



**Southern Virginia Youth Expo 2015  
Career CHOICE  
Final Evaluation Report**

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School of Education  
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**Introduction**

The Southern Virginia Youth Expo 2015, Career CHOICE, designed to help students explore the range of possible careers in Southern Virginia, was held for its second year at the Old Dominion Agricultural Complex in Chatham, Virginia on September 30 and October 1. The event affords seventh, ninth, and tenth graders from six Virginia school divisions and one North Carolina high school the opportunity to engage in over 60 hands-on activities and meet with personnel from 80 different businesses in Southern Virginia.<sup>1</sup> The main goal is for students to *Imagine* the range of career possibilities, *Connect* with future employers, and *Explore* the actual work involved in the range of jobs showcased at this event.

The primary purpose of this evaluation is to assess the students' Expo experience and ascertain if the experience helped them to identify potential careers and pathways for their future educational programming. This report is based on the aggregated data from across all student participants for which surveys were available. Individual school reports, data summaries, and suggestions for data use will be sent to the school divisions for planning and guidance purposes upon approval from the evaluation sponsor, the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR).

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<sup>1</sup> Seven students who identified themselves as 11th and 12th graders also participated.

Secondarily, this evaluation summarizes the feedback from crew members or business employers, event volunteers, the school personnel, and the event planning committee. Overall, this information provides the basis for next year's Expo planning and programming.

This evaluation report begins with a brief section on the background of the Expo, then describes the methodologies used to analyze the data from the various stakeholders. The aggregated results from each participant group is then reported and discussed. After a brief summary with conclusions, suggestions for next year's event are offered.

### **Background**

Launched by the Dan River Collaborative and the Southern Virginia Youth Career Expo Planning Team in 2014, employers are invited from across the region to inspire potential talent and give students tangible experiences in the work involved in each career. This intentional effort to build a pipeline that matches the economic development plans for the region underscores the investment that is being made in the students' future careers. Key goals for the employers are to:

- Highlight existing career opportunities;
- Encourage talent to stay in the region;
- Help students make informed decisions about the skills they need;
- Determine the levels of education and educational pathways required for the jobs; and,
- Discover the salaries they can expect with various jobs.

A particular theme that is emphasized at the Expo is the need for the students to be proficient in mathematics in order to have the skills needed for a range of exciting careers. The

phrase “Math Matters” is a central message conveyed by all teachers, counselors, and employers.

## **Methodology**

### Participants

Students are the primary participants data source, and focus of this evaluation. Twenty-five schools and other educational programs from Southern Virginia (n=24) and North Carolina (n=1) were invited to participate. Data were available and analyzed for this evaluation from 24 Virginia-only schools (11 middle schools and 11 high schools and 2 alternative settings). Of the 4,160 participating students, 3,331 completed the event evaluation survey, and thus, this report is based on these available data.

Secondary participants included the crew members or regional employers, volunteers, and school representatives. Information from surveys completed by each of these sources was analyzed and summarized for this report. Also, the Expo planning committee post-event meeting minutes were summarized and included in the overall discussion and subsequent recommendations.

### Data Sources and Collection Procedures

All instruments were designed by the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) staff and mirrored the data that were collected from the 2014 Expo. The purpose of this survey alignment was to begin to develop a longitudinal data base that could provide information for long-term school and workforce planning. The student survey, or Student Work Order, was designed as a pre-post assessment of the students’ career interests, post-secondary plans, regional job aspirations, and event evaluation (see Appendix A). The crew members’

volunteers', and school personnel surveys focused on evaluation of the planning and implementation aspects of the event. The planning committee meeting minutes were reflections on the event and plans for all aspects of planning for next year's Expo including the event itself, as well as evaluation instruments and procedures.

All data were collected by the IALR staff and given to the evaluators. The students completed their pre-survey when they arrived at the Expo, and completed the post-survey before they left. While the pre-survey was completed under somewhat controlled conditions, the post-survey was completed when students were eating their lunches or socializing after the event. Of the 3,331 completed surveys, approximately one third had at least one item response that was missing. Given that the goal for Expo evaluation focused on the overall event, all available responses were included in the analysis. The crew members, volunteers, and school personnel completed their surveys after the event. Two planning committee meetings were held after the Expo on October 15, 2015 (n=10) and April 26, 2016 (n=11). Minutes were written from the discussion and shared with the evaluators.

#### *Data Analysis Procedures*

Student surveys were analyzed across all schools and by each school. Raw data were extracted from the surveys by each item and entered in an Excel file. The following analyses were conducted:

1. Students were asked to select three career clusters of most interest before and after the Expo. Pre-post comparisons were conducted with the total group, by school, by gender, and by grade level<sup>2</sup>.
2. Students were asked to identify their post high school plans. Pre-post comparisons were conducted with the total group, by school, by gender, and by grade level.
3. Students were asked to write down the name of their current mathematics class.<sup>3</sup>
4. Students were asked if they believed that there were good jobs in southern Virginia upon graduation. Pre-post comparisons were conducted with the total group, by school, by gender, and by grade level.
5. In the pre-event survey, students were asked to circle the five career-related activities that they would like to try or visit during the Expo. The directions said they should have a total of 20 activities circled by the end of Expo. While the responses to this item were sporadic and of questionable reliability and validity, summaries of the most frequently circled activities are reported.
6. Students were asked to identify the three jobs that they in which were most interested. This was an open-ended item, and students were able to write any job names that were of interest.
7. Finally, students were asked two questions to evaluate their experience at the Expo. First, they were asked if they were able to complete more than half of the activities that they had planned. Second, if they did not complete at least half of their activities, they

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<sup>2</sup> While the evaluation team understood that the students were either from 7<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes, we recorded what the students reported as we did not have school data to use to edit the responses.

<sup>3</sup> Analysis of these data can be completed at a later time with additional information from the school divisions.

were asked to identify one of three possible reasons. Pre-post comparisons were conducted with the total group, by school, by gender, and by grade level.

Given the need to evaluate the actual Expo experience itself, the pre- and and post-Expo student data were compared. Analyses focused on frequencies and common themes by individual schools and aggregated across all schools, with a secondary analysis for all items by gender and by grade level. Five percent of the students did not indicate a gender and eleven percent did not indicate a grade level, and thus are not represented in these findings. The data from the crew members', volunteers', and school personnel surveys were entered in an Excel file by the IALR staff and analyzed by the evaluation team. Planning committee meeting minutes were shared with the evaluators as well. This summary analysis identifies common themes and observations across groups, and offers subsequent recommendations.

### School Division Profiles

In order to provide individual schools with actionable information, data analyses by individual school are reported in separate documents. In order to provide a context for the data, brief profiles of the individual school divisions were also developed to accompany the school reports.

### **Summaries of Survey Findings**

The findings are reported by participant group in this order: students, crew members, school representatives, and volunteers. Overall findings are first reported, then findings by gender are shared. Detailed student findings, both overall and by school, are reported in Appendix B. A comparison table with brief highlights is reported in Appendix C.

## Students

Cluster preferences. Student cluster preferences were distributed somewhat evenly across the clusters both before and after the event (see Figure 1). Thirty-five percent of students chose the Law, Public Policy, and Government sector prior to their Expo experience, with only a slight decrease at 34% following the event. Of particular interest is the low number of students who consider the Manufacturing cluster a possible career in the future.

