



INVESTING IN THE NEXT
GENERATION OF
AGRICULTURAL LEADERS

AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

THE HORIZON SCHOLARSHIP



What is the Horizon Scholarship?

The Horizon Scholarship is an initiative of the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) that, in partnership with industry sponsors, aims to promote the dynamic and diversified career pathways that agriculture offers, while helping to address the chronic shortage of agricultural scientists and rural industry professionals.

The Horizon Scholarship supports undergraduates of high potential through their university degrees by providing a bursary, mentoring, professional development workshops and industry placements. Through these actions, the students are more likely to commit to a career in agriculture as well as act as ambassadors for their chosen industries and promote agriculture as a career to their peers.

The issue – why The Horizon Scholarship exists

The Horizon Scholarship addresses the gap that exists in supporting students of high potential in agriculture-related degrees. Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) and the private sector provide a range of post-graduate scholarships and research grants to students undertaking higher degrees. However, there is an absence of financial and program support available to undergraduates studying agriculture-related degrees in tertiary institutions.

The Horizon Scholarship also addresses the main issues facing agricultural industries' labour shortages because:

- It facilitates industry participation in education and training.
- It works to increase the number of graduates in agriculture-related degrees.
- Through the provision of mentoring and industry placements, it makes those graduates work ready.
- It raises the profile and awareness of agricultural career pathways.

The Horizon Scholarship commenced as a pilot in 2010 with RDCs and the Australian Government supporting 10 students through their degrees.

Now entering its fifth year the program has continued to be supported by RDCs, Government and now corporate partners, sponsoring up to 20 scholars each year.

The response from students to the program has been very positive with hundreds of applications received each year.

"The work placement... was a good opportunity that I'm glad I had; it showed me an industry I hadn't seen."

Sean Dickson, Bachelor of Rural Science
University of New England
Sponsored by Australian Pork Ltd

"My industry placement means...not only am I now ahead in my skill level than that expected of a 1st year vet student, but I also now have a much better idea of the daily running of a vet clinic."

Hannah Brodie, Bachelor of Veterinary Science
University of Queensland
Sponsored by the Rural Industries Research
and Development Corporation

Student benefits

Each student receives a \$5,000 per annum bursary as part of the program. In addition to financial support, they receive a number of leadership and industry support services including:

Mentoring

First year students are provided with a mentor from within their university faculty to assist them settle into university life, provide guidance on academic expectations as well as advice on subjects that support their career aspirations.

Latter year students are provided with an industry mentor, chosen in consultation with their sponsor. Industry mentors provide the link between theory and practice, offer input on industry responses to the issues students are studying, provide advice on career opportunities, open up networking opportunities and act as a role model for careers in agriculture.

Many mentors provide their students with additional opportunities including the chance to join PhD discussion groups, undertake laboratory or field work, attend conferences and shadow industry professionals in their daily operations.

Industry placement

Each summer, the students undertake an industry placement within their sponsor's sector which enables them to learn relevant skills that complement their university education and contribute to making them work ready.

Student placements have been undertaken in agribusinesses, research and extension providers, industry associations, government agencies, veterinary clinics, and agricultural / farm operations.

Professional development workshop

Each year the students attend a three-day workshop where their leadership skills are developed through a range of activities that promote team-work, critical thinking, presentation skills and public speaking. They also meet agricultural leaders, media, researchers and politicians.

Sponsor investment

The investment to support one student is \$10,000 per annum for the duration of the student's degree.

This includes a \$5,000 per annum payment direct to the student. The remaining \$5,000 covers the cost of their travel and accommodation related to workshops and industry placements (as well as a living allowance while on the industry placement), the cost of running the workshop and program coordination.

The benefits of being a sponsor

Sponsors of The Horizon Scholarship are responding directly to an urgent need to increase the number of graduates in agriculture-related degrees and related disciplines in order to maintain the Australian agricultural industry's competitiveness.

Along the way, the sponsors are creating strong links with high potential individuals who act as ambassadors for careers in agriculture and are well placed to pursue a career in their sponsor's industry.

Benefits of being a sponsor include:

- The ability to promote your industry to a future leader, through the provision of industry placements and mentors.
 - An opportunity to promote your organisation's commitment to agriculture and careers in your sector.
 - An opportunity to engage with students and influence the messages at the annual workshop by participating in sessions, providing guest speakers and attending the annual Horizon Scholarship dinner.
 - Media coverage throughout the year including the announcements of the opening for applications (November), announcement of successful applicants (March), workshop (mid-year) and any other opportunities sponsors may wish to pursue with their sponsored student/s.
 - An opportunity to sit on the selection panel and participate in the interview process thereby influencing the make up of the annual cohort.
 - An opportunity to link the Horizon Scholars with appropriate activities within your organisation and industry.
- Acknowledgement on the RIRDC website as well as on all printed collateral and workshop materials.
 - A chance to engage with politicians through their interest in following the students' progress.

