AG STUDENTS SURVEYED

On behalf of NAICC, Crop Decisions magazine conducted a survey of 231 students currently enrolled in agriculture related fields at 10 major state universities. This survey gives some insight into the background and interests of ag students today.

The survey began by asking each student a set of general questions about their backgrounds. It found that a majority of the students are single. Almost all surveyed are expecting to graduate by the year 2000. More than half (58 percent) came from a farm background. At least 57 percent have held at least a part-time job related to their major. Most were proficient with a word processor and an Internet Browser. At least half also had experience with spreadsheets, databases, and site specific tools.

The next set of questions dealt with the students’ plans after graduation. The majority hope to work in private industry for a company with 50 or more employees. About a quarter plan to continue their education at the graduate level. Only 13 percent plan to farm after graduation.

Most of the students questioned want to stay in their native state after graduation. While 35 percent don’t care about location, eleven percent must at least be located in a neighboring state. When asked about how actively they have been seeking full-time employment related to their major, 64 percent said they have at least been somewhat active. Of that group, 46 percent plan to accept a job offer by graduation.

The three activities that most interested the students were working in the field, agronomy, and working directly with the farmer, with research and agribusiness falling next on the list. Students listed farming, working for a seed company, and working for a chemical company as their top three job choices. They listed crop consulting fourth.

When asked to rank the careers they expect to pay the most they listed chemical manufacturers, commodity marketing, and agricultural lending as the top three. Crop consulting was listed tenth. Their average expected salary was $22,500.

The survey next asked how the students became familiar with these ag professions. Most of those surveyed knew someone or had worked in the industry. It’s encouraging to note that at least 81 percent said that they were somewhat familiar with crop consulting. The students stated that they had become familiar with crop consulting in the following ways:

59% Personally know a crop consultant.
47% Received literature about crop consulting.
40% Met a crop consultant at a meeting.
33% Worked for a crop consultant.
17% Advisor brought it to your attention.

(Continued on pg. 2)

States Get Strategic

Representatives from 17 state consulting associations met with NAICC officers and staff recently at the second annual Alliance of Association Leaders (AAL) meeting to do some strategic planning for the future of the crop and research certification during the AAL meeting.

(Continued on pg. 2)
President's Message
THE SHRINKING WORLD
by Lee West

Just as NAICC is making progress in working with state, regional and national associations, there is another reality we have to deal with. The shrinking world. Like it or not, your wheat growers in Kansas are not just competing with the guys in Washington State, they compete with Australia, Argentina, and a host of others. When you buy apples in the store, they may be from Washington, New Zealand, Chile, or Europe. Florida grapefruit has a big market in Japan. The disaster last year was because of grapefruit from South Africa. It truly is a world market.

What does this mean to us? It is the objective of all of us, whether crop or research consultants, to provide the best available information to our clients. Traditionally, those of us in the US have not really believed that there was much for us to learn from other areas. This is what I like to call the “California trap.” In my home state, the sun rises at the Sierra Nevadas and sets on the beach. Having grown up in California, and a California Ag school alum, I know that there are a lot of Californians who believe that there is nothing to learn from the people in the rest of the US.

Are we in American Agriculture guilty of the same traps? How many of our winter wheat clients make 200 bushels like many growers in Europe? With all due respect to our colleagues from Florida, there is not much doubt that the heart of the fresh market tomato growing technology is in Western Mexico. The standard of living in Australia and New Zealand is not much different from ours, here in the US, yet they compete effectively in our domestic apple and orange markets.

We, as leading edge technologists for agriculture, need to reach out and work with people and groups from around the world. We can no longer afford to sit back and figure that all the good ideas come from close to home.

If you’re still not convinced, remember 30 years ago when American companies reigned supreme in electronics and autos? We were the top of the heap, with nothing to prove except trying to stay ahead of the guy down the street. Here we are years later and who owns the consumer electronics and auto markets worldwide today?

Remember when you were in college and all of the students down the hill in the Engineering school had a hard time speaking English? Do you remember where you would go to find them? At Cal Poly you couldn’t get a seat in the study halls of the library at midnight. Go back and visit your alma mater today and see how many ag students fall into that category now, and then think about the study habits of the average Gringo student. We are not an island. We owe it to ourselves and to our clients to move beyond our borders, be they county, state, national, or someday, galactic, and get the best information available.

The future is built on what we do today. The foundations we lay must be solid, so that our castle will be safe for the centuries. Fences that we built around our castle for protection will need to be removed for our commerce, and our profession, to grow. The towers that we have manned with watchmen must not be abandoned. The horses that we have long trained to keep us ahead of the competition must not be let out to pasture with the complacency of current superiority. And just as all of us learn from each other, we cannot assume that we cannot learn from others from a broader playing field.

