


MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 17, 2021

TO: CALS faculty training graduate students

FROM: Kirsten Limesand, Ph.D.
CALS Assistant Dean of Graduate Education 

SUBJECT: Nominations now open for the Impact Leader professional development training

One of CALS' Strategic Intents is to produce employable graduates who can do jobs that don't yet exist and create new jobs. Many of us have probably observed national stories on employer surveys reporting that higher education is not sufficiently preparing students in the "soft skills". While these stories have largely focused on undergraduates, reports from the Council on Graduate Schools ([Graduate Education 2030: Imagining the Future](#)) and NASEM ([Graduate STEM Education for the 21st Century](#)) suggest the same case can be made for graduate students. In 2016, ~20% of PhD graduates from CALS graduate programs (2006-2016) were employed in T/TE positions. This statistic along with national data indicating that more PhD graduates are being produced than the number of TE positions available¹, suggests ***greater effort needs to be placed on professional development and career competencies.***

Initiated in January 2020 with sponsorship from Bayer Crop Sciences, the **CALS Impact Leader** professional development program provides a cohort of our premier graduate students an opportunity to gain knowledge in critical areas highlighted by the Council on Graduate Schools and NASEM (linked above), including creating effective teams, communicating with diverse individuals, navigating setbacks, understanding the role of productive conflict, and harnessing innovation and the entrepreneurial mindset. Additionally, students are matched with industry coaches who can give them industry perspectives, help to build a professional network, and highlight the skillsets required to be successful. The training is designed as five full day sessions (1 session/month; ~40 total hours) with reflective assignments between sessions along with one conversation per month with their industry coach. At the end of the training, we ask students to reflect on the most impactful aspects and some common themes include the opportunity to grow, developing leadership skills, gaining confidence, communicating better, exploring careers outside academia, and understanding others. Many students note a major strength of the

program involves networking with students outside their graduate program and learning about the diverse scientific disciplines within the college^{2,3}.

An additional consideration in the commitment to dedicating time to professional development activities is the potential effect on research productivity and time to degree. A recent study⁴ suggests that research productivity (as measured by publications) and time to degree are not affected by participation in professional development activities. Therefore, I am asking all faculty who train graduate students to ***encourage your students to apply to the Impact Leader training*** at <https://career.cals.arizona.edu/channels/graduate-students/> **by 10/31/21**. If you would like further information on the selection of students to the program, please see the following page. All other inquires can be submitted by email to limesank@arizona.edu.

Thank you for your dedication to training the next generation of leaders!

2022 Impact Leader Nomination process details

Guiding principles for selection of Fellows:

1. Ensure that each CALS academic unit has at least one student selected- Each CALS academic unit has been allotted 2 training slots. Additional training slots were allotted based on the employee needs of our industry sponsor and the number of students across all CALS affiliated graduate programs (see table). Hierarchy of decision-making process:
 - a. Select one high quality applicant who completed the nomination form from each academic unit
 - b. If we don't receive enough quality applicants to fill these slots, we will gather input from the Unit Head and graduate program leadership.
 - c. Fill remaining slots with high quality applicants (regardless of graduate program) who completed the nomination form
2. Students who demonstrate a willingness to grow and self-reflect will gain the most from this program
3. Students interested in developing a circle of mentors through the industry coach conversations and facilitator connections.
4. Students who have committed to all training dates. While we aim to be flexible and accommodating in special circumstances, it is very difficult to "catch up" and establish connections within the cohort.
5. All aspects of diversity will be considered in the selection of students. This diversity may include, but is not limited to: different graduate programs within an academic Unit (if applicable), degree program (PhD/MS/PSM/AMP), gender, race and ethnicity.

Unit name	# of Impact Leader Fellows
ACBS	2
AETI	2
AREC	2
BE	4
ENTO	2
ENVS	2
FCS	2
NSC	2
PLS	3
SNRE	3
	24

Nomination timeline:

1. Students submit self-nominations by October 31st, 2021 at <https://career.cals.arizona.edu/channels/graduate-students/>
2. Final decisions and notification by November 19, 2021. Students will receive an individual email with their Unit Head and graduate program leadership copied