

**2015
AWARD
WINNER**

EXCELLENCE IN ACTION

**Agricultural, Food &
Natural Resources**

CAREER CLUSTER



BACKGROUND

When the **Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences (CHSAS)** in Chicago, Illinois opened in 1985, it was only the second urban agriculture-focused school in the nation. The vision of the founders was to address the gap that existed in the agriculture industry due to the lack of interested and qualified career personnel from urban areas. Today, CHSAS offers students in Chicago the opportunity to become college and career ready by enrolling in a comprehensive high school with a unique focus on agricultural knowledge and skills.

The agriculture program of study began in 1994 and includes career studies in six areas: Agricultural Education, Agricultural Finance, Agricultural Mechanics, Animal Science, Food Science and Horticulture. As a comprehensive high school, all students take college preparatory courses in math, English, science, and social studies along with other required classes such as art and physical education. In addition to these core courses, students take four years of agriculture sciences, concentrating on a specific pathway during their junior and senior years. The curriculum is structured so that college prep and career prep go hand in hand and are emphasized equally as students progress throughout high school. One result: **51 percent of CHSAS students are “ready for college coursework”** compared to the district average of 27 percent.

About Chicago High School for Agricultural Science Students

Number of students	693
Male: Female ratio	51% : 49%
Minority students	69%
Low-income students	53%
Students with Disabilities	9%

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREERS

CHSAS is working to incorporate industry-recognized credentials in all their pathways, often a challenge in Agriculture programs of study. Currently, all sophomores take the OSHA General Industry Certification, all students in Agricultural Mechanics complete the OSHA Construction Certification, all Food Science students take the Illinois Department of Health Certificate in Food Sanitation, and all Horticulture students complete the Pesticide Applicator’s License. CHSAS is currently seeking relevant industry certifications for their other pathways.



Experiential learning is also central to this program of study, with all students participating in work-based learning on-campus for two weeks during the summer before their sophomore year, and all juniors and seniors required to complete job shadow experiences associated with their agricultural pathways.

Through such experiences, students are able to readily see the connections between academic content and agricultural applications. They are responsible for constructing sound facilities, taking care of animals, ensuring that plants get watered, controlling for quality products and more. The level of responsibility causes students to fully invest themselves in the program of study.

PARTNERSHIPS KEY TO SUCCESS

Eli's Cheesecake Company has been a gold standard for meaningful partnerships for the program of study. Not only does the CEO sit on the advisory board, but they also provide networking opportunities, offer 12 students internships every summer, award scholarships to graduating seniors who will pursue postsecondary studies in agriculture and host students for job shadowing each year. NuFarm and Kraft Foods also serve as key partners through curriculum support, work-based learning experiences and scholarships.



Educational partnerships are also of the utmost importance, especially the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences (ACES). The college provides summer internship programs for students to work alongside university researchers, rotating visits with all departments in ACES, targeted tours for juniors and accepted seniors, an open house at CHSAS for prospective students, and scholarships. Their faculty is heavily engaged, with two deans and one professor serving on the CHSAS Advisory Board. Wilbur Wright Community College and a number of four-year colleges provide professional development for teachers, articulated credit for students, and tailored college tours and summer internships.

STUDENT SUCCESS BY THE NUMBERS

So what does this all mean? CHSAS puts students on a path to success, graduating 93 percent of students, with the majority enrolling in college, often in the agriculture field of study.

