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Volume 56
Number 8

THEME — SOEP: Placement Programs

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EDITOR'S PAGE

Examining Facts to Frame SOEP Philosophy

BY LARRY E. MILLER, EDITOR
(Dr. Miller is a Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education at The Ohio State University.)

The type of student enrolling in vocational agriculture is changing. "Oh, that is not news," you say. Professionals have been aware of these changes particularly since the 1963 Vocational Education Act. We now have many students that are not from farms, many students that do not have traditional SOE programs, many that do not intend to pursue careers in agriculture; many who are not FFA members. Williams (1983) noted that a revival was needed in SOEP and that a workshop was held in 1982 to begin the evangelism. Plans for a second meeting are already underway.

The Problem

Why is there a problem? What is the problem? These questions should encourage the profession to investigate the evidence and facts we have accrued and consider our policies related to SOEP. McCracken (1983) observed that the quantity and quality of SOEP will decline unless alternatives are found for students that are too young for placement.

A study in the Southern Region revealed that 40 percent of the students did not have a SOE program each year they were enrolled (Iverson, 1980). A New York study (Berkey and Sutphin, 1983) showed that one-fourth of the programs did not have written SOEP plans for students, half of the programs had freshmen students with SOEP's; and, of the students involved with placement, only 27.6 percent had more than 300 hours of experience. In Florida (Arrington and Price, 1983), 68 percent of the students had had SOEP for one year out of four, but only 42 percent had had SOEP for four years; and 24 percent of the students surveyed had been involved in placement programs.

The evidence continues to accumulate which reveals that many programs are not fully utilizing SOEP and many students are not becoming involved. Some evidence is contradictory as Harris (1983) found in Areas I and II in Texas that 58 percent of the departments had 100 percent of the students with SOE programs and only 2.2 percent had less than 70 percent with SOE programs.

Teacher involvement is not as many would have it. Miller (1980), reporting on a North Carolina study, concluded that 42 percent of the teachers did not regularly visit students and expected only 58 percent of their students to have SOE programs. The New York study (Berkey and Sutphin, 1983) reported that 25 percent of the teachers did not make SOEP visits, only 55 percent of the students had had one visit, and about 26 percent, more than one visit. They further report that 41 percent of the teachers do not use SOEP in determining course grades. They also look at summer visitation and found that approximately 19 percent of the students had one visit, 30 percent more than one and 30 percent had no summer visits.

Arrington and Price (1983) found that one-third of the seniors they studied in Florida did not have a SOEP visit in their senior year, 80 percent reported they maintained record books and 75 percent worked on the record books in class.

The Student

The student being served is not necessarily aiming for a career in the taxonomy area in which they are enrolled or in agriculture. In Florida, 90 percent of the students studied lived on a farm of less than 50 acres, only 2.6 percent intended to farm upon graduation but 30 percent were enrolled in production agriculture. Agriculture occupations other than farming were the goal of 13.9 percent of the students. This made a total of 16.5 percent intending to pursue agriculture careers immediately after graduation. Forty-five percent of the students intended to continue their education after high school; and, admittedly, some of these could be in agricultural areas. Only 50 percent had achieved the Chapter Farmer degree in FFA (Arrington and Price, 1983).

In a study in Ohio, 54 percent of the students in production agriculture, horticulture and agriculture mechanics reported that they lived on a farm, but 63 percent of those were less than 100 acres. The production agriculture students reported their first and second vocational choices, and 25 percent reported farming was their first choice and 16 percent as a second choice. Almost half of the vocational objectives of production agriculture students were not related to agriculture. Approximately the same percentage (50%) of the occupational objectives of the horticulture students were not related to agriculture, but only 15 percent of the agriculture mechanics students were unrelated. However, it was interesting to note that the highest proportion (53%) of the first choices of the agricultural mechanics students was to be a farmer (Gutheil, 1983).

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Examining Facts to Frame SOEP Philosophy

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Why is there a problem? The answer, while complex, seems to center around the fact that many students enrolled in vocational agriculture do not have an occupational or career objective in the field. When vocational agriculture was solely training present and prospective farmers, the objectives of SOE programs was ". . . to assist students in 'growing into farming'" (McCracken, 1983).

Sutphin (1981) found nearly 98 percent agreement among teachers, supervisors and teacher educators that production and non-production students should have SOE programs. The profession is obviously not consistently practicing what it preaches, although some variability exists.

Reflection

Perhaps a revival to enliven an evangelical spirit for SOEP is not all that is needed. We may need to examine our philosophy and practice. Students continue to enroll in vocational agriculture even if it is not congruent with their stated career goals. The program must be doing something right. Perhaps the students are learning things other than technical agriculture knowledge, e.g., learning how to solve problems, learning basic skills, learning avocational skills, *ad infinitum*.

The SOEP concept may need to be more responsive to the students in the program. The evidence from the study in the Southern Region and numerous other states seems clear in that lots of students are not engaged in SOE programs and actually do not have career objectives in agriculture. To expect every student to have a SOE program under those circumstances may not be reasonable or fair. Perhaps our policies should reflect this and the total profession might find it beneficial to reflect upon and redefine our philosophy.

