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## EDUCATION

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### Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, Horticulture Business Concentration

May 2020

Texas State University, College of Applied Arts, San Marcos, TX; GPA: 3.8 (Dean's List Honors)

Relevant Coursework:

∅ Soil Science I & II ♦ Companion Planting (Independent Study) ♦ Plant Propagation

### Associate of Science in Physics

December 2017

Houston Community College, Houston, TX; GPA: 3.75 (Dean's List Honors)

Relevant Coursework:

∅ Physics I & II ♦ Chemistry I & II ♦ Spanish I & II

## RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

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### Intern Reference: Sally Herbert (571) 238-9675

July 2019

Altius Farms, *Denver, CO*

50 hours/week

- ∅ Executed all stages of greenhouse production for a business that services over 30 local markets and restaurants
- ∅ Expanded agricultural knowledge of more than 15 varieties of leafy greens

### Server / Trainer Reference: Farzan Fatehi (281) 222-3089

May 2016 – Present

Uchi, *Austin, TX* / *Houston, TX*

40 hours/week

- ∅ Promoted to server after 3 months as a service assistant, a process that usually takes 6+ months
- ∅ Trained 15 new employees for service assistant positions; mentored 5 employees throughout their server training
- ∅ Finetuned knowledge of wine, sake, and spirits through attending monthly continuing education classes
- ∅ Formed relationships with local farmers supplying the restaurant; developed my knowledge of exotic and heirloom crops

### Bartender / Trainer / Floor Manager Reference: Helen McIntyre (215) 206-5428

January 2011 – April 2016

Hillstone Restaurant Group, *Santa Barbara, CA* / *Houston, TX*

50 hours/week

- ∅ Promoted to bartender in under a year, a position usually held by the most trusted veteran servers
- ∅ 1 of 10 selected from 200+ candidates to move to California to help open a new concept for the company
- ∅ Trained 20+ floor staff for new restaurant; promoted to floor manager 6 months after opening

## ACTIVITIES and INVOLVEMENT

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### Volunteer, TNLA Expo, San Antonio, TX

August 2019

- 8 hours – worked to set up plant and ceramics booths for nursery expo

### Stage, Hi-Fi Mycology, Austin, TX

June 2019

- 20 hours – assisted in inoculation, harvest, and packing of 7 different mushroom varieties

### Continuing Education, MycoAlliance, Austin, TX

February 2018 - October 2018

- Attended several workshops and seminars on Mycology and mushroom cultivation

### Introductory Sommelier, Houston, TX

April 2018

- Pursuing Certified Sommelier Credentials by April 2020

### Volunteer, Finca Tres Robles, Houston, TX

September 2016 – October 2017

- 5 hrs/ week – executed harvesting, packaging, and distribution of CSA produce

## AWARDS and SKILLS

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- ∅ Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society Member ♦ Serve Safe & TABC Certified ♦ Phi Sigma Pi Honor Fraternity Member
- ∅ Pi Alpha Xi Horticulture Honor Society President ♦ Accounting Star Award Recipient

What are the factors that affect how consumers purchase food products.

## **PROJECT PROPOSAL:**

Agriculture and food industries contribute over a trillion dollars to the U.S. gross domestic product annually, with food stores and food service accounting for over half of that statistic (xxx). On average, American consumers allocate 13% of their expenditures toward food and food products (xxx). The data overwhelmingly presents the agriculture industry as an integral part of the U.S. economy, however, there exists a threat to this industry. Foodborne illness affects 48 million Americans every year to the tune of 51 billion dollars in economic losses (xxx). With agriculture and food contributing so much to the U.S. economy, it is imperative for producers to understand the factors that go into consumer purchasing behavior and the attitudes and knowledge the consumer holds in regard to foodborne illness.

The research regarding the extrinsic factors that affect consumer food purchases are pretty well defined, but very little research has been done regarding the intrinsic factors. In a 2018 survey on Food & Health done by the International Food Information Council Foundation they list the top factors consumers consider when purchasing food. Taste is the number one factor, followed by price, healthfulness, convenience, and lastly sustainability (xxx). This information is consistent with a similar study published by the USDA in which they list the top factors as time constraints, prices, the food environment, and financial resources (xxx). There are numerous sources that include some combination of taste preference, price, convenience, and healthfulness but none of these sources discuss the probable impacts of intrinsic factors such as brand loyalty, consumer trust, and food safety concerns. Anecdotal evidence suggests that brand loyalty may be more important than consumers' concern for food safety as is evident with the Blue Bell ice cream listeria outbreak. After three people died due to contaminated product, the nation's third largest ice cream company was forced to recall all of its products and rely on a 1.25 million dollar private investor loan to keep the business from going under (xxx). However, less than two years after the recall, Blue Bell ice creams returned to the shelves and sales seemed to be close to pre-outbreak numbers (xxx). This example points towards the need for research regarding the extent food safety plays into consumers' decisions when purchasing food.

In the same survey on Food & Health done by the International Food Information Council Foundation, participants listed foodborne illness as their top food safety concern (xxx). Surely in response to this growing concern, the FDA has introduced the Food Safety Modernization Act aimed at transforming the way companies are required to prevent foodborne illness outbreaks, but very little has been done by the government or private food companies in order to educate the public on foodborne illness and its causes. A survey released by the FDA highlights the utter



scenarios regarding how they choose what they buy. With the experiment lasting several hours, the participants will be compensated for their time.

Our research study is to determine a baseline  the factors that consumers consider when buying food products. With the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) giving so much authority to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), a baseline is needed in order to provide future researchers with the ability to study buying habits as well as how to market to customers.

**PROJECT TIMELINE:**

Fall 2019: Begin planning the design of the economic experiment that determines how students from Farm Management and Quantitative Methods classes (AG3352 and AG3317) will react to food safety scares.

Spring 2020: Experiment sessions will be conducted on Texas State campus and carried out by Dr. Sudhakaran and his research team.

Summer 2020: The data from the experiment will be used to prepare a data analysis for Dr. Sudhakaran's future research.

**BUDGET NARRATIVE:**

Study Participants- \$1,000 will be given to a total of 100 participants (25 participants in 4 cities each at a rate of \$10)

4 sessions with 25 students at \$10 each

**PROJECT TIMELINE:**

Fall 2019	Design consumer survey questions and procedure. Conduct consumer surveys in Austin, Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston.
Spring 2020	Secondary experiment sessions will be conducted on Texas State University campus and carried out by Dr. Sudhakaran and a group of graduate and undergraduate researchers.
Summer 2020	Data from the surveys and experiment will be used to prepare a data analysis for Dr. Sudhakaran's research.

**BUDGET NARRATIVE:**

Survey Participants Incentive - \$10 will be given to a total of 100 participants (25 participants in 4 cities for a total of \$1,000)

4 sessions with 25 students at \$10 each