



Impact Statement

Project Title:

An Analysis of Factors Impacting Student Decisions To Pursue Agricultural Related Majors and the Student Recruitment and Retention Practices of Land Grant and Non Land Grant Institution - Colleges of Agriculture: Implications for Recruitment and Retention

Issue:

As our global population is projected to exceed nine billion by 2050, we face unprecedented challenges to produce sufficient food, feed, fiber, and biofuel feedstock. Agriculture is essential for human health and wellness. Over the next 40 years, we must produce more food than has been produced over the past 10,000 years combined, as well as sufficient biofuel feedstock to ensure a secure and independent energy supply on a contracting land area with fewer inputs. Failure to meet these goals will cause food insecurity in many parts of the world, leading to instability in the global, geopolitical landscape. Coupled with this is the growing demand for sustainable agricultural practices, and locally grown food systems, in order provide fresh food products for changing dietary and health habits. The United Nation's Food and Agricultural Organization estimates that agriculture collectively, accounts for forty percent of the global workforce. Land Grant and Non Land Grant University Colleges of Agricultural offer unique venues to train individuals equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by professionals to address the complex issues facing the 21st Century Global Agricultural Industry.

Given the aforementioned factors it is imperative that both Land Grant and Non Land Grant Universities are prepared to attract high caliber students to address the many issues facing the global agricultural industry, now and in the future. Having an understanding of the factors that would attract potential undergraduate students to pursue an academic major in agriculture and retain them, particularly among various demographic groups, would greatly assist Colleges of Agriculture in developing effective student recruitment and retention strategies. To accomplish the aforementioned initiatives this research study was conducted.

What has been done:

Prior to this study no national studies had been conducted upon land grant and non-land grant colleges of agriculture collectively, to gauge the specific strategies utilized for student recruitment and retention, and additionally among existing agricultural majors to determine what factors encouraged them to pursue an agricultural related major. For the first part of this project a web-based survey was sent to all college of agriculture academic administrators throughout the United States, as listed with the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities. For the survey administrators were asked what specific strategies they utilized to recruit and retain students, based upon practices cited in latest student recruitment and retention literature. Moreover, administrators had to indicate to what extent those strategies were used with minority/underrepresented students. A three-round web based questionnaire approach was utilized for this study, which resulted in 58 completed surveys out of 124 (47% return rate). For the second part of this project a web-based survey was designed to determine the factors that influenced current agricultural majors to pursue an agricultural related major. The survey was sent to the 58 responding college administrators from the first part of the project, asking for them

to forward it to their respective students. This resulted in 1,015 completed surveys, representing 54 of the 58 corresponding colleges.

Impacts/New Partnerships:

The impact of this project will be seen in the strategically based student recruitment and retention strategies that will be utilized by United States Colleges of Agriculture in the future, and moreover the understanding of such strategies as related to the recruitment and retention of minority/underrepresented students into agricultural related majors.

Outcome of Project (societal impact/ measure of increased quality of life)

The outcomes of this project were the development of two models, an Agricultural Student Recruitment Model and Agricultural Student Retention model, based upon the data collected from the responding college of agriculture academic administrators, and respective agricultural college majors. Specifically, within the models are references to strategies for the recruitment of minority/underrepresented students.

How has your project been aided by your FSLI experience?

The FSLI program was the essential foundational conduit through which this project was able to be completed. Having access to the national network of agricultural academic administrators allowed the facilitation of the project, and moreover the access to their respective students, in order to gauge their respective perceptions about factors that encouraged them to pursue an agricultural related major.

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