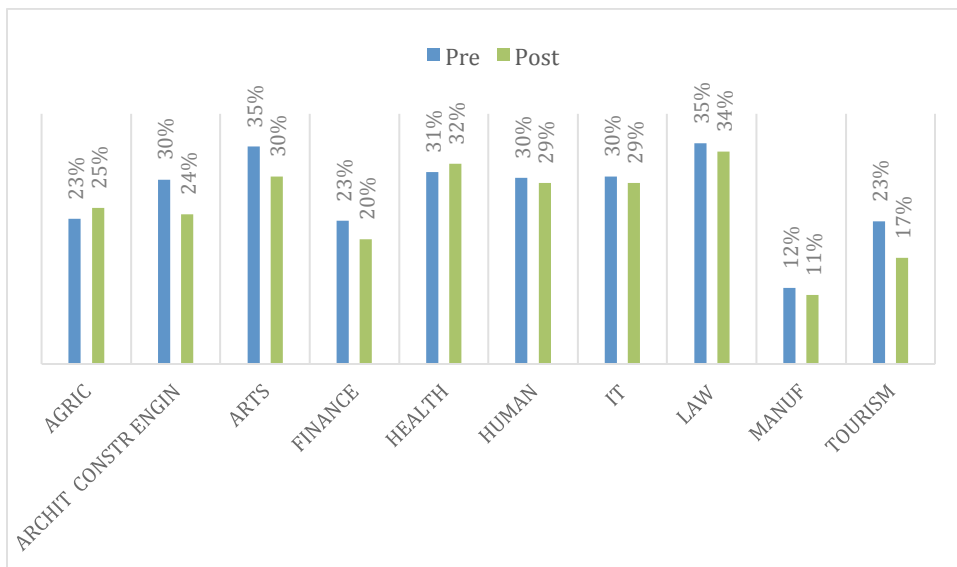


Figure 1. Pre- and post-Expo cluster preferences across all students.

Prior to engaging in the activities, male participants' greatest interest was in the Architecture, Construction, and Engineering cluster at 49%, with (other clusters) also frequently noted. After the activities, male participants' interest in Architecture, Construction, and Engineering dropped to 38%, with IT/Computer Science and Science, Technology, Mathematics rising to 40%. The least selected preferred cluster for male students was in the Human Services



cluster. See Figure 2 for a comparison of male student cluster preferences from pre- to post Expo.



Figure 2. Male students' pre- and post-Expo cluster preferences.

Female participants' greatest interest was in Arts and Communication at 45%. Following the activities, female participant's interest in Arts and Communication dropped slightly to 39%, changing to Human Services and Education at 43%. The Manufacturing cluster was seen as least preferred before and after the Expo, although there was a minimal increase. See Figure 3 for female student cluster preferences from pre- to post-Expo.

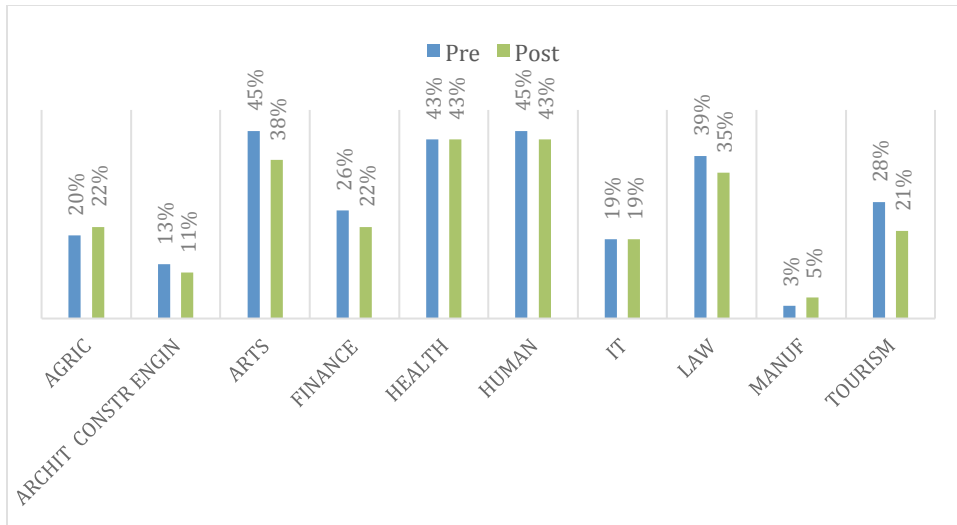


Figure 3. Female students' pre- and post-Expo cluster preferences.

Grade-level differences, overall and by gender convey a more specific picture of cluster preferences. First focusing on seventh grade, overall reported data (n=1684) indicated that Law and the Arts were the most preferred career cluster (see Figure 4). When the data were divided by gender, differences were clear (see Figures 5 and 6) with the Architecture, Information Technology, and Manufacturing clusters being the starkest.

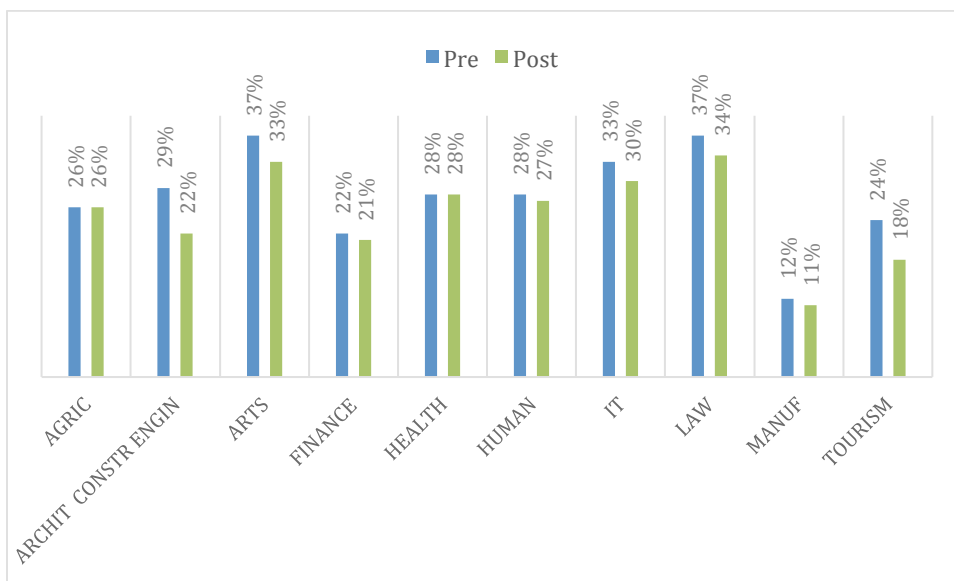


Figure 4. Seventh-grade students' pre- and post-Expo cluster preferences.

