

VIEW FROM THE TOP:

A CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP DELPHI PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

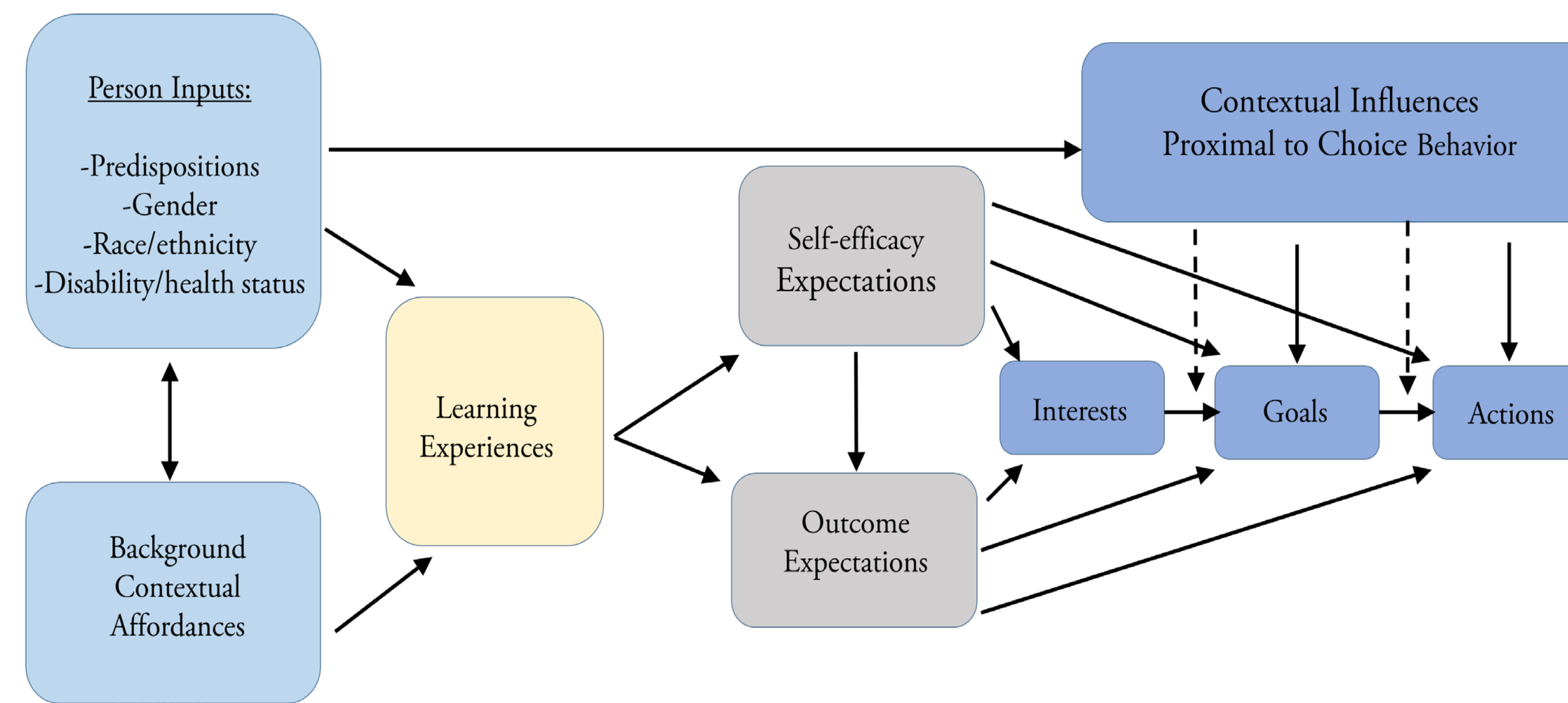
Maintaining a pool of high quality teacher candidates is a challenge exacerbated with the expansion and creation of programs statewide. Nationally, 739 teachers reported leaving the agriculture classroom with teacher preparation programs only providing 717 new teachers (Foster, Lawver & Smith, 2014), leaving a gap to fill. As of May 2, 2016 there are 65 agriculture teaching positions open in California (D. Dunnigan, personal communication, May 2, 2016). Teacher preparation institutions in California estimated producing 62 new teachers during the 2015-16 academic year, leaving a gap to fill during the early stages of the hiring season (California Department of Education [CDE], 2015).

The shortage of agriculture teachers requires our profession to urge students to join the profession. California agricultural education leadership has designated this as an area of critical concern to the profession (L. McCabe, personal communication, October 15, 2015), thus their opinions were sought.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994, 2000, 2002) which indicates “performance and persistence in educational and occupational pursuits” (1994, p. 79) as conditions which affect the development of an individual’s career choice. Lent et al. (1994) described academic development and career choice as “dovetailing” (p. 81) with information acquired during school, ultimately affecting career decisions.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994, 2000, 2002)



Methodology

A Delphi Study, or “group process which utilizes written responses as opposed to bringing individuals together,” (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975, p. 83) was conducted to form a consensus of 18 leaders in California agricultural education including: Six California Department of Education Consultants, the California FFA Advisor, the Executive Director of the California Agricultural Teachers Association [CATA], The five state officers for the CATA, and the five program coordinators from institutions whom credential agriculture teachers in California.