Numerous proponents advocate the virtues of SOE programs for vocational students. I do not object to this position, but wish to note that, as documented, not all students enrolled in vocational agriculture are truly seeking careers in the profession. The paucity of SOE program involvement may reflect the reactions of teachers to these facts and the total profession may need to catch up with its teachers and students.

The Theme Editor for this issue was Dr. Michael F. Burnett, Assistant Professor of Agriculture Education at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803. The Editor gratefully acknowledges his contribution.

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The Cover

Parent involvement with the placement program is an important key to success. (Photo courtesy of Sue Register, University of Nebraska)

RESOURCES

Vocational instructors and program administrators can gain a clear understanding of the dynamics and essential purpose of the process of accrediting a course or program in Accrediting Occupational Training Programs, by Roland V. Stoodley, Jr., of New Hampshire Vocational-Technical College. In filling this knowledge and procedural gap for vocational educators, the monograph takes the reader through the three major steps in obtaining accreditation: (1) application, (2) institutional self-analysis, and (3) the on-site visit by the accrediting agency.

The monograph shows how self-regulation can be the most effective means of ensuring accreditation and continuing compliance with the accreditation standards and procedures. It examines the various kinds of accrediting agencies and their standards and ties these to the needs of vocational and technical programs. Recommendations for improving the current overall accreditation system are also offered.

You may order *Accrediting Occupational Training Programs* (IN 251 — $6.50), 79 pages, from The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, Publications Office, Box N, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210; 614/486-3655 or toll-free outside Ohio at 800/848-4815.

THEME

The Teacher As Initiator

By Larry D. Case

(Editor's Note: Mr. Case is Director of Agricultural Education, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102.)

Historically, supervised occupational experience programs have always been a major part of vocational agriculture instruction. Their purpose is to provide students with experience in situations and to carry technical information received through instruction to the doing stage.

In the early days of vocational agriculture, the supervised occupational experience program included only supervised farming activities and provided experience in the preparation for the occupation of farming. With the vocational legislation of the 1960s; vocational agriculture, through the supervised occupational experience programs, provided experience in both farm and nonfarm agricultural occupations.

A recent study (Mick, 1983) found significant relationships between the supervised occupational experience program and one- and five-year job placement. In order to determine the level of involvement of the students in supervised occupational experience; a measure of type, growth, scope, and net income was developed. A comparison of these factors was studied as to how they might relate to one- and five-year placements. The study concluded that (Mick, 1983:45):

1. . . . students with supervised occupational experience programs were more likely to be placed in agriculturally-related occupations.

2. . . . graduates with weaker SOEP programs were more likely to have moved from other jobs to agricultural occupations by the fifth year of job placement.

3. . . . high school programs of vocational agriculture were likely doing a better job of preparing students with farm backgrounds and ownership types of SOEP for employment in agriculture occupations, in that, there exists a need to provide more instruction about career opportunities in agriculture.

The conclusion of this study, along with the fact that more and more students are choosing occupations other than production agriculture, would seem to indicate that a need for improvement of placement supervised occupational experience programs exists in vocational agriculture instruction. In order to make this improvement, agricultural education professionals must understand the basics of providing a sound supervised occupational experience thrust in the local vocational agriculture department.

The literature indicates that the most influential factor affecting supervised occupational experience programs is the vocational agriculture teacher. The literature further suggests that teacher activities affecting supervised occupational experience programs can be classified into three categories: (1) developing cooperative relationships, (2) providing instruction, and (3) providing on-site visitation/supervision.

Developing Cooperative Relationships

Phipps (1980:214) states that:

> Cooperative relationships among an instructor, the parents, the employers, and the student have a very important bearing upon the effectiveness of the instruction. They are basic to all teaching and must be secured.

Kaczor (1983:9) also stated:

> Informing people is not sufficient in reference to achieving supervised occupational experience programs. A thorough education about the program allows the student's parents, administration, and employers to develop more concise understanding of SOE programs. Instructors must also establish cooperative relationships with these four groups to further enhance the programs' successfulness.

In developing cooperative relationships, the teacher may wish to employ some of the following activities:

1. Seek advice from a local advisory council as to need and opportunities for placement SOEP for vocational agriculture students.

2. Secure support from the local schoool administration and board of education. This can be done by keeping the administrator informed about all facets of vocational agriculture. Such understanding and cooperative relationships are required since many placement SOEP students will have to leave school at various times during the school day.

3. Secure the support of parents and employers by involving them in identifying competencies to be learned by the student. This can be accomplished by developing a written agreement between the parents, employer, student, and the teacher which specifies competencies, activities, and responsibilities of all who are involved. In addition, group meetings should be held to inform parents and employers about SOEP.

