

**Feeding knowledge, not trolls: Using student organizations to educate about agricultural practices**

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### **Introduction**

In an age of great scientific advancement in food, agriculture, and the environmental sciences, researchers face growing backlash from consumers who are increasingly fearful of chemicals, toxins, and hormones in their food (Ventura et. al, 2016). To reduce the number of scientifically illiterate consumers, a team of faculty and students at Ohio State University proposed a series of training exercises aimed at teaching undergraduate and graduate students in science-related fields to tell the stories of their respective industries and their research.

A team of faculty and graduate students from the Departments of Food Science and Technology (FST) and Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership (ACEL) proposed Citation Needed, a collaborative sequence of training seminars, professional panels, and symposia that introduce students to interpersonal and computer-mediated communication principles; teach them tools and techniques for telling their research stories; and provide a venue for them to share their resulting work with the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES) and greater Columbus Campus communities.

### **How It Works**

Citation Needed consisted of two training sessions centered on social media campaigns and multimedia production. Each session was paired with a panel of industry professionals in each area. Students worked in teams to prepare an informational campaign to dispel myths surrounding food, agriculture, and the environment, and each team had the opportunity to present their campaigns and materials at a campus-wide event hosted by Citation Needed. We hope to create an annual series of Citation Needed events. In addition to the two training sessions and corresponding panels, Citation Needed hosted an end-of-the-year symposium. The symposium featured Kavin Senapathy, a science writer, communicator, and activist who works with outlets and organizations like Forbes, Genetic Literacy Project and Skepchick.

Citation Needed's first training session focused on social media and how to frame scientific information. Presenters from the ACEL department provided insight into establishing credibility, being yourself, and telling your story on social media. The presenters had students craft their own tweets about science and tag them to Citation Needed's Twitter account.

In response to the training session focusing on social media, the Citation Needed executive board brought in industry professionals for a panel discussion focused on giving attendees the opportunity to hear from professionals who use social media every day as part of their job. The panel included the director of marketing for a major fast-food chain; the director of communications for the Ohio Pork Board; and an associate professor of marketing and logistics at Ohio State University. They provided insight into the strategies they use, what does (and sometimes does not) work and how social media can be used to communicate, interact and connect with our audiences most effectively.

The second training session focused on video editing and production. Statistics show that at least a quarter of American teenagers create and upload video (Lenhart, 2012) and nearly 75 percent watch YouTube videos (Bennett, 2014). By providing students with a better understanding of video production, they are able to spread the word about agriculture. Attendees learned how to

frame video shots, what b-roll is and how to cut down on pesky background noises. The attendees then gave editing a shot utilizing a free app called Adobe Premiere Clip. The video editing and production panel included speakers from Don't Eat the Pseudoscience, a food science myth-busting YouTube TV channel, as well as the creative lead for a livestock marketing firm. The panelists focused on how they use videos to promote science and agriculture.

### **Results to Date/Implications**

Autumn 2015 semester was the first training session focused on social media. The training session had 58 students, staff, and faculty from across the university. Attendees ranged from undergraduate and graduate students in agricultural communication, medical dietetics, animal science, and FST. The first professional panel had 42 attendees. Again, the attendees included undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff in agricultural communication, animal science, and FST.

Roughly 35 students, staff, and faculty members attended the video training panel. The second professional panel had the lowest numbers, of roughly 20 students in attendance. Many of the students left early due to inclement weather.

The end of year symposium featured two student showcases, one public speaking and another multimedia presentation. The symposium had the highest turnout rate with over 90 in attendance from all across the university. The public and previous panelists were also invited to attend the symposium.

### **Future Plans**

The executive board for Citation Needed was excited by the outpouring of support for this new organization. To give students a deeper understanding of the organization, Citation Needed is planning on participating in the 2016 CFAES Back 2 School Bash and Autumn 2016 and Spring 2017 involvement fairs. The organization is also planning on applying for official club status within the university. With applying for official club status, Citation Needed will have to draft by-laws and elect student officers. Between the involvement fairs and applying for official club status, Citation Needed hopes to reach students across Ohio State University's campus. Event planning for the 2016-2017 school year has already begun.

### **Costs Needed**

The primary costs associated with Citation Needed are food, speaker honoraria, and equipment inputs. Roughly \$200 was spent on catering for each training session and panel and another \$500 for the showcase, totaling \$1,300. Speakers received Citation Needed-branded items, such as coffee mugs and pens, for their contributions. These items cost approximately \$200. To record the sessions for distribution on the organization's website, Citation Needed purchased a digital camera (\$750), a tripod (\$150) and microphones (\$100). Finally, showcase participants received monetary awards in recognition of their work. Citation Needed's inaugural year was funded by a generous donation from an alumnus; in the future, this sum will be supplemented by member dues and fundraising activities.

## References

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