

One-Page Research Summary Series: Bridging Research and Practice

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Introduction and Need for Innovation

The mission of land grant universities in the United States is to provide education to the everyday citizen, serve local communities within the state, and communicate research with the people so it can be imbedded into practice (“The University of Arizona Land-Grant Mission: It’s Contemporary Relevance”, 2012). Agriculture was a key discipline within the original land grant legislation, which expanded the land grant mission to include agricultural experiment stations and what we now know as Cooperative Extension. In departments of agricultural education and related fields across the nation, many research agendas conducted by faculty and graduate students are focused on improving methods of practice within school-based agriculture education (SBAE). This leads to the following question: how do we ensure our research reaches teachers, administrators, and other educational professionals within school systems across the state? One solution for bridging the research gap between universities and SBAE teachers is the one-page research summary series. With current technological advancements, the ability to share information quickly and frequently has surpassed previous attempts at a similar practice. By sending out research summaries to the members of our state’s SBAE teacher association via our state-wide listserv, our department can facilitate the dissemination of research to non-research entities, improving our ability to impact those communities and create positive change.

How it Works

Single-page summaries of empirical work (e.g. theses, dissertations, journal articles, etc.) are developed that highlight the key findings, discussion, implications, and recommendations for practice. These one-page summaries are department branded and then released on the state’s agriculture teacher association email listserv to reach the targeted audience. Topics included in this series are purposefully selected to ensure they are relevant to high school practitioners and have the potential to impact their current situations. Additional components of the research such as extensive introductions, literature reviews, frameworks, and methodologies are edited down to avoid jargon for the reader and to leave more room for the findings, implications, and recommendations of the study. The one-page format forces the author to boil down the components of their study to the most salient contributions and increases the likelihood that their work will be read by busy professionals.

Distributing these items through an email listserv reaches individuals who may be unable to receive updates on research and practice in other ways. In a state with many rural SBAE programs, attending conferences and other professional development opportunities where portions of research may be shared can often be unrealistic and typically only occurs a few times per year. Additionally, the simplistic nature of the single-page design creates an easy-to-read document that pulls readers in and allows for the most important concepts to emerge. If readers are interested in learning more about a topic, contact information is provided for the author(s) of the study. All graduate students completing a thesis or dissertation are required to create a one-page research summary and departmental faculty are encouraged to create these, particularly if their topic is of relevance to the target audience.

Results to Date and Implications

As a direct result of the one-page research summary series, teachers have become more invested in the work conducted at the university. They are more likely to participate in subsequent research studies because they can see the direct impact from their participation.

Teachers also recognize the value of these research efforts and have begun engaging in critical dialogue about various topics related to SBAE that contributes to our growing understanding of the field. Many teachers in our state have responded positively to this effort and have used some of the research recommendations to inform their practice and make decisions related to classroom instruction, curriculum, Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), and FFA. This idea has also received support from the National FFA Local Program Specialist who commented, “your colleagues should be doing this in every state” (Crutchfield, N., personal communication, May 15, 2019).

Furthermore, the impact on our state has spanned beyond research needs. This effort from the university to communicate research has opened the door for further dialogue and partnerships between the university and SBAE teachers. Often, we have teachers ask, “what exactly do you do within your position at the university related to research?” The one-page research summary series sheds light on the significant research being conducted at the university level and clearly illustrates to teachers that the ultimate purpose of university research is to improve practice within the communities that we share.

Future Plans

Creating these summaries have become an expectation for our graduate level students upon defending their theses or dissertations. Because of the positive feedback received, we hope to further capitalize on departmental faculty research in the future. Additionally, there is a wide array of research that exists beyond our university. One future effort is to include one-page summaries on topics of interest that expand beyond research conducted in our state. While research that is specific to the communities in our states is valuable, there are other empirical studies being conducted nationwide that may be of interest to our teachers. This could expand to listservs of other educational entities, such as one for administrators, or school career and technical education directors.

Perhaps this effort can occur in conjunction with other similar efforts to bring research to teachers including *Owl Pellets: Tips for Agriculture Teachers* podcast (2019) and publication of the *Agricultural Education Magazine* (2019). The format and dissemination could be similar to the *Monday Morning Monitor* (National Council for Agricultural Education, 2019) or *Friday Footnotes* publications (Moore, 2019), but specifically with a research focus. Should this project develop to a national scale, a needs assessment survey should be conducted to maximize effectiveness and relevance. While similar efforts have existed historically, they have not been maintained consistently. The technological age allows for greater access to the communities we serve and an opportunity to capitalize on communication with individuals who have the power to take the recommendations and put them into practice.

Costs and Resources Need

By using an email listserv, the cost of this one-page research summary series remains relatively low. However, as the series evolves, personnel to manage the creation and distribution of the summaries will be needed. An increase in volume of summaries may also result in the need for management of an online platform to access older summaries. Nonetheless, this is a cost-effective and time efficient method for disseminating research.

References

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