Agronomic Crop Research Experience (ACRE) 2016 Summary Report

Program Overview

The Agronomic Crop Research Experience (ACRE) is a summer internship committed to providing a hands-on training experience to undergraduate students in a diversity of agronomic disciplines. Interns are placed in county offices throughout the state and work closely with local county educators and state specialists to support on-farm research and extension activities. The program is run through the Ohio State University Agronomic Crops Team with the three goals of training the next-generation of agronomists, empowering locally-directed on-farm research, and identifying solutions to critical agronomic issues in Ohio.

The primary responsibilities of the ACRE interns are to assist with crop scouting, field sample and data collection, data entry, as well as helping to organize extension field days and farmer trainings. Depending on the needs and the county, interns are exposed to a wide variety of extension and research activities. The summer internship starts with a 2-day orientation training and interns meet semi-regularly throughout the summer for additional trainings and field days.

2016 Interns in Ohio

In 2016 there were 8 ACRE interns placed throughout the state. Participating counties included: Fulton, Wood, Trumbull, Darke, Madison, Ross, Knox, and Wayne (see map). Typically, ACRE interns served several (2-3) additional counties adjacent to their hosting county.

2016 ACRE intern accomplishments:

- 15 state-wide research projects supported
- 66 county-based on-farm field trials in 20 counties supported
- Over 32,000 acres scouted or researched
- Over 600 farm visits
- Over 7 agronomic crops and 18 horticultural crops scouted or researched
Feedback on the program from 2016 ACRE Interns:

100% of interns surveyed anonymously
  - Would recommend the program to a friend
  - Said the program better prepared them for their career
  - Said the program was extremely hands-on as advertised
  - Said the program increased their desire to be a county extension educator

“This program gave me the opportunity to see what OSU Extension, OARDC, and other organizations had to offer to the public. I had known about Ag and Natural Resource agents, but I never knew the impact they could have in a county. I come from a county that did not have an ANR Educator, and I now know that we are missing out. I was able to interact with State specialist, who have a great depth and breadth of knowledge, but I was able to do so at a level that I could understand and educate others on.”

“Agriculture is at the forefront of technology and extension is doing everything it can to make sure that the technology is being used correctly... one of the biggest things I’ve learned from this program is the ability to sift through the recommendations of companies, and get down to the cold hard facts of what the farmer needs and why they need it.”

Feedback from 2016 OSU County Extension Educators:

“The ACRE internship program was excellent for our county. It me, as an ANR Educator, to offer a more comprehensive and relevant On Farm Research program that will serve the needs of our commodity farmers. The ACRE internship program did a great job of fostering collaborative research among OSU’s state specialists, county educators and the intern. This relationship will better allow Extension to serve the needs of clients and build more competent graduates in the future.”

“This opportunity provides a great basis for connection with interns (younger generation) with field specialist, new production practices, main campus and the county extension program.”

“As a result of the ACRE internship program, I have been able to double my in-county On Farm Research trials. These trials will, in turn, benefit state specialists and our farmer clientele. Additionally, the ACRE intern was invaluable at our regional summer field day.”

“This program has been a great addition to my extension program. During the growing season the extra set of hands is very helpful to cover research projects and more. These interns want to work and learn, I’m not sure in the two years I have had an intern I have forced them reached their full potential. I believe they can do more than we sometimes give them credit.”