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**Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences  
Professional Development Opportunities and their Impact on  
Perceptions of Career Preparedness**

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Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences Professional Development  
Opportunities and their Impact on Perceptions of Career Preparedness

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Agricultural and Extension Education

by

Jessica L. Wesson  
University of Arkansas  
Bachelor of Science in Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences, 2020

May 2022  
University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## **Abstract**

A student's undergraduate education is an imperative part of developing career skills that will prepare them to transition from academia to the professional world. Experience outside of the classroom and course material taught in a formal class experience are both important. Their experiences and classes, in college, allow them to develop skills and increase their chances of being successful in the workplace (Suvedi et al., 2016).

Chickering's Seven Vectors of Student Development were used to help explain the process of student development. A quantitative survey was sent to DBCALFS faculty, staff, and administrators, and a different quantitative survey was sent to DBCAFLS students. A total of 188 usable surveys were returned for students.

The study found that faculty, staff, and administrators said that campus affiliated organizational clubs (RSOs), internships, and on campus jobs were offered at the college level in DBCAFLS, and campus affiliated organizational clubs (RSOs), school sponsored study abroad, on campus jobs, and career fairs/networking events were offered at the department level in DBCAFLS. Faculty, staff, and administrators also said that internships, on campus jobs, off campus jobs, and capstone courses where students connect with professionals, career fairs/networking events, and company visits (business site tours/presentations by employees) had contribution to student employability skills.

The study also looked at student perceptions involving importance of employability skills to their future careers, as well as their self-perceived level of competence of performing those skills. Student respondents ranked solving problems, identifying problems, meeting deadlines, listening attentively, working well with fellow employees, and adapting to situations as having the most importance to their future careers. Student respondents ranked their competence at

performing certain employability skills as high including, working well with fellow employees, meeting deadlines, ability to work independently, empathizing with others, understanding the needs of others, and listening attentively. Students rated professional development opportunities in terms of their contribution to their employability skills. The highest-ranking professional development opportunities included campus affiliated organizations (RSOs), off campus jobs, academic courses that incorporate professional development curriculum, church/religious organizations, and social fraternities/sororities.

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Secondly, I want to thank my family for all their wonderful support throughout the last five years of my college career. Mom and Dad, thank you for the countless hours of counseling and support as I have made lots of big decisions in my life. Thank you for always cheering for me and standing in my corner. Kyle and Melissa, thank you both for being bonus parents and loving me like your own. Thank you to Will for being the best little brother I could have asked for. You make me want to be a better person for you everyday. Finally, thank you to Nene. All those late night phone calls to help me study and to hear me vent have finally paid off.

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with you. Laykyn, I am so lucky to have known you these past couple of years. Working with you in the ELL has been so much fun and kept me energized throughout some rough times. Madelaine, it's been a long time since we met on campus all those years ago, but I wouldn't change it for anything. You have been the longest friend I have had on campus, and I am so happy to see you graduate with me soon. I hope you know how much your friendship has meant to me over the past few years and how much I love you. Now to my friends in the Hedge and off campus. I am so blessed to have found all of you in the spring of 2021. I know the Lord led me to your group on purpose, and I truly believe we will be lifelong friends. Ruby and Anna, I am so grateful for you two. Your friendship has been a light in some pretty dark times recently. I appreciate your kind hearts and sweet words. Most of all, I appreciate your Christ-like examples that I can look up to. Ethan, you have become like a brother to me, and I will never forget all of the fun times we've had. While we do a lot of joking and pranks, you've also been a voice of reason for our entire friend group and for me. I am grateful for your calm attitude and ability to soothe a situation that riddles me with anxiety. Thank you for that. Madi, I am so grateful for your kind presence and gentle demeanor. You're Ethan's better half, and that makes you one of the best people I know. I genuinely love you and hope you know that. Laney, I haven't known you quite as long, but I look at you like a little sister. I love you, and your energy makes me so happy. I hope you know how much your friendship means to me. Antaven, you're like a little brother to me. Your laugh is infectious, and I love hanging out with you. Never lose your smile or ability to make others smile. Ezra, you're always the same, and I appreciate that about you. You never fail to make me laugh. Lauren, I am so happy I met you last semester, and I hope you know that I am excited to continue our friendship. Emily, I am excited to join you in the poultry science department after graduation. Your smile and sweet heart gives me such joy to be around.

## **Dedication**

This is dedicated to my grandfather. Phillip Doyle Wesson passed away on March 17, 2022, before he could see me graduate with my masters. My Big Daddy, as I called him, was one of the biggest influences in my life. He taught me about Jesus Christ and salvation. He was one of the biggest reasons that I have the faith that I do. My Big Daddy was one of the Godliest men I knew, and I will never forget all of the conversations I have had with him about anything and everything. Big Daddy was a big believer in education. Though he never got to graduate from college himself, he was so proud to watch me do it with my bachelor's. I know he'll be watching in heaven when I walk for my master's. He passed away before the completion of this thesis, but I fully believe he would've been proud to read every single page of this document. He was my best friend, and I will always miss him.

Big Daddy, I am so sorry you can't be here to see this, but I will tell you all about it someday when I see you again. We can sit on the front porch and rock as I catch you up on everything between now and then. I know you'll get to see things, even if you aren't here to see it in person. I will always be thinking of you and can't wait to see you again soon. I will always be Big Daddy's baby. I love you.

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## **CHAPTER 1: Introduction**

### *Need for the Study/Problem Statement*

A student's undergraduate education is an imperative part of developing career skills that will prepare them to transition from academia to the professional world. Experience outside of the classroom and course material taught in a formal class experience are both important. Their experiences and classes, in college, allow them to develop skills and increase their chances of being successful in the workplace (Suvedi et al., 2016).

### *Professional Development Opportunities*

Professional development opportunities refer to activities, discussions, advising, mentoring, and experiences that add to the advancement of students' skills, knowledge, and abilities applicable to workplace positions (Brosnan, 2019). These experiences allow students to explore interests, define career goals, and most importantly gain and refine employability skills. Examples of employability skills include communication, critical and structured thinking, problem solving, creativity, teamwork capability, negotiation, self-management, time management, cultural awareness, common knowledge, responsibility, etiquette and good manners, courtesy, self-esteem, sociability, integrity/honesty, empathy, work ethic, project management and business management (Schulz, 2008). These fit into three categories: personal qualities, interpersonal skills and additional skills/knowledge. The first two categories are usually referred to as soft skills. The latter category consists of skills learned through teaching or training, typically related to a qualification or certification (Schulz, 2008).

### *Importance of Employability Skills*

Schulz (2008) reported that job seekers needed a special factor to be competitive amongst the rest of the applicant pool. The increasing toughness of the career environment means job

seekers need to find an advantage, and that lies in soft skills and additional knowledge. Simply going through the application, interviewing and hiring process will prove to an employer whether or not the fresh university graduate has the necessary foundational soft skills to succeed in the organization (Schulz, 2008). After landing the job, that employee continues to rely on soft skills to succeed with assignments and daily tasks. Their success in the workplace then lends itself to offer them better career opportunities such as raises and promotions (Schulz, 2008).

### *Perceptions of Employers vs. Students and Faculty*

Michigan State University determined that College of Agriculture and Natural Resources students were the best ones to report how prepared they were for their future careers (Suvedi et al., 2016). Students, especially seniors, were directly influenced by the opportunities and resources offered by their colleges and positioned them to assess their experiences (Suvedi et al., 2016). Faculty influence undergraduate students' success and development. The faculty believe undergraduates need a strong support system and the level of support impacts students through practical classroom assignments as well as on and off campus resources and experiences (Brosnan, 2019). Some of the challenges faculty members faced when trying to assist students were lack of time and student academic deficits/distractions (Brosnan, 2019). Employers' perceptions of professional skills for new graduates have been studied (Crawford et al., 2011; Cox et al, 2010; Irlbeck & Akers, 2009; Kurtzo et al., 2016; Overtoom, 2000; Robinson et al., 2007)), but a need exists to examine the professional development opportunities available and the perceptions of the students and faculty members within specific colleges regarding the types and value of professional development opportunities.

*The University of Arkansas Dale Bumpers College of Agriculture, Food and Life Sciences*

The University of Arkansas Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences (DBCAFLS) has nine departments which prepare undergraduate students in technical areas including agricultural business, animal science, entomology/plant pathology, food science, horticulture, human environmental sciences, and poultry science. This study was born out of the interest of the primary researcher after assisting with a professional development course specifically geared toward agricultural communications and agricultural leadership students. This type of curriculum/professional development opportunities should be available to all agriculture students.

*Purpose Statement and Objectives of this Study*

The purpose of this study was to identify professional development opportunities available to undergraduate students in DBCAFLS. Additionally, this study sought to understand students' perceptions of career preparedness based on professional development opportunities. The following objectives guided the research of this study:

1. Determine which professional development opportunities are offered by DBCAFLS as identified by faculty, staff, and administrators.
2. Determine which professional development offered by DBCAFLS undergraduate departments as identified by faculty, staff, and administrators.
3. Describe DBCAFLS faculty, staff, and administrators' perceptions of the contribution that professional development opportunities have on student employability skills.
4. Describe DBCALFS undergraduate student perceptions of employability skill importance to their future careers.
5. Describe DBCAFLS undergraduate student perceived levels of competence at performing employability skills.

6. Describe DBCAFLS undergraduate student perceptions of the contribution professional development opportunities have on student employability skills.

### *Assumptions*

The researcher included the following assumptions in the study:

1. It was assumed by the researcher, respondents answered the questionnaire truthfully.
2. It was assumed, participants in the study accurately represented his or her undergraduate academic program.
3. It was assumed, each participant was an undergraduate student who responded only about departmental and college professional development opportunities.

### *Definitions*

1. **Professional Development Opportunities:** refers to activities, discussions, advising, mentoring, and experiences that add to the advancement of students' skills, knowledge, and abilities applicable to workplace positions (Brosnan, 2019).
2. **Employability Skills:** defined as “transferable core skill groups that represent essential functional and enabling knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace” (Overtoom, 2000, p. 2).
3. **Career Readiness:** defined as “a foundation from which to demonstrate requisite core competencies that broadly prepare the college educated for success in the workplace and lifelong career management” (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, p. para. 1).
4. **Student Support:** interacting directly with students on a regular basis to offer some type of instruction or support; academics/thesis advising, instruction, recruitment, club advising, etc.

### *Limitations*

1. The results only represented students and faculty in the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences at the University of Arkansas and should not be generalized to similar populations.
2. This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic which may have impacted the availability and offerings of professional development activities, especially face-to-face activities.
3. Reliability and validity may be limited with the researcher-developed instrument even though the instrument was pilot tested.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

### Conceptual Framework

#### *Skills Needed by Students According to Students*

It is well documented that faculty and employers have preferences on skills necessary for college graduates to be successful in the workplace, but inquiries with students' perspectives are limited (Brosnan, 2019; Cox et al., 2010; Irlbeck & Akers, 2009, Kurtzo et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2007). "While research on employer and teacher perceptions of college and career readiness skills exists, a limited amount of literature has been published regarding the topic from the post-secondary students' perspective" (DiBenedetto & Willis, 2020, p. 46).

