



Center for Agri-Science Communications at Texas Tech University

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Introduction

- The public does not trust science (Bauer, Allum & Miller, 2007).
- Consumers are demanding to know how their food is produced but do not know where to go for information ([AFBF], 2002).
- Scientists should seek out the media to become known and consistent sources of information (Eyck 2000).
- Texas Tech University Departments of Plant and Soil Sciences and Agricultural Education and Communications partnered with a multinational agricultural company to launch the Center for Agri-Science Communications (CASC).

Objectives Of The Program

- Train plant and soil scientists to engage through social and digital media channels
- Develop scientists' personal communication skills
- Provide new techniques and tools for communicating science to the general public

Attend a teaching enrichment workshop

Create social media profiles and share their research

Participate in Facebook group discussions

Develop three communications goals

Update their curriculum vitae

Costs/Resources Needed

- Funded through a three-year grant by a multinational agricultural corporation
- Estimated budget of \$200,000

How It Works

Distilling the message

Social media

Reaching out to the media

Spokesperson training

Interpersonal communication

Public speaking

Agricultural advocacy

Online portfolios

Academic communication

Etiquette training

Academic job readiness



Figure 1. CASC students engage in interpersonal communication strategies to use when speaking to different audiences about their research.



Figure 2. Cohort I CASC students receive plaques after completing the first year of the program. Students also received a \$200 stipend.

- ❖ The Center for Agri-Science Communications (CASC) is a one-year program centered around educating the doctoral students from the Department of Plant and Soil Science at Texas Tech University.
- ❖ Students enroll in the program in the Fall semester and graduate the program in May.
- ❖ The program consists of a series of monthly workshops geared toward improving communication skills.
- ❖ Students are provided with a course syllabus.
- ❖ Many workshops are led by guest speakers.

Results to Date/Implications

“At a national conference, I was able to approach other scientists without fear. I *applied* what I’ve learned this semester not only to my communication at *conferences*, but in my dissertation defense. I can now imagine the audience, work on my delivery and findings in a simple way, and make *connections* with my audience.”

“The *positive* learning environment of this class helped me a lot. It changed the way I *communicate* my message. The kickoff workshop was amazing, and this program has *helped* me develop a great *professional* relationship with other students and faculty.”

Future Plans

- Train approximately 60 students
- Develop and teach a course open to all agricultural doctoral students at the university
- Expand program to aid in easing the apprehension that scientists have about public engagement

References

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- Eyck, T. T. (2000). The marginalization of food safety issues: An imperative approach to mass media coverage. *Journal of Applied Communications*, 84(2), 29-47.



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