



**SHOW ME THE MONEY:
AGRICULTURAL
COMMUNICATIONS GRADUATES'
STARTING SALARY AT TEXAS
TECH UNIVERSITY**

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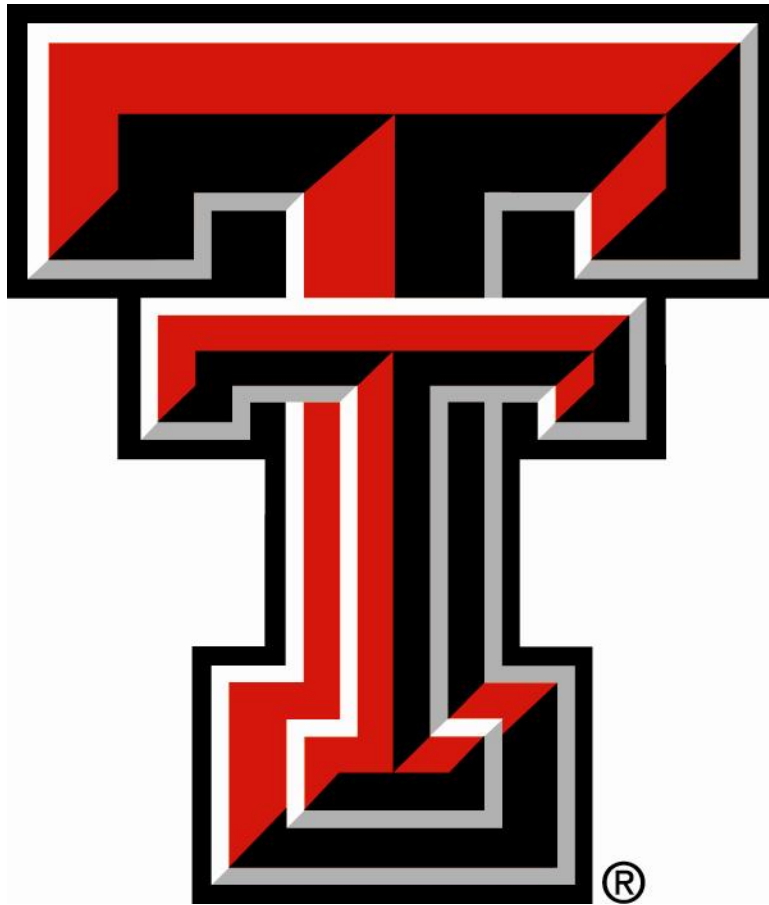
THE STUDY



- How much money am I going to make with this degree?
- Do I have to do an internship?
- Do I need a master's degree?
- Should I study abroad?



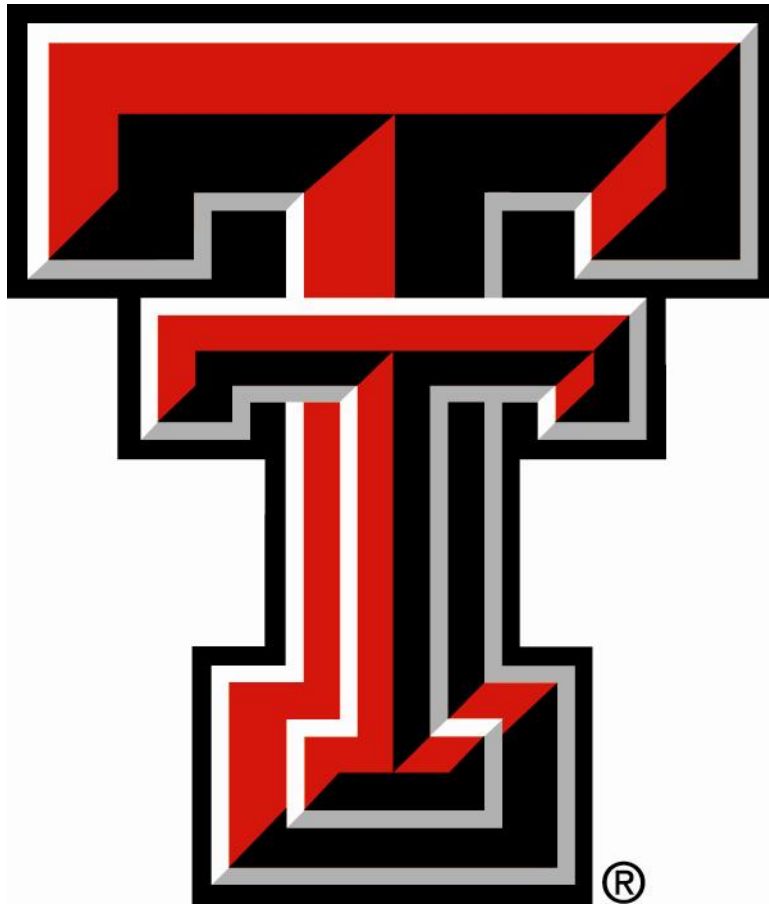
ABOUT US...