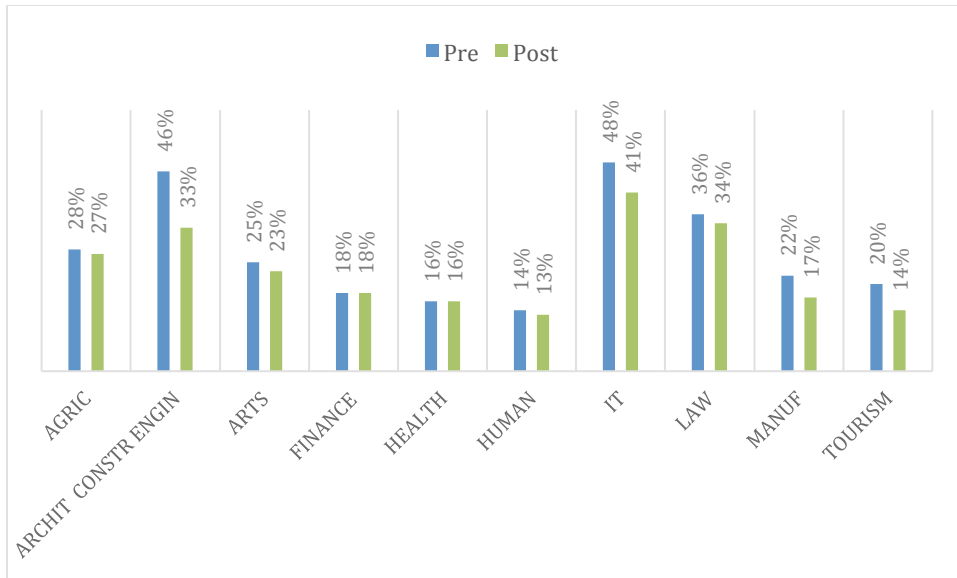


Figure 5. Seventh-grade male students' pre- and post-Expo cluster preferences.

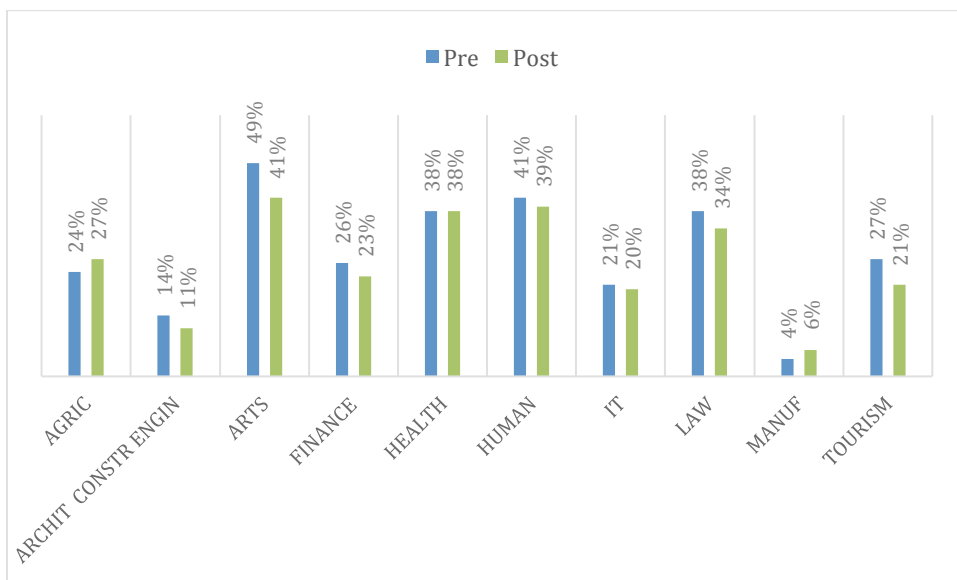


Figure 6. Seventh-grade female students' pre- and post-Expo cluster preferences.

Focusing on ninth-grade students (n=973), similar patterns emerged in the overall data with somewhat of a decrease in interest in the Agriculture cluster. When the data were separated by gender, similar patterns between 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students were observed.

Figure 7 depicts the 9<sup>th</sup> graders' overall cluster preferences, pre- and post-Expo. Figures 8 and 9 depict the male versus female students' preferences.

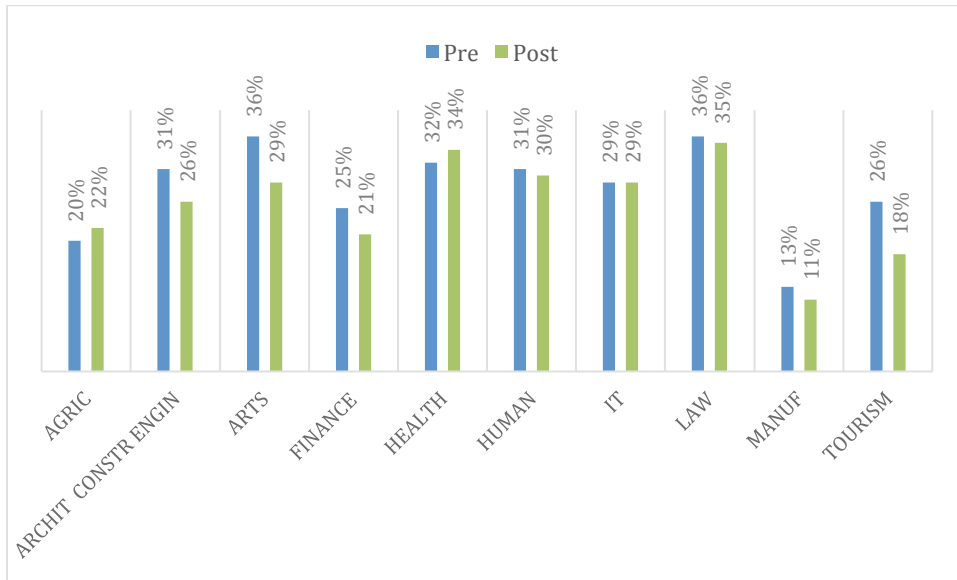


Figure 7. Ninth-grade students' pre- and post-Expo cluster preferences.

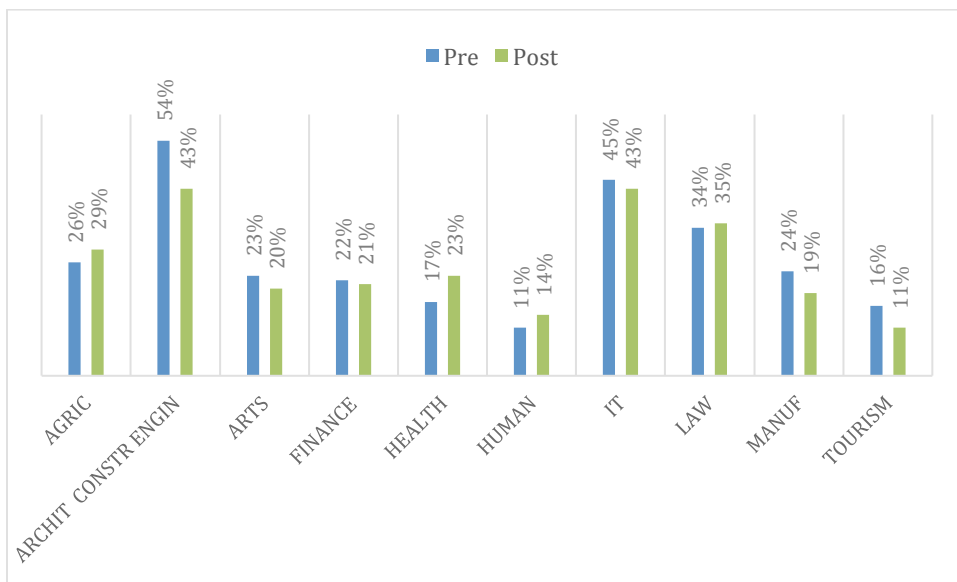


Figure 8. Ninth-grade male students' pre- and post-Expo cluster preferences.

