

# Use of Extracurricular Activities to Augment Agribusiness Education

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## Introduction/Background

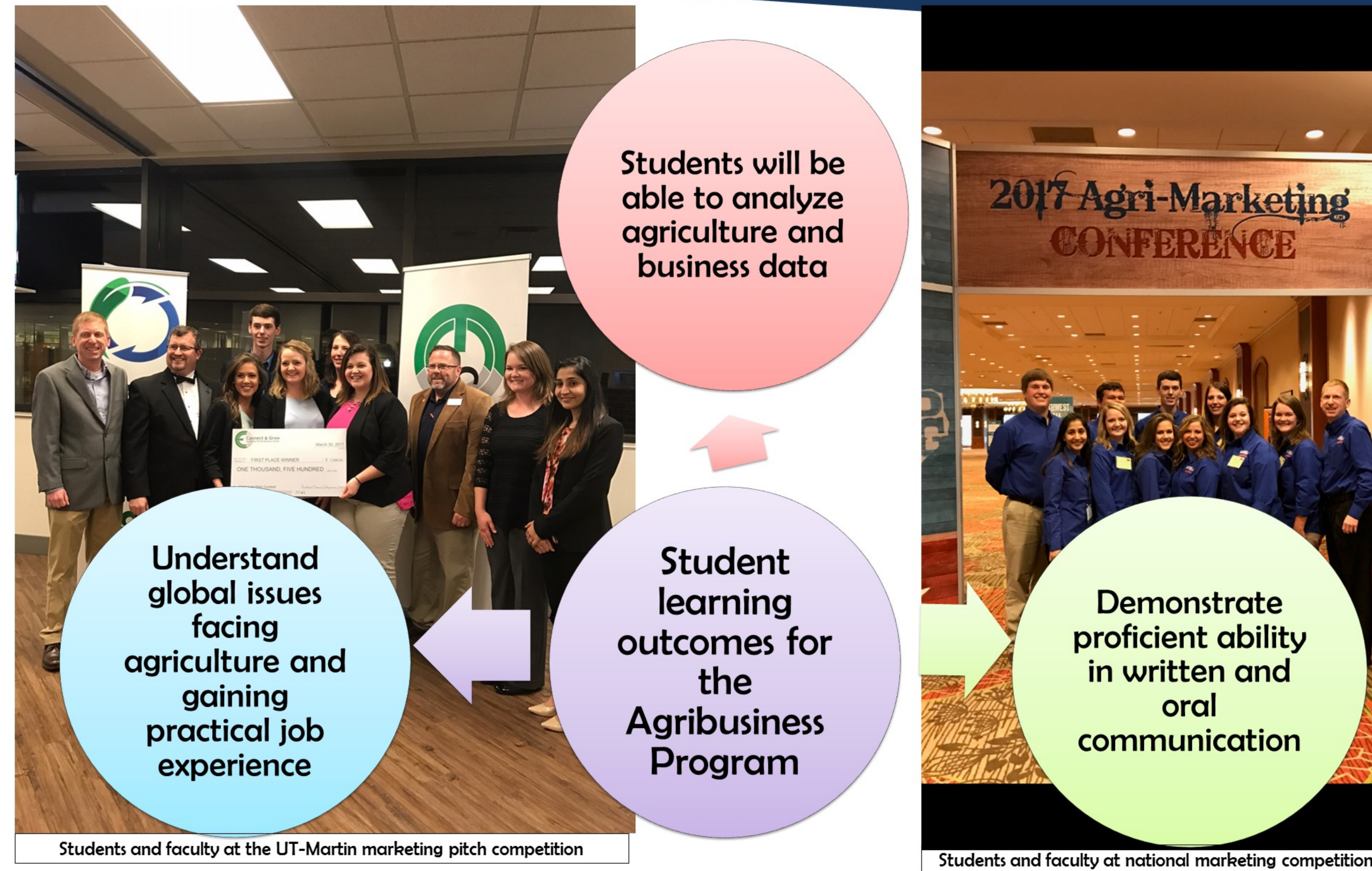
- Students in agribusiness and/or farm and ranch management options often lack direct laboratory component that is present in other agricultural disciplines.
- Agribusiness market simulators are a great tool to provide hands-on experience, but developers must balance realism and complexity. Student engagement in simulators varies due to their previous experiences with group assignments. Tangible benefits may not be readily apparent to the student aside from the course grade.
- Incorporation of extracurricular activities allows students to self-select for these opportunities that may result in a more rewarding experience for both faculty and students.
- Retention of knowledge is an ongoing challenge as students do not always see the connections between theory and reality.
- Extracurricular activities provide a dynamic environment that students enjoy due to the competitive nature of the activity and ability to travel to a regional or national conference.

## Student-Centric

- Participation in extracurricular activities is focused on exposing the student to opportunities that can't be provided within a traditional collegiate course.
- Recruitment occurs through student agribusiness organizations and existing courses. Word of mouth from students who have previously competed aids in the recruitment process.
- Use of academic enrichment funds limits the amount of fundraising required by students to participate. This allows the university to reinvest students' own dollars back into the individual student.
- Faculty serve as mentors rather than instructors which allows students to develop their own creativity and problem-solving skills. This allows students to learn and work at their pace.
- Activities are selected by faculty with the goal of increasing knowledge retention and application of knowledge gained in traditional courses.
- Although not required to participate, students may earn elective credit in agribusiness courses.

## Conclusion

- Students earn priceless learning and networking opportunities through extracurricular activities in the University of Tennessee-Martin Agribusiness Program which provides valuable feedback to faculty for institutional assessment purposes.
- Student engagement is increased resulting from little monetary cost for students to participate in these extracurricular activities. Curriculum is reinforced due to knowledge application and retention by students.



## Industry Exposure

- Use of extracurricular activities provide students the ability to network with local, regional, and national contacts in agribusiness.
- Agribusiness students are required to complete an internship to graduate. Participation in these extracurricular activities benefits not only the students' ability to identify potential internship and career possibilities, but also in raising awareness of the agribusiness program at the University of Tennessee-Martin to agribusiness companies.
- Students are provided the ability to network with agribusiness professionals that is not always possible in a traditional course setting. One competition provides the ability for students to engage in a mentor luncheon in a variety of agribusiness fields of interest to students.
- While the focus of the extracurricular activities is clearly for the benefit of students, the industry exposure provides feedback to agribusiness faculty on the latest industry trends and knowledge to incorporate into coursework.
- Students are also provided the opportunity to network with faculty from other institutions to explore potential graduate school opportunities.

## Practical Learning

- Agribusiness students at the University of Tennessee-Martin are currently provided the opportunity to participate in a quiz bowl and marketing pitch competitions. Participation in one competition doesn't prevent participation in other competitions during the academic year.
- Experiential and problem-based learning techniques are used which incorporate real-world problem complexity that may be absent in existing agribusiness simulators.
- Use of marketing pitch competitions more easily facilitates development of students' soft skills. Students can also self-select to work in groups of their choosing reflecting their strengths of the content areas judged in the competition.
- Participants in the quiz bowl are exposed to questions written by faculty members from other universities which aids in problem identification. Individuals are also paired with students from other universities which further improves soft-skills.
- Connections to the real-world are stressed and reinforced as students are exposed to the reality of market research, product development, and financial projections.



Students working on an agribusiness marketing project