- 150 ag comm undergrads
- \pm 20 ag comm graduate students
- Four faculty members
- All participate in recruitment and academic advising
- Very active ACT chapter



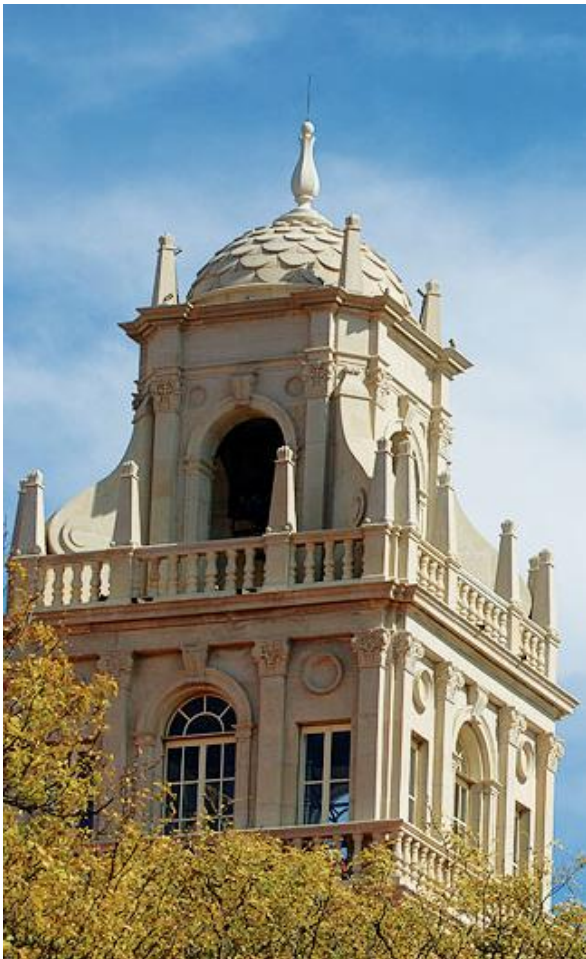
ABOUT US...



- 120 credit hours
- Students can do up to six credit hours of internship
- Internships are not mandatory
- Lots of opportunities for international experiences
- Dozens of organizations



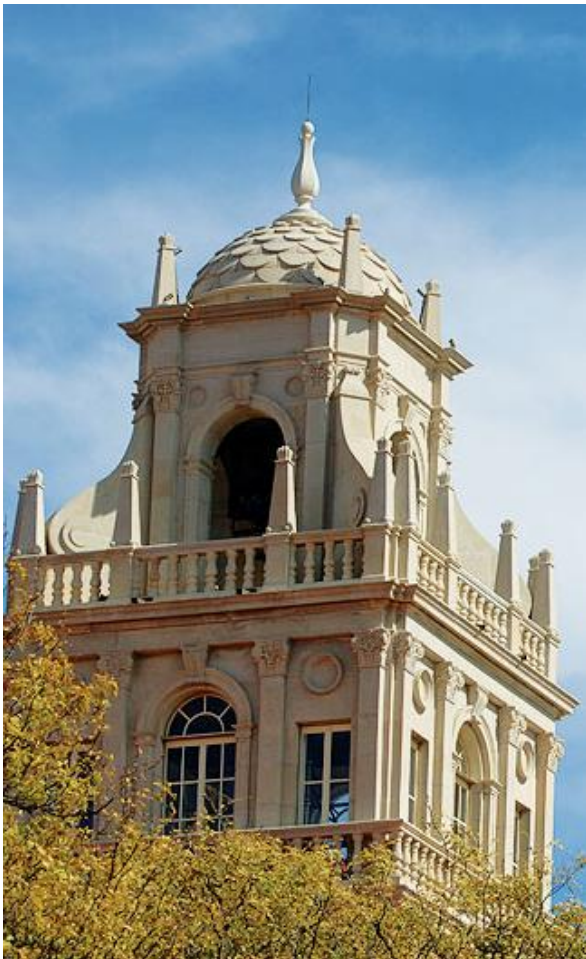
BACKGROUND—SALARY



- It is difficult to find salary data specifically on agricultural communications
- The National Association of Colleges and Employers estimates that starting salary for public relations specialists is \$22,600



