# Survey of 1862 Land-Grant University Agricultural Leadership Academic Programs

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## Introduction

Research in the agricultural education and agricultural leadership disciplines have been inconsistent (Connors and Swan, 2006). Kaufman, Rateau, Ellis, Kasperbauer, and Stacklin (2010) summarized how needs assessments are the first step in working to evaluate leadership education programs. By soliciting input from agricultural leadership and education experts, one might better understand career focus and placement for graduates, objectives of leadership programming, courses taught related to agricultural leadership, and perceptions held by associates within the discipline (Morgan, King, Rudd, & Kaufman, 2013). A recommendation from Williams, Townsend, and Linder (2005) indicated a qualitative study should be conducted to include known leaders within the field to better understand knowledge of the discipline.

The purpose of this study was to identify and characterize the current agricultural leadership academic programs in colleges of agriculture, food, human, life or environmental sciences at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The study supports the The National Research Agenda Priority 5: Effiecient and Effective Outcomes, which addresses the needs to develop effective academic programs to advance the career, developmental, and academic needs of diverse learners (Doerfert, 2011). Four research objectives guided the larger study. This manuscript reports the data collected via survey related to these specific research objectives:

1. Identify all 1862 land-grant universities with agricultural leadership academic programs;
2. Determine demographics of agricultural leadership faculty; and
3. Describe identified agricultural leadership programs.

## Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior and Bloom's Taxonomy provided the framework of the study. Ajzen's Theory focusses on intentions that represent the motivations of an individual in relation to his or her conscious plans or decisions to begin a certain behavior (Ajzen, 2005). According to Conner and Armitage (1998), the Theory of Planned Behavior has experienced a high degree of success in predicting varieties of behaviors and serves as a solid theory for creating effective design decisions in producing change behaviors. Additionally, Bloom's Taxonomy is popular among many academic disciplines as a form of understanding how people learn or master a given subject in a process. With history traced back to 1956, Bloom's Taxonomy has served as a model for academic and human growth (Forehand, 2005). Therefore, Bloom's Taxonomy can be used as a model for academic programming growth.

## Methodology

There are fifty 1862 land-grant institutions with a college related to agriculture, food, life, human or environmental sciences (APLU, 2015). Each college's website was searched for undergraduate or graduate degree, specialization, concentration or option in leadership. Each university that offered programs where students could receive academic credit for a program related to agricultural leadership were contacted (N=26). Of the 26 identified schools, 22 (n = 22) universities agreed to participate in the study. University administrators such as department heads and academic deans provided names of faculty working in an agricultural leadership

program to participate in an electronic survey containing 10 questions. The study was approved by IRB. Descriptive statistics were used to discuss the objectives.

## Results / Findings

Regarding objective one, a total of 26 (N=26) 1862 universities currently have agricultural leadership-related academic programs housed in a college of agriculture, food, life, human, or environmental sciences. These universities included Arizona, Auburn, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi State, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico State, North Carolina State, Ohio State, Oklahoma State, Oregon State, Penn State, Purdue, Rutgers, South Dakota State, Tennessee, Texas A&M, California-Davis, Virginia Tech, and West Virginia. All identified universities offered a major, minor, concentration, or specialization in agricultural leadership-related programs. Of the identified universities, 15 of the programs (68%) were housed in an academic department related to agricultural education, communications, leadership, or extension education, while seven (32%) were described as interdisciplinary programs.

Objective two related to respondent demographics. Of the 26 identified universities, respondents from 22 (n=22) institutions participated in an electronic survey for a response rate of 84.6%. Respondents included 16 males and six females. Additionally, participants' job titles included program coordinator (n=1), as well as assistant (n=8), associate (n=4), and full professors (n=9). The average respondents had been teaching agricultural leadership for a total of nine years with 36% (n=8) teaching five years or less, 36% (n=8) teaching six to ten years, 9% (n=2) 11 to 15 years, and 18% (n=4) teaching for 20 or more years.

Objective three described characteristics of the agricultural leadership programs. Among the 22 participating universities, agricultural leadership programs have existed for an average of 17 years, with 18% (n=4) existing in the last five years, 18% (n=4) six to 10 years, 23% (n=5) 11 to 15 years, 9% (n=2) 16 to 20 years, 9% 21 to 25 years, and 23% (n=5) existing for over 25 years. Undergraduate enrollment in programs ranged from 15 to 700 students, with an average of 136 undergraduate students per program. A total of 20 institutions (91%) require an internship or capstone experience before graduation, and the average number of courses required to meet degree requirements is five leadership-related courses. In terms of teaching support, programs had an average of four faculty devoted to teaching leadership courses. Two programs had faculty who shared leadership teaching responsibilities and no faculty solely devoted to teaching leadership courses, while larger programs reported up to 16 leadership faculty members. A total of seven universities offered agricultural leadership graduate programs, where graduate student enrollment ranged from two to 75 students.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The researcher's data revealed 52% (N = 26) of 1862 land-grant institutions currently have agricultural leadership-related programs. It is interesting to note many of these programs (n=10) are located in southern region of the U.S. From the data, it can be reasonably inferred there is a large chasm in relation to program size, number of required courses, longevity of programs, and experience among faculty members. Recommendations for future research include conducting a research study to emcompasses all faculty members at 1862 land-grant schools or even broadening the study to include all agricultural leadership programs in higher education.

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