4. Develop a good public relations program. A good understanding of placement SOEP by the general public is a necessity. Schools are often criticized because they visit students out of the classroom, and the general thought is

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that students are not learning unless they are in the confines of a school classroom. If programs of genuine educational value are to survive, the general public supporting the public schools must understand that an organized, worthwhile educational activity is occurring between the employer and the student on-the-job.

5. Conduct frequent visits to students, parents, and employers. Visitation may be the most effective means of developing understanding and cooperation. The teacher is put in a positive role of providing needed advice and establishes rapport with the community.

Providing Instruction

Classroom instruction is one of the major functions of the vocational agriculture teachers. In order to motivate students and assist them in understanding and developing a supervised occupational experience program, organized instruction is essential. Instruction must be based on identified, validated occupational competencies. Students must have a thorough understanding of the career opportunities available to them and an understanding of how they gather the necessary experiences to secure the occupation of their choice. Vocational agriculture departments must be in a position to offer a variety of occupational experience programs to students, and once they have chosen an occupational experience program, the students must receive the necessary classroom instructional support to be successful in acquiring the necessary competencies for their chosen occupation.

Williams (1980) identified five ways teachers provide assistance to students in the supervised occupational experience activity. They aid students by: (1) assisting in record keeping on SOEP, (2) providing encouragement for the SOEP, (3) summarizing the records for the SOEP, (4) learning skills in agriculture, and (5) setting educational goals in agriculture.

Teachers must be organized and prepared each day in order to provide adequate classroom instruction. Technical information combined with knowledge of student needs are essential ingredients for relevant instruction.

Providing On-Site Visitation/Supervision

Another responsibility of the vocational agriculture teacher in conducting a quality vocational agriculture program is providing on-site visitation/supervision. The on-site visitation provides the teacher with the knowledge of the student's progress and problems. This information is useful in planning and conducting relevant classroom instruction which, in turn, aids the development of quality supervised occupational experience programs.

Students, parents, and employers need to be involved in the visitation/supervision process. All need to possess a thorough understanding of the purpose of visitation/supervision. Visits need to be carefully planned and skillfully conducted in order to maximize educational benefits.

Summary

In order to make progress in developing quality placement supervised occupational experience, the vocational agriculture instructor is going to have to develop cooperative relations, provide excellent instruction, and have a sound visitation/supervision program. In addition, agricultural educators are going to have to accept the idea that a placement program can accomplish the desirable objectives of supervised occupational experience. Placement programs are new to many of the agricultural educators in our nation. Placement programs probably require a more specific indentification of the competencies to be learned on-the-job than what we have formerly practiced through the ownership/production-type SOE programs.

Supervisors, teacher educators, and teachers must work together in accomplishing the goals of providing a broadened variety of occupational experience programs that are real and relevant to the learner, and this can be accomplished by identifying the basics of developing good supervised occupational experience programs and applying them to the placement-type activities with the understanding that some uniqueness is involved in working with an employee-employer relationship versus an owner-manager role. Indeed, by working together, we can accomplish the task of providing the vocational agriculture student good supervised occupational experience through the placement activity.

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RESOURCES

Occupational educators, whether in industry, public or private education, or government, will find insights and practical recommendations in *Employer-Sponsored Skill Training*, by Robert E. Wenig of North Carolina State University and William D. Wolansky of Iowa State University. The authors show how the lack of a comprehensive national human resources policy for employer-sponsored training is a core problem for employers, workers, and the entire economy. Having such a policy would eliminate unnecessary duplication of training programs and could help fill the training gap in hard economic times. It could also support better linkages among trainers in companies, institutions, agencies, and could promote grassroots support of lifelong learning.

You may order *Employer-Sponsored Skill Training* (IN 250 — $4.95), 49 pages, from The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, Publications Office, Box N, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210; 614/486-3655 or toll-free outside Ohio at 800/848-4815.

THEME

Expanding SOE Via Placement

Supervised occupational experience programs have been a major part of the vocational agriculture program since the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917. As a matter of fact, the SOE program was such a vital program component that the authors of that legislation mandated that each student participate in SOE activities. The Smith-Hughes Act stated: "schools shall provide for directed or supervised practice in agriculture, either on a farm provided for by the school or other farm, for at least six months per year" (2:578). As a result of this legislation and the belief that supervised occupational experiences are essential if the program is to be effective, SOE has developed into an essential component of the curriculum. Also, an integral relationship has developed between SOEP, classroom instruction, laboratory practice, and FFA.

Supervised occupational experience is defined as planned, practical activities conducted outside of regularly scheduled classtime whereby students further develop and apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned in the vocational agriculture instructional program. The SOEP is supervised by teachers, parents, and employers. It is directed toward developing competencies, it emphasizes learning by doing, it may be year long in duration, and is an integral part of the curriculum. The SOEP has been described as the element that "Bridges the Gap" between education and employment.

