

**The CWAE Tracking Survey:
Objectives, Methods and Results**

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Introduction

Cheney's article, "Tracking Agricultural Economics Professionals" provides an excellent catalyst for discussion about the Committee on Women in Agricultural Economics (CWAE) tracking survey. This presentation extends from Cheney's article and my experience as a member of the CWAE tracking committee.

CWAE's interest in the progress of women agricultural economists is a longstanding issue. Numerous studies have examined the roles and status of women and ethnic minorities in the agricultural economics profession (Lane; Lee; Marchant and Williamson; Marchant and Zepeda; Brandt and Ahern; Zepeda, *et al.*; Robbins and Evans; McLean-Meyinnse; Jones, *et al.*). These studies were snapshots or static views of women and ethnic minorities as of points in time. It became evident to AAEA, CWAE and the Committee on the Status and Opportunities of Blacks in Agricultural Economics (COSBAE) that a coordinated system of surveys overtime were needed to track the progress of women and ethnic minorities in the agricultural economics profession.

For many years, questions such as:

- Do women and ethnic minorities favor one type of employer over another, and if so, why?
- How do spousal hiring and family-related issues affect career decisions for women, minorities and their counterparts in agricultural economics?

- Is a critical mass of women or minorities required to attract more women and minorities to a department?
- Is there a glass ceiling for women and minorities, and if so, is it more pronounced with some employer types?
- Are there measurable salary differences between women, ethnic minorities and their counterparts in agricultural economic?

have troubled AAEA and agricultural economists. To understand the issues and progress of its members, the AAEA Foundation Board funded CWAE's quest to track the progress of women and minorities overtime. While other individuals and committees have conducted surveys, this is the first survey to track individuals and cohorts (rather than institutional changes through surveys of department heads) and examine variables which impact professional choices and development.

Objectives

As CWAE and AAEA interest in the tracking survey increased, several objectives became prominent in designing and conducting the survey. These objectives include:

- compiling a time series of consistent, reliable information about women, ethnic minorities and their counterparts in agricultural economics;
- using this information to track the progress and factors affecting the career choices of agricultural economists overtime;
- tracking general changes in the profession and its demographics overtime; and
- providing a source of information to institutions about women and ethnic minorities, their employment choices, professional challenges and performance and

pay issues with respect to their agricultural economics counterparts.

AAEA was also interested in why some females and minorities either do not join AAEA or discontinue membership upon graduation. While such information could assist AAEA in increasing its membership and serving agricultural economists, the tracking committee decided that finding a database of addresses for non-member agricultural economists was not possible under our time and monetary constraints.

Procedures

Upon receiving funding from the AAEA Foundation Board, survey design began. The survey objectives and design require survey distribution in alternating years for the tracking initiative. The 1997 AAEA non-student roster contained 2,272 members. Survey recipients were chosen as all non-student women and ethnic minorities and a random sample of Caucasian males. Surveys were only mailed to AAEA members residing in the U.S. and Canada. In April 1998, 873 surveys were distributed to 440 white/non-Hispanic males and 433 females and male ethnic minorities. A follow-up survey was sent to non-respondents in June 1998. A total of 494 responses were useable for analysis. Due to the tracking objectives and timetable, another survey is due out in 2000. Preparations are proceeding for the next survey mailing in Fall 2000.

Demographics

Other presentations by Thilmany, Srivastava and Hine focus on statistical analysis of survey responses with respect to performance, pay, career choices and workplace challenges. Presented here are general demographics of survey respondents upon which further studies build.

Overall, survey respondents were 31.2% female and 68.8% male. During 1997, the AAEA population consisted of 14% females. Regardless of gender, survey respondents were 79% Caucasian (white/non-Hispanic), 10% Asian and approximately 5% for both Hispanics and Blacks. Ethnic minorities (regardless of gender) account for 16% of AAEA membership but are 21% of survey respondents.

Average age of survey respondents was 45. Females were on average 10 years younger than male counterparts. Less women survey respondents were married/partnered or had children. Of the survey respondents, 90% were either married or partnered, with 75% having at least one child. When examining family by gender breakdown, 93% of males were married with 88% having at least one child, while 76% of females were married with 52% having at least one child. The differences here may foreshadow some of the family/career trade-offs women confront during graduate school and the tenure process.

While this paper does not examine why a respondent chose a certain type of employer, overall employer-type demographics are given. Overall, 62% of survey respondents are employed by an academic institution of some type (1862 and 1890 Land Grant institutions as well as other colleges and universities). Specifically, 66% of all males, 53% of all females and 61% of all minority respondents are employed in academia. Government institutions comprised the next largest employer of survey respondents with 23% females, 18% minorities and 16% males reporting a government employer-type. Women and minorities were also more likely to be employed by industry or the private sector, including 10% female, 7% minority and 5% male. International organizations employ more minorities (13%) compared to 7% for females and 5% for males.

Conclusions

While this presentation gives overall survey objectives, methods and demographics, further studies analyze survey data to given insight about performance, pay, career choices and challenges. The first survey of the CWAE tracking project gives valuable information about agricultural economists in general, with specific interest to women and ethnic minorities. The challenge from here, and what makes this project original, will be the information gained from further surveys. A time series of data is needed to understand issues pertaining to women, minorities and the agricultural economics profession in general, how those issues change and what progress is made.

Summary statistics from the first survey have already been used widely for informational purposes. Employers are learning what makes their workplace more amenable to women and minorities, along with overall pay and performance information. Some of the anecdotal evidence about career challenges for women and minorities are either refuted or strengthened.

Greater information will be gained by continuing the tracking survey to elicit a time series of information about women, minorities and their counterparts in agricultural economics. Survey preparation has begun for the Fall 2000 mailing. Minor modifications will be made, but consistency is important for the tracking objective. While the suggestion has been made again to survey non-members of AAEA, at this time the time, monetary and informational constraints are too great². Any suggestions or edits are welcome, with the understanding that the survey is designed to track issues in the profession.

²At this time no single database of current addresses exists for non-members of AAEA whom are practicing agricultural economists.

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