

# Significant Learning in an Agricultural Study Away Experience

Lori Costello & Tracy Rutherford  
Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications



# INTRODUCTION

## Experience Agriculture—Study Away



- Critical thinking, reflection, interaction with peers
- Perspectives of modern agriculture
- Stereotypes in agriculture
- Individual and group course work
- 10-day field trip National FFA Convention

# LITERATURE REVIEW

- Globally knowledgeable, and personally and socially responsible (Engberg, 2013)
- Active engagement to solve economic, social, and environmental challenges (Roberts, Harder & Brashears, 2016)
- Excellent communication, leadership, and critical thinking skills (Crawford, Lang, Fink, Dalton & Fielitz, 2011)
- Experiential learning helps students acquire skills needed to be job-ready (Odom, Shehane, Moore & McKim, 2014; Meyers & Arnold, 2015)



# LITERATURE REVIEW

- Entertainment media impacts perceptions of agriculture (Specht & Beam, 2015)
- Social reality influences beliefs, attitudes and behaviors (Ruth, Lundy & Park, 2005)
- Emotionally charged topics in agriculture
  - GMOs
  - PETA
  - Food safety

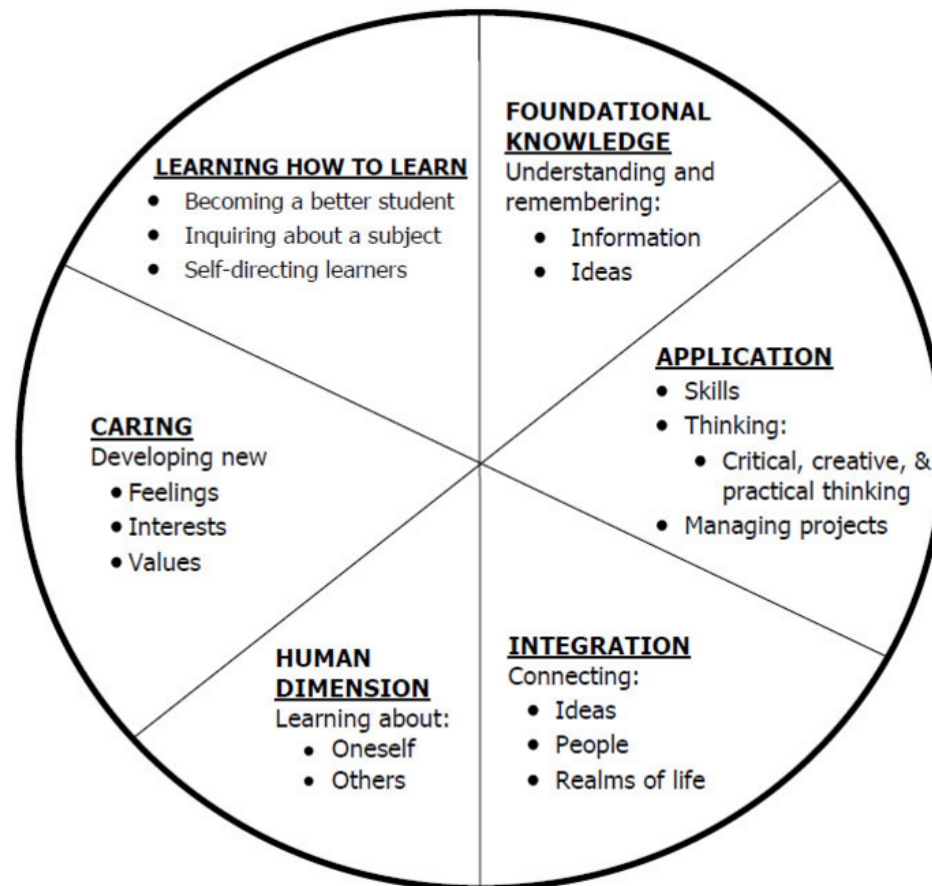
# PURPOSE OF STUDY



To substantiate the occurrence of significant learning as a result of the Experience Agriculture—Study Away course curriculum and field trip experience.

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## Fink's Taxonomy of Significant Learning (Fink, 2013)



# METHOD

- Qualitative content analysis
- Purposive sampling ( $n=11$ )
- Findings cross-validated using a consensus decision-making framework (Rebore, 2009)
- Describe, interpret, and understand the lived experiences of the students (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)



# FINDINGS: Foundational Knowledge

## Meaning Realized Through Course Curriculum

“I just thought agriculture was farming the seeds that you get at the store and raising livestock, but that is just a small sliver of the pie,” and “Stereotypes exist. And they are more common than I thought! And I honestly had stereotypes myself!” ~Student 4



“In society they think people in agriculture spend all their time wearing plaid shirts hanging out in red barns like a bunch of hicks.” ~Student 3

“I think it is important to know both sides of the stereotypes. And why there are certain stereotypes and how it can [a]ffect certain people. And why can't we get over stereotypes?” ~Student 5



# FINDINGS: Application

## Applying Foundational Skills Critically

“I’ve been able to educate those around me who didn’t have much knowledge about agriculture.”

~Student 1

“Just from talking to people and thinking about my experiences in college, I learned that I am going to be well equipped to graduate and make a difference in the agricultural industry group.” ~

Student 7



# FINDINGS: Integration

## Creating Connections & Identifying Solutions

“I always said that I advocated for agriculture, but I wasn’t putting everything I had into it.” ~Student 7

“The Study Away trip broadened my perspective of agriculture significantly and emphasized to me how essential the progress of agriculture is for our nation’s future.” ~Student 9



“My ability to relate on a knowledgeable and educational level with our tour guide brought forth the reality that I will soon be graduating, and that I am equipped with what I need to succeed in atmospheres bigger than myself.”  
~Student 5



# FINDINGS: Human Dimension

## Relationships and Transformations

“I believe it [the course and field experience] has made me a better person.”  
~Student 10

“While I may not always agree with everyone[‘s] views, I can still respect their opinions.” ~Student 2

“I have seen just how different people can be, and how close they can get once they get a chance to just talk, and that really impacted me to form relationships with people I normally wouldn’t have otherwise.” ~Student 8



# FINDINGS: Caring

Change in the degree of caring, leading to new beliefs, interests, or values

“I actually changed my major to Ag[ricultural] Science because of this trip.” ~Student 9

“I found an even deeper passion for agriculture and educating people about agriculture.” ~Student 10

“I feel that my experiences while on the trip made me more open-minded to different views.” ~Student 2



# FINDINGS: Learning How To Learn

## Motivation and Mindset to Seek New Knowledge

“Then once we got to the company they would then talk about the issues they were facing and if they didn’t bring it up, we asked them.” ~Student 4



“The trip provided real-life experiences that resembled the lessons learned in the classroom. I learned that getting out and experiencing classes like that is a learning experience that I will definitely keep with me forever.” ~Student 3

“Many of the things we wondered about in class in our discussions we found answers to along the way on the trip.” ~Student 5



# CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- All six domains of learning were achieved
- Clear connections between course work and field trip experiences were accomplished
- Interpersonal connections were critical to learning in this environment
- Further research should examine whether each student achieved all six types of significant learning
- Pre- and Post-test study design
- Fink's model of integrated course design



# References

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QUESTIONS?