Types of SOE

Two major types of supervised occupational experience programs exist: ownership and placement. Ownership SOE programs involve students having personal ownership, either complete or partial, of the materials and other inputs required for an enterprise. Ownership SOE programs may involve production agriculture and it may also involve agribusiness. Ownership is the oldest and more traditional type of SOEP. Examples of ownership would include such activities as: raising and producing beef cattle, horses, other livestock, and crops; owning a cattle spraying service; operating a custom harvesting service; developing a roadside market; establishing a plant stand to sell plants; and operating a lawn maintenance service. In all of these cases, the student would have complete or partial ownership of the operation. These activities may be conducted at home, on school land laboratories, on rental property, or other appropriate locations.

Placement is the most recent type of SOEP. In placement, students are placed on jobs or in work situations to gain practical experience. While gaining practical experience and developing competencies are the primary concerns, in some cases students also earn money. The emphasis is on learning new skills and knowledge and applying skills and knowledge that have been learned in the instructional program. Placement does not involve ownership and involves either production agriculture or agribusiness or both.

BY JIMMY G. CHEEK AND CARL E. BEEMAN

(Editor's Note: Dr. Cheek is an Associate Professor and Dr. Beeman is Professor and Chairman of the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611.)

Florida's Model

Each state has defined the types of placement opportunities differently; however, common threads run through each. In Florida, three methods of involving students in placement have been defined and are currently being used and implemented. These three types of placement are: employment experience; cooperative placement; and directed laboratory experience.

Employment Experience

Students involved in employment experience are employed or gain work experience in an agricultural occupation. This on-the-job educational program is designed to

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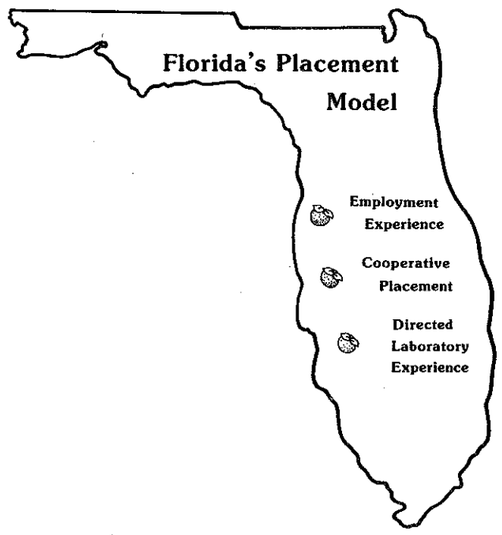

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provide learning experiences related to the instructional program in which the student is enrolled. Employment experience may or may not involve release time from school. It is usually conducted before or after school, on weekends, and/or during the summer. While the word "employment" is used, it may or may not involve pay. The emphasis is on learning and gaining practical agricultural experiences in either production agriculture or agribusiness or both.

This type of placement may be used for students in all grade levels. For example, a freshman who is unable to have an ownership project may work in a plant nursery on weekends, after school, and/or during the summer. Likewise, a student could work on a relative's farm, with or without pay, to meet his/her SOEP requirement. It is important that the teacher, student, and persons for whom the student works, develop a training plan to ensure that a variety of competencies are developed and the student participates in varied activities.

Other examples of employment experience SOE activities would include:

- A student working for pay at a local nursery on Saturday.
- A student working in a local veterinary clinic one or more afternoons per week, without pay, during the school year.
- A student working at home, with or without pay, on activities directly related to their instructional program at school. For example, a student enrolled in an ornamental horticulture class could work on various activities at home related to ornamental horticulture such as installation of an irrigation system, lawn maintenance, landscaping, and landscape maintenance. This type of activity would be more comprehensive than an improvement project or supplementary agricultural skills.
- Working for an agricultural supply company during the regular school year and during the summer.

Cooperative Placement

Cooperative placement (Co-op) involves release time from school. The student usually attends one or more regular courses at school plus a co-op related class taught by the vocational agriculture teacher. Students leave school during the regular school day and are employed by an agricultural firm for a pre-determined number of hours per week. Co-op is designed to provide students with on-the-job training and must not be considered simply a job but an opportunity to gain additional knowledge and skills and to apply those knowledges and skills that have been learned in the instructional program at school.

Participants are usually juniors and seniors in school; and, as a general rule, employers pay the students while on placement. A formal training agreement must be formulated between the teacher, the parent, the student, and the employer outlining the competencies to be learned by the student. High school credit is received for the Co-op experience. Examples would include: a student employed each afternoon for a tractor dealership in the area of agricultural mechanics; a student employed as a meat cutter's assistant; and a student employed as an assistant to a floral designer.

Directed Laboratory Experience

Directed Laboratory Experience (DLE) occurs on school facilities and is conducted other than regularly scheduled class time. Thus, it can occur in the school shop, land laboratory, school greenhouse, school florist, or other school owned area. The student may or may not be paid for their work experience and it may be for either a long or short duration. The student does not have personal ownership. Notice, that DLE involves "other than regularly scheduled class time." This means that the DLE may take place before school, after school, on weekends, during study periods, during school release time, and/or during the summer.