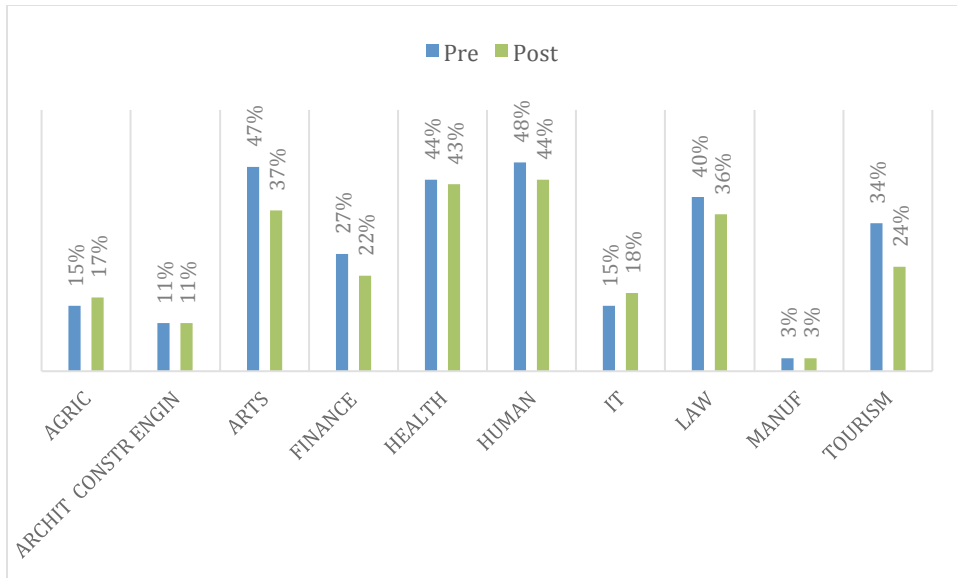


Figure 9. Ninth-grade female students' pre- and post-Expo cluster preferences.

The patterns did shift for those who identified themselves as being 10<sup>th</sup> graders (n=405) to increased preference in the Health and Human Services clusters, and decreased preference in Arts and Tourism (see Figure 10). Patterns by gender were similar to the seventh and ninth grades, with the majority of the shift to Health and Human Services accounted for in the female student preferences. See Figures 11 and 12 for male and female students' preferences, respectively.

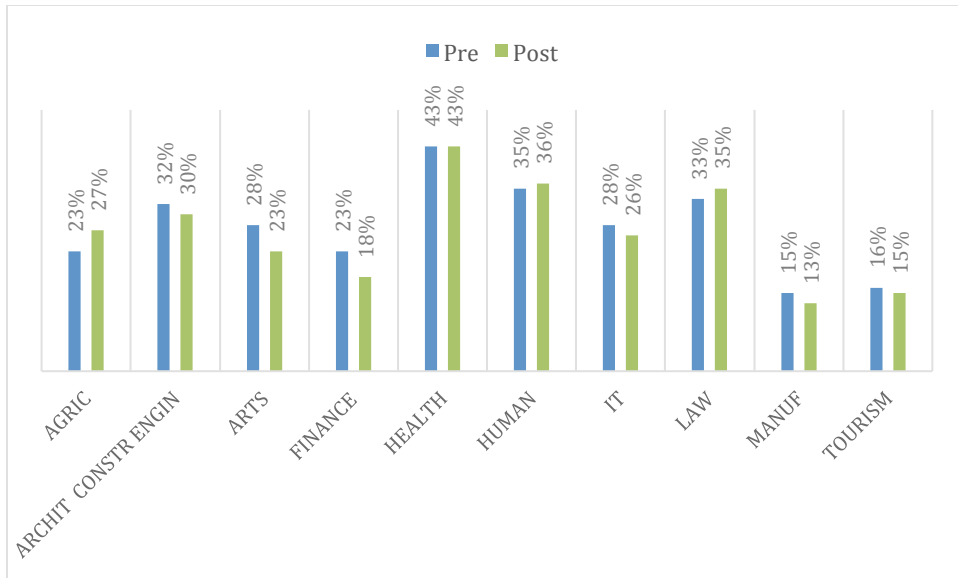


Figure 10. Tenth-grade students' pre- and post-Expo cluster preferences.

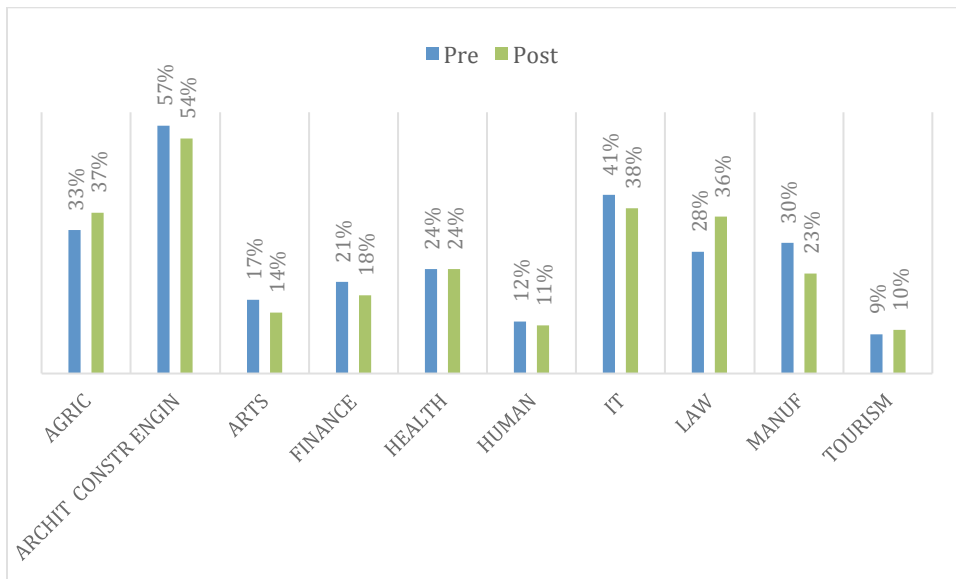


Figure 11. Tenth-grade male students' pre- and post-Expo cluster preferences.

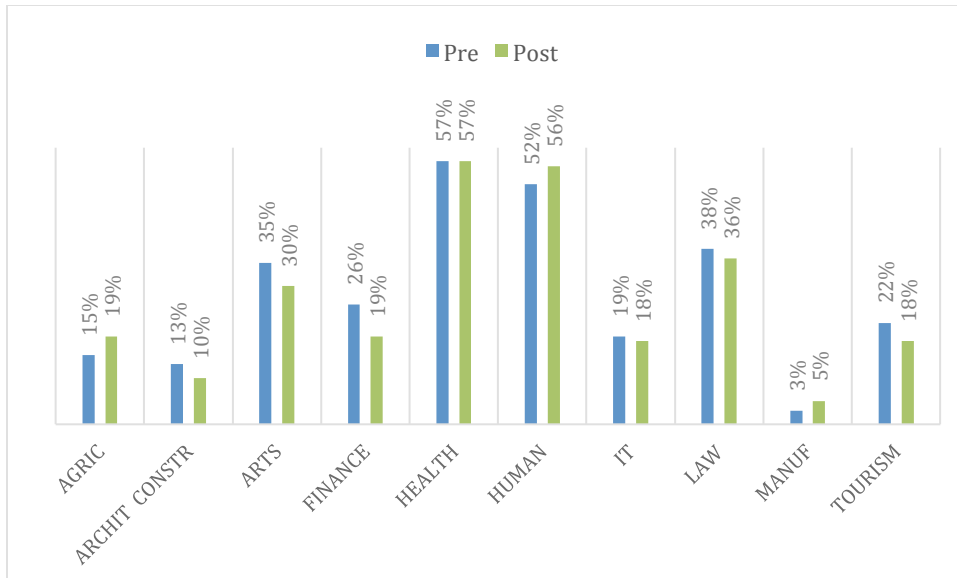


Figure 12. Tenth-grade female students' pre- and post-Expo cluster preferences.