"In order to properly prepare students to be college and career ready in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is necessary to promote a collaborative environment among secondary schools, colleges and universities, as well as policy makers and business leaders" (DiBenedetto & Willis, 2020, p. 45). DiBenedetto and Willis (2020) defined nine career readiness skill clusters. The nine clusters were life skills, career skills, social skills, interdisciplinary topics, knowledge competencies, incidental learning skills, dispositions and experiences. The first construct was learning skills in which they grouped: contextual learning, critical thinking, initiative, perseverance/grit, problem solving, reasoning, self-direction. Life skills were defined as accountability, goal management, organizational skills, problem solving, social/cross-cultural skills, time management. Career skills are career decision making, job search skills, productivity, responsibility, work habits/ethics. Social skills included understanding diversity, ethical responsibility, honesty, integrity, and social responsibility. The interdisciplinary topics skill cluster included agriculture, civics, communications, economics, environment, global awareness, health, and technology. The knowledge competencies were decision making, innovation, proficiency, personal productivity,

and teamwork. Dispositions was defined as creativity/creative thinking, engagement in life-long learning, flexibility, innovation, motivation, perseverance/grit, personal productivity, responsibility, self-direction/self-discipline, self-esteem. The last construct was experiences including career related work experience/internships, community engagement, cross disciplinary connections, international engagement, leadership, project management, teamwork (DiBenedetto & Willis, 2020). While there is not a wide selection of studies based on student perceptions of career readiness, the DiBenedetto and Willis (2020) study provides some context to the student point of view for this study. This study, along with other studies, provided a foundation for the skills that were included in the survey.

DiBenedetto and Willis (2020) surveyed agricultural business, agricultural education, agricultural mechanization, plant and environmental science, agriculture, environmental and natural resources, biochemistry and management students. Ranked skills in respective constructs varied by major. For example, agricultural education majors collectively ranked problem solving, contextual learning, and critical thinking as the most important variables in the learning skills construct, whereas the agricultural mechanics students ranked perseverance/grit, self-direction, and initiative as the highest in that construct. A few of the higher-ranking life skills were time management, organizational skills, and goal management for agricultural education majors; time management, accountability and goal management for agricultural mechanics students; and the agricultural business majors ranked time management, goal management, and organizational skills. In the career skills construct, job search skills, career decision making and productivity were ranked the highest by agricultural education students and agricultural mechanics majors. The agricultural business majors ranked career decision making, job search skills, and work habits/ethics as the highest. Some of the higher ranked skills for the social skills construct were

integrity, ethical responsibility, honesty, social responsibility and understanding diversity for all three majors (DiBenedetto & Willis, 2020).

Interdisciplinary topics had economics, global awareness, civics, technology, and health as the most importantly ranked skills. In the knowledge competencies, proficiency, decision making, personal productivity, teamwork, and innovation were higher-ranking variables by all of the majors. The students from all three academic disciplines listed self-esteem, innovation, creativity/creative thinking, self-direction/self-discipline and personal productivity as the highest skills in dispositions. Experiences such as international engagement, cross disciplinary, project management, career related work/internships, and leadership were identified as most important by the students in each academic area in this study (DiBenedetto & Willis, 2020).

#### *Skills Needed by Students According to Faculty*

Studies involving agriculture college students and faculty are limited. Faculty members at a midwestern University were studied to understand what types of professional development skills opportunities were offered to engineering students and what they thought could be improved to help those students develop leadership skills (Cox et al., 2010). The results were varied, but current curriculum was too full to add courses to teach the students these leadership and professional development skills was prevalent. Since curriculum changes were not plausible for many professors and universities, integration was proposed by engineering faculty members during the study. This involved another proposed option, which was the senior capstone courses that schools/departments offered. Capstones were required classes that undergraduates took in order to graduate, and through these courses they develop skills like communication and teamwork. Real-life experiences were another study finding, including co-op programs, internships and study abroad programs as well. Getting students outside the traditional classroom



was a major emphasis for these respondents. Another non-traditional method of transferring these professional development skills was extracurricular activities: student organizations, student government, Greek life and on/off campus work (Cox et al., 2010).

#### *Skills Needed by Students According to Employers*

Robinson et al. (2007) surveyed supervisors of recent University of Missouri graduates in various agriculture majors to see how they prioritized employability skills. Problem solving and analytic were the most sought-after skills for these employers, while written communication was ranked the lowest. “Seven of the employability skill constructs had a mean weighted discrepancy score greater than .60, including problem solving and analytic (MWDS = 1.08), risk taking (MWDS = .82), motivation (MWDS = .76), managing conflict (MWDS = .68), decision making (MWDS = .67), lifelong learning (MWDS = .62) and listening (MWDS = .62)” (Robinson et al., 2007, p. 22). The four lowest rated were supervision, coordination, ability to conceptualize, and written communication, which all scored lower than .20 MWDS (Robinson et al., 2007).

In a 2009 study, employers in agricultural communications said that their employees, who were recent graduates, lacked common sense, organization, and creativity. They did note that the graduates were easy to work with and exhibited satisfactory reliability. However, there were some negative aspects that were consistent with the Millennial stereotype. Employers stated that universities need to teach more critical thinking skills. Unfortunately, it’s somewhat challenging to teach certain skills in a traditional classroom setting (Irlbeck & Akers, 2009).

#### *Professionalism in Agricultural College Students*

Several studies have been completed to understand what industry experts expect to see in a graduate, particularly in agricultural communications. For example, in one study agricultural communication employers reported that graduates needed writing skills, agricultural knowledge

and audience identification (Kurtzo et al., 2016). Many of the published research studies focused on one specific discipline within agriculture, typically agricultural education, animal sciences, agricultural business or agricultural communications (Crawford et al., 2011, DiBenedetto & Willis, 2020, Irlbeck & Akers, 2009, Kurtzo et al., 2016, Robinson et al., 2007). Crawford et al. (2011) surveyed 8,111 respondents from agricultural degree areas. Twenty-two percent of the student respondents were animal science majors. Agricultural business and management followed with 11.1% of the respondents. The rest of the student respondent bachelor's areas were agricultural public services (including communications, extension education and agricultural education) (9.1%), natural resources conservation, management, research, or policy (7.3%), plant sciences (including agronomy, crop sciences, horticulture and production) (6.3%), food sciences (4.9%), nutrition (3.1%), agricultural mechanization and engineering (3%), forestry (3%), family and consumer sciences (1.8%), landscape architecture, design, construction, recreation and community development (1.6%), and apparel and textiles (0.1%). The alumni respondents' bachelor's areas were agricultural business and management (19.3%), animal sciences (16.2%), plant sciences (including agronomy, crop sciences, horticulture and production) (9.8%), agricultural public services (including communications, extension education and agricultural education) (8.8%), agricultural mechanization and engineering (4.1%), food sciences (4.1%), natural resources conservation, management, research, or policy (3.7%), nutrition (3%), forestry (2.6%), family and consumer sciences (1.8%), apparel and textiles (0.1%) (Crawford et al., 2011). Crawford et al. (2011) found soft skills were ranked most important by employers and alumni, while discipline knowledge was ranked the most important by faculty and students.

Of the 42 employability skills studied in 2011, Crawford and Fink (2020) noticed a large gap between importance and preparedness for 11 of those skills. They did a separate examination

of those gaps in 2020. The skills that had the largest importance-preparedness gaps were (1) understand role in the workplace and have realistic career expectations, (2) recognize and deal constructively with conflict, (3) accept and apply critique and direction in the workplace, (4) listen effectively, (5) communicate accurately and concisely, (6) realize the effect of decisions, (7) build professional relationships, (8) navigate change and ambiguity, (9) identify and analyze problems, (10) transfer knowledge from one situation to another, (11) ask good questions. The only skill that was in the top three for each respondent group was recognize and deal constructively with conflict (Crawford & Fink, 2020).

Evidence that professional development curriculum was lacking in the context of academic disciplines was reported. Out of 23 agricultural communications programs in the United States, only 2.7% offered a course in professional development (Miller et al., 2015). At the University of Arkansas, two professional development courses are offered to students. UNIV 1401 Classroom to Career is a one-hour course that “gives students the tools to prepare for a career or graduate school upon college graduation” (University of Arkansas Division of Student Affairs Career Development Center, 2021, para. 2). The other class offered by the Career Development Center is ARSC 3013 Career Connections, where students learn to develop career plans, create competitive application materials, design a professional experience and reach career goals (University of Arkansas Division of Student Affairs Career Development Center, 2021). In DBCAFLS, there are only six classes that are specifically geared toward professional development/career readiness. These courses teach topics such as interpersonal skills, professional skills, technical skills, and other relevant career readiness skills that cross disciplines (2020-21 Catalog, 2021). These courses are:

- AFLS 3993 Professional Growth and Critical Career Skills

- ACOM 3943 Professional Development in Agricultural Communications and Leadership
- AGED 4211 Teachers as Professionals
- ANSC 1781 Career Preparation and Development
- CSES 3032 Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences Colloquium
- HORT 2101 Horticultural Career Development
- POSC 4811: Professionalism (*2020-21 Catalog*, 2021).

### *Career Readiness*

The National Association of Colleges and Employers' (NACE) uses eight competencies to discuss career readiness: career and self-development, communication, critical thinking, equity and inclusion, leadership, professionalism, teamwork, and technology (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021). Career and self-development is defined as to “proactively develop oneself and one’s career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one’s strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and without one’s organization” (National Association of Colleges and Employers [NACE], 2021, para. 5).

Sample behaviors for career and self-development include:

- Show an awareness of own strengths and areas for development.
- Identify areas for continual growth while pursuing and applying feedback.
- Develop plans and goals for one’s future career.
- Professionally advocate for oneself and others.
- Display curiosity; seek out opportunities to learn.
- Assume duties or positions that will help one progress professionally.

- Establish, maintain, and/or leverage relationships with people who can help one professionally.
- Seek and embrace development opportunities
- Voluntarily participate in further education, training, or other events to support one's career (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, para. 6).

### Communication

This is defined as “clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization” (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, para. 7).

Sample Behaviors:

- Understand the importance of and demonstrate verbal, written, and non-verbal/body language, abilities.
- Employ active listening, persuasion, and influencing skills.
- Communication in a clear and organized manner so that others can effectively understand.
- Frame communication with respect to diversity of learning styles, varied individual communication abilities, and cultural differences.
- Ask appropriate questions for specific information from supervisors, specialists, and others.
- Promptly inform relevant others when needing guidance with assigned tasks (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, para. 8).

### Critical Thinking

This is defined as the ability to “identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information” (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, para. 9).

Sample Behaviors:

- Make decisions and solve problems using sound, inclusive reasoning and judgment.
- Gather and analyze information from a diverse set of sources and individuals to fully understand a problem.
- Proactively anticipate needs and prioritize action steps.
- Accurately summarize and interpret data with an awareness of personal biases that may impact outcomes.
- Effectively communicate actions and rationale, recognizing the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of stakeholders.
- Multi-task well in a fast-paced environment (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, para. 10).

### Equity and Inclusion

This is defined as the ability to “demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different local and global cultures” (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, para. 11).

Sample behaviors:

- Solicit and use feedback from multiple cultural perspectives to make inclusive and equity-minded decisions.
- Actively contribute to inclusive and equitable practices that influence individual and systemic change.

- Advocate for inclusion, equitable practices, justice, and empowerment for historically marginalized communities.
- Seek global cross-cultural interactions and experiences that enhance one's understanding of people from different demographic groups and that leads to personal growth.
- Keep an open mind to diverse ideas and new ways of thinking.
- Identify resources and eliminate barriers resulting from individual and systemic racism, inequities and biases.
- Demonstrate flexibility by adapting to diverse environments.
- Address systems of privilege that limit opportunities for members of historically marginalized communities (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, para. 12).

### Leadership

This is defined as the ability to “recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals” (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, para. 13).