What are some examples of Directed Laboratory Experiences? The list is as endless as the imagination of teachers. A few examples would include:

- A student working the school greenhouse one or more hours per day after the regular school day.
- A student working in the agricultural mechanics shop during study period.
- A student working on the land laboratory, for pay, during the summer or after school.
- A student working during a school release period to landscape the school grounds.

The list could go on, but the key to DLE is that students are receiving on-the-job training and experience designed to help them further develop the competencies they are studying in the regular instructional program.

Characteristics of Placement

Placement SOE programs have the following characteristics:

- They emphasize learning via experience.
- They provide on-the-job experience and training.
- Students may or may not be paid for their work.
- They may occur on the land laboratory, school greenhouse, agricultural mechanics laboratory, or other school facility.
- They may occur on community facilities.
- They may occur on privately owned agribusinesses, farms, ranches, and similar places.
- They occur at a time other than regularly scheduled class time.
- They provide a method to earn FFA degrees and awards.
- They may or may not involve release time from school.
- Students in any grade may be involved.
- Students do not own or have partial ownership of the enterprise.

Planning Placement Programs

The following factors should be considered when planning placement programs:

- A training plan which indicates the competencies to be learned and further developed in the placement program should be developed for each student.
- Placement should maximize learning and minimize repetitive labor.
- Placement should be supervised by teachers, parents, and employers.
- Students involved in placement should keep a placement record book.
- The placement experience should be related to the instructional program in which the student is enrolled.
- Placement should help the student make the transition between education and employment.
- Placement activities should be used to help students earn FFA degrees and awards.
- Teachers should establish minimum standards for acceptable SOE placement programs.
- SOE programs should be incorporated into a teacher's grading system.

Placement and FFA

Placement not only provides learning experience for students, it also helps them satisfy some of the requirements for FFA Degrees, Proficiency Awards, and Achievement Awards. For example, to earn the Chapter Farmer Degree a member must have earned at least $50.00 or have worked 50 hours (other than scheduled class time) in a supervised occupational experience program. Likewise, for the State FFA Degree, the member must have earned and productively invested at least $1000 or have worked (other than scheduled class time) at least 600 hours in a supervised occupational experience program or a combination thereof (1). Thus, students with placement SOE programs gain occupational experience and can earn FFA degrees and awards whether or not they earn money as a result of their SOEP.

Summary

Placement SOE programs offer teachers additional opportunities to insure that vocational agriculture students develop and practice the competencies that are to be learned in the instructional program. Wise use of placement provides additional SOE options for students, provides students increased opportunity to achieve FFA degrees and awards, provides students additional learning opportunities, improves the quality of the graduates, and helps students make a more successful transition from school to employment. The emphasis is on learning via supervised occupational experience program.

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THEME

Preparing Students For Placement

By John W. Slocombe

(Editor's Note: Dr. Slocombe is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at the University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho 83843.)

Where do vocational agriculture teachers find time to accomplish everything? Classroom teaching, agricultural mechanics, school farm management, community relations, FFA, and contests are only a few of their responsibilities. Another major responsibility of the vocational agriculture teacher is to assist students in selecting and developing supervised occupational experience programs (SOEP).

Today, students in vocational agriculture represent rural areas, urban areas, cities, and towns. Thus, to assist students in meeting their occupational objective, teachers must utilize various types of SOE programs. With teacher time at a premium, how can all of these responsibilities be accomplished?

SOE placement programs are one vehicle teachers can use to provide vocational agriculture students with experience in an array of agricultural occupations. Before participating in these programs, students need to learn the "what", "why", and "how" of SOE placement. Teachers must provide group instruction that will help students identify the opportunities important to them and to prepare plans for becoming involved.[1] However, a question commonly asked by teachers is "What should I teach?" Recognizing the need for instructional materials to aid teachers in preparing students for SOE placement programs, a SOE placement instructional packet was developed and field tested in Iowa.[3]

SOE Placement Instructional Materials

The materials present the content and procedures for teaching advanced vocational agriculture students to select and plan SOE placement programs. The packet or unit includes three parts or problem areas for approximately 15 periods (hours) of instruction either at the end of the school year for sophomores or at the beginning of the school year for juniors. The first problem area called "Identifying Opportunities for SOE Placement Programs," was designed to assist students in understanding and iden-

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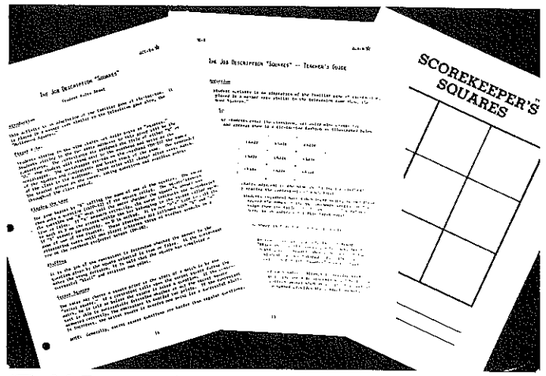

"The Job Description Squares" is a student activity, in Problem Area I, designed to acquaint students with occupations in agriculture.

