TRAINING STUDENTS TO ATTEND A CONFERENCE: SOCIAL AND CAREER OUTCOMES

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Undergraduate Students and Career Exploration

Undergraduate students need more opportunities to :

- Gain awareness of career opportunities
- Explore professional community
- Develop career skills

Not provided in most courses

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Preparing students for the workforce

- Professional behavior
- Working in teams
- Developing professional relationships
- Professional and ethical responsibilities
- Communicating science
- Knowledge of current issues

Photo courtesy of Mike Jenkins

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Undergraduate Students and Career Exploration

Professional benefits of REUs

- Improved understanding of professional practice
- Developing identify as scientist
- Cultivating professional relationships
- Evaluating career opportunities

Challenges of REUs

- Few positions available
- Highly competitive
- Benefits higher achieving students
- Lower diversity of participants

How do we provide more opportunities for students to gain social and career benefits similar to the REUs? Conferences!

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Course Objectives

- Formalize attendance of national meeting
- Train/mentor students to attend conference
- Support students in develop of career goals
- Provide opportunity to develop informal communication skills.
- Explore career options and opportunities in our field

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Course Format

- **Pre-Conference Meetings**
  - Pre-Survey
  - Discussion Topics
  - Assignments

- **In-Conference Meetings**
  - Assignments
  - Discussion
  - Guest Speakers/Mixed Institution Groups

- **Post-Conference Meetings**
  - Reflection
  - Post Survey

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Course Format

- **Pre-Conference Meetings**
  - Pre-Survey
  - **Discussion topics**
  - **Assignments**
- In-Conference Meetings
  - Assignments
  - Discussion
  - Guest speakers/Mixed Institution Groups
- Post-Conference Meetings
  - Reflection
  - Post-Survey

➢ Create a personal schedule (conference app)
➢ Evaluate 3 conference abstracts
➢ Develop resume
➢ ID potential employers
➢ Summarize literature

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TWS Conference Tasks   NAME:

Task	Description of Event	Time/Date	Signature of Witness
Meet another undergrad member from a different institution			
Meet a grad student from a difference institution			
Meet a nonacademic professional			
Meet a professor from another institution			
Ask a question of someone at a general research poster			
Ask a question of a student at a research in progress poster			
Ask a question at the end of a talk			
Meet alumni at the alumni social			
Attend another activity (vendors, panel discussion, plenary session, non-Purdue social, etc.)			
Attend a working group meeting			

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Course Format

- Pre-Conference Meetings
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  - Discussion topics
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- **Post-Conference Meetings**
  - **Reflection**
  - **Post-Survey**

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Data Collection

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am planning to pursue a career in …		✔					
I would like to work for …						✔	
Grad school is important for career prep in …	✔						
Experience is important for career …				✔			

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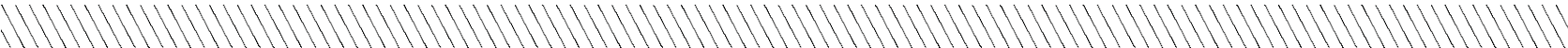
Data Collection

