

ABSTRACTS
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84 Equine programs, an administrator's perspective.
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Equine programs as a part of colleges of agriculture are relatively new. In 1965, Rutgers University hired the first state extension horse specialist in the modern era and today equine programs are a common part of university agriculture programs. From the perspective of a former equine program leader and now agricultural administrator, equine programs are no different than other ag programs in that they come with both positive contributions and challenges. Of the 440 undergraduate students in the Division of Agriculture at West Texas A&M, 75 (17%) are Equine Industry majors and an additional approximately 40 students identify themselves as pre-vet majors who intend to become equine veterinarians. Equine courses also attract students whose primary interest is another species or who are pursuing an unrelated major. This is particularly true of equitation courses. Students that become involved in equine programs may also have improved retention rates. Equine programs are expensive compared to some other types of programs. Most do not generate significant revenue though the sale of animals or products as do cattle, swine and dairy programs. To be effective, equine programs require extensive facilities that must be maintained to a higher degree than other livestock facilities. State and federal dollars for equine research programs are severely lacking and therefore, faculty in these programs may have difficulty in the promotion and tenure process. A bias against equine programs sometimes exists among other faculty members that do not understand a non-food animal industry. The opportunity for significant external funding from the industry does exist, but is often targeted toward facility development or given as in-kind support. In conclusion, these programs are expensive on the front end, but attract a significant number of students that generate credit hours and become supportive alumni.

Key Words: Equine programs, Undergraduate education, University priorities