



Sense of Belonging in Agricultural Education Research to Practice

Co-creating an ag careers workshop series

Background

Students who grew up in agricultural communities often hear a common refrain: *stay away from agriculture. Go be a doctor, lawyer, engineer or business leader.* Yet there are many agricultural and food system careers that are not as physically demanding as field work and can be rewarding for college graduates interested in making a difference in the agricultural and environmental sectors. Even so, students may not know about these careers or how to access them. Many universities have career and internship resources, but depending on the campus climate, students may feel more comfortable accessing career related information from peers or in affinity spaces.



image credit: Katharina Ullmann

“[The career workshop] was very beneficial even for me that’s been here quite some time :)”

What we did:

Student Farm staff co-developed and co-hosted a three-part Professional Development Workshop Series with the UC Davis Multiculturalism in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences ([MANRRS](#)) chapter and the [Internship and Career Center](#) (ICC). Many universities have a MANRRS chapter or similar student organizations. We began by seeking out and asking the MANRRS student leadership team and ICC staff if they wanted to partner on a professional development workshop series. We then met as a group and asked the MANRRS team what topics would be most useful for them. They identified the following topics: *USDA internship opportunities and how to create federal resumes, how to search for agricultural jobs, and how to write a resume and cover letter for an industry job.* Staff from the state USDA-NRCS office, along with a UCD student who had completed an NRCS internship led the first workshop which took place at the UC Davis Center for Chicana and Latinx Academic Student Success. Next, the Student Farm Director led the workshop on how to find agricultural jobs. Staff from the Internship and Career Center led the resume and cover letter workshop. The latter two workshops were located at the standard MANRRS Weekly Seminar meeting location. Students participating in the seminar series found that the workshops were helpful or very helpful.

Best practices:

- **Determine what training opportunities currently exist and explore collaborations** with university's internship and career center, leaders at campus affinity based academic support centers (at UC Davis these fall under Student Affairs' Academic Retention Initiatives) and student organizations for clubs that support Rising Scholars, like MANRRS.
- **Meet with student leaders** to determine which workshop topics to prioritize and where to hold workshops. Workshops should be held in existing student meeting spaces. Recognize power dynamics and unconscious biases you may hold and work to dismantle them when collaborating.
- **Identify guest lecturers to lead workshops** and work with student leaders to schedule workshops so as not to conflict with midterms or finals. When identifying guest lecturers keep representation in mind – ensure that students can see themselves in the guest lecturers you invite.
- **Recognize students** who attend workshops and **meet them where they're at**. Students today experience competing stressors that limit the time they have to devote to extracurricular activities. These stressors may include academic responsibilities, work, access to basic needs, and mental health.
- **Encourage students with more experience to mentor students with less experience**. Students will vary in their career readiness and self-confidence. Create a compassionate learning environment and help students navigate feelings related to imposter syndrome
- **Honor students and their lived experiences** and help them feel socially connected and supported. Recognize the value of their background and perspectives and help them understand how much the agricultural sector needs leaders with their lived experience knowledge.

Resources

- Example [flyer for career development workshop series](#)

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This work was carried out at UC Davis on the homeland of Patwin people, we are grateful for their stewardship. Today there are three federally recognized Patwin tribes: Cachil DeHe Band of Wintun Indians of the Colusa Indian Community, Kletsel Dehe Wintun Nation, and Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation who continue to steward, protect and cherish this land as elders have instructed their young through generations.

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