

SETTING YOURSELF APART

by Elizabeth Stubbs, AgCareers.com Sales & Project Management Intern and University of Guelph Student

As a university student studying agriculture, whether it is agronomy, business or others, the programs are similar with many students graduating each year. This gives employers a lot of qualified candidates from which to choose.

Top graduates are in high demand but how do you make yourself stand out to an employer? One thing is what you do outside of the classroom that can set you apart from the rest of your peers and land you that job that you want.

After interviewing various industry human resource professionals as well as recent graduates across Canada about career exploration and career success, we found the general consensus was — get involved!

The human resource professionals recommended getting involved and being a part of various organizations. And the recent graduates also noted they were able to apply their various experiences in organizations to help them land jobs as well as succeed in their roles.

Next to having internships, taking part in extracurricular activities is a great way to build your employability skills. Traits like communication, decision making, professionalism and self-management are skills you can develop through serving on committees, planning and executing fundraisers and traveling through extracurricular opportunities.

However, while it is important to be involved in extracurricular activities, it can be easy to over extend yourself and be involved in too many activities and not focus enough of your time and efforts to genuinely being involved.

Being a part of clubs and organizations or getting involved in events on campus is about demonstrating leadership or your ability to follow, learning to work with others, accomplishing goals with like-minded individuals, and above all else, having fun and making memories.

READ WHAT INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS SAY

Comments from Dave Taylor, Human Resources Business Partner, Nutreco Canada, Inc.
When hiring, **Nutreco Canada** looks for “some” participation. What it is matters less than just being involved. “The candidates we select for interviews are involved in various activities,” Taylor says. “We put greater value on the fact they are participating in their school or community than the specific activities themselves.” However, Taylor says there are some activities that would be better for certain jobs, such as the **Canadian Agri-Marketing Association (CAMA)** for a marketing intern or **Foal Watch** for someone looking at an equine job.

Comments from Erika Easton, Financial Services Representative, Farm Credit Canada
“One of the most instrumental organizations that I was a part of, not only in university, but since I was young, was **4-H**,” Easton says. “It is a tremendous organization that allows you to be involved in the agricultural industry and learn many valuable tools.” Easton says 4-H improved and grew her public speaking skills which were “a key to having a successful interview with **Farm Credit Canada (FCC)**.” She also says staying involved in agricultural organizations throughout university allowed her to develop skills that she uses day to day at her job with FCC. Easton says attending university events, which employers put on, allowed her to meet and learn about the companies, which led her to landing a summer job with FCC and turned into her permanent position.

Comments from Laura Austin, Agronomy, Administration and Sales Support, FS Partners (A Division of Growmark Canada)
“It looks good to be able to do your studies in school as well as help out in the community,” Austin says. “I was involved in **4-H**, **Junior Farmers**, the **Wellington County Farm Safety Association** and the **Alma Optimist** group.” Austin says being involved is a good way to network which is great for future jobs. If one can network within the agricultural community while in university they’ll be more likely to hear of good jobs. She also especially commended 4-H. “I’ve held just about every position possible and I was a youth leader for a few clubs. These roles really helped me with organization, leadership and people skills.”

Comments from Haley Ruether, Crop Supplies Retail Sales Coordinator Trainee, Federated Cooperatives Limited
Getting involved in student organizations that interest you is important, according to Ruether. Ruether was involved in **Cameco Business Co-operative Education Program (BCEP)** and **CAMA**. She was the treasurer of her school’s CAMA team in her last year and said that it was a great experience because she had the opportunity to work on real life business projects and documents. Cameco BCEP is an eight-month non-credit internship program at the **University of Saskatchewan** where Ruether was able to work at **Federated Cooperatives Limited (FCL)** as a Crop Supplies Marketing Coordinator, and from there was able to land her current position.

Comments from Meagen Vallis, Human Resources Business Partner, Richardson Pioneer
Richardson Pioneer hires new graduates and students for several positions located across Western Canada each year. Many are hired into the Agribusiness Development Program, a new grad program that provides the opportunity for formal training and job shadowing in different areas of the business. In general, Vallis says she likes to see candidates who have taken a leadership role in organizations such as **4-H** or student groups as well as activities such as coaching sports or volunteering with local organizations. It shows a strong sense of initiative and motivation as well as develops leadership, communication, interpersonal and team working skills.