

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
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OBSERVING THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA ASTRONOMY CLUB

Abstract

The University of Arizona Astronomy Club creates a unique environment for undergraduates to accomplish goals early in their academic career. The club provides research opportunities with advisors, graduate students, and projects organized by fellow undergraduates. Undergraduates that work side-by-side develop strong working relationships, which keeps students interested in astronomy and enables them to thrive in their studies and research. Club members are encouraged to attend and present their research at professional conferences where they are exposed early to the scientific research community, learn about internship and REU opportunities, and get information about graduate programs. We want to ensure undergraduates are given enough opportunities to participate in research to aid in graduate school and their future careers. Now that the club has been active for several years, we are interested to see what former students have achieved after their graduation to help identify the strengths, weaknesses, and trends in club activity. This is a follow-up of the professional development the club has worked hard to achieve over the past several years. Here we quantify how many former students starting working in the field immediately after graduation, how many left the field, and how many have gone to graduate school and what impact being a member of the club had on that decision. Astronomy Club has had a positive impact on its members, the Department of Astronomy, and the Southern Arizona community for the past seven years. The club continues to strive to improve undergraduate retention and prepare students for their future careers.