- Surveys
  - Pre- and Post-conference surveys
  - 6 Sections
    - Career goals
    - Preferred future employer
    - Perceptions of graduate school and career preparation
    - Perceptions of work experience and career preparation
    - Perceptions of graduate school and career advancement
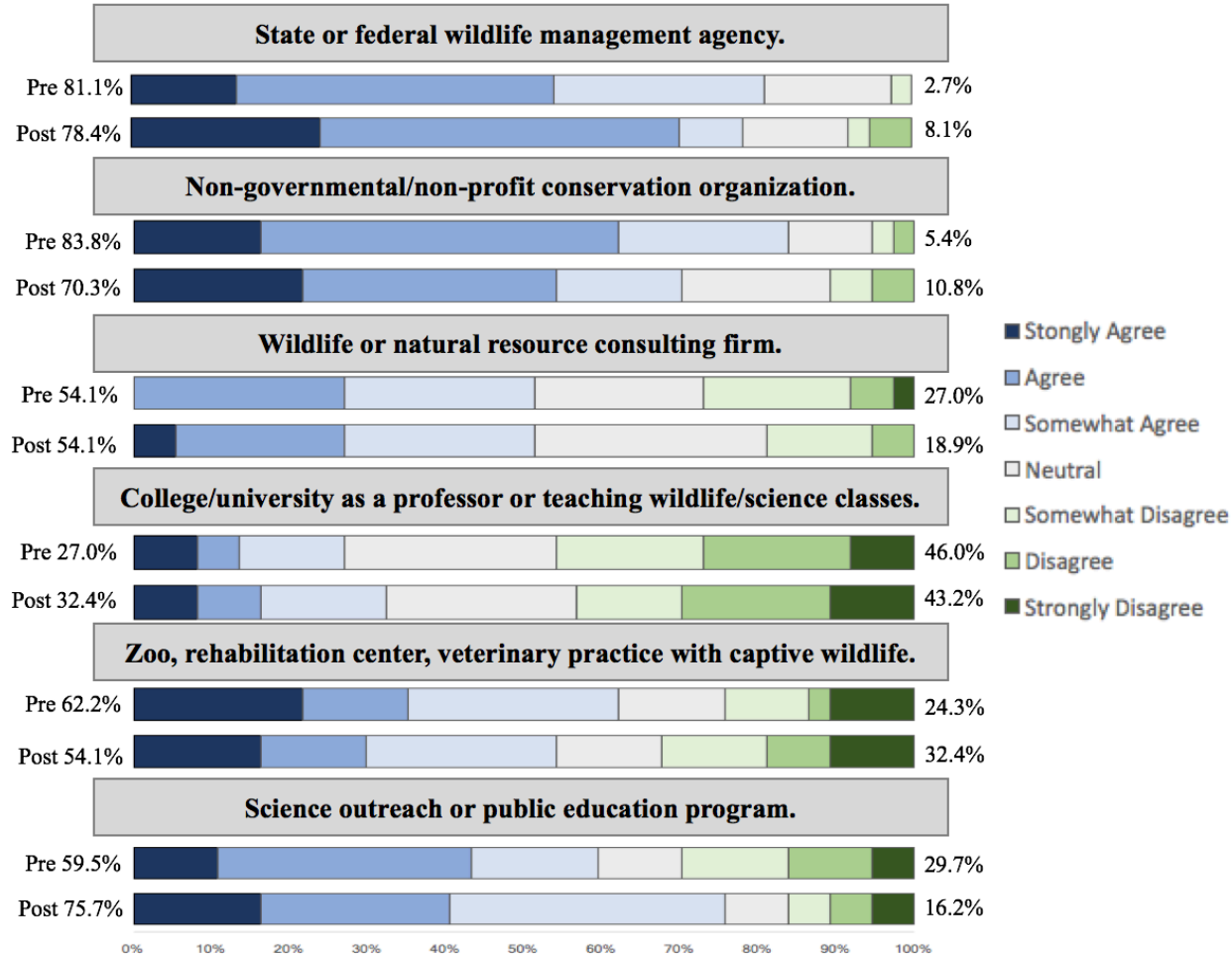   - Demographics and experience
- Video Recordings

