

## Dairy Podcast Project: Exploring Industry Topics and Developing Student Presentation Skills

### Introduction

With millions of podcasts available, information is now literally just an earbud away! The recent explosion of the podcast industry and easy access across a variety of platforms make podcasts a great way to learn on the go!

'I really enjoyed the exposure to new forms of learning. I never really thought to listen to a podcast to learn about anything in the animal science world.' ANS 2350 student

Therefore, to leverage podcast technology and to empower students to explore topics of personal interest, the Dairy Cattle Science ANS 2350 instructor introduced the innovative 'Dairy Podcast Summary Presentation Project' for two consecutive years.

Dairy Cattle Science ANS 2350 focuses on key principles, practices, and decision-making involved when raising dairy cattle across all stages of production. The course serves approximately 100 students each fall. The course includes two 50-minute lectures on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and four 2-hour laboratory sections on Wednesdays.

The 'Dairy Podcast Summary Presentation Project' was created to: 1) encourage students to explore dairy podcasts and to select a topic of their choice to further expand their knowledge, 2) facilitate peer learning through presentations, and 3) promote autonomy, adaptability, and skills such as time management, communication, presentation, and summarization skills. The project incorporated a series of scaffolded checkpoints throughout the semester to ensure continuous project progression, ultimately leading to a well-organized and comprehensive final presentation.

'I never thought there were many podcasts out there about the dairy industry. This project helped me find content that covered in-depth science, as well as content that gave perspectives on the current state of the dairy industry!' ANS 2350 student

### Procedure

#### Part 1

The 'Dairy Podcast Summary Presentation Project' was introduced during week six of the semester at the beginning of each laboratory section. The instructor outlined project guidelines, requiring students to listen to a dairy-related podcast that discussed scientific information. To help students get started, the instructor curated a list of 24 dairy-related podcast shows. Eight undergraduate teaching assistants (UGTA, two per section) were used to help track topics using Google Sheets and no more than two similar topics were permitted in each section. By week nine, students were required to e-mail both of their assigned UGTAs the following information

- The exact title of the podcast show
- Episode number
- Title of the specific episode
- Up to three keywords of the topic being discussed in their podcast

Undergraduate teaching assistants informed each student letting them know if their specific podcast topic was approved or denied.

## Part 2

Once approved, students proceeded with listening to their selected podcast episode and then summarized and created a presentation highlighting at least three key points discussed. To finish their presentation, students shared the most insightful new nugget of knowledge learned. Students were required to upload their completed presentation slide deck into the Learning Management System, Canvas, by the end of week 13. This allowed the instructor ample time to download all presentations, sort them by laboratory section and presentation room (no duplicate topics), and upload the presentations onto the display computers. The instructor created and posted a peer evaluation file in Canvas before presentation day and posted it again in class at the beginning of each lab on presentation day, ensuring students knew whom they would be peer evaluating.

## Part 3

During week 14 of the semester, students presented their PowerPoint slides in a 6-minute ( $\pm$  15 seconds) presentation during their specific laboratory section. Two rooms were used, to accommodate all students. Each presentation room had one UGTA responsible for displaying the correct presentation, keeping time for each presentation, and announcing the final time to be recorded on the peer evaluation rubrics.

'It was really nice to see how passionate my classmates became about different topics that they found interesting.' ANS 2350 student

Ideally, each student was peer-evaluated three times. The instructor averaged these scores for a total of 75 points. This was combined with 25 points from Part 1 (8 points) and Part 2 (5 points), plus 12 points for completing three peer evaluations (4 points each) for a final total of 100 points.

Additionally, a 2-point extra credit feedback assignment was offered for one week in Canvas, including eight Likert Scale questions and four open-ended questions.

“I liked how you split the project up into three parts and had us turn the parts in at different times. It really made it less stressful than doing it all at once.” ANS 2350 student

### **Assessment**

Student feedback gathered from 193 survey respondents across two years, revealed overwhelmingly positive trends. Across both years, 97% of students felt the project allowed them to explore dairy topics in greater depth and 92% of students appreciated learning about new industry topics through peer presentations. Even though 65% of students found the project challenging, they also deemed it rewarding. The project was praised for its structure, organization, and engaging format (88% of respondents). Additionally, 84% of students felt the project promoted critical thinking about their chosen topics and those presented by peers. Overall, a majority (86%) of students considered the project a valuable learning experience and 93% support its continuation in future semesters. As a result of this project, approximately one third of the class has continued listening to more dairy-related podcasts to continue expanding their knowledge about the dairy industry. These trends highlight the project's success in enhancing student learning, engagement, and critical thinking skills.

### **Conclusions**

This project has proven to be an innovative and effective educational tool. By allowing students to explore a wide range of dairy-related topics through podcasts, this project not only deepens their understanding of the industry, but it also broadens their knowledge beyond classroom discussions. This project fosters critical thinking, autonomy, and professional skills through a structured approach that combines peer evaluations and comprehensive feedback, ensuring a well-rounded learning experience. This project exemplifies how modern technology can be integrated with traditional teaching methods to enhance student learning and engagement in a conventional classroom setting.

### **Submitted by:**

Christen Burgett  
Iowa State University  
Ames, IA, USA