

impact

of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences



Society-Ready Graduates

Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE)

Issue

According to a 2003 survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers the top skills/ characteristics employers are seeking among college graduates are communication skills, integrity, teamwork skills and interpersonal skills. Course work is useful in developing these skills, but it very often extracurricular activities and work experience that make the greatest impact in the development of these skills. At the same time, because of the sluggish economy, NACE is predicting college hiring to drop 3.6 percent in 2003. For students this means a competitive job market and the urgent need to be prepared with focused major, work experience and the desired skill set.

What has been done?

The University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences sponsors the award winning Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE) Team. This national organization has as its mission "to develop leadership, teamwork and communication skills by learning, practicing and teaching the fundamentals of free enterprise."

Funding

Credit Counselors of America
Office Depot
Federated Stores
Kinko's- in kind funding
The University of Arizona
Target Stores
Walmart

Contact

Melinda Burke, assistant director, Southwest Retail Center
Division of Retailing and Consumer Sciences
School of Family and Consumer Sciences
The University of Arizona
PO Box 210033
Tucson, AZ 85721-0033
Tel: (520) 621-1295 FAX 3209
mburke@ag.arizona.edu

This organization encourages students to get involved in the campus and larger community in the development of community service projects that teach and demonstrate the benefits of a free market economy. As a result of the planning and implementation of these projects students develop many valuable skills that translate easily to the workplace. The SIFE Team has conducted summer outreach programs for youth, coordinated the spring career fair and worked with many area middle and elementary school teachers to provide enrichment in their classrooms. In 2002 the students also created their own brand of salsa, "Tomate Loco Salsa," utilizing the controlled environment tomatoes grown the UA greenhouses.

Impact

In 2001-02 the SIFE Team contributed 15,631 volunteer hours to the community. The students completed 29 projects and obtained exposure in two campus newspapers, three citywide newspapers, two radio stations and one television station. Total reach through all media exposure was more than 1,177,644

individuals. More than 75 students were involved in SIFE activities throughout the academic year. Every May the SIFE Teams compete at a national competition in Kansas City. In 2001-02 the UA SIFE Team placed in the Elite Eight among the 120 competing teams. For the past three years 24 students have participated on the presentation team. Among these students, 83 percent had job offers upon graduation with companies that they met at national competition. Testimonials:

"I know I was offered a product development position because of my involvement with the salsa project." – SIFE member, senior

"I've been offered a two-year internship with Macy's in San Francisco. I believe this is a direct result of my SIFE experience; in fact it's all we talked about during my interview!"

–SIFE member, sophomore year

"As president of the SIFE team, I was introduced to the recruiter from E. and J. Gallo. I was offered a job in their executive development program because of the skills I developed through SIFE." –SIFE member