Stimulating the Undergraduate Student in Crops

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The ability on the part of an instructor to arouse interest in the subject he is teaching is of prime importance. This paper deals quite largely with the classroom and departmental extracurricular characteristics that were most effective in stimulating the undergraduate student to major in crops at the University of Nebraska, College of Agriculture.

METHOD

Questionnaires were sent to 189 agronomy majors, the majority of whom had graduated since 1930 and who are at present actively engaged in a line of work in which agronomy plays an important part. These graduates are engaged in 13 different types of work as follows: Soil conservation, 43; various phases of agronomic experimental work, 34; graduate work, 24; agricultural extension, 16; farming, 16; vocational education, 15; farm management, 14; agronomic commercial work, 8; teaching agronomy, 5; Bureau of Reclamation, 5; seedsmen or seed analysts, 4; Indian Service, 3; grain inspection, 2.

The 21 characteristics appearing on the questionnaire were listed under three headings, teaching skills, personal traits or qualities of the instructor, and departmental extracurricular activities as shown in the questionnaire. In filling out the questionnaire each individual was asked to select the six most outstanding characteristics from the entire list and number them from 1 to 6 in order of their importance. In evaluating the characteristics the score was assigned in the reverse order. For instance, when a certain characteristic such as "personal appearance" was placed first, it was given a score of 6; if placed second, it received a score of 5, and so on. If "personal appearance" had been placed first on each questionnaire, this characteristic would have received a score of six times the total number of tabulated returns (6 x 145), or 870.

The response was very generous. Out of 189 questionnaires sent out, 162 were returned. Seventeen questionnaires were discarded because instructions were not followed closely enough to include them in the results. The questionnaire used in the study is presented below.

QUESTIONNAIRE

CHARACTERISTICS

Teaching Skills*

A. Presentation of subject matter.
B. Skill in class discussion.

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