Title: Students Perceptions of Urban Forestry as a Career Path: Preliminary Results

Urban forestry is an evolving profession distinct from arboriculture or traditional forestry. It is not well-understood by the public or by other professionals that share responsibility for managing the urban environment. At the same time, demand for the unique expertise of urban foresters is growing as cities increasingly manage their green infrastructure. Many agencies and organizations are encountering a shortage of entry-level urban foresters, which has led to calls for a comprehensive national strategy to recruit college students into the profession. A successful recruitment strategy must be based on an understanding of student demographics and their beliefs about career choice. We conducted a national study of college students in which we showed them a 3-minute video about urban forestry and gave them a survey asking about their perception of urban forestry as a career path, the influence of professional societies on their career decisions (e.g., individual certifications, degree accreditations), and their demographics, values, and family background and expectations. Survey data are being analyzed to better understand how students make career choices and to identify characteristics of students who show an affinity for urban forestry. Preliminary results show few students have prior knowledge of urban forestry, but show moderate interest in it as a career choice after initial exposure by the video. Female students were more likely to recommend it to a loved one than to consider it for themselves. Urban and rural students aligned more closely to each other in their personal values than with suburban students.