"[the workshop] was invaluable in motivating and helping to set clear goals as well as building upon our leadership skills and giving us the opportunity to talk with successful business people in industries of which I am interested."

Naomi Marks, Bachelor of Agribusiness,
University of New England
Sponsored by the Cotton Research and Development Corporation

CURRENT* SPONSORS



*at 1 March 2014



The bigger picture – agriculture’s need for skilled labour

The ability for Australian agriculture to remain internationally competitive, when the demand for food will increase 70% by 2050, depends on the ability of our industries and businesses to recruit from a larger pool of sufficiently skilled individuals.

Agriculture continues to play a significant role in the Australian economy, generating \$137 billion per year in production underpinning 12% of GDP and supporting more than 137,000 jobs directly with a flow on of some 1.6 million jobs across the country.

The pressures of food production to address the deepening world food crisis and the changing climate will see agriculture become an increasingly critical career pathway with a high take up of technology and innovation.

Hindering productivity, innovation and resilience in the sector is the shortage of suitably skilled labour to capitalise on growth opportunities. Research for the Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC) in 2009 found the impediments to meeting agriculture’s skills shortages include “low levels of industry participation in education and training, low numbers of undergraduates and graduates in tertiary agriculture courses, poor awareness of agricultural career pathways and the limited capacity of the current education and training system to deliver innovative training solutions.”

“Without significant intervention, several of agrifood’s sectors and key occupations are on an unsustainable trajectory due to ageing of its workforce, skilled workers exiting to the resource sectors, and poor attraction rates over an extended period which have left an insufficient pool of young workers.”

*“Australia’s regions – Australia’s future - Environmental Scan of the Agrifood Industry,”
Agrifood Skills Australia, 2011*

In 2009 RIRDC commissioned research into labor shortages within Australia’s rural workforce which found business growth and expansion, social amenity and economic prosperity were all restricted by the lack of skilled labour in our regions.

In 2011, Agrifood Skills Australia’s Environmental Scan of the Agrifood Industry found that by 2018 over 102,000 of the current agriculture, forestry and fishing labour force – equating to 33.4 per cent – will be aged 65 years and over. A staggering 56.2 per cent will be aged over 55 years.

At the supply end, the number of agricultural science graduates being produced by Australian universities is falling. In their submission to the 2020 Summit in 2008, the Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture stated that fewer than 800 agricultural science graduates per year are produced across Australia, for more than 2000 jobs.

Agriculture’s future productivity gains will be forged by research, technology and extension. However, the Productivity Commission in their 2005

research paper “Trends in Australian Agriculture” found that, while there had been considerable improvement in previous decades, the proportion of people working in agriculture with a degree was around 7% whereas 22% of the community as a whole had a degree.

The Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture has further expressed concern about the ability to sustain the research effort that delivers agricultural productivity growth as a large percentage of agricultural scientists head to retirement. The low numbers of higher degree students in agriculture reflects that students are not being attracted into agriculture in the first place and that research careers are increasingly unattractive.



The students

The Horizon Scholarship supports students across the nation studying at numerous universities.

Their career aspirations range from working in the fields of genetics, animal husbandry, plant pathology, agronomy, rural landscape preservation, agribusiness, education and in large animal veterinary practice.

The successful students were chosen for their academic achievement, leadership potential and commitment to a career in agriculture.

Almost all recipients received academic and leadership awards at their high schools, whether as Dux, Captain or Head of School, and most have undertaken work experience within agricultural industries, whether as student master at their school farm, or in showing at agricultural shows, general hands, contract harvesters or working on their family farm.

They are individuals of high potential who appreciate the opportunities the Scholarship provides them and are determined to maximize their involvement with their sponsors and mentors to progress their careers.

Program linkages

The Horizon Scholarship has been designed to respond to the need to support tertiary students studying agriculture-related degrees, but to ensure the program aligns to the range of other initiatives and projects aimed at improving the take up of careers in agriculture, linkages with other programs and activities are encouraged.

The students are invited to participate in organisations and activities that complement their studies, advance their professional development and increase their networks. This has included:

- Industry conferences
- Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN) Forum (Conference volunteers)
- Bridging the Rural Urban Divide – Art4Agriculture Young Farming Champions
- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Ag Youth Think Tank

Sponsors are invited to link The Horizon Scholars to planned activities that would benefit from the inclusion of young faces of agriculture, while further advancing students' knowledge.

Program coordination

The program is coordinated by RIRDC using internal staff, who undertake all administrative, communications and support roles.

How to get involved

To become a Horizon Scholarship student sponsor or for more information please contact the Rural Industries R&D Corporation:

Ph: 02 6271 4132

Email: horizon@rirdc.gov.au

Online: www.rirdc.gov.au/horizon