AGED Pathway to PCA

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Introduction

Every year, many students enroll into the Agricultural Education and Communication (AGED) Department and more specifically, the Agricultural Science major. Some of those students assume Agricultural Science is the same as the Crop Science major while hoping to obtain a Pest Control Advisor's (PCA) license. While it is possible to satisfy the requirements to take the PCA exam through the Agricultural Science major, many students need to piece together their schedule each quarter until they graduate. However, the Agricultural Science major offers students a unique opportunity to expand their education.

By taking the individualized route in the Agricultural Science major, those students are able to get an understanding of all the different sectors of agriculture with a focus on pest management. This project would help those who are currently in the Agricultural Science major as well as those who have yet to experience it. By making a guide, also known as an AGED Pathway to PCA, future students will not have to piece together certain classes in hopes it will fulfill the PCA requirements. Instead, students will make informed decisions when it comes to the classes required for the PCA license.

Background

In the very near future there will be an increasing need for PCAs in agriculture (CAPCA, 2019, p. 2). While many of the students at Cal Poly that go on to be PCAs are from the Crop Science major, there are a good number that come from the Agricultural Science major as well. Through the Individualized Career Area route, it is difficult for most of these students to determine how many units of certain subjects they need to take. With an outline for students on which classes they should take and when to take them (Flint, 2014, p. 2), students will be better equipped for career advancement.

Students are also shown to have more success during and after school if they are able to control their own education (Richmond, 2014, p. 6). Brochures are a way to help students with things such as advice, ways to get more information, and a step-by-step guide on how to reach a conclusion. With a guide for these students, they will be able to still decide when to take classes and choose from an array of different courses that will help them in their path to gaining a PCA license.

Methodology

As the current generation of PCAs increases in age, it is important for the next generation to fill the shoes of those who will be retiring. Cal Poly is a great school for the future generation to gain the proper education and experience to thoroughly to fill those shoes. These prospective students can be helped with a guide to plan their college career.

The author first talked to current PCAs in the Central Valley area, as well as Dr. Headrick of the AEPS Department to figure out the necessary classes an Agricultural Science student would need to take. The author then, through previous experience at Cal Poly and knowledge of other flowcharts, designed a custom flowchart to optimize organization and ease of registration. After

consulting with professors, the author saw it was also important to include some advice for students when deciding on the classes they need to take. The author then created a brochure with the custom flowchart along with other recommended classes and minors to take. Since most people operate from devices, the author also made a PDF of this guide and put it on the AGED Department website for all Ag Science students to easily download.

Results

After the guide was made into an outline, the author created a physical brochure using Microsoft Word. The front of the pamphlet includes a title and the authorized Cal Poly seal. The rear of the brochure includes recommended minors that an AGED student could include in his/her path to a PCA, as well as how many units they are, the coordinators for those minors, and where to find more information on those minors (Plant Protection, Crop Science, and Water Science). The inside flap contains information as to why an AGED student should take the PCA route, who the guide is intended for, and general advice for these students. When all sides are opened, the brochure contains the custom flowchart that the author made, including color coding and quarter-by-quarter class and unit descriptions. The author purchased 100 sheets of 11" x 8.5" brochure paper from Staples for $8. The author then printed the brochure onto this paper and received feedback from other students and professors on the aesthetic aspects and information on the brochure.

Conclusion

While the catalog will change for AGED students every two years, the core of this guide will stay intact for many years to come. The guide is provided to the AGED Department in both Microsoft Word and PDF forms for future use. If the author were to do anything different, he would recommend conducting a survey of AGED students to see what each students' most difficult class was, if they intend on obtaining their PCA license, and more additional data. For future use, the AGED Department can use this guide in both its physical and online versions. The brochure can be put in room 10-229 for all AGED students to see, as well as in the AGED Department office.

The guide can be placed on the AGED Department website for students to easily download onto their personal computers. The AGED Department will then be able to update the guide in Microsoft Word every two years when the catalog changes. After the guide was completed, it turned out to be something that all AGED students could use for planning their future classes. While the catalog will change, the objective for the project was met and it will be useful for years to come.

References

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