategic planning conference to enhance undergraduate education in beef production, recent Animal Science graduates and beef industry employers were surveyed to ascertain opinions regarding the current state of beef education relative to future needs. This conference was made possible by a USDA-HEC grant (NIFA Award #: 2011-38411-30534), and functioned to engage discussion amongst faculty, representing six universities, and industry professionals.

ASCI Graduates Survey

Each of 6 different universities who participated in the conference were asked to submit names of recent (up to 10 yr. post-graduation) graduates employed in the beef industry. Graduates were asked to complete an on-line survey regarding their view of importance (Table 1), and educational experience with (Tables 2 & 3), four "future" critical content areas including animal welfare, ecosystems health, food safety, & genomics.

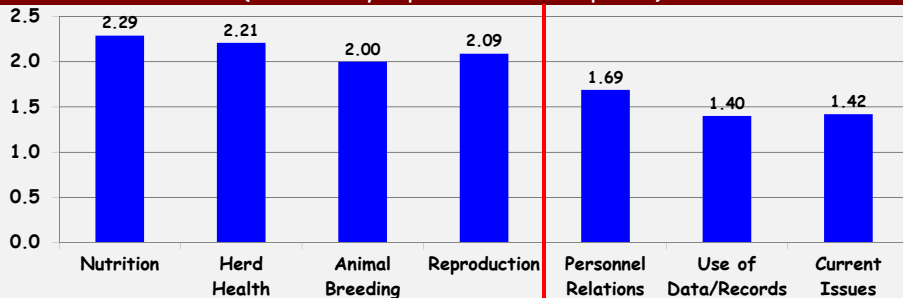
Beef Industry Employer Survey

Beef industry professionals were asked to complete a 50-question on-line survey to determine what they view as important for new graduates entering the beef industry. Responses to several questions related to disciplinary areas were averaged and the overall response reported (Table 4).

Results

- 1) Most graduates AGREE that the "future" critical content areas are IMPORTANT.
- 2) <1/3 of graduates took courses that specifically emphasized critical content areas.
- 3) Most critical content areas were discussed in class, but were not a primary emphasis.
- 4) Level of "satisfaction" regarding education of critical content areas varied widely.
- 5) Today, and in the future, it appears a student's ability to deal with people, data, and current issues may be even MORE important than knowledge of traditional disciplines.

Table 4. Beef Industry Employer Survey: Importance of Basic Disciplinary Knowledge & Skills (1 = Extremely Important; 5 = Not Important)



Conclusions

- 1) Future curricula must engage students in issues management providing a focus on critical content areas including animal welfare, ecosystems health, & food safety.
- 2) Future curricula should allow for development of basic "people" & communication skills.
- 3) The traditional disciplines of beef production science are currently well-taught, and should NOT be ignored in the development of new curricula for the future because they are still important for success in the beef industry.

Table 1. ASCI graduates' perception of "future" importance of critical content areas. (1 = Extremely Important; 5 = Not Important)

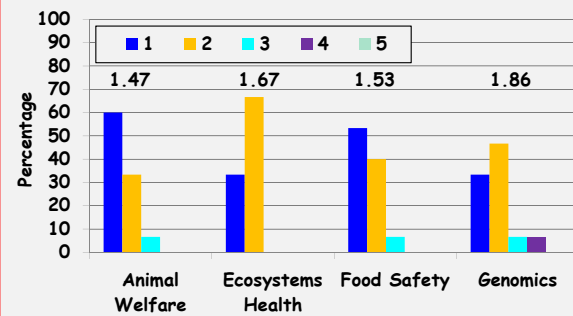


Table 2. % of ASCI graduates who took courses emphasizing "future" critical content areas

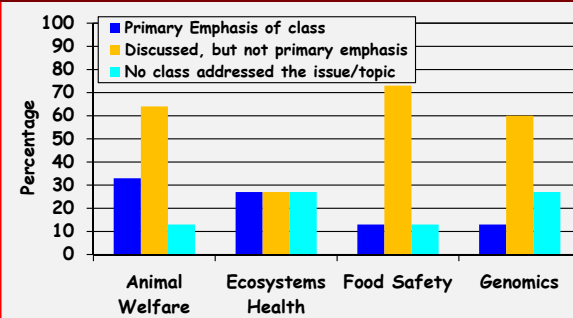


Table 3. ASCI graduates' educational experience satisfaction in "future" critical content areas