Interestingly, at least 85 percent of students polled at most of the schools were familiar with crop consulting. The exceptions were at Louisiana State University and the University of Florida where they were 64 percent and 25 percent familiar respectively.

For a more complete look at this data, check out the January, 1998 issue of Crop Decisions magazine. Our thanks go out to their staff for giving us a glimpse of areas where we are advancing, and where we need to do more work.

(‘States Get Strategic’ cont. from pg. 1)
Jim Peck (PACNYS), Randy Huston (KAICC), and Randy Darr (PCCI) enjoyed free time to visit during lunch.

Mac Hammond (ACAA), Justin McGee (1998 Co-Chair Membership Services Committee), and David Scheiderer (OAICC) take a break for lunch during the AAL meeting.

Tim Case (TAAC and 1997 Co-Chair Membership Services Committee) captures his team’s thoughts on education.

Serious discussion took place on the best approach to promoting the consulting profession.
as Mississippi, state consultant association members have established relationships with universities whereby they have opportunities to work with university personnel on pest management programs and are invited to speak to student assemblies.

The AAL delegates agreed that independent crop consultants must be highly visible and recognized as an important source of information and expertise for growers, government, and the agriculture industry. The group’s goal is to ensure that the Certified Professional Crop Consultant program (CPCC and CPCC-II) and any state consulting certification programs are understood and recognized. To do so, an outreach program is planned involving media relations and various speaking engagements, etc.

Several action items were pinpointed which specifically focus on promoting to growers the value of the services consultants provide. Most of these are public relations efforts, including press releases and other types of media coverage, promotional materials such as a new brochure, and planned attendance at grower educational meetings and farm shows.

Each goal defined for one of the aforementioned major topic areas was assigned to a specific state association, to NAICC, or to FEAIE, and given a target completion date. Updates will appear in future issues of the News.

Other topics discussed at the AAL meeting included continuing education opportunities and membership services, as well as the future direction of the AAL.

The group will meet again in 1999, when goals will be reviewed and updated. It is hoped that all 22 state associations will participate.

Though only the second of its kind, attendance at this year’s meeting increased by two state associations from last year. It appears that interest is growing, along with the realization that even though most NAICC members are independent business owners, it is only by concentrating our efforts as though we were a large company, that we can accomplish our highest goals for the profession and have a major impact on the agriculture industry.

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<tr>
<th>1998 NAICC LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATE</th>
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<td>Chair: Robin Spitko</td>
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<td>Crop Consultant Members:</td>
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**NAICC LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING UPDATE**

Many issues were discussed during the Legislative Advisory Committee meeting on January 21, 1998 at the NAICC Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.

Several of the attendees discussed public perceptions and concerns regarding pesticides. Madeline Mellinger talked about public concern in Florida over medfly spraying. She suggested that it might be helpful to members if NAICC were to put together a pamphlet discussing member qualifications and expertise on pesticide/agricultural issues that they could use for public relation purposes.

Mellinger strongly urged the committee to give significant input on the Food Quality Protection Act to the 1999 Annual Meeting committee. She suggested that this be a strong portion of the 1999 Annual Meeting program.

The attendees discussed the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) at great length. They dealt with NAICC’s involvement, how to go about getting valid input to regulatory agencies, and how to get Congressional support. The group decided on a two-prong approach of lobbying USDA and EPA, and also key Congressmen, Senators, and their staff. Efforts will focus on collection of data and procedures used to evaluate risk, and the role certain products in IPM programs. Attention will also be given on obtaining a WPS exemption for research consultants.

**CONTRACT RESEARCH ISSUES**

During this portion, WPS was discussed at great length. Focus was given to the lack of input on policy for contract research farms. The group talked about how industry and land grant colleges are working together for exemption. It was decided that NAICC should get involved with this as a direct membership benefit for contract researcher members.

**Lab Accreditation Update—**

Mick Qualls
1) Office of Inspector General (OIG) wants some sort of accreditation for labs doing GLP work.
2) These labs are already regulated by FIFRA which specifies funding for EPA to perform inspection of these labs.
3) EPA does not give a certificate of accreditation after inspection.
4) ELAB Advisory Board—Subcommittee of ELAB (lab accreditation system) came up with three recommendations:
   a) Leave things as they are with FIFRA guidelines.
   b) EPA gets more money for more inspectors.
   c) Set up a third party accreditation system.

