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

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Selected Poster prepared for presentation at the Agricultural & Applied Economics Association’s 2013
AAEA & CAES Joint Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, August 4-6, 2013

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**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

**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

**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

**Conclusions**

Using relevant current course content in a social media platform:
- Engages students
- Student conversations about the relevant content
- Engages them
- Enhances learning

**References**