

**Small Sticker, Big Story: Using Commodity-Inspired Stickers to Promote ANRC
Programming and Oregon Agriculture**

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Introduction/Need for Innovation or Idea

Recruiting students in agricultural communication programs has become increasingly competitive, particularly for new or growing academic programs with limited recruitment funds and/or budget cuts (Robertson et al., 2017). Traditional promotional items such as brochures or flyers are often discarded or forgotten about after a single interaction, limiting their long-term visibility (Edelheim, 2007), however stickers can serve as a creative and engaging way to recruit (Sandusky & Abramson, 2026). In contrast, humorous and visually engaging recruitment materials can help messages stand out, connect with audiences, and foster positive impressions (Abrahams, 2020). Additionally, individuals are more likely to display items that reflect their identity over those perceived as advertisements (Bhattacharjee et al., 2014).

Agricultural communication also plays an important role increasing public awareness of agriculture's diversity. Although Oregon produces over 220 different commodities and is a national leader in specialty crops, public perceptions of agriculture often center on only a handful of commodities (Oregon Department of Agriculture, 2016). Oregon leads nationally in several specialty crops such as seeds, berries, Christmas trees, and specialty flora (Oregon Department of Agriculture, 2016). As a result, recruitment materials can also service as opportunities to showcase the diversity of Oregon agriculture.

To address these needs, the Oregon State University (OSU) Agricultural & Natural Resources Communication (ANRC) program developed a collection of commodity-inspired stickers that simultaneously promoted the ANRC program and celebrated the diversity of Oregon agricultural and natural resources industries. Designed as a low-cost recruitment tool, the stickers encouraged students to engage with both the program and Oregon's agricultural identity. The collection featured illustrations representing some of Oregon's leading agricultural and natural resources industries, humorous agriculture-themed puns, and some ANRC program branding. These stickers acted as micro-messages that were designed with the goal of creating lasting visibility, encouraging student ownership of the program, and sparking peer-to-peer conversations about ANRC. By offering multiple designs, students could select stickers that reflected their personalities, interests, or favorite Oregon commodities.

How it Works/Methodology/Program Phases/Steps

Each sticker acted as a micro-message, celebrating a different aspect of Oregon's agriculture and natural resources, while creating opportunities for peer-to-peer conversations about these industries and the ANRC program. The program created multiple designs that let students choose the message or commodity they aligned with the most.

The stickers were implemented using the following five-step process:

Step 1: Identify key messages and personality of ANRC program. Select top Oregon commodities to feature.

Step 2: Design multiple sticker concepts that balance humor, agriculture, and ANRC program promotion.

Step 3: Order and print high-quality stickers from Sticker Mule.

Step 4: Distribute during campus events, classroom visits, recruitment activities, advising appointments.

Step 5: Encourage students to pick what sticker best aligns with them and to use stickers on laptops, water bottles, notebooks, and other personal items.

A few of the sticker designs included a blueberry with a pencil and notepad that said, “Berry Good at Storytelling,” a muscular beef cow that said, “Beef Up Your Message,” and a fir tree that said, “Fir Real, We Have the Best Communicators.” All stickers had “Agricultural and Natural Resources Communication” featured at the bottom.

Results to Date/Implications

The stickers created repeated visibility throughout campus on coffee thermoses, water bottles, laptops, and notebooks. At OSU, one of the biggest on campus tabling events is Agriculture and Natural Resources Day. During this event, faculty had a table set up to promote the ANRC program and noted that these stickers served as an entry point to get students to come up to the table and ask questions about ANRC coursework and programming. Students reported that the humorous designs initially attracted their attention, while the opportunity to choose stickers featuring their favorite commodities to consume increased personal connection and engagement. Some students were surprised to see that Oregon grew some of the crops featured on the stickers. Rather than faculty using stickers as giveaways, the stickers themselves attracted students to the recruitment table, creating natural opportunities to discuss the growing ANRC program with prospective students. Because students voluntarily displayed the stickers on their items, the ANRC program gained repeated exposure beyond the events they were passed out at. Designing multiple stickers as a collection encouraged students to compare designs, discuss favorite commodities, and often collect more than one sticker. The stickers functioned as micro-messages that extended the reach of ANRC program beyond formal recruitment events.

Future Plans/Advice to others

Future plans will evaluate sticker use through surveys measuring commodity recognition, program awareness, and students’ perceptions of belonging and identity within ANRC. Future iterations will invite ANRC students to design new sticker collections, providing experiential learning opportunities while allowing students to shape the program’s visual identity and to have some personal ownership in the materials. This idea could be adapted Extension offices, commodity groups, agricultural youth organizations, or college clubs and other groups that do not have fundraising funds. For others wanting to use stickers, we recommend investing in durable vinyl so the stickers adhere well to a variety of surfaces, create several unique designs so individuals can choose which sticker aligns best with their personalities, reflect authentic culture rather than institutional branding alone, and use stickers as conversations starters rather than standalone marketing materials.

Costs/Resources needed

Compared to many other recruitment initiatives, collectible stickers require minimal financial investment while providing repeated visibility through student-owned items that travel across campus and beyond. Faculty used a Canva account to create the stickers and used Sticker Mule to print the stickers. Two hundred stickers (5 designs x 50 copies of each) cost \$270 or \$1.08 per sticker.

References

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