

Student Ambassadors Gain Leadership Experience

By Kirsten Compton

As a student ambassador for the University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs), Katy Groseta visits high schools across the state to talk about CALs programs.

"I have had the opportunity to speak with students in rural communities who felt they had no chance of ever attending college and help them to realize that a college education is possible," says the animal sciences junior.

Along with 36 other CALs students, Groseta volunteers her time in an organization that focuses primarily on recruiting new students. The group has grown since its inception in 1992, when former associate dean Dave Shoup decided to launch a group of 10 students who would act as young recruiters for the college. They serve as examples of what the college has to offer, and encourage others to enroll in CALs.

"Ambassadors are chosen based on their demonstrated qualities of leadership, tenacity, and initiative," says Jack Elliot, professor in the Department of Agricultural Education and advisor to the CALs Ambassadors. An application, interview and a minimum 3.0 grade point average are required for undergraduate applicants to be considered for acceptance as CALs

The 2003-2004
CALs Student
Ambassadors



CALs Academic Programs

Ambassadors. Ambassadors can be freshmen, sophomores, juniors or seniors.

"We can relate to students," says ambassador Mike Gaspar, senior in agricultural education. "We are the student voice for the college."

Ambassadors visit high schools once or twice a month. While at the school, the CALs students set up displays during lunch hours, at career fairs and in classrooms. They speak with younger students about CALs and the opportunities that are available to help pay for higher education.

Unlike other leadership groups, CALs Ambassadors are not scripted during their presentations. Students are given themes to use during the recruiting but not a set guideline for what to say during the visits.

"I want their individuality to emerge," Elliot says.

The group's 22 annual activities, funded by the CALs Office of Academic Programs, include not only the high school visits, but also participation in the National Agriculture Ambassadors Conference at California Polytechnic Institute, the University of Arizona's homecoming and various CALs events on and off campus. At official functions the group wears khaki pants and matching collared shirts in blue, red, white, or all three, depending on what is selected for each academic year.

Unlike the other 30 clubs in CALs, the CALs Ambassadors organization has no officers. Each student is placed on one of

five committees: ambassador operations, FFA, off-campus recruiting, off-campus events or campus activities. Because the number of ambassadors has nearly quadrupled in 13 years, the current practice is to replace only the ambassadors who graduate, so the number of new members fluctuates from year to year. The group strives to have a student representative from each department in the college.

The ambassador experience offers more than a chance for CALs students to recruit others. It's also a chance to develop skills that will prepare CALs graduates for future careers.

"A metamorphosis takes place—students' leadership skills and public speaking skills become fine-tuned in ambassadors," says Bobby Browning, coordinator for career and multicultural activities and academic programs in CALs. "Real leaders are developed in this program. And the ambassadors realize that there are careers in the agricultural industry."

In addition, past ambassadors have gone on to be surgeons, nutritionists, teachers and extension agents.

"I currently do applied research and educational programming in agriculture, natural resources and youth development," says Dean Fish, past ambassador and current Santa Cruz County Extension director. "Ambassadors really reinforced the foundation for what I do today." ☐

Spring 2004 Issue Highlights

- 6 — Walk Across Arizona
- 8 — Agri-Tourism
- 10 — Edible Seaweed
- 12 — Dairy Compost
- 13 — Mosquitoes in Wetlands
- 14 — Nutrition After School

For more information contact Jack Elliot (520) 621-1523, or visit the website at cals.arizona.edu/OAP/ambassadors.