

Horticulture Innovation Australia

Final Report

Investing in Youth Successful Scholarship Applicant

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Rural Industries R&D Corporation (RIRDC)

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Summary

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 offer, while helping to address the chronic shortage of agricultural scientists and rural industry professionals.

The Horizon Scholarship supports undergraduate students studying an agriculture or related degree 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 Horizon Scholarship addresses the gap that exists in supporting students of high potential in agricultural science at the tertiary level. The Primary Industry Centre for Science Education (PICSE) runs important programs promoting tertiary studies in agricultural science to high school students. Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) and the private sector provide a range of postgraduate scholarships and research grants to students undertaking higher degrees.

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

- It facilitates industry participation in education and training.
- It works to increase the number of graduates in agricultural science.
- 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. In 2014 there were 17 sponsors supporting 45 current students. There are nine graduates who have completed their scholarships and form the alumni.

The response from students continues to be positive and the program continues to receive strong numbers of applications.

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 they 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 year, the students undertake a work placement within their sponsor's industry or related field which enables them to learn relevant skills that complement their university education and contribute to making them work ready.

Students undertake industry placements in a range of industry sectors including agribusinesses, research and extension providers, government agencies, veterinary clinics and agricultural/farm operations.

Professional development workshop

In July each year, the students attend a three-day workshop in Canberra 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 Members of Parliament.

Benefits of the Horizon Scholarship to Industry

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

Participating industries are able to showcase their industry to students of high potential through the provision of mentors, industry placements and workshop engagement.

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.

Introduction

The objective of the Horizon Scholarship is to increase the number of students pursuing undergraduate studies and subsequent careers in agriculture in Australia.

Embedded in the program's objective is the imperative of promoting the dynamic and diversified number of career pathways that agriculture offers students entering tertiary education, while helping to address the chronic shortage of agricultural scientists and rural industry professionals.

Investing in Youth 2010, with the support of a number of major sponsors including Horticulture Innovation Australia was able to select ten students entering undergraduate studies in agriculture and related disciplines.

In 2011, with the support of a number of major sponsors including Horticulture Australia Ltd, nine students entering undergraduate studies in agriculture and related disciplines were selected for a scholarship. This was in addition to the 19 students already in the program.

Horticulture Innovation Australia's 2010 Horizon Scholar was Bonnie Hargreaves who has now completed a double degree in Agricultural Science and Commerce at the University of Western Australia and graduated from the program at the end of 2012.

Horticulture Innovation Australia's 2011 Horizon Scholar was Samuel Adams, who has now completed a Bachelor of Agricultural Science at the University of Queensland and graduated from the program at the end of 2014.

Methodology

The Horizon scholarship supports students through four key strategies; a financial scholarship and professional support in the form of mentoring, professional development and industry placement.

The program is designed to support students with new skills and learnings, career advice and direction and experience in and exposure to different career pathways.

The Horizon Scholarship has achieved its key performance indicators and delivered against its four key strategies.

Bonnie Hargreaves and Samuel Adams have met their performance indicators and participated actively in the program.

Financial Bursaries

Both Samuel Adams and Bonnie Hargreaves were each provided with a financial scholarship of \$5,000 for the duration of their undergraduate degrees. The scholarships are binding to students participating fully in their studies and passing all examinations and assessments.

Bonnie Hargreaves

Bonnie's university mentor was Dion Nicol, a PhD student at the University of Western Australia.

Bonnie's industry mentor was Maureen Dobra, CEO of the Loose Lettuce Leaf Company. Maureen, along with her family, has built on 35 years of experience as market gardeners, including the last 18 as gourmet growers, to establish "The Loose Leaf Lettuce Company" as one of the horticulture success stories of the Gingin region. What started as a sideline to meet a client's request for tiny leaves has developed into a thriving business providing employment for local people and delivering produce six days per week to customers in outer and inner metropolitan areas and to Perth Market City. Around 4 tonnes of leaves are harvested each day. The company's most popular salads are Wild Rocket, Baby Green Cos, Special Lettuce Mix and Baby Spinach. The Loose Leaf Lettuce Company is Freshcare Certified (P6000697).

Samuel Adams

Samuel's university mentor was Dr Jitka Kochanek, Research Fellow, Faculty of Science at the University of Queensland. The mentoring partnership was established by teleconference on 10 June 2011, facilitated by the Program Coordinator.

Samuel's industry mentor was Malcolm Smith from the DEEDI research station, based at Bundaberg. Malcolm has worked on developing better citrus trees (mandarins mostly) to suit what the industry requires to meet current market specifications. During a face to face meeting Sam was shown the methods used in developing new varieties to best fit with what the industry was asking for. He was given the opportunity to inspect greenhouses where

plants are largely being grown from cutting, but also some seed. They examined germinating seed under controlled conditions and ventured into the field, looking at what had been done developing and cross pollinating different varieties.

Samuel was also in touch with Peter Melville when he was still working at Horticulture Innovation Australia and saw him as providing input to his studies and future prospects.

