

AN EVALUATION OF THE 2025 NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATORS OF TOMORROW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

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Introduction

Professional development enhances student learning and career readiness (Mizell, 2010). Discipline-specific conferences provide experiential learning, mentorship, and community. The National Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (NACT) hosts the Professional Development Conference (PDC) featuring workshops, tours, and networking (National ACT, n.d.). This study evaluated the 2025 National ACT PDC.

Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory

Training = future career value
(Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1971)

Theory of Planned Behavior

Attitudes, norms, control → behavior
(Ajzen, 1991)

Methodology

- 86 students + 14 advisers attended
- Survey developed, validated, & distributed via QR code (Creswell, 2012)
- $N = 57$ responses (57% response rate)
- Questions: demographics, session feedback, overall impact
- Analysis: descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages)

Results

Students gained confidence in content creation, industry awareness, and mentorship. Panels and applied workshops were most valued, while suggestions included more sessions on portfolios, podcasting, and policy.

- 89% ($f = 51$) satisfied to extremely satisfied; 90% ($f = 51, n = 56$) plan to apply knowledge
- Top goals: networking (36.8%, $f = 21$) & professional growth (33.3%, $f = 19$)

“The most valuable sessions were those featuring life lessons and information that we can implement or build our own skills.”

Conclusions

The PDC successfully advanced professional development and career readiness, aligning with NACT’s mission (National ACT, n.d.). Findings support Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1971) by demonstrating the value of investing in conferences and align with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) in showing strong intent to apply skills.



Recommendations

- Prioritize applied, hands-on sessions
- Expand peer interaction & mentorship
- Keep professional panels central
- Continue conference research & evaluation



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