

Preparing Transdisciplinary Scientists: Evaluation of the 2013 Webinar Series

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Overview

A webinar series was held in Winter 2013 with the goal of strengthening the ability of CSCAP graduate students to become transdisciplinary scientists. Each webinar consisted of a 40 minute presentation followed by 20 minutes of questions and answers. Forty-six individuals participated in the series with an average of 24 per week. They were from the fields of sociology, statistics, agriculture, crop production, entomology, hydrology, soil science, climatology, plant pathology, and outreach and engagement. All but one were members of the CSCAP team. This poster presents the evaluation results and recommendations.

Presenters

- Dennis Today, Associate Professor and State Climatologist, South Dakota State University
- Richard Joost, Director of Supply Programs, United Soybean Board/SmithBucklin
- Pradip Das, Technology Prospecting Lead, Global Strategy/IFS/Monsanto Co.
- John Kadyszewski, Director , American Carbon Registry at Winrock International
- Jim Guilford, Executive Director, Soil and Water Conservation Society
- Joe Colletti, Senior Associate Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and Associate Director, Experiment Station, Iowa State University

Topics Covered

- Presenters' specific expertise
- Examples of the type of issues they are working on
- Information needs beyond their particular discipline
- The implications of their work for farmers, agribusiness, and policymakers
- Current gaps that exist within their organizations (e.g., lack of agricultural systems knowledge, inability to work as a team, and not communicating across disciplines)
- What they envision will be the opportunities, needs, and challenges for the next generation of scientists

Evaluation

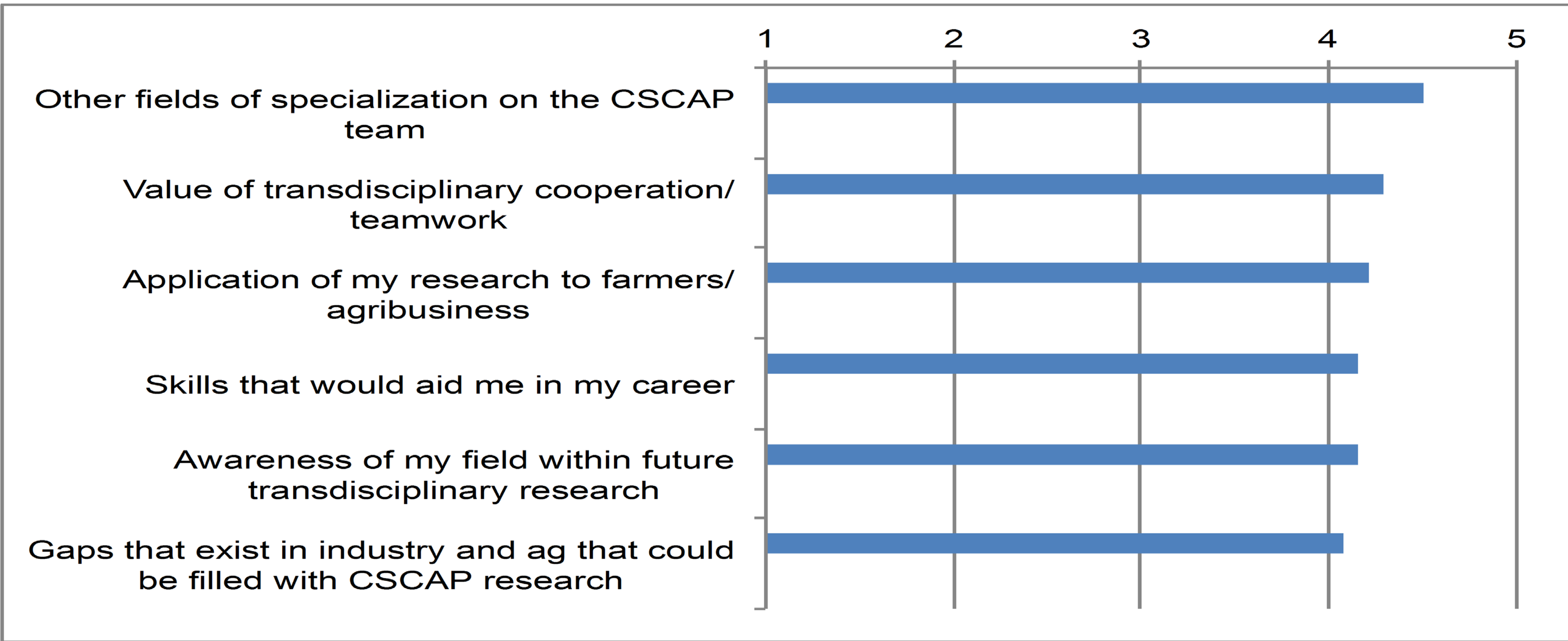
- 1) An online survey after each webinar (*N* = 7 to 17)
- 2) An online survey approximately 2 months after the series had ended (*N* = 14)

Questions asked about format and technical aspects, speaker preparation and presentation, learning objectives, beneficial and influential aspects of the series, and areas for improvement.

Participants were highly satisfied with the webinars. Those who did not attend all of them indicated competing priorities rather than a lack of interest. They felt speakers were well prepared, the webinars were well-organized and intellectually stimulating, the technological aspects went well, and the topic breadth was appropriate.

They also indicated they increased their understanding of agriculture and climate change issues as well as different fields of study, transdisciplinary work, practical application of research, skills, knowledge gaps, and opportunities.

Increased Understanding through the Webinar Series



Scale: 1 to 5, 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree

Beneficial and Influential Aspects

- Contact with the PI's and individual advisory board members
- Learning about the various fields of study in actual application
- Learning more about the various organizations represented
- Learning more about climate, climate change, and the field of climatology
- Number of career opportunities for people in climate change/agriculture
- The emerging importance of transdisciplinary research

Summary and Recommendations

Overall, the webinars were a worthwhile experience, helping participants to learn more about work of different disciplines, current and emerging needs, and the value of transdisciplinary approaches.

For future planning, CSCAP project leaders are advised to:

- Offer another webinar series to reach existing and new graduate students
- Encourage new students and team members to watch past webinars posted on the CSCAP website
- Include information on career trajectories and specific examples of transdisciplinary work in different disciplines and organizations
- Include farmers' views
- Find ways to discuss webinar presentations among students, faculty, and staff after the webinar has ended so that participants can ask additional questions, seek clarification, raise issues, and understand linkages among disciplines

Acknowledgment

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