Perceptions of Degree Value and Employment Readiness of Recent CALS Graduates:
A follow-up study

ABSTRACT

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) at the University of Arizona (UA) aims to provide the highest quality educational experience available. When CALS graduates leave the college and enter the workforce, they are in a unique position to analyze and critique their experience within CALS. Evaluating this information will allow CALS to determine if the curricula and degrees are properly preparing students to be effective and prepared within the workforce.

Follow-up studies have been used extensively to evaluate the effectiveness of college programs and their effectiveness in preparing graduates for employment. By using follow-up studies to evaluate graduate perceptions of degree value and employment readiness, CALS may gather information that will aid in making better informed decisions regarding the adjustment of curricula or the various programs within CALS. CALS must ensure that they are adequately preparing graduates in order that they remain competitive in the global economy.

The design of the study was descriptive survey research. The survey was designed to assess educational experience of graduates from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) at the University of Arizona (UA). The assessment was used to evaluate perceptions of degree value and employment readiness of CALS graduates from 2011, 2012, and 2013.

The target population of this study consisted of CALS graduates from the classes of 2011, 2012, and 2013. The population was comprised of graduates within the 10 academic units of CALS, covering 16 majors. The data from this study may be used by stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of CALS in their preparation of graduates for employment. Collecting graduate
input will allow the administration of CALS to better evaluate and implement alterations to curricula or programs to better suit the needs of graduates and employers.
This study focused on graduate perceptions of both degree value and employment readiness. Degree value is the value a graduate places on the degree they acquired from CALS and the UA. Graduate perceptions were evaluated using the Net Promoter Score (NPS) which is used in various industries to gauge customer satisfaction. Degree value was also evaluated using items that related to a graduate's access to academic advising, career service, and alumni engagement. Employment readiness of graduates was evaluated using items that evaluated perceptions related to seven skills including: communication, decision-making/problem-solving, self-management, teamwork, professionalism, experiences, and leadership.

CALS graduates were satisfied with their time at the UA, however, they were less satisfied with their degree selection within CALS. The lack of satisfaction with CALS was primarily from the lack of access and knowledge of Career & Academic Services. Many graduates cited having no knowledge of the services provided and as a result found difficulty in finding related internships or work-experiences related to their degrees before graduation. Overall, graduates were satisfied with CALS ability to prepare them for careers, but were less satisfied with their degree selection from CALS.