The Subcommittee recommended that the first option be chosen. ELAB was disappointed with the decision. The Subcommittee has finished its job and it now moves to EPA. Qualls reported that the track record of the labs is very good, with more than 95 percent in complete compliance. “I believe that things will be left as they are,” he said. “There is a need to maintain high quality, but no need for over-regulation.”

**1998 ACTION POINTS FOR NAICC LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

1) Put together a brochure presenting the qualifications of our members, perhaps with a few policy statements on key pesticide issues.
CALL TO ACTION
Please send specific examples of crop management disruption due to loss of OPs or carbamates to the NAICC headquarters. Identify the target pests and list which materials have NO alternatives. Also, please correspond with your Congressmen and Senators on this issue (see sample letters).

Thanks for your support!

NAICC Annual Meeting A Hit With Student

The following is a letter received from a student that attended the NAICC Annual Meeting in Washington D.C. She writes:

It was a pleasure attending the NAICC conference last weekend in Washington D.C. For me the whole affair started after one of my professors, Dr. Ed Rajotte, sent me an e-mail note suggesting that I attend the NAICC conference. I was a little reluctant about attending at first, however after calling Allison Jones, she helped me make up my mind. Allison was extremely cordial and was kind enough to explain to me what the conference had in store. Thank you for encouraging me, Allison, I am glad I made the decision to attend.

Upon my arrival, I met Allison who helped me feel at home right away. Later Allison introduced me to Madeline Mellingner whose concern and kindness went further to help me relax. Madeline later introduced me to Mark Otto whom I learned was to be my mentor. I guess what I am saying is that from the time I arrived there seemed to be someone around to help me get comfortable and settled. This is something I have never experienced in other conferences.

The sessions? All the listed sessions seemed interesting and I had trouble choosing which to attend. Nevertheless the sessions that I attended were very educational and the presenters were very well prepared. The diversity of the topics ranged from very 'technical,' 'applied research' to 'real life experiences' (Life's too short, but is compromise the answer?) was amazing. I felt quite informed on the various topics coming out of each session. At the end of it all I benefited from a well-rounded experience.

The student's session was definitely one the best sessions. In retrospect, I had no idea what to expect going to the session. Listening to each speaker I was impressed by the in depth discussions, drawn from day to day experiences. The discussions were not only interesting but they also gave me a good feel of what professionals in the crop consulting and contract research fields get involved with. All the speakers were well spoken, very candid, and answered each of the questions with detail and wisdom. I came out of this session feeling very educated. I even got good tips on interviewing! Definitely a plus! I must add that it was also a wonderful opportunity to get to know the other students who were attending the conference.

The mentoring idea was one that appealed to me greatly. As a student coming into a group in which I practically knew nothing, it was comforting to have someone who was a long time member and knew the organization well, be my mentor and walk me through the whole affair. This was definitely one aspect that made this conference unique as well as a big success from the student's perspective. I strongly suggest that this be a feature for future meetings! Through my mentor, I got to meet and visit other people. I also got an opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues that I was unable to bring up during the sessions. Having a one to one discussion helped clear up a lot of issues. Thank you for setting this up. It was simply brilliant.

Reaching other students? I think working through clubs such as the Horticulture, Entomology, and Agronomy clubs would definitely be a good way to get information to the students. Arranging for NAICC professionals to visit and give talks to the students would be also an excellent avenue for getting the information out. Lastly, giving information to professors in relevant fields is definitely key to encouraging students participation in future meetings about the NAICC. Obviously Dr. Rajotte thought very highly of NAICC, to suggest that I attend.

Lastly, let me thank you very much for affording me this opportunity. The accommodations and food were also great. I thoroughly enjoyed interacting with the other participants at the conference. I commend the organizers for the professional manner in which the proceedings were organized and conducted. It was a great learning experience. I was impressed by the dedication of the members to their profession, and especially their concern for the student entering the profession. In simple words, attending the NAICC meeting definitely started my year on the right footing.

Sincerely,
Nyambura Irene Mbugua

Protecting Yourself From Errors And Omissions Liability

It's been said that you shouldn't take business advice from friends, but David Mowers set out to debunk that saying with his presentation "Protecting Yourself From Errors and Omissions Liability: Business Tips for Peers" at the NAICC Annual Meeting in January. Mowers offered several strategies during his discussion for error protection and claim avoidance.

Mowers began by suggesting insurance specific to NAICC member needs, such as AFMRA insurance; he also offered the option of individual insur-
ance. Next, Mowers addressed business structure. He recommended the separation of business entities into corporations, LLC's or LLP's. Mowers then indicated ways to avoid claims or "control damage." First, he said, become certified. It will differentiate you from others and demonstrate professionalism. He also emphasized the importance of a code of ethics, adding that it is specifically requested on insurance applications. In addition, the code of ethics may reduce insurance premiums, he said.

