

Jacqueline Campbell, Agricultural Education

Year in School: Senior
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Bryan Garton, Agricultural Education
Funding Source: William Boatright Endowment

Where are they today? A follow-up of agricultural education graduates at the University of Missouri 1999-2003

The purpose of this study was to determine the employment and occupational status of agricultural education graduates. The study further sought to assess graduates' level of job satisfaction, factors leading to their changes in employment, and the employability skills needed and the contribution of curriculum in preparing students for the skills. Agricultural Education graduates from May 1999 through May 2003 ($n = 112$) participated in the study. The Dillman Total Design Method (Dillman, 2000) was followed in the data collection process. Mailings of postcards and questionnaires assisted in the collection of data for the 96 respondents. A majority of the graduates (87%) reported they were employed full-time. Of those graduates, there was a wide dispersment of careers with nearly two-thirds employed as teachers in public schools, or in sales or management positions. The remaining 13% reported being in graduate school (7%), employed part-time (5%), or caring for family (1%). The level of job satisfaction was compared between graduates teaching secondary agriculture with graduates in industry careers. There was no difference in the level of job satisfaction between graduates in teaching versus industry. Factors influencing a career change were examined among those who had changed occupations since graduation. Of the 14 identified factors, "career goals/ambitions changed" was reported as the major factor for a career change while "personality conflicts with co-workers" had little influence on changing careers or occupations.

Graduates were split into two categories, teaching in a public school and working in an industry career, to examine employability skills needed and the contribution of the agricultural education curriculum to the development of necessary employability skills. To factor in the contribution of curriculum with the importance of the employability skills, the Borich Needs Assessment Model (Borich, 1980) was utilized to create Mean Weighted Discrepancy Scores. Based upon the mean weighted discrepancy score, "analyzing information to make decisions" was reported as the skill with the greatest need for curriculum modification. "Working as a team member" had the least implication for curriculum changes. The overall program and academic advising toward the preparation of students for careers was assessed to confirm graduates were prepared for careers in teaching or industry. "Quality of instruction" was found to be the highest ranked characteristic when assessing career options in agricultural education. In general, instruction, curriculum organization, course availability, student organization, quality of students, and internship experiences were rated as being excellent.