

COMPLETERS OF THE VIRGINIA GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL FOR AGRICULTURE: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

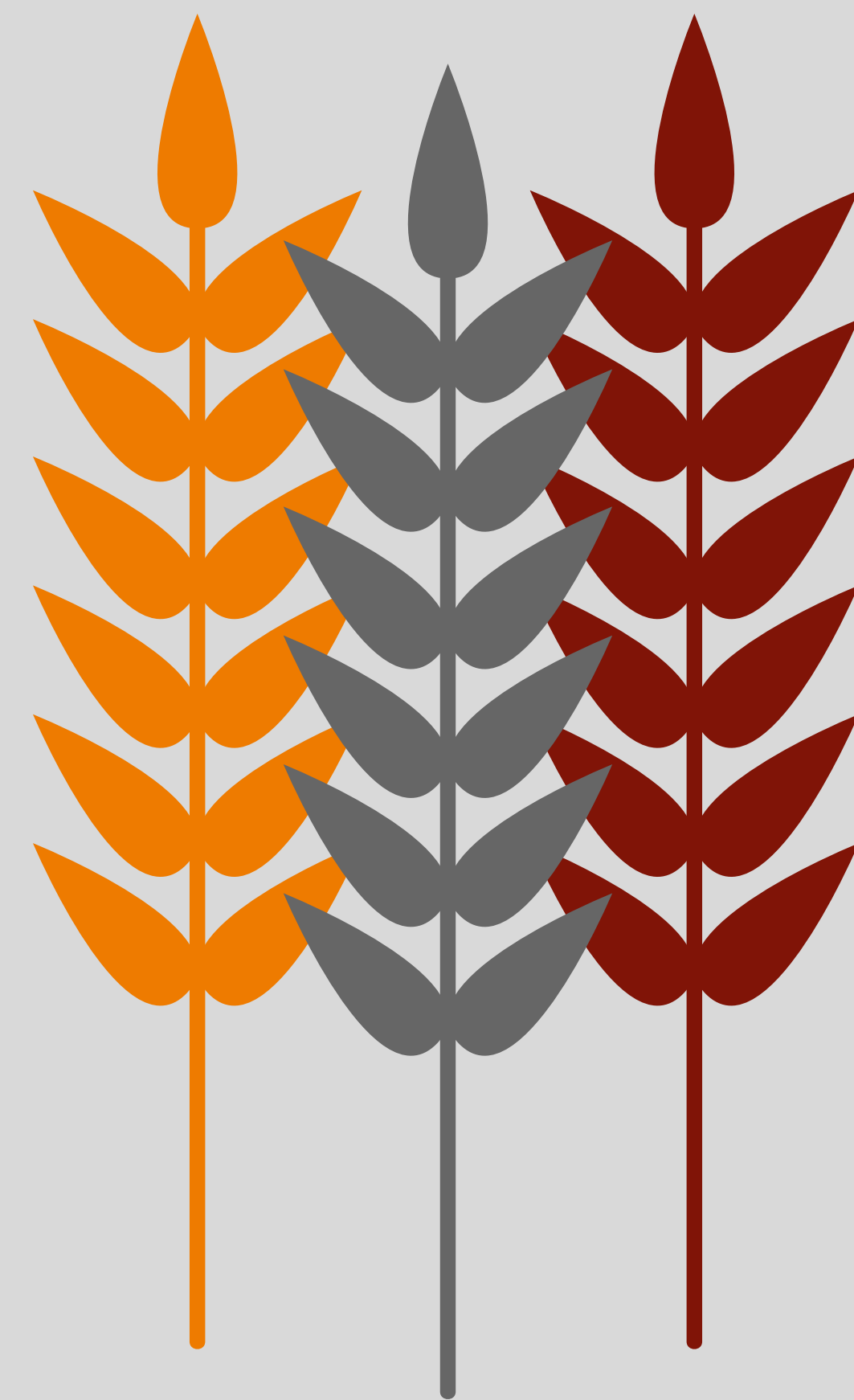
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INTRODUCTION

Since 2001, nearly 100 secondary junior and senior gifted and talented students with approximately 90% having little agricultural background attend the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture [GSA]. The mission of GSA is "to develop future leaders and scientists for careers in agriculture." The goal of this research is to determine if the program has an effect in choosing a career in agriculture



FINDINGS

Of the 547 GSA completers recognized, 330 (60%) identified as female, and 217 (40%) identified as male. 101 completed the questionnaire.

