

Academic Influence on Student

Perceptions of Intersecting Issues: Wild Equine

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Higher education and learning have a direct influence on how students perceive environmental issues. This study explores range, wildlife, veterinary, and conservation biology undergraduate and alumni student perceptions of the regulation of protected equine populations through the lenses of disciplinary moral orders and academic culture. Two theoretical frameworks were used, moral order (Ylijoki, 2000) and academic tribes (Becher & Trowler, 2001), were used to assess the level of students' socialization and academic influence throughout their experience at the university. Students and alumni (n=12) were interviewed and questioned on their experiences at the university.

The key findings of the study were:

1. Current students remaining in one degree program led to more polarized individuals. There were high levels of academic tribes and influence. Field and job experience

decreased polarization in current students.

2. Field and job experience decreased polarization in alumni students. There was evidence of academic influence throughout the alumni further suggesting the need for in disciplinary integration and curriculum development.
3. Disciplinary moral order was less influential on related degree programs in contrast to the current and alumni wildlife and range students.

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations for practice are suggested:

- The integration of experiential learning opportunities and interdisciplinary curricular developments specific to issues of public debate.
- Curriculum development to stay current with evolving economic, environmental, agricultural, and social issues.
- Integration of the non-academic and experiential learning with formal, classroom-based learning.