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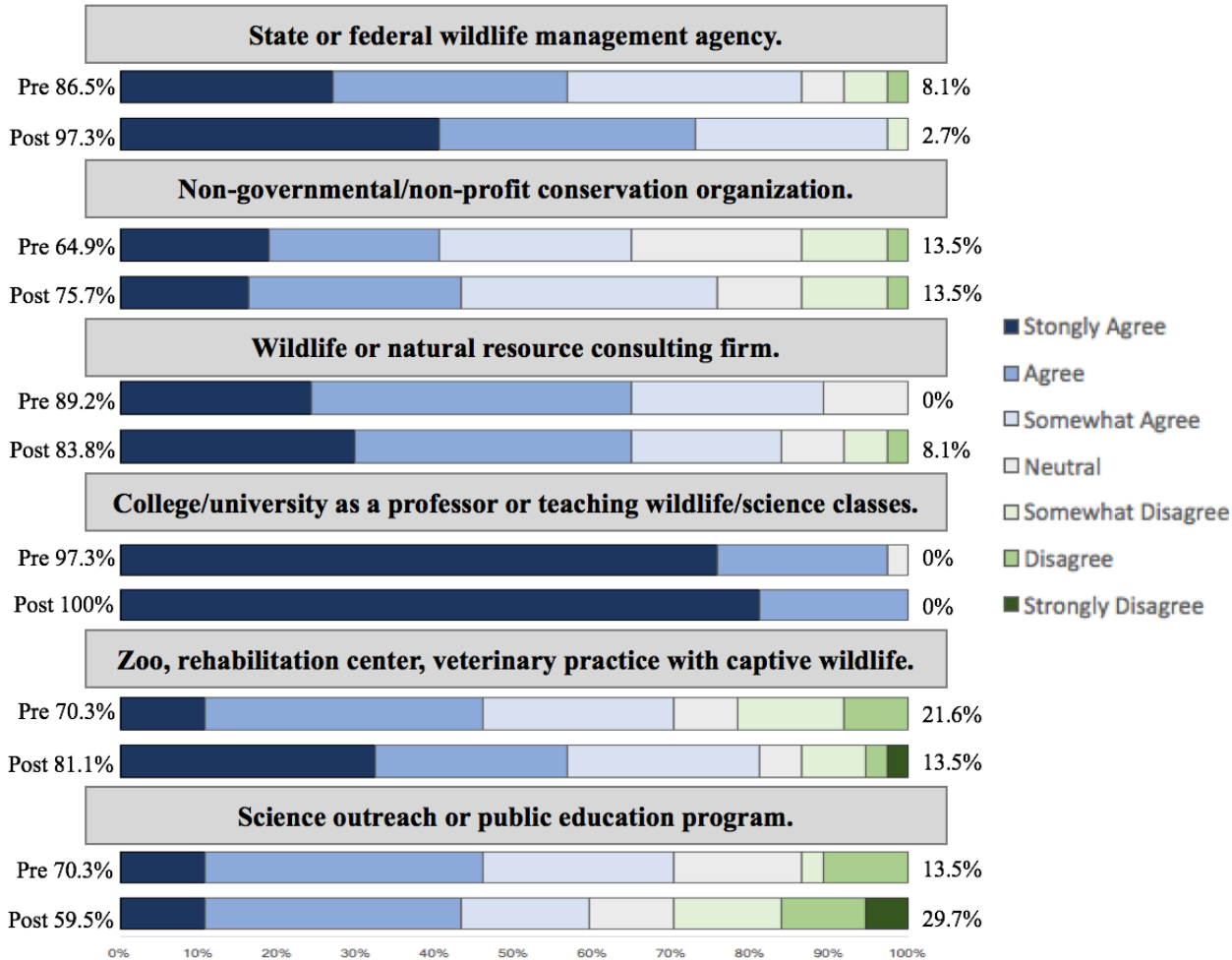# Survey Results – Career Outcomes – I would like to work for...