Sample behaviors:

- Inspire, persuade, and motivate self and others under a shared vision.
- Seek out and leverage diverse resources and feedback from others under a shared vision.
- Use innovative thinking to go beyond traditional methods.
- Serve as a role model to others by approaching tasks with confidence and a positive attitude.
- Motivate and inspire others by encouraging them and by building mutual trust.

- Plan, initiate, manage, complete, and evaluate projects (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, para. 14).

### Professionalism

This is defined as “knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits, and act in the interest of the larger community and workplace” (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, para. 15).

Sample behaviors:

- Act equitably with integrity and accountability to self, others, and the organization.
- Maintain a positive personal brand in alignment with organization and personal career values.
- Be present and prepared.
- Demonstrate dependability (e.g., report consistently for work or other meetings).
- Prioritize and complete tasks to accomplish organizational goals.
- Consistently meet or exceed goals and expectations.
- Have an attention to detail, resulting in few if any errors in work.
- Show a high level of dedication toward doing a good job (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, para. 16).

### Teamwork

This is defined as the ability to “build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities” (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, para. 17).

Sample behaviors:



- Listen carefully to others, taking time to understand and ask appropriate questions without interrupting.
- Effectively manage conflict, interact with and respect diverse personalities, and meet ambiguity with resilience.
- Be accountable for individual and team responsibilities and deliverables.
- Employ personal strengths, knowledge, and talents to complement those of others.
- Exercise the ability to compromise and be agile.
- Collaborate with others to achieve common goals.
- Build strong, positive working relationships with supervisor and team members/coworkers (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, para. 18).

### Technology

This is defined as the ability to “understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals” (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, para. 19).

Sample behaviors:

- Navigate change and be open to learning new technologies.
- Use technology to improve efficiency and productivity of work.
- Identify appropriate technology for completing specific tasks.
- Manage technology to integrate information to support relevant, effective, and timely decision-making.
- Quickly adapt to new or unfamiliar technologies.
- Manipulate information, construct ideas, and use technology to achieve strategic goals (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021, para. 20).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *Chickering's Seven Vectors of Student Development*

Chickering first published his theory in 1969, but later revised in 1993. The most recent version includes seven vectors to explain the process of student development: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Developing competence deals with intellectual, physical/manual, and interpersonal qualities. The intellectual is using the mind to build skill through analytical and comprehensive thought. The physical and manual involves athletic and artistic achievement, increasing self-discipline, strength and fitness, competition, and creation. Interpersonal characteristics encompass skills of listening, understanding, and communicating and functioning in different relationships (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

The second vector is managing emotions. This is knowing and becoming aware of emotions at their extremes and finding solutions to keep them under control. Managing emotions is important because feelings like anxiety, anger, depression, desire, guilt, shame, and embarrassment should not become so strong that they interfere with education. The third vector is moving through autonomy toward interdependence. Autonomy is depending on others. This transition requires emotional and instrumental interdependence. Emotional independence happens when there is a separation from the support group. This move should be voluntary. In education, the student achieves instrumental independence when they are able to plan and coordinate the activities and solve problems on their own (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Developing mature interpersonal relationships is curating a tolerance (intercultural and interpersonal) and the capacity for intimacy. The fifth vector is establishing identity. This entails combining vectors 1-4 (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The development of identity includes the following: (1) comfort with body and appearance, (2) comfort with gender and sexual orientation, (3) sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context, (4) clarification of self-concept through roles and life-style, (5) sense of self in response to feedback from valued others, (6) self-acceptance and self-esteem, and (7) personal stability and integration (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The sixth vector is developing purpose. One must develop a purpose for why they do things like attending college. The seventh vector is developing integrity, which is for your own beliefs, values and purposes as well as seeing other points of view (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). This theory was used to explain how students develop employability skills through the opportunities offered by DBCAFLS.

## **Chapter III: Methodology**

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify professional development opportunities available to undergraduate students in DBCAFLS. This study also sought to understand students' perceptions of career preparedness based on professional development opportunities.

The following objectives guided the research of this study:

1. Determine which professional development opportunities are offered by DBCAFLS as identified by faculty, staff, and administrators.
2. Determine which professional development offered by DBCAFLS undergraduate departments as identified by faculty, staff, and administrators.
3. Describe DBCAFLS faculty, staff, and administrators' perceptions of the contribution that professional development opportunities have on student employability skills.
4. Describe DBCALFS undergraduate student perceptions of employability skill importance to their future careers.
5. Describe DBCAFLS undergraduate student perceived levels of competence at performing employability skills.
6. Describe DBCAFLS undergraduate student perceptions of the contribution professional development opportunities have on student employability skills.

### **Design of the Study**

This study used a quantitative survey approach in order to ensure the highest number of responses from participants. Surveys are a systematic method that allows researchers to construct quantitative descriptions of a population or infer descriptions back to a larger population by gathering information from members of the population (Groves et al., 2009). Two

questionnaires were developed and administered using Qualtrics to collect information from each respondent group. Data was collected simultaneously from each respondent group.

The first part collected data from DBCAFLS faculty, staff, and administrators who provided student support. Student support was defined in the questionnaire as interacting directly with students on a regular basis to offer some type of instruction or support; academics/thesis advising, instruction, recruitment, club advising, etc. They were asked to identify which professional development opportunities were offered by DBCAFLS and which were offered by DBCAFLS undergraduate departments. Respondents were also asked to rank professional development opportunities based on the amount of contribution those opportunities had on student employability skills. In the last section, faculty, staff, and administrators were asked to provide demographic information.

Part two of the study surveyed DBCAFLS undergraduate students. They were asked to evaluate the importance of 28 employability skills to their future careers as well as their self-perceived level of competence at performing those skills. The students were then asked to evaluate the contribution of certain professional development opportunities had on those employability skills. Finally, undergraduate students were asked to provide demographic information.

## **Participants**

### *Population and Sample*

Faculty, staff, and administrators in DBCAFLS was the population for one questionnaire. Data was not available to describe faculty, staff, and administrators who did not hold academic titles (Office of Institutional Research, 2022); thus, the researcher could not determine the overall number of potential participants. The researcher used purposive sampling to include only

those who worked in student development to participate. Respondents from this group were mostly female, white and aged 30-59. A majority of the respondents were academic department faculty ( $n = 17, 39.53\%$ ), followed by Bumpers College administrators and staff ( $n = 16, 37.21\%$ ), and academic department staff ( $n = 10, 23.26\%$ ).

The second population was DBCAFLS undergraduate students during the spring 2022 semester. DBCAFLS had 1,853 undergraduate students in the Spring 2022. There were 576 male students and 1,280 female students. There were 140 Hispanic/Latino students, 17 American Indian/Alaska Native students, 22 Asian students, 45 Black/African American students, 2 Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students, 1,448 White students, 102 students identified as two or more races, 28 nonresident aliens, and 24 identified as unknown race. Degree-seeking students were reported as 1,829, and 3 students are non-degree seeking. For Bumpers College, 1,675 students were full-time, while 198 students were part-time (Office of Institutional Research, 2022). This study utilized nonprobability and voluntary response sampling.

### *Sampling Methods*

Purposive sampling was used for faculty, staff, and administrators. The purpose of purposive sampling is to gather people who meet certain criteria (Cozby & Bates, 2020). The advantages of this type of sampling include the sample includes only types of individuals needed for the research. A disadvantage is that this method is likely to introduce bias into the sample and the results may not be generalizable to the intended population. Nonprobability sampling and voluntary sampling was used for undergraduate students. Nonprobability sampling is the chance that someone from the population being chosen is unknown (Cozby & Bates, 2020). An issue with nonprobability sampling is that it is not as sophisticated as probability sampling. Nonprobability sampling requires little effort expended to ensure that the sample accurately

represents the population. However, this type of sampling technique is convenient and usually cheap.

The majority of the respondents were aged 30-59 ( $n = 36, 83.73\%$ ), and each age category, in that range, had 12 respondents. The majority of respondents were female ( $n = 21, 48.84\%$ ). Most of the respondents were White, non-Hispanic ( $n = 30, 69.77\%$ ), followed by Hispanic/Latino ( $n = 6, 13.95\%$ ). The respondents were varied in their roles within Bumpers College with academic department faculty leading ( $n = 17, 39.53\%$ ), Bumpers College administrators and staff ( $n = 16, 37.21\%$ ) following, and academic department staff ( $n = 10, 23.26\%$ ). The selected demographics were age, gender, ethnicity, and their role within Bumpers College. Table 1 outlines the demographics of DBCAFLS faculty, staff, and administrators.

**Table 1**

*Demographics of DBCAFLS faculty, staff, and administrators*

Demographic Categories	<i>n</i>	%
Age ( $n = 43$ )		
20-29	2	4.65
30-39	12	27.91
40-49	12	27.91
50-59	12	27.91
60-69	2	4.65
Chose not to answer	3	6.98
Gender ( $n = 43$ )		
Male	19	44.19
Female	21	48.84

**Table 1 (Cont.)**

Demographic Categories	<i>n</i>	%
Choose not to Respond	3	6.98
Ethnicity ( <i>n</i> = 43)		
American Indian or Alaska native, non-Hispanic	1	2.33
Asian, non-Hispanic	2	4.65
Black or African American, non-Hispanic	1	2.33
Hispanic/Latino	6	13.95
White, non-Hispanic	30	69.77
Prefer not to answer	3	6.98
Role within Bumpers College ( <i>n</i> = 43)		
Academic Department Faculty	17	39.53
Academic Department Staff	10	23.26
Bumpers College Administrators and Staff	16	37.21

The majority of student respondents were aged 20-29 (*n* = 111, 59.04%), with the age category 10-19 following behind (*n* = 68, 36.17%). The majority of the respondents were female (*n* = 128, 68.09%). Most of the respondents were White, non-Hispanic (*n* = 152, 80.85%), followed by Hispanic/Latino (*n* = 14, 7.45%), Asian, non-Hispanic (*n* = 6, 3.19%), Black or African American, non-Hispanic (*n* = 5, 2.66%), American Indian or Alaska native, non-Hispanic (*n* = 3, 1.60%), and 1 respondent chose not to respond (0.05%). The students varied in their presence on campus with second year on campus immediately following high school (*n* = 73, 38.83%) leading. Next was first year on campus immediately following high school (*n* = 49,



26.06%), other ( $n = 24$ , 12.77%), third year on campus immediately following high school ( $n = 16$ , 8.51%), fourth+ year on campus immediately following high school ( $n = 13$ , 6.91%), second+ year on campus immediately following community college ( $n = 7$ , 3.72%), first year on campus immediately following community college ( $n = 6$ , 3.19%).

**Table 2**

*DBCAFLS Undergraduate Student Demographics*

Demographic Categories	<i>n</i>	%
Age ( $n = 188$ )		
10-19	68	36.17
20-29	111	59.04
30-39	7	3.72
40-49	1	0.05
Gender ( $n = 188$ )		
Male	30	15.96
Female	128	68.09
Choose not to Respond	22	11.70
Ethnicity ( $n = 188$ )		
American Indian or Alaska native, non-Hispanic	3	1.60
Asian, non-Hispanic	6	3.19
Black or African American, non-Hispanic	5	2.66
Hispanic/Latino	14	7.45
White, non-Hispanic	152	80.85
Prefer not to answer	1	0.05

**Table 2 (Cont.)**

Demographic Categories	<i>n</i>	%
Presence on campus ( <i>n</i> = 188)		
First year on campus immediately following high school	49	26.06
Second year on campus immediately following high school	73	38.83
Third year on campus immediately following high school	16	8.51
Fourth+ year on campus immediately following high school	13	6.91
First year on campus immediately following community college	6	3.19
Second+ year on campus immediately following community college	7	3.72
Other	24	12.77

*Human Subjects Protection*

In compliance with the University of Arkansas polices and federal regulations, research pertaining to human subjects was required to be submitted, reviewed and approved before research completion. Following this policy, this study was approved as Exempt by the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board (IRB) office and granted permission to proceed with the gathering of data. The approval number provided for this research is IRB #2109360292.

