

California University students use real-world work to learn of agriculture

by Leslie E. Stevens
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Knight-Ridder Newspapers

There's nothing like a little real-world experience to teach the connection between agriculture and making money.

Whether breeding cattle, producing cheese, raising flowers or making jam, Cal Poly's agricultural students are learning the realities of risk and reward through their enterprise projects.

On Wednesday, agricultural science senior Hilary Beck was out picking tangerines in a Cal Poly orchard with a dozen classmates. The tangerines are Beck's first enterprise project, and she hopes to use the experience in her future ag teaching career.

"It is a great experience to be responsible for actual produce going to market," Beck said. She said it would be nice to make money, but her biggest interest is gaining knowledge she can later share with her students.

"We want to teach our students to earn and learn," said Virginia Walter, environmental horticultural sciences professor. Students in the horticultural departments have ample opportunities

sales. As of last June, the college had 430 students participate in 53 different agricultural enterprise projects, according to Mark Shelton, associate dean of the College of Agriculture. With the exception of some dairy projects, the vast majority made a profit, he said.

The dairy unit may be a special case, said Les Ferreira, head of dairy science. He said with 180 cows, they lack economies of scale available to 1,000-herd operations, a size common to commercial dairies. Also because dairies operation are no longer located in the county, he said they pay considerably more to ship in feed and ship out milk for processing in the Central Valley.

One of the few criticisms aimed at the budding entrepreneurs is that at times they are competing with local businesses. It is a charge the college takes seriously, Shelton said. "We are criticized every year at Farmers Market," he said. "That is why we counsel our students not to sell below market." Walter also said the horticultural unit does not intentionally advertise beyond the campus -- "We do not want to compete with local florists," she said. In general, the volume students

North Dakota professor sues former student for libel over graphic article

by Billy O'Keefe
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TMS Campus

A professor at the University of North Dakota has filed a \$50,000 libel suit against a female former student, six months after he successfully sued the same student for slander and nearly two years after the she was found to be stalking him.

Physics professor John Wagner claims that an article written by 44-year-old Glenda Miskin, in addition to being libelous, is emotionally distressing and exists with the intention of dragging his name and career through the mud.

The article, entitled "Kinky Torrid Romance by Randy Physics Professor: UND ruins the Career of Religion Student with two Children," describes in graphic detail a courtship of Miskin by Wagner. Among the accusations Miskin makes are that Wagner is a sex offender and a pedophile.

Miskin's article, which appears on her site, undnews.com, and is linked

at a separate site, und-fraud.com, accuses the university and Wagner of conspiring to cover up the accusations and drive her out of the university.

"I have learned that it is not safe to make reports to UND Officials," Miskin wrote. "They will blow your confidentiality and will consider you the problem. Looking at a degree on my wall that came from an institution like UND would make me want to throw up. The question that still remains is, is this the reputation that the State of North Dakota and the University of North Dakota wish to project to the public who pay their salaries?"

In addition to seeking punitive damages and compensation for lawyers' fees, Wagner wants both Web sites, which he claims have had hundreds of thousands of visitors, to remove the article.

Miskin, who has two children, has operated undnews.com since October. Its purpose, as described on the front page of the site, is to serve those "who are appalled by what goes on

at UND, a fourth-rate institution that is desperately pretending to be half-way respectable."

In addition to Miskin's account, the site includes stories about censorship, discrimination. Most recent is an alleged interview with Playboy college playmate Veronica Folz, who in the interview refers to Wagner by name and is quoted as saying that UND has "a bad reputation for rape."

Miskin also works for UND-fraud.com as an editor. Wagner has also filed suit against the site's operator, Vivian Nelson, who said that she does not vouch for Miskin's story.

Wagner successfully sued Miskin in July for slander, in a case that involved similar accusations that appear in Miskin's article.

Miskin was suspended from the university after a disciplinary panel in 1999 determined that she was stalking Wagner via a bombardment of phone and e-mail messages. By her own design, she did not and will not return to the university.

Report: U. of Wisconsin recruits took advantage of shoe discounts

by Matthew McGuire
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TMS Campus

Not only did University of Wisconsin athletes receive discounts from a local shoe store but recruits also appear to have violated NCAA rules, the Wisconsin State Journal reported last week.

Several unidentified recruits who had signed letters of intent and were living on campus during the summer of 2000 received discounts, in addition to veteran players, the article stated. An internal investigation revealed that 121 players received discounts totaling more than \$23,000 after the Wisconsin State Journal broke the story last July.

The school later confirmed that student athletes had received unadvertised shoe discounts from the Shoe Box, a shoe store located in the Madison suburb of Black Earth. The store is owned by University of Wisconsin athletic booster Steve Schmitt, who also extended athletes no-interest lines of credit on store merchandise up to \$1,000.

NCAA rules forbid athletes from receiving discounts not available to the general public.