Preparing Students For Placement

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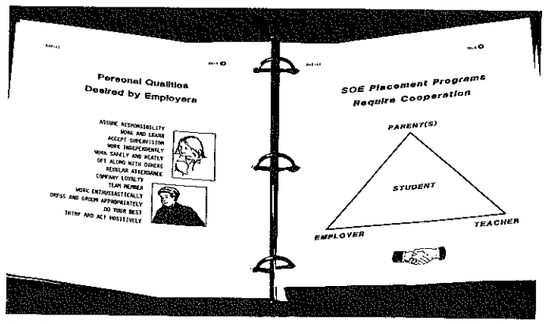
tifying opportunities to learn through SOE placement programs.

The second problem area entitled "Planning SOE Placement Programs," allows students to discover that successful SOE placement programs must be carefully planned. Instructional activities are included to acquaint students with the elements of effective SOE placement programs.

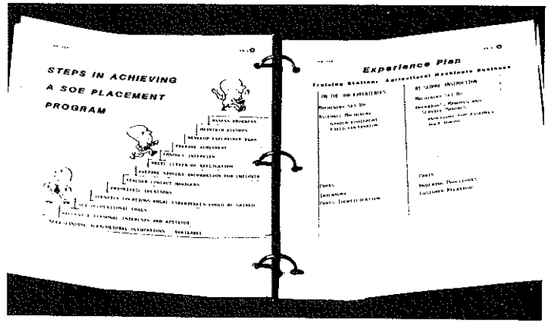
"Starting SOE Placement Programs" is the title of the third problem area in the instructional packet. It includes learning activities to direct students in obtaining a part-time job and developing detailed plans that will provide successful employment experiences. Following are the problems included in each problem area:

Problem Area 1: Identifying Opportunities for SOE Placement Programs.

1. What is a SOE placement program? How can it help me?
2. What are the main occupational areas and jobs in agriculture?
3. What are the qualifications needed for agricultural jobs in the community?
4. How should classroom-laboratory instruction and the FFA complement and support SOE placement programs?



Problem Area 2 emphasizes that SOE placement programs require cooperation from the student, parents, teacher, and employer.



A variety of learning activities direct students in obtaining a part-time job and developing plans for successful employment experiences.

5. What opportunities exist for SOE placement programs in the community?

Problem Area 2: Planning SOE Placement Programs.

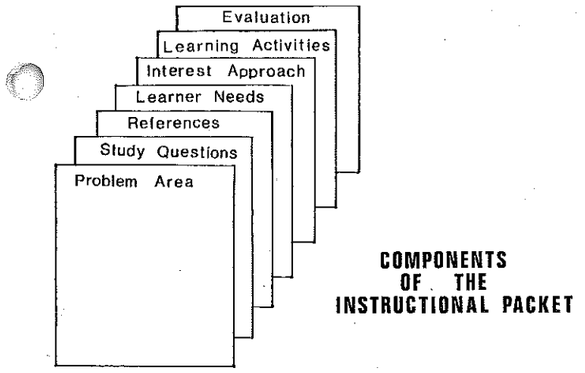
1. What are the elements of an effective SOE placement program?
2. Why is employment experience in agriculture valuable?
3. What is required to be a successful student employee?
4. What are the alternatives for SOE placement programs?
5. What legal regulations pertain to SOE placement programs?

Problem Area 3: Starting SOE Placement Programs.

1. Why is student information important to an employer?
2. How is a job application made?
3. How is a job interview conducted?
4. What should a SOE placement program agreement include?
5. What should a SOE experience plan include?
6. What records are required for a SOE placement program?
7. How can student progress in a SOE placement program be determined?

The problem areas are subdivided with study questions. Each set of questions is preceded by a paragraph identifying the teaching situation. The study questions are followed by a list of references and instructional materials, a list of learner needs, an interest approach, learning activities, a conclusion, desired outcomes for evaluation, and optional learning activities. A variety of individual and group instructional methods are suggested. Duplication masters for information sheets, activities, and transparencies are included and suggestions made for their use. A teacher key is provided for each activity that students are asked to complete.

In addition to the three problem areas, a computer program is included as an optional teaching tool for this unit. Suggestions are made to guide students, with the help of their parents, to make tentative choices of a SOE placement program. Supervisory visits by the vocational agriculture teacher to the student's place of employment with the employer is an integral part of the instructional model.



Iowa vocational agriculture teachers field tested the instructional packet. They indicated the packet reduced preparation time and ensured appropriate content was being taught.

Effectiveness of the Instructional Materials

Do they work? This is a question teachers commonly ask in reference to instructional materials. To answer this question the instructional packet was field tested in central Iowa in the fall of 1982 as part of an Agricultural Experiment Station project.[2] Fifteen Iowa vocational agriculture teachers and their sophomore classes were selected to use the packet. An additional fourteen teachers and their sophomore classes following their normal procedures for preparing students for SOE placement programs served as a control group. At the close of the instructional unit, teachers using the packet evaluated the quality and value of the instructional materials.