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Survey Results – Previous experience as a wildlife technician is an important part of preparation for a career in...
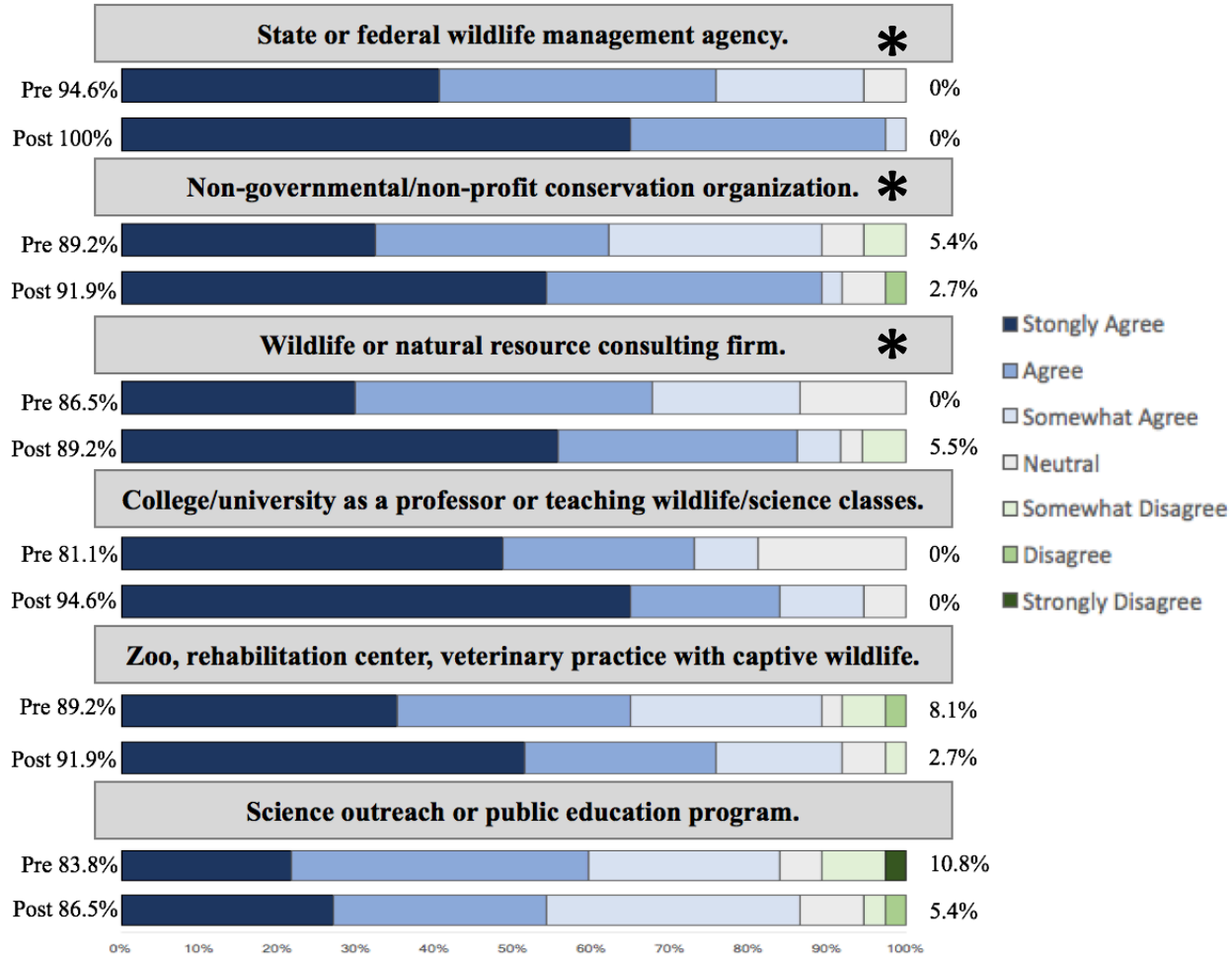
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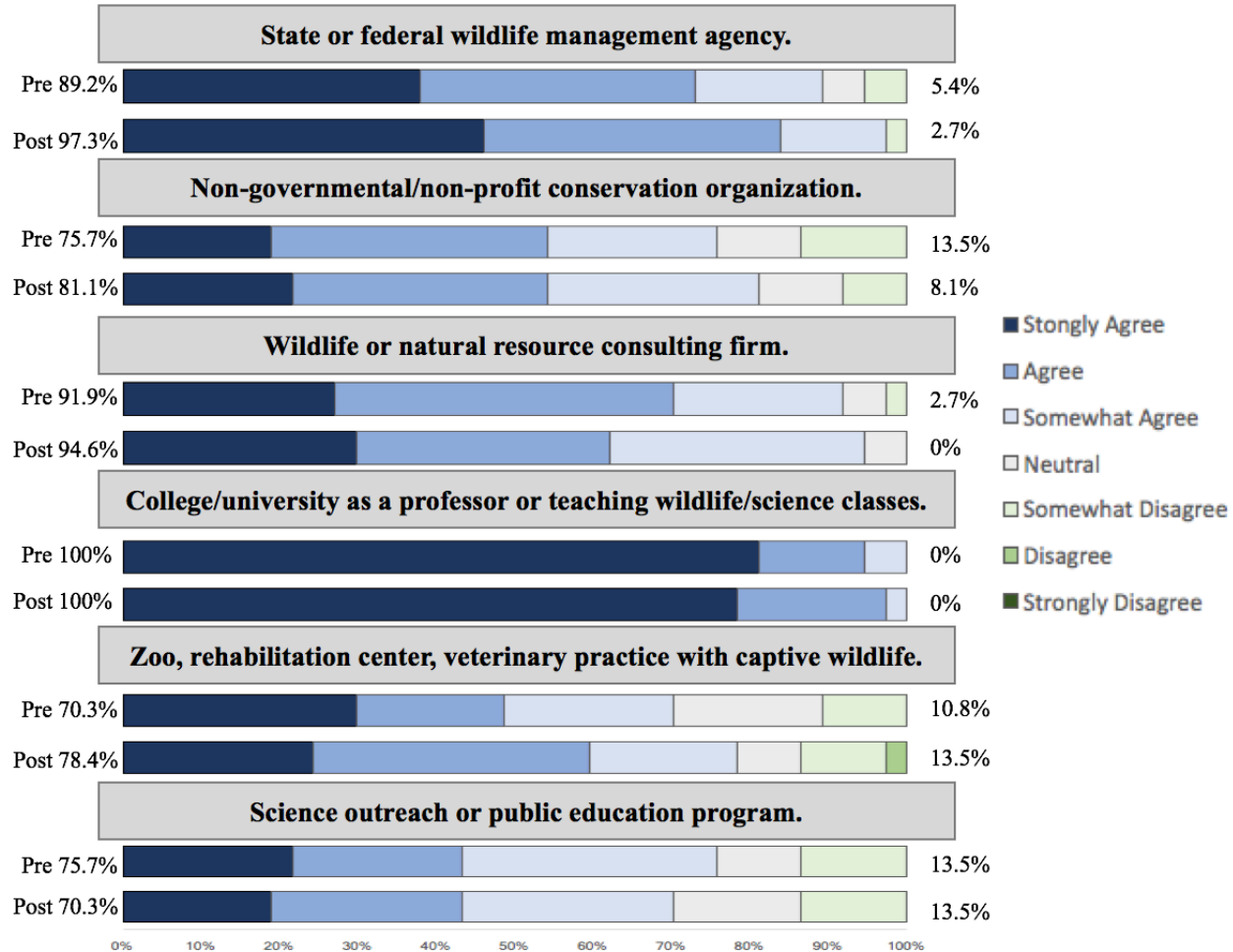
Social Cognitive Career Theory Categorizations

