

**Purdue Faculty and Staff Award Recipients' Perceived Value of a PK-12 Awards Program**

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### **Introduction**

The Purdue College of Agriculture PK-12 Engagement Program was designed to engage youth, teachers, parents, and grandparents by building relationships and networking opportunities. The PK-12 Council established outreach and engagement awards to recognize and reward faculty and full time staff that have excelled and demonstrated impact in outreach and engagement. Awards are tools that can be used as incentives and motivational influences to promote scholarship (Brawer et al., 2006). Awards can add value to a program and validate support from administration and institutions (Fitzpatrick & Moore, 2015). Awards can provide recipients with extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Huggett, et al., 2012). If awards address motivation, incentives, and program validation, then it was helpful to understand how the award recipients perceived the benefits of the award.

### **Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

The Faculty Engagement Model (FEM) framed the study. The FEM shows the relationship among three dimensions: institutional, professional, and personal. Faculty are motivated to engage in activities based on what their institution values. The culture of the institution and values related to promotion and tenure, research relative to teaching, allocation of funding, and administrative support are extrinsic motivators of the institutional dimension. The professional dimension includes the norms and values of the department and the professional relationships, which serve as extrinsic motivators. The personal dimension encompasses intrinsic motivators such as personal values, time, personal and teaching identity, age, and personal experiences (Wade & Demb, 2009). "Faculty act on their intrinsic personal motivation for public service once the extrinsic motivation (tenure) has passed" (Wade & Demb, p. 11).

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose was to describe previous award recipients' perceptions of the perceived value of the Purdue College of Agriculture PK-12 Awards Program. Four research questions guided this study: (1) How did PK-12 Awards benefit staff and faculty? (2) How was the award funding utilized? (3) How many students, parents, and educators were reached annually through PK-12 engagement efforts of the award recipients?

### **Methods**

Five cohorts of award recipients in the Purdue College of Agriculture were recognized between 2016 to 2020 excellence and impact of PK-12 engagement and outreach efforts. Three team awards and 12 individual awards recognized a total of 18 faculty and staff. A questionnaire was developed to assess the award recipients' perceptions regarding the impact of the PK-12 Awards Program. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: (1) Perceived Value (12 items); (2) Annual Number of Participants Reached (3 items); (3) Open-ended Questions (3 questions); and, (4) Demographics (2 items). The questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of experts for face and content validity. Data was collected using an online survey tool over four weeks. Twelve recipients completed the questionnaire (66.7% response rate). Seven were faculty and five were staff. Ten were individual recipients and two received a team award. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and qualitative data were coding using descriptive and in

vivo coding techniques (Saldaña, 2015). Data were independently coded and then collaboratively reviewed and modified by two researchers through peer debriefing.

### Results

Results are presented to answer each research question.

**RQ-1. Benefits of the PK-12 awards:** In response to the survey, participants agreed the top benefits were as follows: (1) increased overall perceived value of PK-12 Engagement Program, (2) increased recognition of recipients' PK-12 excellence and impact, (3) increased dissemination of PK-12 activities and outcomes, (4) improved existing PK-12 activities and (5) strengthened collaborations for PK-12 engagement. Further, participants commented the award legitimized the PK-12 Program and their work, and supported their program, networking opportunities, and career merit.

**RQ-2. Funding Utilization:** Three themes emerged from the open-ended question. First, the funding was used to increase program engagement. Next, recipients used it to fund presentations, workshops, professional development, and student activities. Finally, funds were used for project and program development. Materials were purchased for program events or projects, and the curriculum was developed and shared.

**RQ-3. Audiences Reached:** Participants recorded their annual engagement with students, parents, and educators. Collectively there were 20,815 students reached per year, and 1,892 students reached annually per award recipient. There were 1,895 parents reached per year, and 237 parents reached annually per award recipient. The total number of educators reached per year was 2,008, and 183 educators reached per award recipient. Collectively, the 12 receipts reach 24,718 PK-12 students, parents, and educators annually.

### Conclusions, Implications & Recommendations

Award recipients agreed the award helped improve their PK-12 engagement and increased their credibility among peers, administrators, and external stakeholders. This supports the FEM (Wade & Demb) and the findings of Bethel et al. (2021) because faculty and staff perceive what the institution values. Awards with funding can provide extrinsic incentives to promote and improve engagement programs (Seppala & Smith, 2020). Award recipients should be recognized through various media. Participants agreed the awards offered support for the program, notably financial support. The Program offered networking opportunities and career evidence. Faculty and staff were motivated by the funding allocation and career incentives, aligning with the FEM and findings of Ruedrich et al. (1992). Awards with financial support should be implemented for programs that want to increase program support, improve existing curriculum, and engage in new activities to broaden their audiences. Funding was utilized to increase program engagement and program development. Supporting the FEM, funding serves as an extrinsic motivator within the institutional dimension. Of the collective participants the 12 awardees reached annually, 84% were PK-12 students, 8% were parents, and 8% were educators, teachers, and volunteers. The evidence of community involvement as reported by the award recipients supports the FEM (Wade & Demb). Awards can serve as extrinsic motivators to broaden the audience of a program and increase stakeholder buy-in (Hugget et al.). Future research should explore the challenges, barriers, risks, and negative consequences of the award program (Fitzpatrick & Moore; Seppala & Smith). Moreover, mixed methods, including semi-structured and focus group interviews, should be conducted to better understand more specifics and stories regarding impact of the awards program and detailed funding utilization.

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