Using a Social News and Discussion Forum to Engage Students in Agricultural Economics and Marketing

Xiaowei Cai
Department of Agribusiness
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407
cai@calpoly.edu

Lindsey Higgins
Department of Agribusiness
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407
lhiggins@calpoly.edu

and

Marianne McGarry Wolf
Department of Agribusiness
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407
mwolf@calpoly.edu

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CAL POLY SAN LUIS OBISPO
Agribusiness Department
College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences

Background

Why Student Engagement?

- Engagement is linked positively to desirable learning outcomes including critical thinking and grades
- Lowest-ability students benefit more from engagement than classmates

Student Engagement

- Level of academic challenge
- Active and collaborative learning
- Student-faculty interaction
- Enriching educational experiences
- Supportive campus environment
- Reading and writing
- Quality of relationships
- Institutional emphasis on good practices
- **Relevance of material**

Why motivation?

- Eight main teaching elements that motivated students
- Establishing **relevance** as the most important factor
- Abstract theory alone is demotivating

References

- Carini, Kuh, and Klein (2006). "Student Engagement and Student Learning: Testing and Linkages". Research *in Higher Education* 47(1): 1-33
- Kember, Ho, and Hong (2008). "The Importance of Establishing Relevance in Motivating Student Learning". *Active Learning in Higher Education* 9(3): 249-263

Objectives

- Does using relevant current course content in a social media platform engage students?
- Do student conversations about relevant content engage them and enhance learning?

Methods

Courses offered in Winter and Spring 2013:

- AGB 212 - Agricultural Economics
- AGB 301 - Food and Fiber Marketing
- AGB 405 - Agribusiness Marketing Research
- AGB 406 - Agribusiness Marketing Planning
- AGB 443 - Branded Wine Marketing

Relevant Current Content and Conversation Delivered by New Platform-ValuePulse

- Graded Courses: AGB 212, 405, 406, 443
- Extra Credit Course: AGB 301

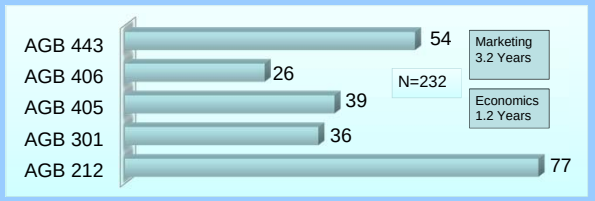
Faculty send articles to students: AGB 212, 301,405, 406	Students send articles to students: AGB 406	Students send articles to Faculty: AGB 406

Conversation & Collaboration

Results

Measurement

Survey administered after ~80% of course assessing students' self-reported: engagement, collaboration, and learning



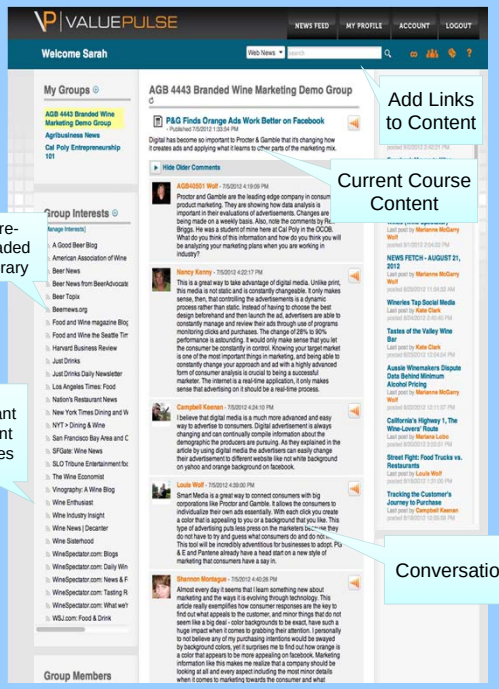
Increased Engagement from Relevant Current Content and Conversation

- **88%** → More engaged and interested in course topics
- **83%** → Learned more by reading classmates' comments

Increased Self-Reported Engagement Resulting in Enhanced Learning

- **87%** → Understand theoretical principles by applying them to current content
- **84%** → Know more about coursework and field of study
- **75%** → Critical thinking skills improved
- **65%** → Written communication skills improved

Sample Course Conversation



Conclusions

Using relevant current course content in a social media platform

- Engages students

Student conversations about the relevant content

- Engages them
- Enhances learning

VALUEPULSE www.valuepulse.com