Seven students identified themselves as 11<sup>th</sup> (n=4) and 12<sup>th</sup> (n=3) graders. Given the small numbers, the grade levels were combined. Figure 13 reports the overall pre- and post-Expo cluster preferences. Male students were primarily interested in the Agriculture, Architecture, Information Technology, Manufacturing, and Tourism clusters, with a clear pre-/post-Expo shift from Agriculture to Manufacturing. Female students were primarily interested in the Arts, Finance, Health, Human Services, Information Technology, and Tourism clusters, with a shift from Arts, Finance, and Tourism to Agriculture and Health Services from pre- to post-Expo.

*After-graduation plans.* Prior to the Expo activities, the majority of the students planned to attend a four-year college/university following high school graduation at 66%, with a small decrease at 65% following the event. Another decrease was seen in the “Other” category indicating that students may have identified a possible path that they had not prior to the Expo. Students' pre- and post-Expo after-graduation plans across all options are reported in Figure 4.

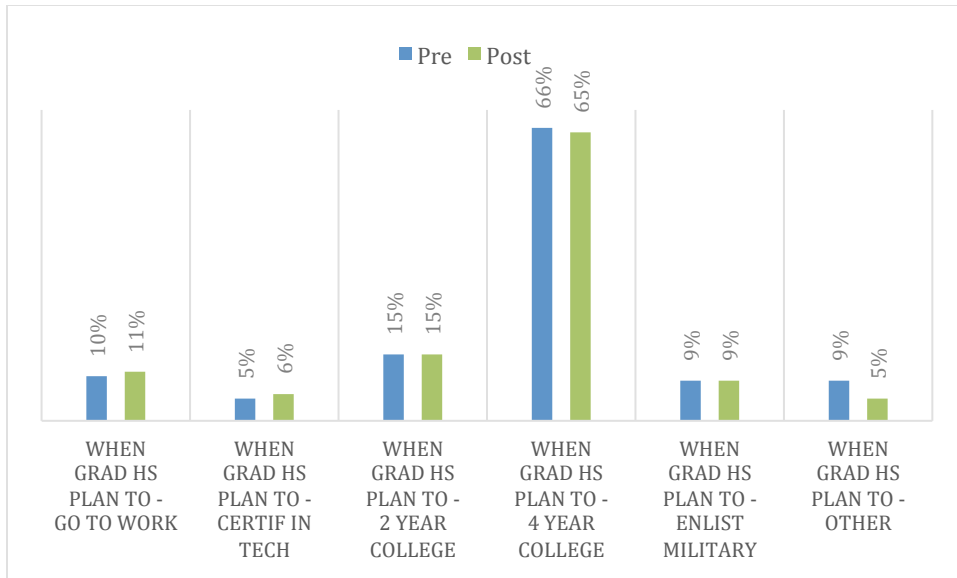


Figure 4. Pre-Expo after-graduation plans across all students.

Prior to the Expo, 58% of the male students planned to attend a four-year college/university. There was minimal change to after-graduation plans after the Expo with 56% still planning to attend a four-year college/university. Plans for male students across all options are reported in Figure 9. Prior to the Expo, 74% of the female students planned to attend a four-year college/university. There was minimal change after the Expo to after-graduation plans with 71% still planning to attend a four-year college/university. Plans for female students are reported in Figure 6.



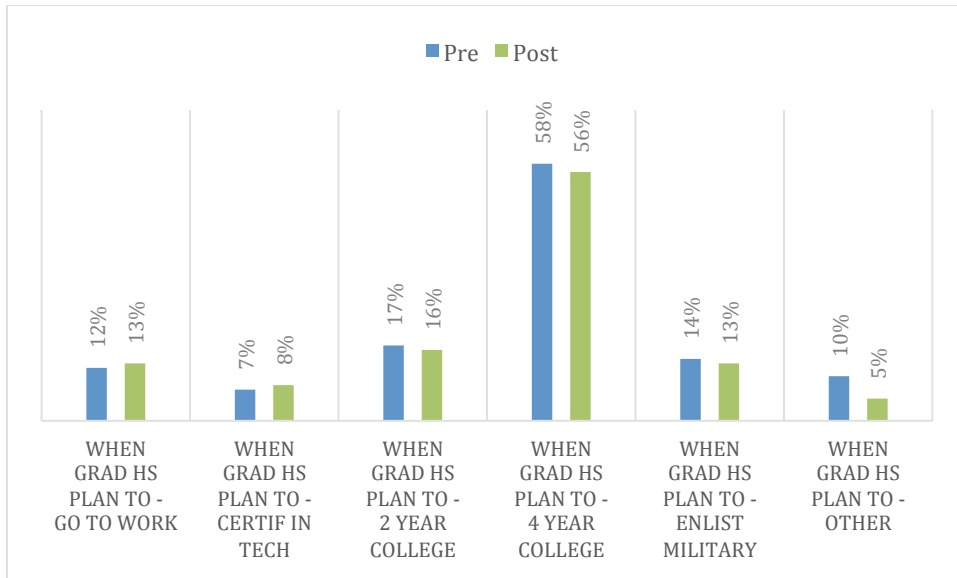


Figure 5. Male students' pre- and post-after-graduation plans.

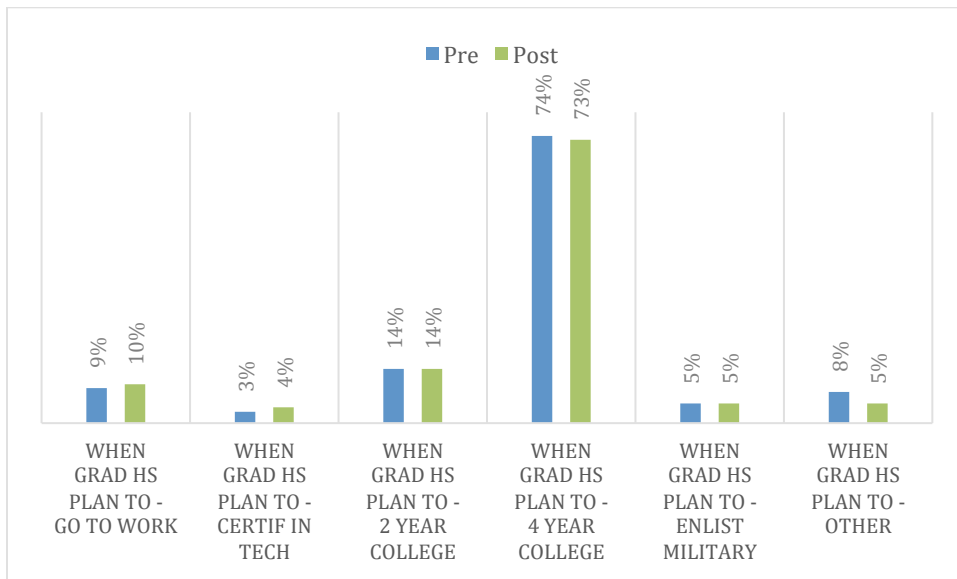


Figure 6. Female students' pre- and post after graduation plans.