The university required athletes to close any open accounts at the store and repay the discounts to charity. Some students were also suspended and required to perform community service.

Among the players suspended were three basketball players, including two from Wisconsin's Final Four team, 26 football players and a women's soccer player.

The Wisconsin State Journal obtained the 160-page report of the internal investigation through a public-record lawsuit. The report was turned over to the NCAA on Aug. 21 and contained information about shoe discounts to recruits.

"During the past semester, several prospects who had signed letters of intent and were living in Madison prior to initial full-time enrollment were able to purchase shoes at The Shoe Box and receive a discount similar to our athletes," The State Journal quoted the report as stating.

John Dowling, senior university legal counsel, told The State Journal that the university hasn't "been able to confirm that any recruit has been taken to The Shoe Box as part of an official [recruiting] visit."

"It is fun to grow things, but ultimately you have to sell something."

-Virginia Walter,
professor of environmental
horticultural sciences

to grow and market their plants through the on-campus Poly Plant Shop, community farmers markets and sales to retailers.

According to Walter, enterprise projects are often the first exposure students have to the business side of farming. "It is fun to grow things, but ultimately you have to sell something," Walter said. "It is important students see the other side of the coin." Potted poinsettias for the Christmas holidays are the largest project undertaken by the horticulture students. A recent graduate, Terry Leppo, and ag business junior Michele Kakaha were among those who participated. According to Leppo, students potted and sold more than 3,000 plants and grossed about \$20,000. For Kakaha, the project was a turning point. "It let me see what I like doing," she said. As a result, she has decided to focus on marketing and publicity rather than

produce is too small to be a problem for local businesses, she said.

Since 1943 enterprise projects have been part of the learning experience for students. In the College of Agriculture students can earn up to four units of nongraded academic credit for their projects. Students sign contracts with their departments spelling out what they plan to do and the number of hours involved. Projects can be done by a single student or groups of more than 30 for popular beef cattle, citrus and grape enterprises.

The Cal Poly Foundation, a privately funded auxiliary organization that provides support services to the university, acts as the projects' banker and bookkeeper.

It loans money, charges administration and finance expenses, and splits profits with the students and departments. Any losses are repaid to the foundation by the departments.

High school seniors sail through final year, according to study

by Matthew McGuire
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TMS Campus

The U.S. Department of Education has just confirmed what seniors in high school have known for a long time: the last year of high school is a breeze.

In a report issued last week, the National Commission on the High School Senior Year described the senior year of high school as a "lost opportunity" in a report entitled "The Lost Opportunity of Senior Year: Finding a Better Way."

"Instead of meeting new challenges in the classroom, too many of our high school students are drifting through their senior year and discovering that they are unprepared for the demands of this education era," said former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley. "This is a lost opportunity we need to reclaim."

The study found deficiencies in both high school students who entered the workforce and those who entered college.

Upon entering college, many students are poorly prepared for academic demands and the college must send students through a remediation process. Remediation -- often in the form of the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic -- takes place in all community colleges, in four out of five public four-year universities and in six out of 10 private four-year institutions, the study found.

Those students who entered the workforce from high school were

found not be able to read or compute at a ninth grade level, the study found.

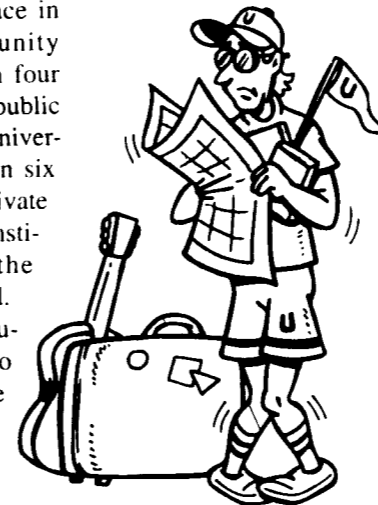
Other findings included that:

-- the structure and organization of high schools closely resembles high schools of several generations ago;

-- internationally American elementary schools rank high, middle schools rank average and high schools rank near the bottom;

-- colleges and K-12 schools do not work well together to align academic content, admissions procedures and expectations for students.

The report is the first of two reports on the subject and is designed to lie out problems facing the American education system. The second study, which will suggest changes, is scheduled to be released in June 2001.



Campus murders drop while sex offenses, robberies increase

by Matthew McGuire
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TMS Campus

The number of murders decreased on college campuses this year, however, the percentage of sex offenses, robberies and hate crimes increased despite downward national trends, according to a new crime report issued by the U.S. Department of Education.

The report analyzes crime data reported by 6,300 colleges and universities for 1997, 1998 and 1999.

Of the crimes committed, only 19 percent occurred on campus, compared to 73 percent that occurred on public property. Of the crimes that took place on campus, about one-third were committed in residence halls.

