

CALS CAREERS

From Fields to Frontlines: How CALS Careers Are Evolving



Kristina Vack, CALS Director of Career Services

CALS has long been defined by its deep connection to agriculture, food systems, and natural resources. Those roots remain strong. At the same time, the career paths of CALS graduates over the last 15 years tell an important story of growth and evolution—a story that increasingly includes healthcare and the life sciences.

Data from recent graduating classes show that healthcare has become the leading employment destination for CALS students, representing roughly 13–26% of graduates each year since 2016. Today’s alumni are physicians, physician assistants, veterinarians, nurses, registered dietitians, and scientists working at organizations such as UW Health, Mayo Clinic, Exact Sciences, and the Medical College of Wisconsin. Among CALS alumni overall, roughly 80% of top employers fall within the healthcare and health industry.

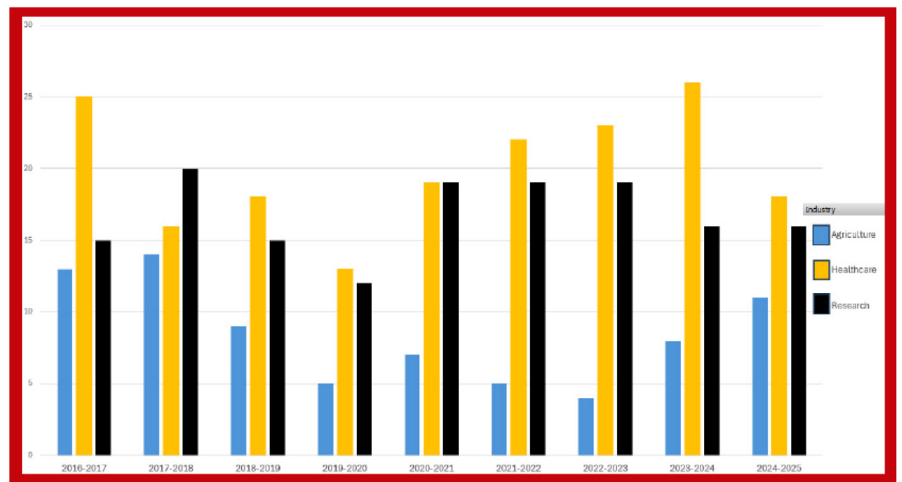
About one-third of CALS graduates report continuing directly into graduate or professional school, most commonly in medicine, veterinary medicine, nutrition, public health, dentistry, nursing, and related life science fields. Others enter clinical, research, or administrative healthcare roles as part of a gap-year plan that builds experience while keeping long-term graduate school goals in view.

This evolution reflects not a change in what CALS is, but where graduates are choosing to apply what they learn here. CALS has always encompassed both agricultural and life sciences, grounded in systems thinking, science-based decision-making, and a strong commitment to the public good. Today’s students are increasingly taking those same core competencies into healthcare and health-related fields—addressing complex challenges in human and animal health, biomedical research, nutrition, and public health. Whether graduates work in agriculture, healthcare, or research, they are applying a CALS way of thinking to solve interconnected problems that matter deeply to society.

CALS Career Services plays a critical role in helping students navigate this changing landscape. Students have access to one-on-one career advising, employer connections through networking events and on campus recruiting, as well as career development tools such as Handshake for jobs and internships,

BigInterview for interview preparation, and BigResume for resume feedback. Career Services also partners with employers and alumni to create experiential learning opportunities that connect classroom learning to real-world impact.

The growing presence of healthcare in CALS outcomes highlights how broadly a CALS degree can be applied—and how future generations are carrying forward the Wisconsin Idea in new and vital ways.



Top Career Pathways for CALS Alumni

Healthcare and the health industry represent the dominant employment sector for CALS alumni. **80% of top alumni employers are in the Healthcare & Health Industry.**

Healthcare & Health Industry	Other Industries