Grade-level differences, overall and by gender convey a fairly stable picture of after-graduation plans as has been presented. By and large, students hope to attend a 4-year college upon graduation. However, two slight shifts in plans might be of interest for further

exploration. The first is that as students advance in the high school grade levels, the 2-year college option is identified more frequently. The second is the fact that, as male students advance into high school, the military becomes more of an after-graduation option than early identified. Because of the stability of the data, the histograms for the after-graduation plans separated by grade-level, overall and by gender, are reported in Appendix D.

High-interest Expo activities. Prior to the Expo, the activities that were identified as of most interest were SWAT Vehicle Gear Demo 44%, Diet Coke & Mentos Eruption 40%, Self-Driving RC Cars 41%, X-Ray Vision 33%.

Male participants identified SWAT Vehicle Gear Demo (56%), Diet Coke & Mentos Eruption (41%), Self-Driving RC Cars (50%), and X-Ray Vision (39%) as the activities they wanted to try. Female participants indicated the following as their favorite activities to try: Finger Printing & Evidence Collection (56%), Hair Designing (63%), Logo Design (34%), and Nursing with Simulations (35%).

Southern Virginia job prospects. Prior to Expo activities, 59% of the students believed that there is a good job in Southern Virginia. Following the activities, the number of students who believe there is a good job in Southwest Virginia increased to 63%.

Sixty percent of male participants believed that there was a good job in Southern VA prior to completing activities. Following the activities, 67% of male participants believed there is a good job in Southern VA. Fifty-four percent of female participants believed there was a good job in Southern VA prior to completing activities. This number increased appreciably to 62% following the activities. See Figure 7 for the pre- and post-Expo comparisons for all students, then separated out by male and female students.

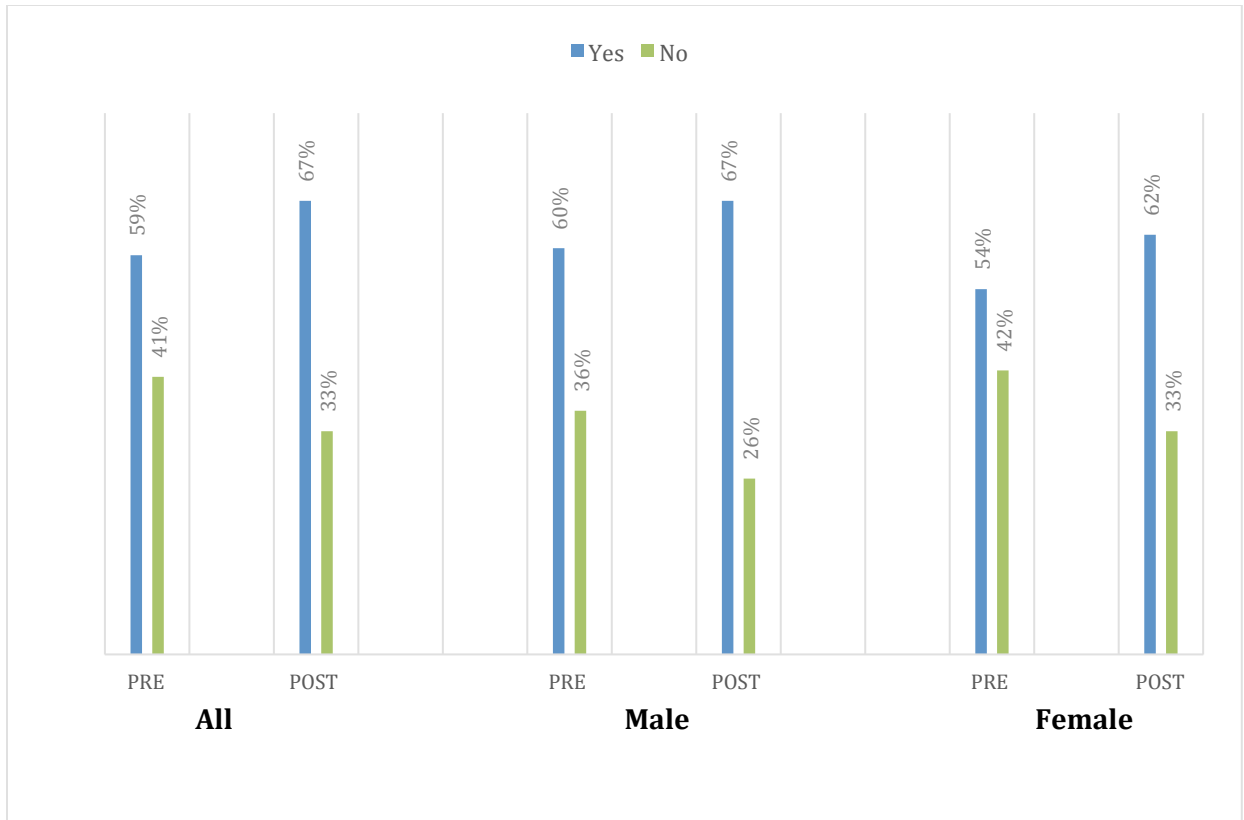


Figure 7. Students' perceptions of potential for good jobs in Southern Virginia, overall and by gender.

Expo evaluation. When asked if they completed most/at least half of the activities they initially selected, 3,107 students (93%) responded. Eighty-one percent reported that they did complete most of their selected activities. Of the 1357 male students, 80% reported completing most of their selected activities. Of the 1607 female students, 82% of the female students completed most of their selected activities.

The students who did not complete most of the activities that were planned indicated the following: 11% said that the sites were too busy, 9% said that they spent all their time on 1 or 2 activities, and 17% said that they found another activity to be more interesting.

## **Crew Members**

Forty-eight crew members completed an evaluation survey that also asked about interest in additional career awareness activities. Regarding evaluation of the 2015 Career Expo, fifty percent of the crew members participated on both days. The average number of hours served at the Expo were 9.125. Forty-six percent of this year's crew members also participated last year. Overall, 71% of crew members felt that the event was extremely well organized.

When asked to self-assess the quality of the Expo activities they provided, 38% of the crew members believed the activity was of high-quality, with 33% believing they delivered a quality activity and only 15% believing their activity needs improvement. Looking ahead to next year, 77% of crew members plan to attend the 2016 Career Expo. Forty percent already have their activities planned for the upcoming year, with 29% not yet planned. In regards to recruitment of employees, 49% of the crew members do not plan to recruit, compared to 21% who plan to recruit.

In addition the quantitative feedback, crew members offered a range of qualitative comments for individual survey questions related to favorite experience, one thing that they would change, recommended improvements to the events, improvements to their activity, suggestions for community engagement and their overall perception of the event. Above all, the participants cited their enjoyment of seeing the students, citing the student's enthusiasm and excitement for the activities, as their favorite experience. Crew members also appreciated the students' engagement and connection to the work.

Three overarching themes emerged out of the participants' responses to changing one thing about the Expo: length of time, Expo logistics, and crew member requests. Crew members requested more time between zones for the students offering suggestions. The suggestions included filtering students by interest, having smaller groups and requesting teacher assistance to move students along. One crew member mentioned the lunch tent, stating that the students were in the tent too long and there were too many students in the tent at one time.

Crew members also discussed logistical changes they would like to see. They would like a schedule prior to the event outlining breaks and lunch and improved communication (e.g., greeting inside, updates as groups left, expectations for the day). Overwhelmingly, participants would like to move all of the "noisy vendors" together. Participants stated that they could not hear the students nor could the students hear them. The last theme was general requests including: time to visit other vendors, have soft drinks as well as coffee, extended time for lunch, and materials for the activities (e.g., boards for under the table, bungie cords).