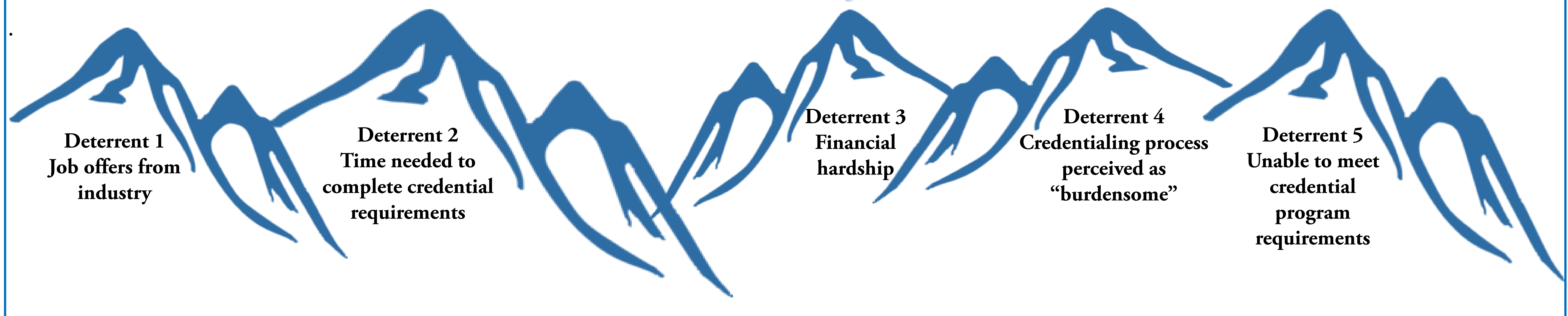
Round 1: Participants were asked, “To your knowledge, list of all of the reasons why agriculture teacher candidates (college students) who express an interest in becoming an agriculture teacher have not continued on the path towards becoming an agriculture teacher?”

Round 2: Items generated from Round 1 (24) were rated on an interval scale of 1 to 10 identifying how greatly participants think the reasons deter persons from continuing towards becoming an agriculture teacher (1=little deterrence and 10=extreme deterrence).

Round 3: The items from Round 2 with an average of 5 (moderate deterrence) were then ranked by participants from order of greatest deterrence to least deterrence.

Round 4: Participants offered any additional thoughts or insights on the top 5 ranked deterrents.

Results/Findings

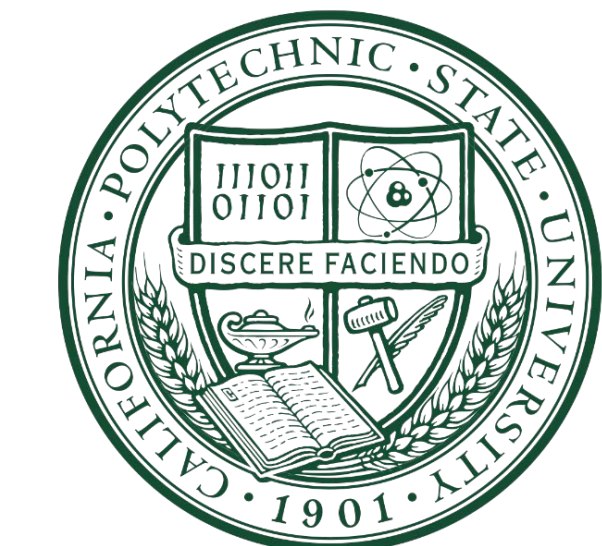


Conclusion

- Most stakeholders agree with the top five deterrents, although not in order.
- There is overlap of Deterrents 2, 4, and 5.
- It is difficult to pinpoint why students accept job offers from industry.
- Financial considerations of student teaching and burdensome requirements of the credential program may play a role in students’ decision not to pursue a credential.
- Scholarships or financial incentives need to be maintained and/or increased, especially during the student teaching process.
- Credentialing needs to be streamlined with special consideration to maintaining quality.
- As Lent et al. (1994) suggested via Social Cognitive Career Theory, students need regular, continued exposure to the idea of pursuing agricultural education as a career starting in high school and continuing during their college career.

Implications/Recommendations/Impact

Further studies are recommended to determine how program requirements for agriculture credential candidates can be reduced and to examine the relationship between students who choose to enter the industry as opposed to a credential program. Additionally, further research should be conducted to determine effective methods to identify and nurture high school students with an interest or propensity to teach agriculture, as well as how teacher preparation programs can work with them to move them through the credential process.



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