Even in categories where the percentage of crimes increased, the incident level remained below national levels. For example, while the number of robberies increased on campuses, the national rate was 150.2 robberies per 100,000 persons, compared to 12 per 100,000 college students.

"This report gives us a national perspective on campus safety and serves as a benchmark for parents and students to compare security at individual colleges and universities," said outgoing U.S. Secretary of Edu-

cation Richard W. Riley.

Colleges and universities have been required to record campus crime and distribute an annual security report to students and employees and prospective students. However, it wasn't until this year that schools were required to report the data to the U.S. Department of Education.

The number of murders declined by 54 percent, down from 24 deaths in 1998 to 11 in 1999. This decrease is greater than the national average decline of 8.5 percent in 1999.

The number of sex offenses increased 6 percent from 2,337 in 1998 to 2,469 in 1999. The study states that sex offenses are "the most underreported crime in America. As a result, the increase could reflect improvement in the rate of reporting, rather than an increase in the incidence of sex offenses."

On a national level, incidents involving forcible rape -- one component of total sex offenses -- declined by 4.3 percent in the same time period.

On-campus robberies also increased on campuses, despite a national downward trend, according to the study. Schools reported a total of 1,997 robberies during 1999, up seven percent from 1998 and nine percent from 1997.

The number of reported aggravated assaults totaled 3,777, down from 3,856 in 1998. While the decrease of

two percent on college campuses followed the national trend, it was a smaller figure than the national 6.2 percent decrease.

Burglary is the most frequently reported crime reported to the U.S. Department of Education, and a total of 26,035 burglaries were reported on campuses -- an increase of 2 percent from 1998. Nationally, burglaries declined by 10 percent.

Colleges and universities reported 2,067 hate crimes for in 1999, an increase from 2,374 in 1998. The study attributes the increase to faulty reporting from two-year for-profit institutions, which generally employ police officers and may have misreported some figures.



Sacramento paper sues U. of California -- Davis for release of police reports

by Billy O'Keefe
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TMS Campus

After a public struggle that carried on for several months, the Sacramento Bee this week sued the University of California, Davis for failure on its part to release campus police reports of sexual assaults and other crimes.

The 18-page complaint, filed in Sacramento County Superior Court, claims that the university ignored the law in its refusal to release to the Bee 13 reports filed between August 1996 and January 2000, and that its "policy of secrecy about past crimes" violates both state and federal mandates.

The struggle began after the Bee published a two-part report in September, in which it accused all nine UC campuses of underreporting crime statistics.

The second piece in the series, entitled "UC keeps sex crimes in the shadows," focused sharply on UCD, claiming that the school excluded instances of sexual assault, when reported to sources other than campus police, from its crime statistics.

UCD Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Carol Wall and Vice Chancellor of Administration Janet Hamilton called for the paper to re-

tract the report shortly after it ran.

"Taking alleged 'shortcomings' in statistical reporting and turning them into a deliberate effort to keep crime 'in the shadows' is a substantial leap indeed," stated a letter containing the retraction request. "This representation is not true, and irresponsible to publish."

In a surprise twist, officers for and employees of the UC Davis Police Department issued a vote of no confidence against Chief Calvin Handy, and told Chancellor Larry Vanderhoef that they backed the Bee's claims.

The university has since denied certain public records requests by the Bee, claiming that releasing the records is a violation of privacy for those involved.

In a written statement, Vanderhoef expressed disappointment in the Bee's decision to sue, as well as hope that the two parties can avoid litigation.

"We have proposed, in good faith, a meeting between university and Bee representatives to explore other ways we may be able to provide The Bee the information it is seeking without placing the university at legal risk," he said. "I'm disappointed that the Bee evidently has rejected that meeting in favor of a lawsuit."

U. of Michigan student found dead in dorm

by Matthew McGuire
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TMS Campus

A 20-year-old University of Michigan student was found dead in her dorm room Tuesday, apparently from unnatural causes. Candy Rong-Rong Wei, of Durham, N.C., was rushed to the University of Michigan emergency room after a fellow student found her unresponsive shortly after 3 p.m. Tuesday in her Mosher-Jordan Residence Hall room, said university spokeswoman Diane Brown. Wei was pronounced dead at 3:45 p.m. at the UM hospital emergency room.

An autopsy was scheduled with the Washtenaw County medical examiner Thursday afternoon, and while the death is apparently from unnatural causes, foul play is not expected, Brown said.

Wei was a sophomore majoring in art and design and was fondly remembered by Matthew Schultz, a senior who worked with Wei on the online art publication "Eat the Monster."

"She is one of the few examples of a true artist. Everything she produced was meaningful and touching," Schultz told the Michigan Daily, the UM student newspaper. "She is someone who was engaged in the world."

Immediately following the incident, the university dispatched grief counselors to the dorm, the school of art and design and to faculty, Brown said.

Wei's mother flew to Ann Arbor from Durham Wednesday and her father arrived from New Jersey Thursday.