The event improvements were similar to the aforementioned comments. Participants cited most frequently crowding of the zones, more time for the students, and better signage for the students to see from a distance. One participant recommended that the Expo be extended to a three-day event instead of two. Again, participants mentioned the noisy vendors requesting for them to be moved to an isolated location together.

Participants offered a number of ways to improve their activities. The participants plan to have more varied activities, visual ideas, interactive examples, technology enhanced activities and more realistic activities.

Crew members' responses to community engagement emerged two identifiable themes (i.e., Communication and Including Others) and a general "other" category. Participants' recommendations for communication and community engagement included: presentations for employers, school board members, and community public broadcast networks. Participants also recommended increasing advertisement to include mailers home and social media. Also, participants recommended that the Expo be advertised earlier in the year and more publicly. Participants also suggested involving others such as parent participation, opening the event to the community, holding the Expo on a Saturday or moving the event to a more centralized location. Other recommendations for community engagement are: increase teacher engagement, activities for different age groups, and breakfast the second day. In conclusion, the participants stated that the Career Expo was extremely well organized and interacting with students was their favorite experience.

The questions related to additional career awareness activities offered ideas for further school/industry collaborations. Crew members' interest in each activity were as follows:

- Host a facility tour: Yes (52%), No (13%), Don't Know (2%)
- Host a "Bring a child to work" day: Yes (15%), No (21%), Don't Know (48%)
- Serve as a guest speaker in a school: Yes (56%), No (6%), Don't Know (23%)
- Design real-world problems to be used in the schools: Yes (31%), No (15%), Don't Know (23%)
- Mentor students: Yes (23%), No (38%), Don't Know (50%)
- Provide externships: Yes (17%), No (21%), Don't Know (46%)
- Provide internships: Yes (46%), No (19%), Don't Know (19%)

- Provide on-the-job training: Yes (25%), No (23%), Don't Know (19%)
- Provide apprenticeships: Yes (4%), No (38%), Don't Know (42%)

### **School Representatives**

Thirty school representatives provided feedback on the 2015 Career Expo. Respondents were first asked about the extent of their participation in the Expo. All of the respondents chaperoned the event. Sixty-three percent of school representatives helped prepare students before the Expo. Forty-three percent of school representatives helped students relate their experience to their Academic & Career plans. Seventeen percent of school representatives served as the primary school coordinator/organizer for the event.

Overall, the school representatives were very pleased with the 2015 Expo. Seventy-three percent of school representatives indicated that the event was extremely well organized, with 20% indicating that it was somewhat organized. Fifty percent indicated that the activities were high quality and 40% indicated that they were quality activities.

When asked how knowledgeable they were about/prepared for the Expo leading up to the event, 47% indicated they were adequately prepared, 30% very prepared, and 23% somewhat prepared. School representatives also indicated that 77% of their students received the booklet several days before the event while 23% received the booklet the day of. Fifty-seven percent completed the book activity or a supplemental career activity while 17% did not. Sixty-six percent used the book several days before the event, 17% the day of and 17% did not use the booklet. Those who did not use the booklet indicated that they did not receive it, did not have or teach the students, or the school counselor worked with the participating students. School representatives were asked how far in advance did they use the booklet, 20% used the

book approximately one week before the event, 10% the day of, 6% did not, and 3% used the booklet approximately two weeks before the event.

School representatives also responded to the following: suggestions for improving the booklet, favorite experience, one thing that they would change, recommended improvements to the events, improvements to their activity, suggestions for community engagement and their overall perception of the event.

School representatives provided a number of suggestions for improving the booklet and its usefulness to students. Some of the provided suggestions were providing a brief description or explanation of the topics, include a project based learning activity or have students fill out a sample job application or resume. School representatives also provided suggestions for resources to better prepare, including VA Wizard training for school counselors, a video to show students what to expect, or online sources to use prior to the event.

School representatives indicated the following as their favorite experiences: the student engagement, the hands on activities, and the careers represented. School representatives were also asked about one thing they would change and future recommendations for organization and activities. A number of school representatives indicated that they would like to see students given more time at each station or a longer event. School representatives also provided recommendations for the end of the Expo, allowing students time to fill out the after Expo portion of the work order, providing seats for students to fill out information as well as water. School representatives' recommendations for future events were more hands-on activities, and activities related to technology, music and game systems. Lastly, school representatives provided suggestions for engaging the broader community that included



outreach efforts, parent involvement, and a video tour of the event for schools to show students. Again, school representatives felt that the Expo was a wonderful event that was organized, informative and helpful.

School representatives were also asked a number of additional questions related to their interest in possible career awareness opportunities. School representatives were asked about their interest in:

- A local educator industry tour: Yes (57%), No (27%)
- Arranging a facility/industry tour: Yes (37%), No (50%)
- Having an employer/employee as a guest speaker in their classroom: Yes (60%), No (23%), and
- Having a local company to provide real world problems: Yes (57%), No (27%).

## **Volunteers**

Eighteen volunteers offered feedback on the 2015 Career Expo. Sixty-one percent of volunteers attended the Expo both days. The average number of hours served at the Expo was 7. The volunteers served in the following areas: bus (33%), tent (39%), work zone (33%), lunch (17%), closing (15%), crew member check-in (22%) or relief (15%). Thirty-nine percent of volunteers (n=6) were “repeats” participating in the 2014 Career Expo.

Overall, 95% of volunteers felt that the event was extremely well organized. When asked if there were enough volunteers, 78% of the respondents indicated “Yes”, with the others suggesting that 4-6 volunteers were needed per work zone. Eighty-three percent of volunteers indicated that they would participate as a volunteer in the 2016 Career Expo, with 13%

indicating that they would serve as a volunteer coordinator to help recruit others. Seventy-two percent of the volunteers declined the offer to participate as a crew member.

Volunteers also responded to the following: suggestions for improving the booklet, favorite experience, one thing that they would change, recommended improvements to the events, improvements to their activity, suggestions for community engagement and their overall perception of the event.

Volunteers enjoyed the exhibits and getting to know each other. The majority of volunteers enjoyed interacting with the students, encouraging them and helping them to find their interests. Volunteers also enjoyed seeing the students engaged, interested and excited. One volunteer stated, "Seeing them come to this realization and understanding that they can stay local and have a good job is what this event is all about."

When asked about one thing that they would change about the Expo, volunteers provide a number of suggestions: communication devices (for emergencies, duty assignment changes), a one-minute buzzard warning for students, a volunteer schedule, and an easy to find first aid area. Volunteers provided similar recommendations to improve organization; a two-minute window to reset zones, directional signs that are clear and large, and to provide information to the students before they are released off the bus. With regards to community engagement volunteers recommended a slideshow or video advertisement for various stakeholders, parental engagement, an evening event open to the public, and inviting someone from the fashion industry (cotton). Overall, volunteers thought the event was excellent and well organized.

Volunteers were also asked questions related to services their company can offer.

Volunteers' responses were as follows:

- Host a facility tour: Yes (33%), Don't Know (11%), and Not Applicable (39%)
- Host a "Bring your child to work day:" Yes (5%), No (17%), Don't Know (28%), and Not Applicable (33%)
- Provide employees to visit schools as guest speakers: Yes (50%), Not Applicable (28%).
- Design real-world problems: Yes (22%), Don't Know (28%), and Not Applicable (33%)
- Mentor students: Yes (28%), Don't Know (22%), Not Applicable (33%)
- Provide externships: Yes (11%), No (5%), Don't Know (22%), Not Applicable (44%)
- Provide internships: Yes (22%), No (11%), Don't Know, Not Applicable (39%)
- Provide apprenticeships: Yes (5%), No (11%), Don't Know (22%), Not Applicable (44%)
- Provide on-the-job training employment: Yes (17%), No or Don't Know (11%), Not Applicable (44%).