**Instrumentation**

A questionnaire is usually presented in written format, and respondents write their answers. They usually cost less, since they can be administered through the mail, in person or on

the internet. The questionnaires for this study were offered through the internet. Based on the review of literature, a questionnaire was developed for each respondent group to meet the study objectives.

The first questionnaire was developed for the DBCAFLS faculty, staff and administrators. Part one asked the respondents to drag and drop various professional development opportunities into the box corresponding to which level they were offered at – academic departments or DBCAFLS college level. They were asked to do so to see which opportunities would be classified at which level to compare and contrast the perceptions of college level faculty/staff and department level faculty/staff. They had the option to drop the same opportunity in each box if they chose to do so. They also were not required to categorize every professional development opportunity. Part one of the survey was researcher developed. The second part asked participants to rate the professional development opportunities based on their perception of each item's contribution to student employability skills. These particular professional development opportunities were derived from the Robinson et al. (2007) study and feedback from the cognitive interviews. This portion of the survey was to help compare faculty, staff, and administrator perceptions with student perceptions. There were 14 items that were measured on a four-point Likert scale. Responses ranged from 0 – no contribution, 1 – minor contribution, 2 – moderate contribution, and 3 – major contribution. The third and final part of the questionnaire was demographic information including gender, ethnicity, and age. Respondents were also asked to identify their role within DBCAFLS. The third section was researcher developed. After several cognitive interviews were conducted, minor changes were made to a few of the questions. See Appendix B for the faculty, staff, and administrators questionnaire.

The second questionnaire was developed for DBCAFLS undergraduate students. Part one asked the students to rate their perceived levels of importance certain employability skills were to the success of their future occupation based on a four-point Likert scale. Responses ranged from 0 – no importance, 1 – minor importance, 2 – moderate importance, and 4 – major importance. It also instructed them to rate those skills in terms of their perceived level of competence at performing those skills. Responses ranged from 0 – no competence, 1 – minor competence, 2 – moderate competence, and 4 – major competence. This part of the survey was developed from the instrument used in the Robinson et. al study (2007). The second portion of the survey instructed the respondents to rate professional development opportunities in terms of their contribution to the employability skills rated in part one, which was also on a four-point Likert scale. These responses were 0 – no contribution, 1 – minor contribution, 2 – moderate contribution, 3 – major contribution, and not applicable. This part of the survey was developed based on the Robinson et. al study (2007). The third part asked about demographic information including their presence on campus, age, gender, and ethnicity, and it was researcher developed. See Appendix C for the student questionnaire.

### *Reliability and Validity*

Reliability is the consistency of a measure (Cozby & Bates, 2020). The researcher utilized 28 skills from the Robinson et al. study (2007) to ensure the surveys were reliable. To ensure that the instrument was reliable among DBCAFLS undergraduate students and faculty, staff and administrators, a pilot study was conducted. There were 20 students and 5 faculty, staff and administration employees for Mississippi State University that agreed to pilot test the survey. Each respondent timed how long it took them to complete the survey (3 to 17 minutes) and took note of any areas or questions that were vague or unclear, or they felt uncomfortable answering.

The Cronbach's coefficient alpha for the faculty, staff, and administrator's questionnaire was 0.928, which is an excellent score for internal reliability. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha for the student questionnaire was 0.940, which is an excellent score for internal reliability.

Validity is the extent to which a conclusion is accurate if everything is known (Cozby & Bates, 2020). Face and content validity were established by a panel of experts consisting of past DBCAFLS students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Cognitive interviews were conducted, and minor changes were made to the questions in the faculty, staff, and administrators' questionnaire. No changes were made to the student questionnaire. These changes were made prior to the pilot study.

#### *Data Collection*

The data collection process for faculty, staff, and administrators started with an initial email asking them to participate in the online survey and provided them with contact information for the research team as well as IRB approval information. An email was sent each week for the following three weeks to remind participants about the survey. A total of four emails were sent.

Students received a similar initial email requesting their participation in the student questionnaire. They also received three follow-up emails; one each week immediately following the first email. A total of four emails were sent to the students per recommendation from literature. "The web survey implementation sequence generally starts with a survey invitation; a prenotice is rarely used" (Dillman et al., 2014, p. 331). Dillman (2014) said that the number of follow-up emails depended on how many responses each email yields (Dillman et al., 2014). See Appendices D and E for recruiting emails and communications.

There were 188 DBCAFLS undergraduate students that completed surveys and 43 DBCAFLS faculty, staff, and administrators that completed surveys. The response rate for

faculty, staff, and administrators could not be determined due to the absence of information about faculty, staff, and students involved directly in student support. The response rate for students was 10%.

### *Data Analysis*

Descriptive statistics were analyzed using the SAS 9.4m7. Frequencies and percentages were reported for the DBCAFLS faculty, staff, and administrator questions regarding at which level professional development opportunities were offered. Frequencies and percentages were also reported for the contribution of professional development opportunities to student employability skills as well as the demographic information. Means and standard deviations were reported for DBCAFLS students' perceptions of employability skill importance and competence at performing those skills. Frequencies and percentages were reported for the contribution that professional development opportunities have on student employability skills, as well as demographics.

## Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this research was to identify professional development opportunities available to undergraduate students in DBCAFLS. Additionally, this study sought to understand students' perceptions of career preparedness based on professional development opportunities available to them. The findings for objectives 1-4 are reported below as each related to faculty, staff, and administrators.

### **Objective 1: Determine which professional development opportunities are offered by DBCAFLS as identified by faculty, staff, and administrators.**

The first objective that guided this study was determined by asking survey respondents to drag and drop professional development opportunities into boxes classifying whether they were offered at the college level by DBCAFLS or at the general department level (meaning the opportunities were offered by any department, not specific to the department in which the respondent was employed). Table 3 shows the frequency of each professional development opportunity being dropped into the box labeled "College Level", meaning respondents classified it as being offered by DBCAFLS at the college level.

**Table 3**

*Professional Development Opportunities Offered at the College Level as Identified by DBCAFLS Faculty, Staff, and Administrators*

Professional Development Opportunities	<i>n</i>	%
Campus Affiliated Organizational Clubs (RSOs)	33	76.74
Honorary Societies	15	34.88
Social Fraternities/Sororities	0	0.00
Internships	33	76.74

**Table 3 (Cont.)**

## Professional Development Opportunities

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
School Sponsored Study Abroad	29	67.44
Student Government	7	16.28
Band	0	0.00
ROTC	0	0.00
Collegiate Athletics/Cheerleading/Mascots/Spirit Squads	0	0.00
Intramural Sports	2	4.65
On Campus Job	30	69.77
Off Campus Job	9	20.93
Church/Religious Organization	0	0.00
Commodity Organizations (Arkansas Cattleman's Association, The Poultry Federation etc.)	24	55.81
Professional Organizations (Arkansas Farm Bureau, Arkansas Women in Ag etc.)	20	46.51
Courses about professional development	26	60.47
Workshops about professional development	14	32.56
Academic courses that incorporate professional development curriculum	27	62.79
National conventions/conferences	32	74.42



**Table 3 (Cont.)**

## Professional Development Opportunities

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Judging teams/other teams (livestock judging, soil judging, ranch horse, quiz bowl etc.)	29	67.44
Ambassador/REPS teams	18	41.86
Study tours (completed in the US)	9	20.93
Company visits (business site tours/presentation by employees)	27	62.79
Professional mentorship/job shadowing	20	46.51
Student-led Fundraisers (SMASH, Plant Sales, etc.)	22	51.16
Capstone projects where students connect with professionals	21	48.84
Career fairs/networking events	22	51.16
Guest speakers in classes or via seminars	12	27.91

*Note:* N = 43.

A majority of the respondents identified campus affiliated organizational clubs (RSOs), internships (76.74%), national conventions/conferences (74.42%), on campus jobs (69.77%), school sponsored study abroad, judging teams/other teams (livestock judging, soil judging, ranch horse, quiz bowl etc.) (67.44%), academic courses that incorporate professional development curriculum, company visits (business site tours/presentation by employees (62.79%), courses about professional development (60.47%), commodity organizations (Arkansas Cattleman's Association, The Poultry Federation etc.) (55.81%), student-led fundraisers (SMASH, Plant Sales, etc.) and career fairs/networking events (51.16%) as being offered at the college level.

Some opportunities were not identified by any respondents as being offered at the college level including social fraternities/sororities (0.00%), band (0.00%), ROTC (0.00%), collegiate athletics/cheerleading/mascots/spirit squads (0.00%), and church/religious organizations (0.00%). This was expected as those activities are typically offered university-wide. However, these options were included since the opportunities were included in the student questionnaire. Other opportunities that were identified being offered at this level by few respondents were student government (16.28%), intramural sports (4.65%), off campus jobs (20.93%), study tours (completed in the US) (20.93%), and guest speakers in classes or via seminars (27.91%).

**Objective 2: Determine which professional development offered by DBCAFLS undergraduate departments as identified by faculty, staff, and administrators.**

The second objective that guided this study was determined by asking survey respondents to drag and drop professional development opportunities into boxes classifying whether they were offered at the college level by DBCAFLS or at the department level. Table 4 shows the frequency of each professional development opportunity being dropped into the box labeled “Academic Department”, meaning respondents classified the professional development opportunity as being offered at the departmental level.

**Table 4**

*Professional Development Opportunities Offered at the Academic Department Level as Identified by DBCAFLS Faculty, Staff, and Administrators*

Professional Development Opportunities	<i>n</i>	%
Campus Affiliated Organizational Clubs (RSOs)	31	72.09
Honorary Societies	27	62.79
Social Fraternities/Sororities	0	0.00

**Table 4 (Cont.)**

Professional Development Opportunities	<i>n</i>	%
Internships	27	62.79
School Sponsored Study Abroad	32	74.42
Student Government	14	32.56
Band	0	0.00
ROTC	0	0.00
Collegiate Athletics/Cheerleading/Mascots/Spirit Squads	0	0.00
Intramural Sports	4	9.30
On Campus Job	34	79.07
Off Campus Job	13	30.23
Church/Religious Organization	0	0.00
Commodity Organizations (Arkansas Cattleman's Association, The Poultry Federation etc.)	23	53.49
Professional Organizations (Arkansas Farm Bureau, Arkansas Women in Ag etc.)	21	48.84
Courses about professional development	27	62.79
Workshops about professional development	24	55.81
Academic courses that incorporate professional development curriculum	26	60.47
National conventions/conferences	24	55.81

<b>Table 4 (Cont.)</b> Professional Development Opportunities	<i>n</i>	%
Judging teams/other teams (livestock judging, soil judging, ranch horse, quiz bowl etc.)	20	46.51
Ambassador/REPS teams	25	58.14
Study tours (completed in the US)	14	32.56
Company visits (business site tours/presentation by employees)	26	60.47
Professional mentorship/job shadowing	18	41.86
Student-led Fundraisers (SMASH, Plant Sales, etc.)	17	39.53
Capstone projects where students connect with professionals	14	32.56
Career fairs/networking events	31	72.09
Guest speakers in classes or via seminars	27	62.79

*Note:* N = 43.

