

**Abstract**

**Introduction:** While institutions of higher education provide the knowledge that students need to be successful, a degree only means so much in the employment market when all graduates' competitors also have a similar degree<sup>2</sup>. To increase the marketability of a graduate in regard to employment, it is suggested that they become involved in an extracurricular activity that helps them to grow professionally.

**Methods:** In an effort to create a space where students start career/professional development, a list of possible achievements were made for the F.A.N. Club. These included: volunteer, fundraise, raise awareness, promote healthy, and sustainable lifestyle choices amongst peers

**Results:** There has not been enough time to measure academic or career development since the club's establishment; however, of the members who expressed interest about 15% of them are active members.

**Discussion:** In the future, it is expected that the students who are involved in the F.A.N. Club will report a higher GPA, and that they feel better prepared to succeed in their professions.

**Methods**

- There are 3 main steps to creating a successful club
1. Assess who the club is for, and the main things that can be achieved through the club.
  2. Reach out to possible interested parties
  3. Create a system that is sustainable after the first generation of club members have left the university.



**Discussion & Conclusions**

While it is unrealistic to expect that every graduate from the F.A.N Club will have a higher GPA, they all will be better prepared to move toward their chosen careers. Some students might be able to thrive in a professional setting; however, some may have other things that make them a valuable asset to employers in the future. Through their involvement in this Club, it is expected that they will explore different facets of their future professions, and find something that they are passionate about. They may begin to develop the morals and ethics that they will have as a healthcare provider, and develop respect of the ways in which people decide to live their lives, diet wise.

**Introduction**

Career development seldom starts when an individual reaches adulthood, as we mature, we begin to develop talents, or special interests that will someday prove to be useful in a professional environment<sup>1</sup>. College students are not adequately prepared for professional environments because they focus on mainly receiving a degree. However, they forget that when they go to an interview that their competition will have the same degree<sup>2</sup>. Student involvement increases the development psychosocial, leadership, organization, and planning skills. The development of these skills is even more prominent in students involved in organizations that focus particularly on education, cultural participation, lifestyle, planning, or organization. With the Nutrition and Foods program being so new at NAU, it seemed only natural that there should be a group of students who pioneer the creation of an organization where like minded students can interact. With these outcomes and goals in mind, the Food and Nutrition (F.A.N.) Club was created.

	URMP (n=50)		Control Group (n=50)	
GPA Status	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
Junior GPA	2.586	1.5-3.5	2.591	1.5-3.5
Graduation GPA	3.025	2.0-3.4	2.632	2.0-3.4
GPA improvement	0.439	-0.63-1.6	.041	-0.82-0.88

**Table 1.** "Comparison of wildlife students in the undergraduate research mentor program (URMP) and randomly selected non-program"<sup>2</sup>.

**Results**

With the F.A.N. Club being so new, its members are focusing primarily on creating a sustainable system with a set agenda of responsibilities that it holds on campus. The F.A.N. Club has 30 people on its email list with this number set to increase by the end of the 2018 spring semester. Of those 30 members, about 30% of them are consistently active. Encouraging students to remain active and motivated is one of the main trials of ensuring the Clubs sustainability, as well as promoting leadership and responsibility in the Club to each member. However, through trial and error the Club is discovering in what ways they will promote health whilst succeeding in academics as well.

The F.A.N. Club's mission is focused on improving campus and community health with food by promoting healthy and sustainable lifestyle options. Its main projects include volunteering with Northern Arizona Fit Kids, the Arizona Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, and providing students at the University with the tools to lead a healthy food lifestyle. In preparation for the end of the semester, the Club will start it's first finals week meal plan guide to help students fuel themselves properly for optimal brain health. This project will not only help the students in the University community, but also the students in the Club. The experiences that students will gain through the Club will prepare them to move towards their professional careers with confidence.

**This project was supported by the College of Health and Human Services, the Nutrition and Foods program & the Eric M. Lehrman 2015 Trust.**



**Student members of the F.A.N. Club, 2018**

**References**

1. Hirschi, A., Niles, S. G., & Akos, P. (2011). Engagement in adolescent career preparation: Social support, personality and the development of choice decidedness and congruence. *Journal of Adolescence*, 34(1), 173-182. doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2009.12.009
2. Kinkel, D. H., & Henke, S. E. (2006). Impact of Undergraduate Research on academic performance, Educational Planning, and Career Development. *Journal of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Education*, 35, 194-201.

**Contact Information**

Tiffany Grant  
Email: tag293@nau.edu