## **Discussion**

The findings revealed by the survey data and Career Expo Planning Committee minutes provide important observations for further discussion. Also, observations by the Expo Planning Committee and us, as the evaluation team, about the survey/data collection process and instrument are offered.

First, we offer three observations based on student data findings, then some comments related to the survey data from the crew members, school representatives, and volunteers. Clearly, the Expo provides an important opportunity for students to learn more about future

careers and the types of careers that can be found in Southern Virginia. The data revealed that students changed their perceptions of the promise of good jobs in their home region, and learned more about the opportunities available for them in their own communities. As such, a key goal of the Expo has been met.

Second, students' after-graduation plans primarily focused on attending 4-year colleges and universities, clearly aligning advanced career cluster interests with the necessary level of education. And, if they can match those interests and degree options to the types of jobs available in Southern Virginia, then the region has a good chance to keep promising talent at home.

Third, the high-interest Expo activities may not be truly indicative of career interest, but more aligned with curiosity and novelty. Students are asked to select the activities prior to the Expo, so they may not know exactly what they will learn. Also, based on commentary across all participants, the activity itself may not be truly reflective of the overall nature of the job that is be showcased. That said, in a cursory review of the frequency with which students attended only those activities that aligned with their chosen clusters, we found that students varied in how they chose to spend the limited time at the Expo. Many participated in only those activities that aligned with career cluster interests. Many divided time between identified clusters and exploration of other possible areas of interest. Some did not participate in any activities that were related to the cluster preference. Further analysis of this information can yield more specific findings, but this does have implications for how students are oriented to the Expo in terms of purpose and strategy.

Shifting to the findings from the crew members', school representatives', and volunteers' surveys, actionable information for the Expo planners was evident. Overall, all groups attested to the value of the Expo, and are invested in its mission as well as success. Also, most of these participants want to figure out how to give students more time to explore and engage. The Planning Committee addressed this issue in their meetings, restricted by the time available on site for the students due to school schedule limitations. As such, the plan is to keep the existing format but reduce time from the introduction and exit sessions. Regarding the event logistics, the crew members, as well as the other groups, identified the noise from specific vendors impacted their ability to talk with students. Suggestions were made to organize the "noisy vendors" into a special area, affording the other crew members the opportunity to engage students more meaningfully. Communication about the Expo was also identified as critical, with helpful suggestions being offered. Finally, it was very important to acknowledge the fact that the vendors were reflective about their own activities and had already begun to improve them for next year's Expo.

The school representatives offered a number of important observations and suggestions that the Planning Committee took under advisement. Of particular importance is the need for the school personnel and students to have more information before they arrive at the Expo. The Planning Committee's offer to the schools for pre-Expo on-site visits is a good way to try to ensure that Expo participants arrive at the event, ready to engage with the crew members, optimizing their time and experience. The school representatives asked for more hands-on activities, thus echoing the crew members' observations and plans that are already in the making.

The volunteers also offered actionable suggestions for program improvement, primarily focusing on the logistics. Their inclusion of parents as an important possible group of future participants is worth considering. Finally, it is very important to note the number of volunteers who returned this year from last year's event, and the number who said they would return next year. Obviously, they are invested in the event and want to keep improving it for the future.

In addition to asking for feedback, crew members, school representatives, and school volunteers were asked about other career awareness and orientation activities might they want to either sponsor or participate in the future. Options included activities such as facility tours, guest speakers, internships, etc. The survey asked the crew members and volunteers to indicate whether their company or they would be willing to offer these additional career activities. The school representatives were asked if they would be interested in having the same list of additional opportunities available for their students. A comparison of the responses across group revealed interesting findings that merit further discussion (see Appendix E for the comparison chart).

In brief, facility tours, guest speakers, and internships were most frequently identified across all groups. There were some differences as the nature of the activities had more possible dimensions or took a great deal more individual time to do successfully (e.g., apprenticeships, design problems, mentorships). One suggestion would be to have a glossary of the definitions, expectations, and some examples so that the different groups would know the scope of each activity. Also, it makes sense to look closely at the data to match those who want to offer the specific activity with those who want it available.

## Recommendations

Based on the survey data and Expo Planning Committee findings and suggestions, the following recommendations are offered:

### Related to the Students

- As per the Planning Committee's conclusions, we also recommend site visits by the IALR personnel to the participating schools as orientations to the Expo experience. This will afford all school representatives and students to become more planful related to this event, and will solicit further buy-in and program sustainability. At this orientation, school representatives and students should receive a presentation on the Expo, as well as draft materials on activities, career clusters, general logistics including a map of the Expo layout.
- After the orientation visits, teachers and counselors should engage students in conversations and review of all materials, especially if there is a time delay between the IALR orientation and actual event.
- The Student Work Order should be revised. If it remains a paper-pencil instrument, response options should be more "forced-choice" and less open-ended. If the Work Order moves to an electronic delivery, this will streamline the design and data collection procedure.
- Completion of the pre-event survey should be completed prior to coming to the event, as close to the event as possible in order to save time upon arrival at the event. School representatives should collect the surveys if there is a time delay between pre-event

survey administration and the event, and redistribute on the way to the event so that the forms are not misplaced.

- The post-survey administration needs to be organized and monitored so that students complete the survey and actionable data are collected. The Expo Planning Committee has already taken steps to address this issue. It will create a more robust data set for future evaluations.
- The Expo Planning Committee should explore how to gather information from the students about the experience and their career planning once the students return to the schools. This will involve working with all of the participating schools, but may pay off in giving the students some reflective time to really take seriously this effort.
- Also, and as per the Expo Planning Committee's plan, a 6-month follow-up survey is recommended to again keep students' focus on the future, especially as they choose high school courses and pathways to their after-graduation plans.
- Overall, the above recommendations point to the need to create a more formalized timeline of activities and opportunities to engage the students, teachers, counselors, etc. so that the event becomes an integrated component of the schools' overall career development curriculum.

#### *Related to the Event*

- The crew members, school representatives, and volunteers offered a number of very helpful suggestions for the 2016 Career Expo. The Planning Committee has noted that future meetings will be held this summer. Identifying ways to include some of the very specific suggestions (e.g., signage) is recommended.



- Clearly the layout of the Expo activities has impacted the experience for all participants. Again, the Planning Committee will be working this summer to better organize the activities. This may become complex with also trying to organize activities in Zones. Feedback from vendors as to draft plans may help if problems emerge.
- Communication was also an issue. As per the Planning Committee meetings, there will be information sessions planned. It maybe helpful to ask key constituents to also help advertise and spread the word.
- Finally, the idea of increasing parent involvement was suggested. Possible ways that this might feasibly happen, maybe through school-based activities, might be explored.

*Related to the Other Possible Career Awareness Opportunities*

- The solicitation of other possible career awareness activities is laudable and important to increase the overall effort to meet Expo goals. Develop a data base of possible activities and match regional employers' interests along with school needs. Perhaps set up meetings for exploring opportunities, then supporting individual partnerships to flourish.
- Some coaching may be needed for employers to understand what is entailed in each activity, as well as scaffold their work with the school division to build programs that are based on each partner's needs, capabilities, and capacities.