A majority of the respondents identified on campus jobs (79.07%), school sponsored study abroad (74.42%), campus affiliated organizational clubs (RSOs) (72.09%), career fairs/networking events (72.09%), honorary societies, internships, courses about professional development, guest speakers in classes or via seminars (62.79%), academic courses that incorporate professional development curriculum, company visits (business site tours/presentation by employees) (60.47%), study tours (completed in the U.S.) (58.14%), workshops about professional development, judging teams/other teams (livestock judging, soil judging, soil judging, ranch horse, quiz bowl etc.) (55.81%), and commodity organizations

(Arkansas Cattleman's Association, The Poultry Federation etc.) (53.49%) as being offered at the academic departmental level. Several opportunities were not identified by any respondents as being offered at the academic departmental level including social fraternities/sororities (0.00%), band (0.00%), ROTC (0.00%), collegiate athletics/cheerleading/mascots/spirit squads (0.00%), and church/religious organizations (0.00%). Again, this was expected but the data provided a benchmark of how faculty, staff, and administrators viewed opportunities.

**Objective 3: Describe DBCAFLS faculty, staff and administrators' perceptions of the contribution that professional development opportunities have on student employability skills.**

The third objective was to describe DBCAFLS faculty, staff, and administrators' perceptions of the level of contribution that professional development opportunities had on student employability skills. Respondents were asked to rate each professional development opportunity on a scale ranging from "no contribution" to "major contribution". The frequencies of are reported in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Levels of Contribution that Professional Development Opportunities Have on Student Employability Skills According to DBCAFLS Faculty, Staff, and Administrators*

	Contribution to Developing Employability Skills							
	No Contribution		Minor Contribution		Moderate Contribution		Major Contribution	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Professional Development Opportunity								
Campus Affiliated Organizational Clubs (RSOs)	1	2.33	16	37.21	20	46.51	6	13.95
Honorary Societies	2	4.65	19	44.19	16	37.21	6	13.95
Social Fraternities/Sororities	9	20.93	13	30.23	19	44.19	2	4.65
Internships	1	2.33	1	2.33	4	9.30	37	86.05
School Sponsored Study Abroad	1	2.33	9	20.93	21	48.84	12	27.91
Student Government	1	2.33	12	27.91	21	48.84	9	20.93
Band	8	18.60	21	48.84	12	27.91	2	4.65
ROTC	8	18.60	12	27.91	21	48.84	5	11.63
Collegiate Athletics/Cheerleading/Mascots/Spirit Squads	7	16.28	19	44.19	15	34.88	2	4.65

Contribution to Developing Employability Skills

**Table 5 (Cont.)**

	No Contribution		Minor Contribution		Moderate Contribution		Major Contribution	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Professional Development Opportunity								
Intramural Sports	20	46.51	16	37.21	5	11.63	2	4.65
On Campus Job	1	2.33	4	9.30	23	53.49	15	34.88
Off Campus Job	2	4.65	5	11.63	19	44.19	17	39.53
Church/Religious Organization	13	30.23	20	46.51	8	18.60	2	4.65
Commodity Organizations (Arkansas Cattleman's Association, The Poultry Federation etc.)	4	9.30	7	16.28	22	51.16	10	23.26
Professional Organizations (Arkansas Farm Bureau, Arkansas Women in Ag etc.)	3	6.98	11	25.58	16	37.21	13	30.23
Courses about professional development	1	2.33	13	30.23	14	32.56	15	34.88

**Table 5 (Cont.)**

## Contribution to Developing Employability Skills

	No Contribution		Minor Contribution		Moderate Contribution		Major Contribution	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Professional Development Opportunity								
Workshops about professional development	1	2.33	13	30.23	13	30.23	16	37.21
Academic courses that incorporate professional development curriculum	1	2.33	10	23.26	17	39.53	15	34.88
National conventions/conferences	2	4.65	12	27.91	15	34.88	14	32.56
Judging teams/other teams (livestock judging, soil judging, ranch horse, quiz bowl etc.)	1	2.33	15	34.88	22	51.16	5	11.63
Ambassador/REPS teams	3	6.98	20	46.51	15	34.88	5	11.63
Study tours (completed in the US)	3	6.98	16	37.21	20	46.51	3	6.98
Company visits (business site tours/presentation by employees)	1	2.33	8	18.60	22	51.16	12	27.91



**Table 5 (Cont.)**

	Contribution to Developing Employability Skills							
	No Contribution		Minor Contribution		Moderate Contribution		Major Contribution	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Professional Development Opportunity								
Professional mentorship/job shadowing	1	2.33	3	6.98	17	39.53	22	51.16
Student-led Fundraisers (SMASH, Plant Sales, etc.)	5	11.63	21	48.84	12	27.91	5	11.63
Capstone projects where students connect with professionals	3	6.98	6	13.95	21	48.84	13	30.23
Career fairs/networking events	1	2.33	6	13.95	13	30.23	23	53.49
Guest speakers in classes or via seminars	1	2.33	13	30.23	19	44.19	10	23.26

Certain professional development opportunities were not perceived as strong contributors to student employability skills as others, according to the faculty, staff, and administrator respondents. Professional development skills ranked no contribution or minor contribution included intramural sports (83.72%), church/religious organizations (76.74%), and band (67.44%). Professional development skills categorized as having moderate or major contribution

to student employability skills included internships (95.35%), professional mentorship/job shadowing (90.69%), on campus jobs (88.37%), off campus jobs (83.72%), career fairs/networking events (83.72%), company visits (business site tours/presentation by employees) (79.07%), and capstone projects where students connect with professionals (79.07%).

**Objective 4: Describe DBCAFLS undergraduate student perceptions of employability skill importance to their future careers.**

Objective five of this study sought to describe DBCAFLS undergraduate student perceptions of employability skill importance to their future careers. Student respondents were asked to rate the importance of skills on a scale of no importance to major importance. The 28 employability skills were ranked in order of importance in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*DBCAFLS Undergraduate Student Perceptions of Employability Skill Importance*

Rank	Employability Skill	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1.	Solving problems.	2.87	0.36
2.	Identifying problems.	2.82	0.40
3.	Meeting deadlines.	2.77	0.51
4.	Listening attentively.	2.76	0.51
5.	Working well with fellow employees.	2.75	0.51
6.	Adapting to situations of change.	2.75	0.50
7.	Recognizing the effects of decisions made.	2.73	0.50
8.	Allocating time efficiently.	2.71	0.52
9.	Responding positively to constructive criticism.	2.71	0.53

**Table 6 (Cont.)**

Rank	Employability Skill	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
10.	Prioritizing problems.	2.70	0.52
11.	Maintaining a positive attitude.	2.70	0.57
12.	Ability to work independently.	2.70	0.53
13.	Understanding the needs of others.	2.68	0.57
14.	Knowing ethical implications of decisions.	2.65	0.61
15.	Conveying information one-on-one.	2.61	0.60
16.	Empathizing with others.	2.60	0.64
17.	Communicating ideas verbally to groups.	2.59	0.63
18.	Relating well with supervisors.	2.53	0.67
19.	Resolving conflicts.	2.53	0.73
20.	Initiating change to enhance productivity.	2.52	0.60
21.	Using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation.	2.48	0.71
22.	Giving direction and guidance to others.	2.48	0.71
23.	Managing/overseeing several tasks at once.	2.46	0.68
24.	Contributing to group problem solving.	2.39	0.70
25.	Assigning/delegating responsibility.	2.37	0.76
26.	Identifying sources of conflict among people.	2.28	0.81
27.	Taking reasonable job-related risks.	2.23	0.70
28.	Supervising the work of others.	2.18	0.76

There were six skills that had a mean higher than 2.75. Solving problems ( $M = 2.87$ ), identifying problems ( $M = 2.82$ ), meeting deadlines ( $M = 2.77$ ), listening attentively ( $M = 2.76$ ), working well with fellow employees ( $M = 2.75$ ), and adapting to situations of change ( $M = 2.75$ ) were in this category. There were fourteen skills that scored lower than 2.40. These skills consisted of contributing to group problem solving ( $M = 2.39$ ), assigning/delegating responsibility ( $M = 2.37$ ), identifying sources of conflict among people ( $M = 2.28$ ), taking reasonable job-related risks ( $M = 2.18$ ).

**Objective 6: Describe DBCAFLS undergraduate student perceived levels of competence at performing employability skills.**

Objective six of this study sought to describe DBCAFLS undergraduate student perceived levels of competence at performing employability skills. Student respondents were asked to rate their perceived levels of competence at performing skills on a scale of no competence to major competence. The 28 employability skills were ranked in order of competence in Table 7.

**Table 7**

*DBCAFLS Undergraduate Student Perceptions of Employability Skill Competence*

Rank	Employability Skill	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1.	Working well with fellow employees.	2.65	0.55
2.	Meeting deadlines.	2.61	0.59
3.	Ability to work independently.	2.61	0.62
4.	Empathizing with others.	2.55	0.61
5.	Understanding the needs of others.	2.55	0.61
6.	Listening attentively.	2.54	0.62

**Table 7 (Cont.)**

Rank	Employability Skill	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
7.	Using proper grammar, spelling, & punctuation.	2.48	0.64
8.	Solving problems.	2.43	0.58
9.	Relating well with supervisors.	2.43	0.63
10.	Conveying information one-on-one.	2.41	0.66
11.	Identifying problems.	2.40	0.56
12.	Maintaining a positive attitude.	2.38	0.70
13.	Knowing ethical implications of decisions.	2.36	0.71
14.	Recognizing the effects of decisions made.	2.36	0.64
15.	Prioritizing problems.	2.30	0.61
16.	Giving direction and guidance to others.	2.30	0.71
17.	Adapting to situations of change.	2.30	0.75
18.	Responding positively to constructive criticism.	2.29	0.75
19.	Communicating ideas verbally to groups.	2.28	0.70
20.	Contributing to group problem solving.	2.27	0.68
21.	Managing/overseeing several tasks at once.	2.25	0.71
22.	Allocating time efficiently.	2.23	0.75
23.	Resolving conflicts.	2.21	0.74
24.	Assigning/delegating responsibility	2.18	0.72
25.	Identifying sources of conflict among people.	2.18	0.66
26.	Initiating change to enhance productivity.	2.12	0.76
27.	Supervising the work of others.	2.05	0.74
28.	Taking reasonable job-related risks.	1.94	0.75

There were six skills that ranked higher than 2.50, and these were working well with fellow employees ( $M = 2.65$ ), meeting deadlines ( $M = 2.61$ ), ability to work independently ( $M =$

2.61), empathizing with others ( $M = 2.55$ ), understanding the needs of others ( $M = 2.55$ ), listening attentively ( $M = 2.54$ ). There were five skills that ranked lower than 2.20. These were assigning/delegating responsibilities ( $M = 2.18$ ), identifying sources of conflict among people ( $M = 2.18$ ), initiating change to enhance productivity ( $M = 2.12$ ), supervising the work of others ( $M = 2.05$ ), taking reasonable job-related risks ( $M = 1.94$ ).

**Objective 7: Describe DBCAFLS undergraduate student perceptions of the contribution professional development opportunities have on student employability skills.**

The seventh objective was to describe DBCAFLS undergraduate students' perceptions of the contribution that professional development opportunities have on student employability skills. Respondents were asked to rate each professional development opportunity on a scale ranging from "no contribution" to "major contribution". The frequencies of are reported in Table 8. For readability and ease of interpretation, data was collapsed into three categories (not applicable, no contribution, and contribution). Students who selected minor, moderate, or major contribution were collapsed into the "contribution" category. Total responses varied from question to question, as some respondents did not complete some questions.

