

Food Science

Part One. Analysis of the Current Landscape, “A [Deeper] Look in the Mirror”

Advising in Food Science is done directly by faculty with an open door policy whenever possible. Within the major, students can focus on food science, health and wellness and food safety. Students work with an advisor to determine the track that interest them the most and then advisors plan out their curriculum according to their individual program. Faculty also help students identify courses outside of the major requirements to help them with areas of personal interest and/or strengthen of their Food Science curriculum. This strategy is working well as Food Science is consistently more than 1 standard deviation above the mean in faculty accessibility, academic advising, faculty concern for progress, access to classes and connections to the rest of your academics in the graduating senior survey.

The Food Science Department has a long history in career development. Resume preparation and interview training starts as early as their freshman year with different topics being covered in FS 190I, 265 and 391C. Most of our classes also have invited lectures from industry scientists to help the students better understand the expectations of the job and classes have food plant tours to further introduce the students to the work environment. In addition, 5-8 companies visit the Department each year to interview for internships and full time positions. This gives students an opportunity to practice their interview skills in real life situations. The majority of companies provide feedback for the students to help them with future interviews. Food Science is consistently more than 1 standard deviation above the mean in career preparation and guidance.

Overall, our faculty and students are very happy with our advising and career preparation.

Part Two. Goals for Academic and Career Advising and the Student Experience

As we continue to get new faculty, senior faculty will need to spend significant time training new advisors. It would be helpful if the advising center could help with food science specific advising training in times outside of the high demand registration periods.

Faculty are still learning the EAB SSC advising tool but we feel that this process could provide addition insight to our one-on-one advising. Student articulation of their career preparation to employees can always be improved. We currently work on this during interviewing practice sessions and building resumes. Most employees are not that interested in curriculum issues but in how students developing skills outside of the classroom such as communication, teamwork and leadership. A lot of our classroom activities such as product development competitions, team lab projects and undergraduate research experience help with developing these skills. We have added a 1 credit class in both product development and undergraduate research preparation to help with this process.

Another area that we are trying to help students with is resume building. This activity needs to begin as early as possible and can initially be made in small steps but we have learned that students need to be reminded as often as possible and not matter how much encouragement, some student will not engage in this activity until late in their career.

Our intern placement is pretty strong at 65-75%. It's unclear how high this can go since it is not required and many students will have conflicts at home that can interfere with summer internships. However, we do realize that it's a constant battle to get companies to come to campus to interview for internships so we have created an internship committee that is both working to attract more companies as well as help students with the application process and interview skills. There is no doubt that students that do internships have the most job opportunities so we plan to continuously work to improve this process.

Part Three. Academic and Career Advising Action Plan

As mentioned above, our overall advising and career development is quite strong. We will continue to work hard in these areas including training faculty, utilizing the EAB SSC advising tool, working with students to build their resumes and recruiting companies to campus for internship interviews. We take great pride in providing a first class experience for our undergrads and feel that this has helped us be successful in alumni fund raising activities as students that have a positive experience while on campus are more likely to give back later in life.

ON another front, this year we did a product development pilot program with Herbalife. Student took a product development class instructed by an alumni with extensive industry experience. In the class, teams developed a series of new product prototypes and presented their projects to Herbalife executives. The winning team received a cash prize and several students were chosen for internships. This has been a great experience as the student gained additional experience in working with teams, taking leadership in different portions of the project, communicating their results with industry experts and gaining a better understanding of challenges in the food industry, all of which will help with securing jobs and being successful in their careers. We are hoping that we can continue to find industry partners to fund this experience in the future. However, addition funds might be useful if industry partners cannot be secured.