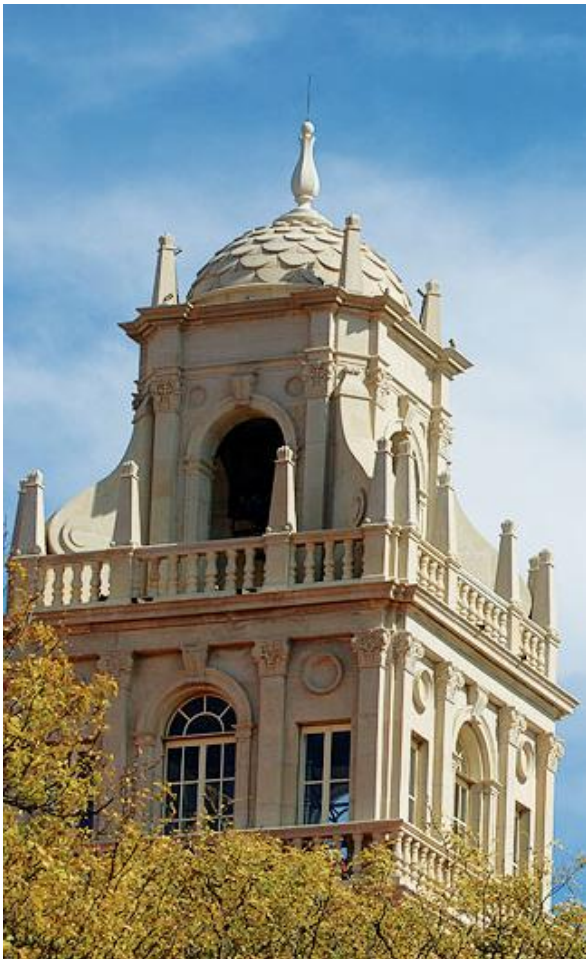
BACKGROUND—INTERNSHIPS



- Students that intern the summer before their senior year are two times as likely to have a job upon graduation (Daddona, 2010)
- 92% of ag comm students planned to complete one or more internships (Watson & Robertson, 2011)
- 75% of undergrads at TTU complete an internship



BACKGROUND—GRADUATE SCHOOL



- Many ag comm students plan to pursue a master's degree (Watson & Robertson, 2011).
- The number of students earning master's degree is quickly increasing (Haworth & Conrad, 1995).
- However, most employers of ag comm graduates do not see improved communications skills in employees that hold a master's degree (Irlbeck & Akers, 2009).



BACKGROUND—OVERALL INVOLVEMENT



- Students play an integral role in determining the degree of involvement in college classes, extracurricular activities, and social activities (Astin, 1984; Hutley, 2011).
- Involvement in student organizations creates skills that are attractive to future employers



METHODOLOGY

- Researcher-developed, online survey instrument
- E-mailed through the department's agricultural communications alumni listserv
 - Followed Dillman's Tailored Design Method
- Pilot tested
 - Reliability coefficient = 0.75 to 0.86. Acceptable to good (George & Mallery, 2003).
- 58 alumni completed the questionnaire.



FINDINGS—SALARY

- First year salary for bachelor's degree $M = \$31,326$ ($SD = 6,402.43$)
- First year salary for a master's degree $M = \$31,560$ ($SD 6,035.17$)
- 20% of graduates had accepted a job offer by graduation day. 12% had an offer within one month



FINDINGS—INTERNSHIPS

- Of the participants, 91% completed an internship
- Of those, 26.7% received a full-time job offer from their internship employer upon graduation
- Internships did not make a significant impact on starting salary ($t(46) = .31, p > .001$).



FINDINGS—GRADUATE SCHOOL

- 36% of those surveyed began work on a master's degree upon graduation
- A master's degree did not make a significant difference in salary ($t(46) = .612$, $p > .001$).



FINDINGS—INVOLVEMENT

- Nearly 95% of participants were involved in a student organization
- Six participants studied abroad



CONCLUSIONS

- The participants in this study do have higher starting salaries than general public relations specialists
- Internships make the difference in getting that first job
 - Ag comm students participate in internships more than TTU students
- Graduate school is a popular option, but it does not necessarily translate to a higher starting salary
- Student involvement—organizations, study abroad, internships—can lead to an easier job search



FUTURE RESEARCH

- How much do they make five years post-graduation? Ten years?
- Does a master's degree impact salary in the long term?
- Why aren't students with master's degrees earning more starting salary?





THANK YOU!