**Table 8***Levels of Contribution that Professional Development Opportunities Have on Student**Employability Skills According to DBCAFLS Undergraduates*

	Contribution to Developing Employability Skills					
	Not Applicable		No Contribution		Contribution	
Professional Development Opportunity	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Campus Affiliated Organizational Clubs (RSOs)	47	25.00	30	15.96	111	59.04
Honorary Societies	74*	39.57	53*	28.49	60*	32.09
Social Fraternities/Sororities	58*	31.02	29*	15.51	100*	53.48
Student Government	95	50.53	69	36.70	24	12.77
Band	103	54.79	72	38.30	13	6.91
ROTC	101*	54.01	69*	36.90	17*	9.09
Collegiate Athletics/Cheerleading/Mascots/Spirit Squads	101*	54.01	66*	35.29	20*	10.75
Intramural Sports	79	42.02	58	30.85	51	27.13
On Campus Job	80**	43.01	55**	29.57	51**	27.42
Off Campus Job	43*	22.99	36*	19.25	108*	57.75
Church/Religious Organization	49	26.06	35	18.62	104	55.32
Commodity Organizations (Arkansas Cattleman's Association, The Poultry Federation etc.)	88*	47.06	64*	34.22	35*	18.72

**Table 8 (Cont.)**

Professional Development Opportunity	Contribution to Developing Employability Skills					
	Not Applicable		No Contribution		Contribution	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Professional Organizations (Arkansas Farm Bureau, Arkansas Women in Ag etc.)	86*	45.99	66*	35.29	35*	18.72
Internships	70*	37.43	51*	27.27	66*	35.29
School Sponsored Study Abroad	93**	50.00	62**	33.33	31**	16.67
Courses about professional development	62	32.98	52	27.66	74	39.36
Workshops about professional development	71	37.77	59	31.38	58	30.85
Academic courses that incorporate professional development curriculum	41*	21.93	38*	20.32	108*	57.75

Note:  $n = 188$  \* $n = 187$ , \*\* $n = 186$

Band ( $n = 103$ , 54.79%), ROTC, Collegiate Athletics/Cheerleading/Mascots/Spirit Squads ( $n = 101^*$ , 54.01%), and school sponsored study abroad ( $n = 93^{**}$ , 50%) were not applicable to the student respondents. On the other end of the spectrum, campus affiliated organizations (RSOs) ( $n = 111$ , 59.04%), off campus jobs ( $n = 108^*$ , 57.75%), academic courses that incorporate professional development curriculum ( $n = 108^*$ , 57.75%), church/religious organization ( $n = 104$ , 55.32%), and social fraternities/sororities ( $n = 100^*$ , 53.48%) scored high as having contribution to student employability skills.



## Chapter V: Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to identify professional development opportunities available to undergraduate students in DBCAFLS. Additionally, this study sought to understand students' perceptions of career preparedness based on professional development opportunities available to them. The following conclusions were a result of the data analysis.

### *Professional Development Opportunities Contribute to Student Development*

Chickering's Seven Vectors of Student Development clearly outlines the process in which students develop throughout their educational journey. In the first vector – developing competence – students use intellectual, physical/manual and interpersonal qualities and activities to build their skills. The skills developed here are self-discipline, listening, understanding, and communicating – all of which are reported to be strengthened by various professional development opportunities. This study showed that student and faculty, staff, and administrator participants perceived certain professional development opportunities contributed to student employability skills. Conclusions are presented by objective below.

*Objective 1: Determine which professional development opportunities are offered by DBCAFLS as identified by faculty, staff, and administrators. Objective 2: Determine which professional development offered by DBCAFLS undergraduate departments as identified by faculty, staff, and administrators.*

Faculty, staff, and administrator respondents noted that campus affiliated organizational clubs (RSOs), internships, and on campus jobs were offered at the college level in DBCAFLS. The Cox et al. (2010) study suggested that engineering faculty at a Midwestern University believed that extracurricular activities such as these would be valuable to students to build leadership skills and other employability skills. Faculty, staff, and administrators categorized

campus affiliated organizational clubs (RSOs), school sponsored study abroad, on campus jobs, and career fairs/networking events as offered by DBCAFLS departments. The study that surveyed engineering faculty (Cox et al., 2010) revealed that most of these were recommended by their respondents as well. The only professional development opportunities identified in the current study not identified by Cox et al. was career fairs/networking events. While this professional development opportunity was not discussed in the Cox et al. (2010) study, it did play an important role in this study.

*Objective 3: Describe DBCAFLS faculty, staff, and administrators' perceptions of the contribution that professional development opportunities have on student employability skills.*

The third objective sought to describe faculty, staff, and administrator's perceptions of the professional development opportunities' contribution to student employability skills. Several opportunities were identified as having a contribution to student employability skills including internships, on campus jobs, off campus jobs, and capstone courses where students connect with professionals. Each of these were also mentioned in Cox et al. (2010). This study reported that respondents especially recommended capstone courses, since this helps them develop skills such as communication and teamwork. Other opportunities rated highly in this study were career fairs/networking events and company visits (business site tours/presentations by employees).

*Objective 5: Describe DBCALFS undergraduate student perceptions of employability skill importance to their future careers.*

Student respondents ranked solving problems, identifying problems, meeting deadlines, listening attentively, working well with fellow employees, and adapting to situations as having the most importance to their future careers. This reflected the results of Robinson et al. (2007). That study's results highly ranked solving problems (#1), listening attentively (#5), identifying

problems (#6), and working well with fellow employees (#7). The other skills – meeting deadlines (#16) and adapting to situations of change (#21) – were not quite as highly ranked, but they were still in the top 50% of the skills in the Robinson et al. study (2007). This mirrored some of the findings in the DiBenedetto & Willis study (2020). They found that solving problems, time management, and teamwork ranked highly among their respondents. Furthermore, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (2021) recommends some of these skills as being part of career readiness, including active listening, demonstrating dependability, adapting, and collaborating with others.

*Objective 6: Describe DBCAFLS undergraduate student perceived levels of competence at performing employability skills.*

Student respondents ranked their competence at performing certain employability skills as high including, working well with fellow employees, meeting deadlines, ability to work independently, empathizing with others, understanding the needs of others, and listening attentively. Most of these ranked very high in the Robinson et al. (2007), with ability to work independently ranking as #1, working well with fellow employees ranking as #3, listening attentively ranking as #4, and meeting deadlines ranking as #8. Compared to the results from objective 5, these differ slightly. Students felt some skills were important to their future careers, yet they did not feel highly competent performing those skills.

*Objective 7: Describe DBCAFLS undergraduate student perceptions of the contribution professional development opportunities have on student employability skills.*

Students rated professional development opportunities in terms of their contribution to their employability skills. The highest-ranking professional development opportunities included campus affiliated organizations (RSOs), off campus jobs, academic courses that incorporate

professional development curriculum, church/religious organizations, and social fraternities/sororities. This somewhat echoed the Robinson et al. (2007) study, as campus affiliated organizations (RSOs) ranked #1 for on campus activities, social fraternities/sororities ranked #5 for on campus activities, academic courses that incorporate professional development curriculum ranked #1 for academic activities, and church/religious organizations ranked #1 for the off-campus activities. In comparison to the faculty, staff, and administrators results, students chose different professional development opportunities. It is important to note that 95.35% of faculty, staff, and administrators said that internships had a contribution to student employability skills. Only 35.29% of student respondents said they felt that internships contributed. On the other hand, 55.32% of students said that church/religious organizations and social fraternities/sororities had a contribution to their employability skills. A majority (76.74%) of faculty, staff, and administrators said that church/religious organizations had no or minor contribution. One finding that both groups shared was that campus affiliated organizational clubs (RSOs) did contribute to student employability skills.

### *Overall Conclusions*

Overall, there were some interesting observations made. Internships were perceived as contributing to student employability skills by 95.35% of faculty, staff, and administrators, while only 35.29% of students said the same thing. The low perception of students may have resulted from the actual lived experiences, or may be attributed to the number of student respondents below junior level or the types of internship experiences students had during COVID-19. It was also noted that over half of the student respondents (55.32%) ranked church/religious organizations as having contributions, but faculty, staff, and administrators (76.74%) said this professional development opportunity had no or minor contribution to student employability

skills. Social fraternities/sororities was ranked high in contribution by students (55.32%), but faculty, staff, and administrators (51.16%) said they had no or minor contribution to student professional development.

## **Recommendations**

### *Research*

Further research should be conducted to investigate the dissonance between faculty, staff, and administrators' and students' perceptions of which professional development opportunities contribute to student employability skills. Furthermore, this study had a high number of respondents that were freshmen/sophomores. Future studies should include more juniors, seniors and recent graduates, since they have had more of an opportunity to take advantage of more of the professional development opportunities available to them. Another consideration would be to avoid surveying students who were enrolled during the COVID-19 pandemic during shutdowns. This may have limited their chances to participate fully in the professional development opportunities during those years.

Furthermore, research is needed to see how students form their opinions about which skills are important and which professional development opportunities contribute to the development of those skills. Researchers should seek to understand why students do not feel competent in certain skills to determine how more training could be offered to students for those areas. It was evident that both groups perceived campus affiliated organizations (RSOs) as being impactful to student development. Further research should take a closer look at why both groups perceived this as an impactful opportunity, which organizations are the most impactful, and what type of events or roles offered by these organizations are most impactful.

## *Practice*

Faculty, staff, and administrators need to understand the competencies that students rated high to low in importance and competence as well as the perceived value of professional development opportunities to better market these professional development opportunities to students. As noted in the Cox et al. study (2010), current curriculum is too full to simply add more professional development. Thus, capitalizing on extra-curricular and course integrated opportunities should be of focus for faculty and administrators. Leveraging opportunities and ensuring students gain from those opportunities is essential.

Faculty and staff will need to recognize that students have different viewpoints regarding what is important for them to learn and what they require in terms of instruction for learning those skills. Another recommendation would be to emphasize the importance of internships through critical conversations with advisees. Also, incorporating such opportunities into program requirements may elevate perceived importance. Faculty, staff, and administration felt that internships contributed strongly to student employability skills, but students did not report the same level of value. This may indicate the need to discuss internship quality with students.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Research Compliance Protocol Approval



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**To:** Jessica L Wesson  
**From:** Justin R Chimka, Chair  
IRB Expedited Review  
**Date:** 11/15/2021  
**Action:** **Exemption Granted**  
**Action Date:** 11/15/2021  
**Protocol #:** 2109360292  
**Study Title:** Are Agriculture Students Prepared for the Workplace When They Graduate?

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu).

cc: Casandra K Cox, Investigator

## **Appendix B: Faculty, Staff, and Administrator Questionnaire**

Welcome and thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey!

If you agree to participate in this brief survey, 10 minutes or less, click the “Next” button. If at any point you need to revisit a questions, click the “Back” button.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to secure information about professional development opportunities from faculty and staff of the Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and greatly appreciated. The information you provide will assist in evaluating the ways in which students are being prepared for employment. Therefore, your responses are vital. However, you are not required to participate in this study. It is strictly voluntary.

All information collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and university policy. Email addresses will be collected to prevent duplicate survey responses, but they will be deleted from the dataset as soon as data collection is complete. This will ensure that individual responses will remain anonymous. Thank you for participating in this important study. Through your participation, we can continue to provide students with a high quality education.

