

**A College Collaboration: Connecting a College Communications Team with an  
Agricultural Communications Course to Create Content**

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**Introduction / Need for Innovation**

As videos have become more popular, people are turning to them as a form of visual news. Organizations and businesses have recognized this transition and have started to create and share their own videos regarding news, updates, and information to social media content sharing sites (Pew Research Center, 2014). Not surprisingly, public opinion on agriculture and natural resource issues have become more polarized, even though the public knows very little about agriculture and natural resources (Hamilton, 2004). In response, academic stakeholders often strategically partner up with other stakeholders to create collaborations to better disseminate their information and to better inform the public (Qu, Irani, & Lindsey, 2018).

Additionally, the 2016-2020 National Research Agenda for the American Association for Agricultural Education named “Public and Policy Maker Understanding of Agriculture and Natural Resources” as the number one research priority (Roberts, Harder, & Brashears, 2016). Roberts et al., 2016). This research priority touches on the idea that if U.S. agriculture is going to provide for an ever-growing population and is going to meet the needs of citizens, agriculture must be valued and understood by all (Roberts et al., 2016).

One of Oregon State University (OSU) agricultural communications instructors and students recognized this shift in video popularity and decided to integrate the creation of a video featuring the students in the course addressing common misunderstandings in agriculture. Video was not an area of communication that had previously been included in the curriculum. This is needed as more times than not, undergraduate students who are pursuing a career in agricultural communications are expected to be the “jack of all trades” and be trained in a variety of communication areas such as photography, writing, video, advocacy and more (Morgan, 2012). The opportunity to partner with communications staff in the College of Agricultural Sciences (CAS) to create a video advocating for agriculture came out of this recognition and need.

**How it Works**

After finishing lessons on industry advocacy, students enrolled in an agricultural communications course titled “Communicating Agriculture to the Public” created a list of common misunderstandings in agriculture they wanted to address. Students discussed how agriculturalists should talk to the lay public about common misconceptions regarding agriculture to help mitigate consumers’ irrational fears and concerns when it came to different facets of the agriculture industry. Students also addressed the importance of coming across as sincere and relatable when discussing these misconceptions with the public.

As a class, the students decided the best way to reach the public and gain interest in listening to them debunk agriculture misconceptions was to create a two-minute video to be posted on social media. Students suggested having the video shared on the CAS Facebook page for better reach and dissemination. The course instructor reached out to the CAS communications team to see if they would be willing to assist with the videoing and editing of the project and proposed the collaboration as something the college could feature on their social media pages, as a way to highlight real students and to feature a student-driven project that was happening within the

academic college. Two communication team members who were trained in video production assisted in filming the students with a high quality video camera. The course instructor reserved one of the college's conference rooms for free for the video to take place in. The students each came up with their own script and answered what misunderstanding they wanted to address the most. The two team members filmed the students

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

The CAS posted the video to their Facebook page which has 4,334 likes and a following of 4,582 people. The same video was also shared on the OSU Department of Agricultural Education & Agricultural Sciences Facebook page, which is the academic department the course that created the video is taught in. The department's Facebook page has 473 likes and 485 followers. As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, the video posted on the college Facebook page had 4.7K views, 86 Facebook "likes" and 6 Facebook "love" reactions with 86 shares (College of Agricultural Sciences – Oregon State University, 2019). Extension county Facebook pages, agriculture organizations in neighboring states, state FFA chapters, donors of the college, other agricultural departments on campus, students featured in the video, and alumni of OSU reshared the video.

Students filled out an optional survey about partnering with the CAS communications team on the last day of class. Majority of students said they enjoyed having a platform provided for them to use their voice to advocate for the industry. They also noted they appreciated how high quality and professional the video turned out. Majority of the students also said they wanted to continue working with the team to produce more pro-agriculture videos, photos, and other content. None of the students had any negative comments regarding partnering with the CAS team.

### **Future Plans/Advice to Others**

Partnering with our college's communications team allowed for students to have a designated platform that had an existing following to advocate for agriculture. The team also enjoyed the opportunity to connect with students within the college they manage communications for and to highlight their work. The team also appreciated having content to showcase that they didn't necessarily have to gather or create by themselves. Teaming up with the CAS communications team allowed for our department's agricultural communications course get more exposure, which is crucial because OSU is starting a new ag communications program, which will be the first one in Oregon.

Agricultural communications courses should partner with their ag college's communications team to create a bridge between what is happening in the classroom to the outside world. Students enjoyed working with a professional communications team so they could focus more on their messaging and the communications team enjoyed being able to highlight students rather than their usual research spotlight of distinguished faculty. Future plans include partnering with the team to create agricultural podcasts and student highlights.

### **Costs/Resources Needed**

Partnering with the OSU CAS communications team alleviated video production costs which at OSU can cost anywhere between \$2,000-\$3,000 for a short video. In order to produce the video in a timely fashion, an outside student video editor was hired for \$50 to compile the students' recordings together with cut transitions accompanied by music.

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