12.6% identified as having an agriculture career. Careers were in agricultural research (n = 23), environmental or conservation (n = 15), agricultural education (n = 12), animal science (n = 11), and agribusiness (n = 8).

19.0% were not in agriculture careers. Areas included medical (n = 35), engineering (n = 31), government (n = 13), higher education (n = 13), and director of an organization (n = 12).

68.4% of the GSA completers could not be identified with certainty or did not have indication of their career field on their social media profile.

81 identified as White/Caucasian and 12 Asian. Other demographics included Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, or Native American.

Of the questionnaire completers, 59 had obtained a bachelor's degree, 24 had obtained a master's degree, and 14 had obtained a doctoral degree. GSA completers enrolled in over 29 majors of study, of which the most popular were six were identified in the college of agriculture. The most popular majors included biology (n = 13), animal sciences (n = 10), environmental sciences (n = 8), biochemistry (n = 7), business (n = 6), and engineering (n = 5).

For students who were asked if GSA influenced their career decision and were in an agriculture career, 8 indicated that participating in GSA confirmed their decision, 5 indicated that they explored additional agriculture career options, and 5 indicated that they began a career in agriculture as a result from participating in GSA.

77 respondents were enthusiastically appreciative of GSA contributing to their increased awareness of agriculture.

CONCLUSIONS

Findings present the only known evidence of long-term impact of the GSA program. While the findings are limited due to the low participation rate of the questionnaire, and difficulty in identifying past GSA completers, there is some evidence that the program does promote a positive appreciation for the agriculture industry for these individuals who have little to no agricultural background. Faculty members and staff associated with the GSA program are encouraged to develop additional coursework and resources in the program to more effectively promote agriculture careers as a viable option for future GSA students. The developed resources and coursework should focus on the behavioral, normative, and control beliefs associated with career intentions (Ajzen, 1991).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1991) states that intention of behavior depends on motivation and ability. The theory differentiates between three different beliefs: behavioral, normative, and control (Ajzen, 1991). Behavioral beliefs connect the behavior to the outcomes and influence the attitudes toward the behavior. Normative beliefs refer to the expectations of people that are present in the individual's life. Control beliefs refer to the ability to perform the behavior. Behavior here is defined in a situation and intent as the indication of an individual's willingness to engage in behavior, such as seeking a career in agriculture (Ajzen, 1991).

METHODOLOGY

Purpose: to determine the effect of GSA on entering careers in agriculture, focusing on:

- 1) identifying careers associated with GSA completers
- 2) identifying college degrees of GSA completers
- 3) identifying how GSA informed their decision to enter an ag career

- Obtained yearly rosters from 2001-2012 to better ensure students had completed college and were in the job market (N = 1,106).
- Social media utilized to identify and confirm if individuals were past GSA completers, and if they would like to complete a survey regarding their career choices.
- 547 completers were identified and sent an online questionnaire
- 101 former GSA students completed the questionnaire.
- Researchers reviewed social media profiles of the 547 completers to determine for declaration of an agriculture career, or a career outside of ag.

References

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HIGHLIGHTS

Is the Governor's School for Agriculture effective in developing interest in a career in agriculture? Are participants' views of agriculture positively impacted after completion of the program?

547 completers recognized

101 answered survey

12.6% identified having an agricultural career

19% identified not having a career in agriculture

68.4% offered no career identification

76% were enthusiastically appreciative of GSA contributing to their increased awareness of agriculture