If you come to a question you prefer not to answer, you may skip it and proceed to the next

question. Should you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact a member of our research team: Jessica Wesson, at [jlwesson@uark.edu](mailto:jlwesson@uark.edu) or (Phone Number); Mrs. Casandra Cox, at [ccrumle@uark.edu](mailto:ccrumle@uark.edu) or (Phone Number); Dr. Jill Rucker, at [kjrucker@uark.edu](mailto:kjrucker@uark.edu); Dr. Jefferson Miller, at [jdmiller@uark.edu](mailto:jdmiller@uark.edu) or (Phone Number). IRB approval has been granted for this project (Protocol number: 2109360292) and you may contact Ro Windwalker at [iwindwal@uark.edu](mailto:iwindwal@uark.edu).

Your help with this survey is appreciated.

By clicking here, you provide consent to participate in this study about faculty perceptions of professional development opportunities for students.

- Yes, I consent to participate in this survey.
- No, I do not consent to participate in this survey.

*Skip To: End of Survey If Welcome and thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey! If you agree to particip... = No, I do not consent to participate in this survey.*

Please identify your role within the College:

- Bumpers College Administrators and Staff
- Academic Department Staff
- Academic Department Faculty

---

*Display This Question:*

*If Please identify your role within the College: = Academic Department Faculty  
Or Please identify your role within the College: = Academic Department Staff*

Do you provide student support? (Student support is defined as interacting directly with students on a regular basis to offer some type of instruction or support; academic/thesis advising, instruction, recruitment, club advising etc.)

Yes

No

*Skip To: End of Survey If Do you provide student support? (Student support is defined as interacting directly with students... = No*

---

Page Break

Display This Question:

If Please identify your role within the College: = Academic Department Staff

Or Please identify your role within the College: = Academic Department Faculty

Below you will see recurring professional development opportunities listed on the left. Please drag and drop each opportunity you believe is offered by your academic department. (You do not have to move all listed items.)

Professional Development Opportunities Offered by Your Academic Department(s)

\_\_\_\_\_ Campus affiliated organizational clubs (RSOs)

\_\_\_\_\_ Honorary Societies

\_\_\_\_\_ Internship

\_\_\_\_\_ School Sponsored Study Abroad

\_\_\_\_\_ Student Government

\_\_\_\_\_ Intramural Sports

\_\_\_\_\_ On Campus Job

\_\_\_\_\_ Off Campus Job

\_\_\_\_\_ Commodity Organizations (Arkansas Cattleman's Association, The Poultry Federation etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Professional Organizations (Arkansas Farm Bureau, Arkansas Women in Ag etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Courses about professional development

\_\_\_\_\_ Workshops about professional development

\_\_\_\_\_ Academic courses that have curriculum with professional development incorporated

\_\_\_\_\_ National conventions/conferences

\_\_\_\_\_ Judging teams/other teams (livestock judging, soil judging, ranch horse, quiz bowl)

\_\_\_\_\_ Ambassador/REPS teams

\_\_\_\_\_ Study tours (completed in the US)

\_\_\_\_\_ Company visits (business site tours/presentation by employees)

\_\_\_\_\_ Professional mentorship/job shadowing

\_\_\_\_\_ Student-led fundraisers (SMASH, Plant sales, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Capstone projects where students connect with professionals

\_\_\_\_\_ Career fairs/networking events

\_\_\_\_\_ Guest speakers in class or via seminars

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please list and categorize.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please list and categorize.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please list and categorize.)

Display This Question:

If Please identify your role within the College: = Bumpers College Administrators and Staff

Below you will see recurring professional development opportunities listed on the left. Please drag and drop each opportunity you believe academic departments offer. (You do not have to move all listed items.)

### Academic Departments

---

\_\_\_\_\_ Campus affiliated organizational clubs (RSOs)

\_\_\_\_\_ Honorary Societies

\_\_\_\_\_ Internship

\_\_\_\_\_ School Sponsored Study Abroad

\_\_\_\_\_ Student Government

\_\_\_\_\_ Intramural Sports

\_\_\_\_\_ On Campus Job

\_\_\_\_\_ Off Campus Job

\_\_\_\_\_ Commodity Organizations (Arkansas Cattleman's Association, The Poultry Federation etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Professional Organizations (Arkansas Farm Bureau, Arkansas Women in Ag etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Courses about professional development

\_\_\_\_\_ Workshops about professional development

\_\_\_\_\_ Academic courses that have curriculum with professional development incorporated

\_\_\_\_\_ National conventions/conferences

\_\_\_\_\_ Judging teams/other teams (livestock judging, soil judging, ranch horse, quiz bowl)

\_\_\_\_\_ Ambassador/REPS teams

\_\_\_\_\_ Study tours (completed in the US)

\_\_\_\_\_ Company visits (business site tours/presentation by employees)

\_\_\_\_\_ Professional mentorship/job shadowing

\_\_\_\_\_ Student-led fundraisers (SMASH, Plant Sales, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Capstone projects where students connect with professionals

\_\_\_\_\_ Career fairs/networking events

\_\_\_\_\_ Guest speakers in classes or via seminars

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please list and categorize.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please list and categorize.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please list and categorize.)



Below you will see recurring professional development opportunities listed on the left. Please drag and drop each opportunity you believe Bumpers College offers. (You do not have to move all listed items.)

College

- 
- Campus affiliated organizational clubs (RSOs)
  - Honorary Societies
  - Internship
  - School Sponsored Study Abroad
  - Student Government
  - Intramural Sports
  - On Campus Job
  - Off Campus Job
  - Commodity Organizations (Arkansas Cattleman's Association, The Poultry Federation etc.)
  - Professional Organizations (Arkansas Farm Bureau, Arkansas Women in Ag etc.)
  - Courses about professional development
  - Workshops about professional development
  - Academic courses that have curriculum with professional development incorporated
  - National conventions/conferences

\_\_\_\_\_ Judging teams/other teams (livestock judging, soil judging, ranch horse, quiz bowl)

\_\_\_\_\_ Ambassador/REPS teams

\_\_\_\_\_ Study tours (completed in the US)

\_\_\_\_\_ Company visits (business site tours/presentation by employees)

\_\_\_\_\_ Professional mentorship/job shadowing

\_\_\_\_\_ Student-led fundraisers (SMASH, Plant Sales, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Capstone projects where students connect with professionals

\_\_\_\_\_ Career fairs/networking events

\_\_\_\_\_ Guest speakers in classes or via seminars

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please list and categorize.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please list and categorize.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please list and categorize.)

---

Page Break

Please rate the following items based on your perception of each items contribution to student employability skills.

	No contributio n	Minor contributio n	Moderate Contributio n	Major Contributio n
Campus affiliated organizational clubs (RSOs)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Honorary Societies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Fraternities/Sororities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School Sponsored Study Abroad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student Government	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Band	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ROTC	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collegiate Athletics/Cheerleading/Mascots/Spirit Squads	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intramural Sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On Campus Job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Off Campus Job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Church/Religious Organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Commodity Organizations (Arkansas Cattleman's Association, The Poultry Federation etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional Organizations (Arkansas Farm Bureau, Arkansas Women in Ag etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Courses about professional development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workshops about professional development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic courses that incorporate professional development curriculum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
National conventions/conferences  Judging teams/other teams (livestock judging, soil judging, ranch horse, quiz bowl)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ambassador/REPS teams	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Study tours (completed in the US)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Company visits (business site tours/presentation by employees)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional mentorship/job shadowing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student-led fundraisers (SMASH, Plant Sales, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Capstone projects where students connect with professionals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career fairs/networking events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Guest speakers in classes or via seminars	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (Please list.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (Please list.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (Please list.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



*Display This Question:*

*If Please identify your role within the College: = Academic Department Staff*

*And Please identify your role within the College: = Academic Department Faculty*

If there are recurring professional development opportunities offered by your academic department not in the survey, list those below:

---

*Display This Question:*

*If Please identify your role within the College: = Bumpers College Administrators and Staff*

If there are recurring professional development opportunities offered by academic departments not in the survey, list those below:

---

What is your gender?

---

What is your ethnicity?

- Hispanic/Latino
  - Black or African American, non-Hispanic
  - White, non-Hispanic
  - American Indian or Alaska native, non-Hispanic
  - Asian, non-Hispanic
  - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic
  - Two or more races, non-Hispanic
  - Race and/or ethnicity unknown
  - Prefer not to answer
- 

How old are you?

---



## **Appendix C: Student Questionnaire**

Welcome and thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey! If you agree to participate in this brief survey, 10 minutes or less, click the “Next” button. If at any point you need to revisit a question, click the “Back” button.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to secure information from students of the Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences. Specifically, the questionnaire is designed to assess your perceptions of the importance of selected employability skills and your perceived level of competence at performing the skills. In addition, the questionnaire assesses how various professional development opportunities impacted your perceived readiness for a future career.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and greatly appreciated. The information you provide will assist the College in evaluating the ways in which students are being prepared for employment. Therefore, your responses are vital. However, you are not required to participate in this study. It is strictly voluntary.

All information collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and university policy. Your name will not be collected and your individual answers will not be linked with any identifying information in any data reports. Thank you for participating in this important study. Through your participation, we can continue to provide students with a high quality education.

If you come to a question you prefer not to answer, you may skip it and proceed to the next question. Should you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact a member of our research team: Jessica Wesson, at [jlwesson@uark.edu](mailto:jlwesson@uark.edu) or (Phone Number); Mrs. Casandra Cox, at [ccrumle@uark.edu](mailto:ccrumle@uark.edu) or (Phone Number); Dr. Jill Rucker, at [kjrucker@uark.edu](mailto:kjrucker@uark.edu); Dr. Jefferson Miller, at [jdmiller@uark.edu](mailto:jdmiller@uark.edu) or (Phone Number). IRB approval has been granted for

this project (Protocol number: 2109360292) and you may contact Ro Windwalker at  
iwindwal@uark.edu.

Your help with this survey is appreciated.

By clicking here, you provide consent to participate in this study about student perceptions of  
professional development opportunities.

- Yes, I consent to participate in this survey.
- No, I do not consent to participate in this survey.

*Skip To: End of Survey If Welcome and thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey! If you agree to  
particip... = No, I do not consent to participate in this survey.*

---

Page Break

Please respond to the following items by marking the response that most accurately reflects your perception of the importance of the employability skill to your future career and your perceived level of competence at performing the skill.

In the LEFT column, indicate how important you believe the corresponding skills are to the success of your occupation.

In the RIGHT column, indicate your perceived level of competence at performing the corresponding skills.

	Importance				Competence			
	No	Minor	Moderate	Major	No	Minor	Moderate	Major
	importance	importance	importance	importance	competence	competence	competence	competence

1. Identifying  
problems.

2. Prioritizing  
problems.

3. Solving  
problems.

4.  
Contributing  
to group  
problem  
solving.

5. Knowing  
ethical  
implications  
of decisions.

6.  
Recognizing  
the effects of  
decisions  
made.

7.  
Assigning/delegating  
responsibility.

8. Allocating  
time  
efficiently.

9.  
Managing/overseeing  
several tasks  
at once.

10. Meeting  
deadlines.

---

Page Break

Continuation of skills importance and competence

	Importance				Competence			
	No	Minor	Modera	Major	No	Minor	Modera	Major
	importa	importa	te	importa	compet	compet	te	compet
	nce	nce	importa	nce	ence	ence	compet	ence
			nce				ence	

11. Taking  
reasonable  
job-related  
risks.

       

12.  
Conveying  
information  
one-on-one.

       

13.  
Communicating ideas  
verbally to  
groups.

       

14. Using  
proper  
grammar,  
spelling, &  
punctuation.

15.  
Listening attentively.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

16.  
Working well with fellow employees

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

17.  
Relating well with supervisors.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

18.  
Empathizing with others.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------



19.  
 Understanding the  
 needs of  
 others.

Continuation of skills importance and competence

	Importance				Competence			
	No	Minor	Modera	Major	No	Minor	Modera	Major
	importa	importa	te	importa	compet	compet	te	compet
	nce	nce	importa	nce	ence	ence	compet	ence
			nce				ence	

20.  
Identifyin  
g sources  
of conflict  
among  
people.

21.  
Resolving  
conflicts.

22.  
Supervisi  
ng the  
work of  
others.

23.  
Giving  
direction  
and  
guidance  
to others.

24.  
Adapting  
to  
situations  
of change.

25.  
Initiating  
change to  
enhance  
productivi  
ty.

26.  
Respon  
ding  
positively  
to  
constructi  
ve  
criticism.

27.  
Maintaini  
ng a  
positive  
attitude.

       

28.  
Ability to  
work  
independe  
ntly.

       

---

68. Which additional skills, NOT included in the previous lists, are important to to your future career success? (If you don't have any to add, leave blank.)

