Concreting the Student Learning Experience in Agricultural Economics through Field Research Projects

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Purpose
This purpose of this study was to assess the impacts of an experiential learning assignment in the shape of a field research project on undergraduate student learning perceptions in an agricultural economics program.

The Article
This study begins with an introduction that includes feasible statements from university students where the dominant theme is the concept of university learning as being separate from the “real world.” Many students have a hard time seeing a connection between what they are learning in school to what they will be doing in their future career. Experiential learning, where students are placed in a location that allows them to interact and learn in and from a “real world” atmosphere, is one instructional method which can be used to increase student skill development for future employment. The authors hypothesize that a structured experiential learning activity with industry commitment will assist students in becoming critical thinkers and differentiate themselves for their future careers. Data included a survey of all students (sophomore/junior level agribusiness management course) completing the project and voluntary, open-ended interviews conducted by a non-course instructor. Results showed that students thought the field project enhanced their learning over other assignments, particularly with a higher frequency of interaction with industry professionals. Also, the results indicated that students found they had an increased depth of content knowledge, improved professional understanding, and a deeper awareness of their strengths.

What this Means for the Field
The results of this study indicate that students obtain higher rates of benefit from experiential learning. Because of this further efforts to include field work in such learning programs would have positive impacts on students’ learning experience. This instructional method of learning is also more closely aligned with work that students will do in the “real world” and thus have a greater impact on their future careers.

Citation

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