Professional Development Workshop

RIRDC facilitated workshops in Canberra in July 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 for students to support their professional development and provide the opportunity to enhance their connections with the program and with each other and the opportunity to meet with their sponsors and rural industry leaders.

- The workshop for 2010 was held at the Australian Institute of Sport on the 6-9 July 2010.
- The workshop for 2011 was held at Old Parliament House on 4 & 5 July 2011.
- The workshop for 2012 was held at the Australian National University on the 1-3 July 2012.
- The workshop for 2013 was held at Hotel Kurrajong on the 1-3 July 2013.

The workshops delivered against the following broad objectives:

- A sense of shared identity and common ground between the 2010 and 2011 Investing in Youth students, allowing them to establish their own sense of collective purpose and begin to form a unique bond with a network of their peers, with the end result being solid collaboration and communication beyond the initial workshop.
- A focus on building leadership skills, including leadership styles, teambuilding, communication and negotiation and public speaking, and through their new skills and learning's an enhanced commitment to agriculture and a new sense of themselves as emerging leaders.
- Exposure to a range of agricultural careers through 'speed dating' sessions, or key influential speakers from a diverse career background followed by a speed dating session with the speakers.
- Put their leadership and public speaking skills to the test in the Big Ideas Muster, where the students considered issues affecting the future of agriculture and presented their ideas to a small group of sponsors.
- An opportunity to meet with Members of Parliament, by attending afternoon tea at Parliament House hosted by Hon Dr Mike Kelly MP, the parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.
- Media training to ensure they fully utilise media opportunities.
- Recruitment advice and training in presentations and resume writing including follow up individual advice.
- An opportunity to meet with their sponsoring RDC's at the workshop dinner, to

build relationships and to engage in discussion with industry leaders on the future of agriculture.

Industry Placements

Bonnie Hargreaves

Bonnie's first industry placement was with Horticulture Innovation Australia Ltd as an assistant in the Sydney office, as well as having some experience in universities around the Sydney area. She enjoyed this placement as it was her first experience working in an office environment and a good eye opener. As well, spending some time with a PhD student and his supervisor at the Sydney University of Technology was beneficial for her to see what it would be like to complete a PhD. She also spent some time in the Sydney basin, looking at the type of agriculture there.

Bonnie's second placement was at the Ecosciences Precinct with the DEEDI office in Brisbane. This was her most enjoyable placement, primarily because it exposed Bonnie to a wide range of experiences. Part of the two weeks was spent in the DEEDI offices exploring areas such as plant pathology, which she found very interesting, tissue culture, and seed cleaning for stored grain pests. She also spent some time out at the regional office working on fruit fly pesticides as well as learning about integrated pest management and attending a growers' meeting on the subject.

Samuel Adams

Samuel was only able to complete one placement during his scholarship due to other commitments. Samuel was in constant contact with RIRDC and his sponsor to seek out placement opportunities. Samuel completed his placement at Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers. During the two weeks he spent time with various people in the industry of horticulture, learning the aspects of growing, packing, marketing, monitoring and business planning. He thoroughly enjoyed his time during this placement. Samuel did fulfill the placement requirements of his university degree.

Communication & Extension Activities

RIRDC issues media releases announcing that the scholarship applications are open as well as announcing the scholarship winners each year.

In 2012 RIRDC launched into social media for the program with the establishment of a facebook page and a twitter account. Both platforms have continued to grow and provide ongoing valuable communication extension for the program.

The program's various activities and students insights are highlighted in numerous RIRDC and RDC publications included Diversity. The program and individual students have also been profiled in a number of media programs and publications, including ABC Country Hour.

The increased promotion undertaken toward the end of 2012 resulted in the highest number of applicants received for available places. When applications closed in early 2013, 229 applications had been received, up from the average of 70 in the first two years. In 2014 and 2015 over 200 applications have been consistently received.

The scholarship will continue to be promoted and positioned as a prestigious opportunity for high quality individuals committed to a career in agriculture.

The Scholarship continues to receive an increased level of national, state, industry, rural and regional media coverage. Media coverage (not including social media) produced between 14th November 2014 and 12th February 2015 totaled **91** items. This coverage reached a cumulative audience of **1,075,244**.

The Scholarship has significantly harnessed the opportunities that social media offers including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn.

- Creation of a Program Promotional Video profiling the program and scholars www.rirdc.gov.au/horizon (1398 views as of 30th December 2014)
- Student led videos promoting "Why I Love Ag" profiled on the RIRDC YouTube channel
 - Most popular scholar videos for 2014: Horizon Scholar, Felicity Taylor - Why I love ag (Studying Ag/Economics at USyd & sponsored by CRDC) (374 views as of 11/02/2015) Horizon Scholar, Jordy Kitschke (studying Agricultural Science at Adelaide Uni (sponsored by GRDC) (237 views as of 11/02/15)
- Individual profiling of 4 students for use as a promotional tool during call for applications.
- Increased awareness of the Program through attendance and promotion at other events e.g. conferences and cross industry meetings.
- Minister for Agriculture and the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture media release announcing the 2014 recipients.
- The Horizon Scholarship Facebook page (www.facebook.com/HorizonScholarship) was launched in August 2013

and has received encouraging response and likes. The aim is to engage with general youth in agriculture communities.