The group of teachers using the instructional packet indicated the content of the packet was very appropriate for preparing students to enter SOE placement programs. Teachers revealed that the student handouts and transparency masters included in the packet greatly reduced preparation time. The study questions, interest approaches, and learning activities assisted teachers the most in preparing students for SOE placement. One teacher described the materials as "convenient to use." Another one said "the instructional packet was valuable in assisting students with SOE placement programs." Another teacher said "the materials are excellent in reducing preparation time and ensure that appropriate content is being taught."

The field test revealed the group of teachers using the packet spent more days teaching their students about SOE placement programs than the control group. These results indicate that the instructional packet was effective in assisting teachers to prepare sophomore students for SOE placement programs.

Acceptance of Materials by Teachers

During the 1983 summer conference, the instructional packet was delivered to Iowa vocational agriculture teachers through an inservice workshop. The workshop focused on the content of the packet and how to use it in preparing sophomore vocational agriculture student for SOE placement programs. At the close of the workshop, teachers expressed positive comments about the packet. One teacher stated "the instructional packet provides a systematic approach for teaching students the knowledge and skills common to all agricultural occupations." Another teacher said, "Using the instructional packet will increase student interest in SOE placement programs."

A microcomputer program can be used to enhance student learning about SOE placement programs.

Since the materials were well received by Iowa vocational agriculture teachers, copies of the instructional packet have been made available to people in other states through the Iowa Association for Vocational Instructional Materials, 208 Davidson Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011, at a cost of $10.00 plus postage.

Summary

Vocational agriculture teachers need to assist students in selecting and developing a SOE placement program related to their occupational objective. To effectively prepare students for these programs teachers must have the content and procedures to do the job. SOE placement programs are an effective method of preparing students for an array of agricultural occupations. However, before participating, students must know the what, why, and how of SOE placement programs in vocational agriculture.

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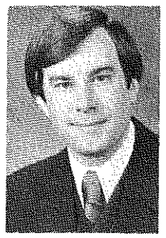
THEME

An Expanded View of SOE: Placement



By Jerry Peters and Stacy Gartin
(Editor's Note: Drs. Peters and Gartin are Assistant Professors of Agriculture Education at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907.)

For years, production agriculture teachers have been placing students on farms for supervised occupational experience (SOE). Today, however, as the number of farms continue to decline, coupled with students not wanting to return to the home farm and more non-farm students enrolled in high school production agriculture programs who seek agribusiness entry skills, the production agriculture teacher is truly in a dilemma.

How does a production agriculture teacher meet the needs of students that have occupational objectives in agricultural business? What type of SOEP can a production agriculture teacher develop for these students?

The answer to this problem may seem quite simple; "Just place them in agribusiness instead of on farms." The solution, however, is not this simple. Most agricultural businesses are reluctant to hire a young 15 to 18 year old high school student as part of the student's SOEP. This is especially true with today's economic slump. Employers are also hesitant to cooperate with a student who may sometimes be only an observer, due to hazardous working conditions or lack of needed skills. Thus, many production agriculture teachers discourage SOE placement because of the limited number of training stations and because of their students' lack of skills deemed necessary for agribusiness employment.

Placement Laboratories

Agriculture educators continue to support the idea of utilizing school land laboratories in order to provide students with the experience needed to enable students to become more vocationally competent in production agriculture. Since land laboratories have proven valuable in applying related instruction, it would seem school agribusiness laboratories would fulfill an equally valuable role.

How Does It Work?

Students would begin their first two years of vocational agriculture as entry level agribusiness workers. Aside from the daily classroom routine, they would be responsible for overseeing the work necessary for their agribusiness SOE. The third and fourth years of vocational agriculture would be spent moving into mid-management and management positions in the agribusiness. Students would be allowed to rotate through all the agribusinesses the school had to offer.

A single school might have a variety of agribusinesses. A general farm store business could be the outlet for marketing the grain and livestock produced on the school land laboratory. This agribusiness would provide vocational agriculture students and others the opportunity to purchase high quality products at a reasonable price. The general farm store could operate very similar to that of a cooperative store. The inventory of such a store could also include FFA materials and supplies needed in the other school owned agribusinesses.

Operating the general farm store would be the responsibility of the students. They would be in charge of cleaning, processing, bagging, labeling, pricing, and selling their commodities and supplies. The agribusiness students could practice and develop valuable public relations and communication skills.

The school owned farm machinery could be utilized by students in a custom farming business. Students could gain experience in soliciting and satisfying clients of their business. They would receive experience in maintaining, cleaning, calibrating, and operating agricultural machinery. This agribusiness could provide services to the vocational agriculture students and the general public.

The agricultural mechanics business could build, repair, and service agricultural equipment for their customers. The agribusiness could offer guaranteed quality workmanship at reasonable rates.

The trees, shrubs, bushes, and related equipment utilized in school nursery operation could be the basis for the landscaping business. The landscaping business would allow students to apply knowledge and skills learned through the classroom. The students would work with customers in analyzing landscaping situations, planning for desired results, designing the layout, and implementing the plan. The landscaping business students would also develop expertise in maintenance and operation of equipment and public relations. This type of SOE would incorporate record keeping into the total instructional program.