Another way to differentiate yourself, Mowers pointed out, is to join a professional organization. As well as making you stand out from the crowd, this will offer a source of continuing education and will, again, be a way to reduce insurance premiums.

Mowers then focused on ways to deal positively with clients. He began with "establishing a memorandum of engagement or contract." Specifically, he explained, this contract will cover the time period of the engagement between you and the client. It should give a specific description of services to be provided. It will also have disclaimers, indemnification clauses, and a clause for dispute remediation. Finally, Mowers concluded, it will have estimated fees, a fee collection policy (including finance charges), and signatures and dates from all involved parties.

Mowers also explained the components of a client file, which is another means of protection. It provides background information in case of a dispute. The file should include a record of all conversations, especially those including verbal instructions or agreements from the client; documentation of all actions, procedures, and decisions made with and for the client; any referrals to or consultations with outside experts on behalf of the client, and regular progress reports. Also include in the client file a memoranda of engagements or contracts, fee negotiation proceedings, and peer review reports.

Mowers next explained the parts of a client report, which should include, the date, time, and location of the job; the name of the person doing the work; and conditions while performing the job — field, weather, etc. It is also important to make sure reports are properly completed because good reports can place the burden of proof on the client.

Peer reviews were then discussed. Mowers emphasized the reasons for peer reviews: they are a way to exchange ideas on current conditions among the staff and a way of offering suggestions on remedial strategies. Reviews also aid in keeping staff members informed regarding client status, he said. Another considerable defense in claims avoidance is an operating procedures handbook clearly explains procedures and documents what is to be done. It also refers to the source of information from which the procedure is derived. Finally, he said, it is a good basis for a training program.

This led Mowers into a brief discussion of the elements of an in-house training program for employees. Start with a proper basic background education program; don't assume any prior knowledge on the part of the employee. Next, he said, give a proper orientation to procedures and be sure that these procedures are being explicitly followed. Following procedures explicitly he said, is a good defense because the complainant must document their procedures.

Two other substantial components of a "damage control" program are quality assurance and client screening. Mowers gave the elements of a quality assurance program as follows: the program will document that standard operating procedures are being followed and that the employees understand the procedures; the program is a basis for consistent reports and findings and is a follow-up to training programs. For claim avoidance, Mowers said, training demonstrates diligence in accurate reporting and is a good defense for complaints. As for client screenings, Mowers said, "It is a good way to know your client, including financial status." This will give you an idea of if a client will pay and knowledge if you might expect a lawsuit to bail clients out, he said.

The Illinois consultant closed with a focus on the true business of crop consulting. He said, "We work with people, not with crops, insects, weeds, diseases, or fertility. We are in the personal services business—we help and we care." Don't be afraid, Mowers accentuated, to

Training Good Help

by Orvin Bontrager

There are many good positions for college graduates to accept in the seed and chemical industry and in crop consulting; therefore, hiring qualified help is an ever increasing challenge. It is imperative that newly hired employees are trained properly to maintain the highest degree of expertise possible with the consultant's clients. With rapidly changing technology, this is a continuous endeavor.

At Servi-Tech, a new full time and summer intern employee almost always team checks with an experienced crop consultant the first summer of crop service. There are too many important decisions to be made on an hourly and daily basis to turn an inexperienced person out on their own. Typically the new employee rides with several experienced agronomists in one area to learn how different professionals conduct field checks and interacts with their clients. A full-time consultant may go a full year before a set of growers are turned over to the specialist.

Most of the new employees get their initial training immediately in the field since most start in late winter or spring. They initially have worker protection safety or certified pesticide applicator training to promote their personal protection from pesticides.

Within the first year, employees attend personality, social styles, and sales training so they can interact with their clients and fellow consultants in a professional manner. Within that time frame, in-depth sessions are presented on fertilizers, soil fertility management, herbicide and insecticide mode of action and usage. On a division and regional basis, intensive training also takes place in crop recommendation report writing, irrigation management, variety and hybrid selection, equipment and planter calibrations, tillage practices, crop budgeting, and GPS technology.

In addition to our own required in-house training, Servi-Tech crop consultants are encouraged to attend university, chemical, and seed company information meetings to stay abreast of new developments. As any successful crop consultant realizes, continued educa-
Management Firm and Contractor Interactions

At the NAICC Annual Meeting, Tom Armstrong of Agri Business Group, Inc., spoke on an important aspect of research consulting. His topic: Management Firm and Contractor Interactions. Armstrong opened his talk with a definition of interaction taken from Webster's: a mutual or reciprocal action or influence.

