

**An Application of Project Based Learning:
Creating Award Recipient Highlight Videos for a College Honors Banquet**

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Introduction/Need for Innovation or Idea

The Texas Tech University College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) hosts an annual awards banquet every spring semester prior to the conclusion of classes. Known as the Ag Honors Banquet, this event showcases the yearly accomplishments of the CASNR competitive and judging teams, highlights outstanding faculty and staff members, and recognizes an outstanding student from each of the six academic departments within the college.

Traditionally, the outstanding students, faculty, and staff were recognized as part of the script for the banquet. Over the years, this event has declined in attendance and organizers wanted to make it more interesting for attendees without adding to the length. In 2016, students in a senior-level agricultural communications course, Convergence in Agricultural Media, were tasked with producing a series of videos to highlight each outstanding student from the academic departments for the Ag Honors Banquet. In 2017, students in the courses expanded these videos to include the outstanding staff and faculty award recipients.

The development of these videos is based on the Project Based Learning teaching method. Project Based Learning is an innovative teaching method in which students gain knowledge and experience by applying their skills to work for an extended period of time on an authentic, engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge (Buck Institute for Education, n.d.; Larmer, 2015). Another defining feature of Project Based Learning is relying on the teacher for facilitation but not direction (Moursund, 1999). In regard to the innovative idea described in this narrative, the authentic, engaging, and complex challenge was for these students in the course to plan, produce, and present interesting content for the banquet that showcased their skills and revamped the traditional honors banquet.

How it Works

The process to create the videos began when each department determined an outstanding student by early April. Additionally, in the spring and fall semesters, Student Agricultural Council representatives select outstanding faculty and staff members. After names of all selected outstanding students, faculty, and staff were submitted to the Dean's Office, the students in the course began the planning process.

The development of these videos was primarily at the discretion of the students, and the finished product was a two-minute video about each award winner. Each video featured an on-screen interview of the award recipients with typical questions being about their experiences in the college, favorite memories or traditions, and future plans. Another interview was conducted with someone who could speak positively about the award recipient. These interviews were then edited together in the final video. The students in the course maintained consistency in almost all of the production elements, including shooting, interview questions, graphics, framing, editing, and sound. The videos were evaluated for quality and consistency before being uploaded to the college's YouTube channel as a playlist. This playlist allows the videos to be found more easily during the banquet and provided a way to organize the videos each year.

Results to Date/Implications

In 2016, six videos were created for the banquet to highlight the outstanding students. This effort was so well received that in 2017, 10 videos were created to highlight the outstanding faculty and staff award recipients in addition to the outstanding students in each department. The integration of videos in the banquet has been met with praise, based on anecdotal evidence. Students said they appreciated learning more about the award winners and banquet organizers said the videos added variety and interest. The use of videos allows for more control of the timing because they are of nearly identical length. Although some recipients were originally hesitant to be interviewed, the use of the video was less intimidating than being asked to make remarks during the banquet. The videos are edited to positively feature the award recipients and also feature comments from a person who had been a significant influence in that recipients' academic pursuits. Records indicated banquet attendance increased by 48% from 2016 to 2017, with 120 people attending in 2016 and 178 attending in 2017.

Using Project Based Learning allowed students to gain several benefits from the specific activity of video development such as critical thinking/problem solving, communication, collaboration, and self-management (Larmer, 2015). The video development required students to make choices regarding the project. When the students were given input and control over aspects of the project, it created a sense of ownership, leading them to care more about the project and work harder (Larmer, 2015). Additionally, this method of teaching encourages critique and revision where students give, receive, and use feedback to improve their process and products (Buck Institute for Education, n.d.). This was certainly experienced as students worked together to create the videos and were often seen critiquing each other's work. Finally, students made this a public product because the videos were presented at the banquet, thereby demonstrating what they had learned to those outside the classroom (Buck Institute for Education, n.d.).

Future Plans/Advice to Others

This project has been completed for two years and will continue to be integrated in the course. This project has been a successful way for students to be involved in all aspects of video production – planning, interviewing, shooting, editing, and posting online. Although some changes were made from the first year to the second, one of the areas that continues to be a struggle is how to encourage students to showcase the award recipient's individuality while remaining within the timeframe and other required elements for consistency (i.e. filming, editing, sound, and quality of the videos). One way to do this is to assign one student to serve as the project manager or executive producer for the duration of the project.

Costs/resources needed

The primary resources needed for this type of project are video equipment. This includes cameras, tripods, microphones, and light kits when necessary. However, these types of videos could be created inexpensively using smartphones or tablets. Another necessary resource is video editing software such as Adobe Premiere Pro, Final Cut Pro, iMovie, or Windows Movie Maker. These can range in price from free (iMovie) to \$20/month (student access to Adobe Premiere Pro). Finally, it is recommended to use YouTube or Vimeo to host these videos online so they can be shared on the students' social media channels, in addition to department or college use. It is free to establish a YouTube channel or Vimeo account.

References

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