AUTHORIZATION TO SHARE CAPSTONE
ABSTRACT

MOLLY ERIN MEACHUM “Writing at the Agricultural Institute: Reflections from Faculty and Student Survey Results and Self-Perceptions”. (Under the direction of Professor Chris Anson.)

The ability to communicate in written and oral forms is increasingly being assessed both in and outside of the classroom (Turner, et al. 2013; Legette, Sitton, and Blackwell 2011; Briggeman, Rastegari-Henneberry, and Norwood 2007). Moreover, there is an increased interest in higher education with respect to student engagement because generally academic success is directly linked with student engagement (Johnson, Wardlow, and Graham 12; Paine et al. 265).

This research aims to descriptively review the role of writing at the Agricultural Institute (AGI), a two-year program housed within the College of Animal and Life Sciences (CALS) at North Carolina State University. The mission of the AGI focuses on the combination of “general education” and “technical skills” in the curriculum in order to help students achieve both “personal” and “professional” successes.

Given that the AGI is highly focused on teaching, along with increased awareness of the impact of student engagement, it seems necessary to use a formative assessment to gain insight into the kinds of writing AGI students do. One of the purposes of the study is to provide a platform for discussion and dialogue about writing practices at the AGI and possible improvement for writing across the curriculum.

In this capstone project, questions about writing and the type of writing activities that AGI faculty and students engage in were surveyed. These questions were appended to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) questions, which were divided into three main constructs: 1) interactive writing activities, 2) meaning-making writing tasks, and 3) clear writing expectations. Short answer reflective questions about writing challenges in the classroom and academic study habits that students often struggle with were also surveyed.

Several trends about the use of institutional resources and student academic habits emerged. With these trends and others identified, the AGI writing program as well as faculty across the institute can take measures to improve student engagement and potentially increase student success.