- The 2014 reach included 353 likes with 1234 people viewing the announcement of the 2014 Scholars. The page continues to attract high numbers of views with a recent post attracting 1233 views.
- *The Horizon Scholarship Twitter* page (@HorizonScholar) was also launched in August 2013. It continues to be heavily utilised throughout the campaign and has 1,263 followers.

Scholar Evaluation

Bonnie Hargreaves

At the end of 2012 Bonnie graduated from the Horizon program to undertake a GRDC funded Honours project entitled 'Heritability of resistance to black spot disease in a field pea recurrent enrichment and association population'. Bonnie had been supported by the program to study a Bachelor of Agricultural Science/Bachelor of Commerce at the University of Western Australia

In 2011 Bonnie attended a conference in Sydney about the future of agriculture, where Charlie Arnot was the guest speaker. She enjoyed the conference immensely, especially as Charlie outlined ways in which supporters of the agricultural industry need to speak about agriculture in order to promote it to the general public.

In 2012 Bonnie become an ambassador for the PICSE program and in 2013 was elected to the committee of SNAGS (Students in Natural and Agricultural Sciences) UWA as secretary. Bonnie has also attended numerous field days promoting agricultural degrees and career pathways to potential students.

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Benefits from the program

For Bonnie the Horizon Scholarship has been an incredible experience. The main highlights along the way for Bonnie have been attending the workshops each July in Canberra. Meeting fellow like-minded university students who are each as passionate about their section of the agricultural industry and improving the image of agriculture as a whole, was both inspiring and motivating to Bonnie. Coming back from the workshops each time Bonnie felt refreshed and ready to tackle some of the issues in agriculture head on. She particularly enjoyed the workshop in 2012, where there was training in social media and how to present our 'best public self' as well as preparation for entering the workplace.

Bonnie has participated in many media and public speaking engagements as part of the Horizon Scholarship. She has had several radio interviews with ABC over the course of the scholarship, speaking about her experience with the Horizon Scholarship and the agricultural industry. She was also video interviewed by Dan Hirst of Heywire, speaking about her experience with both the Heywire program and Horizon. She has enjoyed these opportunities and believes that speaking about her experiences will encourage other youth to become involved in agriculture or at least to consider it as a career.

Bonnie is still involved with the PICSE program as an ambassador for the program and has

spoken several times for PICSE about her experience with agriculture, where she cross promoted the Horizon Scholarship.

Bonnie feels that the Horizon Scholarship has been incredibly supportive throughout her university career and is very grateful for all the opportunities that have been provided as a result. She believes it was such great support to have had and opened her eyes to taking opportunities that come her way and not being afraid to speak up about what she is passionate about. Bonnie feels proud to have been a Horizon scholar and looks forward to being part of the alumni.

Sam Adams

During high school Samuel was awarded the Sinclair Trophy for excellence and effort in agriculture and the Keith Lawrence Memorial Shield for leadership and was appointed Senior Prefect and Captain of the shooting team.

Samuel participated in the PICSE Growsmart program and undertook three rural placements whilst at school, including CSIRO, the University of New England's Soil Science laboratories and a local farm, to gain experience and exposure to primary industries.

Samuel's career aspirations are to become an agronomist, as he continues to have a strong interest in pastures, horticulture and cropping and is keen to pursue research into water and nutrient efficiencies and more sustainable plant enterprises.

In 2011 Samuel was recommended for the Deans commendation for high achievement, has completed additional work experience, and formed with fellow students the UQ Plant Science Society of which he was elected President. At the end of 2013 Samuel graduated from the University of Queensland with a Bachelor of Agricultural Science with a high credit average.

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Benefits from the program

For Samuel the greatest highlight of the program was the people. He has had the pleasure to meet some really interesting, unique and intriguing people, fellow students, policy makers, influential industry people, media people and many others. He feels as a result of three years meeting new people and networking, he is starting to get the hang of the networking idea, and feels more comfortable talking to different people and more confident to ask questions. Samuel would also like to make note of the importance the financial support provided by Horticulture Innovation Australia throughout his time in the scholarship, which made his study and university life easier and more enjoyable.

Samuel feels that the Horizon program has been unique in that all scholars bond and become good friends regardless of how long they have been in the program. Furthermore, the

relationships built with RIRDC, the sponsors, facilitators and industry leaders provide skills for the development of a career post university.

Samuel believes the program itself is well run and professional, yet still provides the flexibility to meet and interact with other scholars. Samuel feels that he is now equipped to tackle the 'real world of Agriculture' from being selected and participating in this program.

Acknowledgements

The Horizon scholarship would like to thank the ongoing support of Horticulture Innovation of Australia in sponsoring Bonnie Hargreaves and Samuel Adams. We look forward to working with you in the future.