

I can change my mind!

Communicating Agricultural Science Careers to Urban High School Students

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Urban high school students without agricultural production backgrounds can change their perceptions about agricultural science careers following hands-on agricultural communications summer workshops. The workshops focused on careers in agricultural communications such as digital photography, news writing, digital video, and Web site design to help students realize new perspectives about career opportunities in the agricultural industry.

The purpose of this project was to determine the influence of workshop participation on students' perceptions about careers available with an agricultural degree. A purposive sample (n = 38) was derived from four summer workshops (El Paso, Atlanta, Chicago, and San Antonio).

Post-workshop analyses showed significant increases in students' perceptions of agricultural communication careers such as public relations officer (100%), engineer (75%), photographer (73%), chemist (61%), and Web designer (60%). No perceptible changes occurred in students' perceptions of other specific agricultural communications' careers such as journalist or media personality.

The significant difference between students' pre- and post-test scores for specific information

technology careers highlights the importance of information technology as a critical factor for students' career decisions. Educators, especially in large urban settings, should use information technologies associated with the agricultural industry to foster students' awareness and interest levels for agricultural science careers. Continued research in recruitment programs for nontraditional, inner-city youth into post-secondary agricultural sciences should include a variety of assessment methods to further clarify the factors affecting students' decision making processes about agricultural science careers.