The speaker then moved into the factors of interaction between project management companies and field contractors. He emphasized that these factors are "very significant," and include timeliness, technical competency of both groups, the ability to respond to questions, and a well-designed protocol. Other factors are accurate reporting, honesty and trust, a willingness to cooperate, and a well-designed field notebook. The final factor in these interactions, he noted, is good communication.

Armstrong next paused to define successful interactions between a project management company and field contractors. His definition: "Successful interactions consist of many mutual or reciprocal actions and influences. These are done through good and timely communications." Our future, he predicted, will be determined by how successfully we work together today to satisfy our clients' needs on a timely and quality basis.

Armstrong placed high value on the idea of teamwork. "Working as individuals, we will have limited success; however, by working together as a team, we can efficiently and effectively satisfy our client's needs through the services we provide."

The concentration of Armstrong's talk then centered on the significant factors of interactions between management companies and field contractors. These factors include being an active listener, maintaining confidentiality, and being flexible. It is also essential, Armstrong stated, to successfully complete projects on schedule, to not be a nuisance, to ask timely questions, and to know when to say "no."

Keeping in mind both the very significant factors, Armstrong concluded, "Our product is service to our clients. The positive interactions between the project management firm and each field contractor are very important for the successful completion of each client's projects."

### ADDITIONS TO THE 1998 DIRECTORY OF MEMBERS SUPPLEMENT

Please add the following to the GLP listing:

| Regions 5 | Kiser, Kevin, p. 38
| Region 7  | Ron Spotanksi, p. 62

### CERTIFICATION

**David J. Harms, B.S. (Agr. Ind.)**
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Home: (309) 662-1183
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### NEW MEMBERS

#### VOTING

David F. Green, B.S. (General Agriculture)
Servi-Tech, Inc.
422 N. Colorado Avenue
Haxtun, CO 80731
Home: (970) 774-7206
Fax: (970) 774-7271
Mobile: (970) 520-2556

- **Crops:** Corn, dry beans, wheat, alfalfa, sunflowers, millet (irrigated and non-irrigated)
- **Services:** Soil sampling, fertility recommendations, weed, insect, and disease counting and recommendations, irrigation scheduling/moisture monitoring, equipment adjustment and calibration, crop planning, crop rotation planning.

Glenn W. Oliver, M.S. (Weed Science)
Agricultural Systems Associates
1001 Oakgate Court
Apex, NC 27502
Office: (919) 362-1300
Home: (919) 362-1300
Fax: (919) 363-2004

- **Services:** Contract research.

Ryan Phelps, M.S. (Plant Pathology)
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6767 US Highway 264 East
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Fax: (919) 975-1462

Paul Viger, M.S. (Agronomy)
Viger Ag Research
P.O. Box 187
Campbell, MN 56522
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Home: (218) 630-5593
Fax: (218) 630-5594

- **Services:** Contract research.

#### PROVISIONAL

Gordon LeBlanc, B.S. (Environmental Science)
Jensen Agricultural Consulting
565 Petite Prairie Road
Washington, LA 70589
Office: (318) 346-6504
Home: (318) 826-5007
Fax: (318) 346-4485

- **Services:** Contract research
APRIL 23-24, 1998
American Crop Protection Association
Spring Conference, Crystal Gateway Marriott, Arlington, Va. For more information contact Jeanne Lynch at 202/872-3848.

April 29 - May 1, 1998
May 17 - 20, 1998
May 21, 1998
American Society of Ag Consultants
Continuing Education Courses:
Communications for Agricultural Consultants – April 29 - May 1;
Principles of Agricultural Consultants - May 17-20; Professional Standards for the 90's, May 21. All sessions will be held at the Clarion International Hotel, 6810 N. Mannheim Road, Rosemont, IL. For more information contact ASAC at 303/758-3513.

MAY 3-6, 1998
Watershed Management: Moving From Theory to Implementation, Colorado Convention Center, Adam's Mark Hotel, Denver, Colo. For more information call 800/666-0206.

MAY 11-13, 1998
International Society of Quality Assurance 4th Canadian Chapter

JULY 5-9, 1998
Soil and Water Conservation Society
Annual Conference, San Diego, Calif. For more information contact Sue Ballantine at 515/289-2331 or sueb@swcs.org.

AUGUST 17-21, 1998
Fifth International Symposium on Adjuvants for Agrochemicals (ISAA '98), The Peabody, Memphis, Tenn. For more information contact Allen Underwood at 901/537-7260.

MAY 23-28, 1999
10th Annual Soil Conservation Organization Conference, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind.