

Online Learning Communities in Undergraduate Animal Science Courses

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SUNY Cobleskill- A background

- SUNY System
- Teaching Emphasis
- Applied Learning
- College of Agriculture and Technology
- Also offer Liberal Arts Degrees
- 100 year Centennial



SUNY Cobleskill Animal Science

- Campus is home to approximately 100 sheep, 100 goats, 20 beef cattle, 200 dairy, 45 horses, rabbits, poultry, and canine
- USDA Meat Processing Facility
- Offers Associates, BS and BT degree programs
- Emphasis on applied, on and off farm learning experiences
- 11 full time faculty in disciplines ranging from livestock to canine
- Active students through clubs and organizations



Courses

- Online learning communities developed in two different livestock techniques courses
- Skill development
- Reflective Journals
- 100 and 200 level
- 2 credit courses
- Techniques and check/barn duty
- Facebook utilized to develop the learning community



Literature Review

- Teaching and learning occurs in a social context (Maor, 2003)
- Developing a 'community' within a classroom allows for more student collaboration (O'Connor, 1998)
- Facebook has been shown to be a promising tool for to establish online learning communities (Whittacker, Howarth & Lynn, 2014)
- Benefits include affective communication, social support and increased problem solving strategies (Mazer, Murphy & Simonds, 2007)
- Students are very interested in using Facebook for educational purposes (Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman & Witty, 2010)

Why did we use it?

- Ease- Universal compatibility
- Accessibility- 1.86 billion users world wide
- Cost- Free!
- Notifications- Alerts of posting and other activity
- Need in the class- classes only meet once a week, no time for development of a community within constraints of regular class time
- Monitoring the activities of hundreds of livestock and dozens of students



How was it used?

- Student's major semester long project- barn check duty
- Students added to the online learning community at beginning of the semester
- Update page every four hours with pictures and narratives of their checks, bottle feedings, and skills used
- Instructors, campus veterinarian, livestock faculty serve as administrators of the group (get notifications)

How was it used?

- Assessment tool- checks were a major part of students' participation grade
 - Appropriate techniques were monitored
- Communication tool
 - Everyone involved with the livestock on campus would know what was happening (example- lambs born, kid with a runny nose, we needed clean towels etc).
 - Scheduling- students would use the online community to cover for each other, schedule postings
 - Promotion- courses, internships, campus events, jobs
- A tool for reflection

Page Stats- 2017 Spring Semester

- 560 posts made to the page by 51 students
- 14 posts made by faculty
- 986 pictures
- 67 instances of public communication between students

Let's take a look

- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1527010784200434/>

Example:

PINNED POST



Ben Weikert

January 23



Welcome to the Livestock Techniques 115/215 Facebook Page. On this page, you are expected to post pictures and updates of your sheep/goat/swine checks. The check schedule will also be updated here on a weekly basis.

Important Numbers for emergencies:

Ben Weikert- 717-253-2043

Dirk Schubert- 607-435-5662... [See More](#)

Seen by 30

Like

Comment

Example:



Kelley Doolin

8 hrs

7am check - All of the animals appear to be good this morning. I got most of the lambs to nurse and I will work on the rest before I leave. No does or ewes are in labor right now.



Example:



Cindi Shelley

April 9 at 10:20am



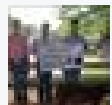
Hi Livestock 115/215 classes! Just wanted you to know that the dairy goats have had all of the kids that we are expecting. If you happen to look in on them, and something looks not so right, send a note, but all the babies have arrived 😊

 Like

 Comment

 You and 2 others

✓ Seen by 44



Write a comment...



Example:



Ben Weikert

April 6 at 2:30pm

Reminder about this extra credit opportunity tomorrow night! Free food will be served from 4 to 6! Meat facility tour at 5 pm, and a showing of the critically acclaimed documentary "Farmland" will start at 6 pm in CANR 101.



Example:



Emily Lynn

April 2 at 8:23pm



8pm: Everyone seemed content. Ellie and Blue's litters were active. The expecting ewes were all munching and were very friendly. 606 is very weak and if you touch her her body gives out, but can move around by herself fine.



Example:



Ben Weikert shared a link.

April 2 at 7:44pm



215: bottle feeding sign up



Like

Comment

Share

✓ Seen by 40



Write a comment...



Example:



Tayla Robinson

February 21



Hi guys I was wondering if anyone wanted to **switch** their morning checks with me for any other time on the weekend. It would be much appreciated because I need to go home this weekend.

3 Comments Seen by 34



Like



Comment



Colleen Bernier What checks do you need covered?

Unlike · Reply · 1 · February 21 at 4:59pm



Jessica Lynn Thompson I can also help out

Like · Reply · February 21 at 5:02pm



Tayla Robinson what times do you girls have checks?

Like · Reply · February 21 at 5:13pm



Write a comment...





Questions or Comments?

