Cultivating Personal and Professional Development: The Benefits of a Student Designed Agricultural Industry Tour

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Oregon State University
History

• AgExec serves as governing body within the College of Agricultural Sciences
• Began in 1995 – President of Agricultural Executive Council
• First tour – students fit in one van
• Student-led event for 20 years
How it Works

• Vice President is responsible for organizing the tour
• Support from officer team, Academic Programs Office, and Experiential Learning Coordinator
• Financial support from industry donors
• Support from volunteers
Marketing

The Agricultural Executive Council Presents:

SWAG Industry Tour
Informational Meeting

6:15 P.M. Wednesday April 8th 2015
Linus Pauling Science Center 125

Sign Up Today in Bexell 214 or 330
Registration fee $50
Fee increases after Dec. 12
Benefits

• Industry connections
• Networking
• Exposure to numerous areas of agriculture
• Personal growth
• Professional growth
• Career readiness
Benefits

“…on the tour, we were able to witness aspects of the agricultural industry…I am able to use what I witnessed on the tours and, as a result, relate better to topics that I would have otherwise been unfamiliar.”

--Jessica Budge

Executive Director, Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom
Oregon State University Alumni
Experiential Learning

Concrete Experience (CE)

Active Experimentation (AE)

Reflective Observation (RO)

Abstract Conceptualization (AC)

Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984)
Objectives

• Determine students’ general satisfaction with the industry tour
• Explore the perceptions and attitudes concerning personal and professional benefits of participating in an agricultural industry tour
• Implementation of reflection activities to foster the experiential learning process
Survey Instrument

• On-site, paper survey instrument
• Designed to measure perceptions and attitudes of students who participated in an internship – modified for industry tour participants
  – Supplemental reflection worksheet
Participants

• 37 participants
• 25 had not participated in an industry tour prior to this event
• 29 females, 8 males
Participants

Grade Level

- Graduate: 1
- Senior: 9
- Junior: 11
- Sophomore: 10
- Freshman: 6
Participants

*Major Within the College*

- **Agricultural Sciences**: 27%
- **Animal Science**: 30%
- **Agricultural Business Management**: 16%
- **Food Science and Technology**: 11%
- **Horticulture**: 8%
- **Applied Economics**: 2%
- **Ecological Engineering**: 3%
- **Bioresource Research**: 3%
Findings

Perceived Career Readiness

- I feel more confident to talk to industry professionals: 100% agree
- I am more aware of career opportunities: 92% agree
- I have gained insight into my chosen career field: 70% agree
- I have grown professionally due to the tour: 86% agree
Findings

Industry Tour Satisfaction

- I felt a sense of pride learning about Oregon agriculture: 82% Agree, 8% Neutral, 0% Disagree
- I grew personally from the industry tour: 88% Agree, 19% Neutral, 3% Disagree
- Supported my perception of Agriculture: 95% Agree, 5% Neutral, 0% Disagree
- Was pleased with tour stops: 85% Agree, 12% Neutral, 3% Disagree
Conclusions

• Students were satisfied with the industry tour
• Students felt an increase in perceived career readiness
• Created the potential for long term industry partnerships
• Created career and internship opportunities for students
Implications

• Implemented a one day industry tour this spring that was equally successful
• Acquired significant support from the Dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences
  – Expressed interest in reaching all 210+ agricultural commodities in Oregon over the next two years
  – Considering offering upper division credit for students who attend a three day industry tour
  – Interested in facilitating enough tours to accommodate all interested students within the college
Recommendations

• Further research on students’ perceptions, attitudes, and motivations to participate
• Further research on industry impact
• Creation of an industry tour specific measurement tool to capture useful data, including pre and post assessments
• Further application of the use of reflections – implementation of experiential learning process
Recommendations

• Collaboration with other colleges (e.g. College of Business, College of Forestry)
• Host industry tours on parent visit weekends
Thank You!

• Questions?