Agricultural Communications
An Academic Discipline

- Teaches effective communication
- Works with and in agricultural industries, government agencies, agricultural news, and consumer groups
- Wide range of career opportunities

Agricultural Journalism @ TAMU
- Started in 1918 – small program
- 115 students enrolled currently
- Bachelor of Science
  - 132 Hours
  - 27-33 Hours of AGJR Classes
  - Traditional Writing, Editing, Photography, and Public Relations
  - Non-traditional Electronic and Online Media
Agricultural Journalism @ TAMU

- AGJR Minor
  - 17 hours
  - Same 11 hours of core courses
  - Two AGJR electives
    - Publishing, Public Relations, or Electronic Media

What “Agricultural Communicators” Do?

- Reporters/writers (mags & papers)
- Graphic designers
- Publishers
- Marketing specialists
- Advertisers
- Public relations practitioners
- TV producers/reporters
- Radio announcers/reporters
- Teachers
- Lobbyists
- Public information officers/specialists
- County agents

Where Are They Employed?

- Commodity groups (beef councils, agriculture associations, dairy boards)
- Restaurants
- Supermarkets
- Health organizations
- Gov’t agencies (USDA, EPA, Forestry Service)
- Travel/tourism
- Insurance agencies
- Land-grant universities
- Wildlife organizations
- Marine organizations
- Public relations/ad agencies
- News organizations (mags, TV, radio, papers)
- Food production
How Good Is The Job Market?

• GOOD! Total Demand 6,397

Supply for Communication and Education Specialists, 2000-2005

Academic Training

• “Technical” agriculture
  – Animal science
  – Horticulture
• Agriculture law/marketing
• Communications
  – Presentations
  – Reporting/writing
  – Campaigns/public relations
  – Skills: desktop layout, video, computers

AGJR Academic Program

• Technical agriculture courses
  – College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
  – Marketing, agriculture law, policy courses
• Journalism and Communications courses
  – Department of Agricultural Education
  – Department of Communication
AGJR Academic Program

- Specific Agricultural Journalism/Communications courses
  - Introduction to Agricultural Journalism (AGJR 105)
  - Media Writing I (AGJR 203)
  - Mass Communication Law & Society (JOUR 301)
  - Media Writing II (AGJR 303)
  - Editing for Mass Media (AGJR 304)
  - AGJR 305, 306, or 307 electives
  - AGJR 404, 405, 406, or 407 professional skills

http://www.aged.tamu.edu/agjour/curricula.html

AGJR Programs

- 54 programs offer degrees in agricultural communications.
- Includes programs that offer a emphasis or option in ag comm.
- An additional 70 programs offer related coursework or are developing coursework

Current Research

Agricultural Communications Curriculum
Published in JAC 1992-2001

- Top categories (Williams & Woods, 2002)
- Information technology (14.9%)
  - Electronic Media (13.2%)
  - Communications Management (12.4%)
- Bottom categories
  - Graphic design (0%)
  - Photography (.8%)
  - Marketing (1.7%)
  - Academic Programs (2.4%)

Academic Program Research

- Kroupa & Evans, 1973
  - “agricultural communications programs should adopt a highly flexible curriculum design, particularly for students’ agricultural subject matter.”
- Evans & Bolick, 1982
  - 124 to 133 credit hours for graduation

Academic Program Research

- 1987 North Central Colleges of Agriculture curricula review
  - Major curricular limitations
    - Inadequate oral and written skills
    - Inadequate understanding of business skills
    - Inadequate emphasis on cross-cultural, global perspectives
  - Have these really changed?
Professional Opinions

• Wilson, Paulson & Henderson (1991)
  – Graduate programs
  – Writing, communication technology, understanding & evaluating research, and
    Mass Communication theory
• Sprecker & Rudd (1999)
  – Broad-based instruction about agriculture
  – Communication skills are more important than subject-area knowledge

Academic Program Research

• Reisner, 1990
  – Survey of 26 Agricultural Communications programs
    • 16 teach agricultural communications courses
    • 10 schools offered no coursework specifically
designated as ag communications
    • 5 offered exclusively skills courses
    • 10 offered a micro-macro mixed curriculum
    • 1 offered only macro-level course
  – “Ideal” Curriculum

Southern Agricultural Communications Programs

• Weckman, Witham, & Telg (2000)
  – 13-state southern region
  – Student enrollment increasing
  – Small number of faculty (.5 to 2.6)
  – Housed in other academic departments
  – Ranged from 9 – 115 students
  – Teaching professional skills & critical
    thinking courses
Major questions in the discipline

- Where should Ag. Comm. programs be housed?
- What should drive Ag. Comm. curriculum?
- Should Ag. Comm. programs emphasize specializations?
- Should there be a national Ag. Comm. organization for academic programs?

National Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow

What Is ACT?

- National, student-run organization
- More than 370 members, 24 chapters
  Designed for college students who have a professional interests in communications related to agriculture
  - Don’t have to be an AGJR major
  - Don’t have to be a JOUR major
ACT Chapters

- Cal-Poly State University
- Cornell University
- Kansas State University
- Michigan State University
- Montana State University
- The Ohio State University
- Oklahoma State University
- Purdue University
- South Dakota State University
- Texas A&M University
- Texas Tech University
- University of Arizona
- University of Arkansas
- University of Florida
- University of Georgia
- University of Guelph
- University of Illinois
- University of Kentucky
- University of Missouri-Columbia
- University of Nebraska
- University of Puerto Rico
- University of Wisconsin-River Falls
- University of Wyoming
- Washington State University

What Does It Offer?

- Network with chapters from 21 other states and 2 other countries
- Network with professionals
  - Livestock Publications Council
  - National Association of Farm Broadcasters
  - Agricultural Communicators in Education
  - National Association of Agricultural Journalists
  - Agriculture Relations Council
  - American Agriculture Editors' Association
  - Others...

What Does It Offer?

- National convention
- Newsletters
- Critique and contest
  - Speech/interviews
  - Writing
  - Photography
  - Public relations
  - Electronic media production
Local Events and Activities

- Fund-raisers
- Regional meetings
- Local mentor programs
- Agriculture-related presentations
- Socials
- Meets the 2nd Tuesday of every month
  7:00 p.m., Scoates 214

Interested?

- Contact Us:
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  President
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Check out the National ACT Web site:
http://nact.okstate.edu/

Ag Comm Discipline

- “People” job field
- Understanding of agriculture and communications
- Job openings for graduates
- Adequate pay for entry-level
- Will continue to grow