---

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Page Break

How many registered student organizations (RSOs) do you ACTIVELY participate in? Active participation means you are a dues paying member and attend at least 50% of the meetings/activities.

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 4-5
- 6+

---

Page Break

Considering the employability skills you rated in Part I, please mark the description of the listed category contributing to your employability skills development. If an item is listed that you were not directly involved in, please select Not Applicable.

	No contribution	Minor contribution	Moderate contribution	Major contribution	Not Applicable
69. Campus affiliated organizational clubs (RSOs)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
70. Honorary Societies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
71. Social Fraternities/Sororities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
72. Student Government	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
73. Band	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
74. ROTC	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
75. Collegiate Athletics/Cheerleading/Mascots /Spirit Squads	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
76. Intramural Sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
77. On Campus Job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
78. Off Campus Job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
79. Church/Religious Organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

80. Commodity Organizations

(Arkansas Cattleman's  
Association, The Poultry  
Federation etc.)

81. Professional Organizations

(Arkansas Farm Bureau,  
Arkansas Women in Ag etc.)

80. Internships

81. School Sponsored Study

Abroad

82. Courses about professional

development

83. Workshops about  
professional development

83. Academic courses that

incorporate professional  
development curriculum



Please select the option that best describes your presence on campus.

- First year on campus immediately following high school
  - Second year on campus immediately following high school
  - Third year on campus immediately following high school
  - Fourth+ year on high school immediately following high school
  - First year on campus immediately after attending a community or junior college
  - Second+ year on campus immediately after attending a community or junior college
  - Other
- 

How old are you?

---

What is your gender?

---

What is your ethnicity?

- Hispanic/Latino
- Black or African American, non-Hispanic
- White, non-Hispanic
- American Indian or Alaska native, non-Hispanic
- Asian, non-Hispanic
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic
- Two or more races, non-Hispanic
- Race and/or ethnicity unknown
- Prefer not to answer

End of Block: Default Question Block

---

## **Appendix D: Faculty, Staff, and Administrators Recruitment Emails**

### **First Email**

Hello,

My name is Jessica Wesson, and I am a graduate student in AECT. I am emailing to ask for your help completing a short survey of Bumpers College faculty and staff about professional development opportunities.

Click the link to provide consent to participate in the study and begin the survey.

[https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_2sHYqrI9IfBzSPs](https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2sHYqrI9IfBzSPs)

You can contact me: Jessica Wesson, at [jlwesson@uark.edu](mailto:jlwesson@uark.edu) or (Phone Number) or my thesis chair Mrs. Casandra Cox, at [ccrumle@uark.edu](mailto:ccrumle@uark.edu) or (Phone Number) if you have questions. IRB approval has been granted for this project (Protocol number: 2109360292).

Your response to this survey is greatly appreciated!

Thanks,

Jessica Wesson

### **Second Email**

Hello,

I am emailing to ask for your help completing a short survey of University of Arkansas students and faculty. This is my second email regarding this survey. The first was one week ago, and I am including the survey information below from the first email for your review. You may have seen a message regarding this survey on the UA News as well.

The focus of this study is survey faculty, staff, and administrator perceptions of the importance of professional development opportunities for students' employability skills. The survey will take 10 minutes or less to complete. Click the link to provide your consent to participate in the study and begin the survey. [https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_2sHYqrI9IfBzSPs](https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2sHYqrI9IfBzSPs)

You can contact a member of our research team with questions: Jessica Wesson, at [jlwesson@uark.edu](mailto:jlwesson@uark.edu) or (Phone Number); Mrs. Casandra Cox, at [ccrumle@uark.edu](mailto:ccrumle@uark.edu) or (Phone Number); Dr. Jill Rucker, at [kjrucker@uark.edu](mailto:kjrucker@uark.edu) or (Phone Number); Dr. Jefferson Miller, at [jdmiller@uark.edu](mailto:jdmiller@uark.edu) or (Phone Number). IRB approval has been granted for this project (Protocol number: 2109360292).

Your response to this survey is greatly appreciated!

### **Third Email**

Hello,

I am emailing to ask for your help completing a short survey of University of Arkansas students and faculty. This is my third email regarding this survey. The first was two weeks ago, and I am including the survey information below from the first email for your review. You may have seen a message regarding this survey on the UA News as well.

The focus of this study is survey faculty, staff, and administrator perceptions of the importance

of professional development opportunities for students' employability skills. The survey will take 10 minutes or less to complete. Click the link to provide your consent to participate in the study and begin the survey. [https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_2sHYqr19IfBzSPs](https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2sHYqr19IfBzSPs)

You can contact a member of our research team with questions: Jessica Wesson, at [jlwesson@uark.edu](mailto:jlwesson@uark.edu) or (Phone Number); Mrs. Casandra Cox, at [ccrumle@uark.edu](mailto:ccrumle@uark.edu) or (Phone Number); Dr. Jill Rucker, at [kjrucker@uark.edu](mailto:kjrucker@uark.edu) or (Phone Number); Dr. Jefferson Miller, at [jdmiller@uark.edu](mailto:jdmiller@uark.edu) or (Phone Number). IRB approval has been granted for this project (Protocol number: 2109360292).

Your response to this survey is greatly appreciated!

### **Final Email**

I am emailing to ask for your help completing a short survey of University of Arkansas students. I contacted you several weeks ago about participating in this survey. I am including the survey information below for your review. You may have seen a message regarding this survey on the UA News as well.

The focus of this study is survey faculty, staff, and administrator perceptions of the importance of professional development opportunities for students' employability skills. The survey will take 10 minutes or less to complete. Click the link to provide your consent to participate in the study and begin the survey. [https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_2sHYqr19IfBzSPs](https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2sHYqr19IfBzSPs)

You can contact a member of our research team with questions: Jessica Wesson, at [jlwesson@uark.edu](mailto:jlwesson@uark.edu) or (Phone Number); Mrs. Casandra Cox, at [ccrumle@uark.edu](mailto:ccrumle@uark.edu) or (Phone Number); Dr. Jill Rucker, at [kjrucker@uark.edu](mailto:kjrucker@uark.edu) or (Phone Number); Dr. Jefferson Miller, at [jdmiller@uark.edu](mailto:jdmiller@uark.edu) or (Phone Number). IRB approval has been granted for this project (Protocol number: 2109360292).

Your response to this survey is greatly appreciated!

## Appendix E: Student Recruitment Emails

### First Email

Hello,

My name is Jessica Wesson, and I am a graduate student in AECT. I am emailing to ask for your help completing a short survey of Bumpers College students about professional development opportunities.

Click the link to provide consent to participate in the study and begin the survey.

[https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8tZSvsMvWumA6eG](https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8tZSvsMvWumA6eG)

You can contact me: Jessica Wesson, at [jlwesson@uark.edu](mailto:jlwesson@uark.edu) or (Phone number) or my thesis chair Mrs. Casandra Cox, at [ccrumle@uark.edu](mailto:ccrumle@uark.edu) or (Phone number) if you have questions. IRB approval has been granted for this project (Protocol number: 2109360292).

Your response to this survey is greatly appreciated!

Thanks,

Jessica Wesson

### Second Email

Hello,

I am emailing to ask for your help completing a short survey of University of Arkansas students and faculty. This is my second email regarding this survey. The first was one week ago, and I am including the survey information below from the first email for your review. You may have seen a message regarding this survey on the UA News as well.

The focus of this study is survey student perceptions of the importance of professional development opportunities for students' employability skills. The survey will take 10 minutes or less to complete. Click the link to provide your consent to participate in the study and begin the survey.

[https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8tZSvsMvWumA6eG](https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8tZSvsMvWumA6eG)

You can contact a member of our research team with questions: Jessica Wesson, at [jlwesson@uark.edu](mailto:jlwesson@uark.edu) or (Phone number); Mrs. Casandra Cox, at [ccrumle@uark.edu](mailto:ccrumle@uark.edu) or (Phone number); Dr. Jill Rucker, at [kjrucker@uark.edu](mailto:kjrucker@uark.edu) or (Phone number); Dr. Jefferson Miller, at [jdmiller@uark.edu](mailto:jdmiller@uark.edu) or (Phone number). IRB approval has been granted for this project (Protocol number: 2109360292).

Your response to this survey is greatly appreciated!

### **Third Email**

Hello,

I am emailing to ask for your help completing a short survey of University of Arkansas students and faculty. This is my third email regarding this survey. The first was two weeks ago, and I am including the survey information below from the first email for your review. You may have seen a message regarding this survey on the UA News as well.

The focus of this study is survey student perceptions of the importance of professional development opportunities for students' employability skills. The survey will take 10 minutes or less to complete. Click the link to provide your consent to participate in the study and begin the survey.

[https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8tZSvsMvWumA6eG](https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8tZSvsMvWumA6eG)

You can contact a member of our research team with questions: Jessica Wesson, at [jlwesson@uark.edu](mailto:jlwesson@uark.edu) or (Phone number); Mrs. Casandra Cox, at [ccrumle@uark.edu](mailto:crumle@uark.edu) or (Phone number); Dr. Jill Rucker, at [kjrucker@uark.edu](mailto:kjrucker@uark.edu) or (Phone number); Dr. Jefferson Miller, at [jdmiller@uark.edu](mailto:jdmiller@uark.edu) or (Phone number). IRB approval has been granted for this project (Protocol number: 2109360292).

Your response to this survey is greatly appreciated!

### **Final Email**

I am emailing to ask for your help completing a short survey of University of Arkansas students. I contacted you several weeks ago about participating in this survey. I am including the survey information below for your review. You may have seen a message regarding this survey on the UA News as well.

The focus of this study is survey student perceptions of the importance of professional development opportunities for students' employability skills. The survey will take 10 minutes or less to complete. Click the link to provide your consent to participate in the study and begin the survey.

[https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8tZSvsMvWumA6eG](https://uark.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8tZSvsMvWumA6eG)

You can contact a member of our research team with questions: Jessica Wesson, at [jlwesson@uark.edu](mailto:jlwesson@uark.edu) or (Phone number); Mrs. Casandra Cox, at [ccrumle@uark.edu](mailto:crumle@uark.edu) or (Phone number); Dr. Jill Rucker, at [kjrucker@uark.edu](mailto:kjrucker@uark.edu) or (Phone number); Dr. Jefferson Miller, at [jdmiller@uark.edu](mailto:jdmiller@uark.edu) or (Phone number). IRB approval has been granted for this project (Protocol number: 2109360292).

Your response to this survey is greatly appreciated!