- (Lent et al. 2002)
- Self-efficacy beliefs
- Vocational interest development
- Outcome expectations

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Self Efficacy

- Self-confidence in completing assignments
- Interacting with others often "scary" or "nervous"
- Asking questions
- Sense of belonging
- Critiquing presentations
- Feeling "lost" or "overwhelmed"

Photo courtesy of The Wildlife Society

Vocational and career interest development

- Engaged in profession
- Applied course content to the experience
- Improved understanding of the nature of work in their field
- Emphasis on graduate education decreased interest in some fields
- New interests developed

Outcome Expectations

- Increased understanding of how to pursue specific careers
- Job application information (résumés, etc.)
- Increased understanding of career opportunities
- Clarified perceptions of job expectations
- Importance of graduate school
- Importance of experience
- Learned how to network to meet future advisors or supervisors

Photo courtesy of Darren Wood

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Student Outcomes - Social

- Exposure to social and cultural norms of their field
- Social integration and sense of identity and belonging
- Built confidence when networking and during professional socializing
- Built bonds with faculty, peers from home institution
    - Retention
    - Confidence
    - Success
- Social goals should also be built into REUs

Photo from www.hercampus.com

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Student Outcomes - Career

- Increased strength of interest to attend graduate school
- Clarified and confirmed graduate school intentions
- Understanding of professional practice
- Understanding of career advancement – understand steps necessary to meet goals
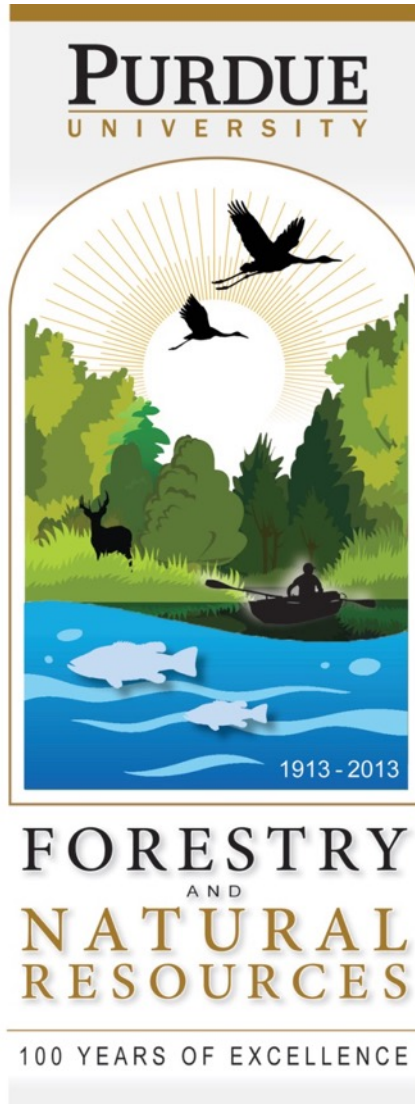
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Benefits to offering this course

- Benefits of the structure and environment of the classroom
- Daily meetings provided supportive environment
  - Safe" environment for practicing professional social skills
- 120 credits/degree
- Less expensive than similar number of REUs

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- University of North Carolina
  - Department of Environmental Sciences
- West Virginia University
  - Mary Grace Samuels Endowment
  - Division of Forestry and Natural Resources
- Guest Speakers
- The Wildlife Society

QUESTIONS?

For additional course information, please feel free to contact me at eflaher@purdue.edu.

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