The agribusiness laboratory would provide the vehicle to enhance the students' awareness of career opportunities and provide the experience necessary for them to select a career in tune with their vocational objective.

Internship

Upon completion of the SOE agribusiness program and receipt of their high school diploma, students would be placed as interns for one year in the agricultural business for which they had been prepared. Placing students at this point in the vocational agriculture program would hopefully eliminate time conflicts with after-school activities, diminish transportation problems, and increase the students' chances for expansion and growth in the businesses. During the placement period, the intern would receive justifiable wages. The production agriculture teacher would continue to supervise the interns on a regular basis.

Upon satisfactorily completing the internship program, the intern would receive a vocational education certificate of competence. This certificate would be signed by the teacher, intern employer, the local school superintendent, and high school principal.

Who's Going to Help?

The vocational agriculture advisory council would select an additional committee that would give guidance and assistance to the instructor regarding SOE program. The SOEP committee would be selected on a basis similar to that which is used in selecting the vocational agriculture advisory council. The committee would include specialists from agribusiness industries, a representative from the advisory council, a student representative from each of the school agribusinesses and a member of the local Young Farmers. The SOEP committee would provide assistance in selecting and recruiting the types of agribusinesses to establish, plan and organize each of the agribusinesses, and evaluate the agribusiness.

Benefits of Agribusiness Laboratories

School owned agribusinesses would enable more students to conduct practical and worthwhile SOE programs. Students would be able to apply the many skills and develop the competencies needed for gainful employment in selected agribusinesses. With students under constant supervision, instructors would be able to monitor, evaluate, and re-instruct students in areas of need. Allowing students to progress through all phases of agribusiness, from entry level positions to managers, would provide the opportunity for students to become more competent in areas in which the agricultural industry indicates our students are sometimes found lacking. As an extension of the classroom and school land laboratory, the school owned agribusinesses would complete the cycle from producer to consumer.

The agribusiness preparation and experience program would lend itself to keeping the vocational agriculture teacher up-to-date and technically competent. The money generated by the school agribusiness would be channeled back into each specific business making it self-sufficient.

The internship program could provide additional membership and participation from out-of-school members in the FFA, FFA Alumni, Young Farmers, and adult education programs. The agribusiness and internship program would also provide support for extended service contracts of vocational agriculture teachers and release time for the supervision of SOE programs.

As high schools across the country begin to increase their number of credit hours needed for graduation, it is imperative that vocational agriculture teachers look for new and innovative methods of improving their enrollments. They must capitalize on the assets they currently have in their programs and the community in which they get their support. Initially, the school agribusiness laboratories will take considerable time and patience to become well established; but once developed, they can be the lifeblood of a vocational agriculture program. Where does one begin in establishing such a program? It starts with the teacher. It starts with you!

THEME

SOE For A Changing Population of Students

By J. David McCracken
(Editor's Note: Dr. McCracken is a Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education at The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210.)

Many areas in Ohio and nationally have experienced significant changes in the nature of the population. Previously rural areas now contain many residents who are enjoying the opportunity of living in the country. There has been an increase in the number of large farms and small farms, with an accompanying decline in the number of middle-sized farms.

These changes have been apparent to teachers of vocational agriculture. A greater percentage of the students in vocational agriculture are not from family farms. These students are interested in agriculture, but often are preparing for occupations other than in production agriculture.

For these students, the traditional production project in vocational agriculture may not be sufficient in preparing students for their future careers. What types of supervised practice would be more appropriate?

Importance of SOEP

Supervised occupational experience programs can be of several types. There are ownership programs consisting of production projects, group enterprises, and entrepreneur-

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SOE For A Changing Population of Students

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ship or small business projects. Placement or cooperative programs were designed to provide supervised practice in working in the agricultural industry. Improvement and skill development projects also may be used as supervised occupational experience. Teachers use SOEP to relate instruction to practice, for interest-approaches or attention-getters, as sources of problems for study and to apply instruction to specific situations.

Supervised practice is helpful to students in many ways. It provides opportunity for them to work, earn money, achieve a degree of financial independence, and assume greater responsibility. Students on work experience programs work under the supervision of employers, the teacher, and parents in establishing desirable work habits. Abilities are also developed in cooperation, initiative, human relations, and flexibility. Work experience is advantageous to students as they seek employment. It also enables students to develop specialized areas of expertise that may not be available in the group setting of the classroom.

Report from One Ohio County

A survey was recently conducted of the students in vocational agriculture of a suburban county in Ohio. One of the outcomes was data concerning the types of supervised occupational experience programs conducted by the students. Data indicated that 23 percent of the students were from full-time farms, 41 percent were from part-time farms, and 36 percent were not from farms. Fifty-six percent of the parents owned or rented less than 10 acres. The majority of the students had limited resources for traditional supervised occupational experience programs.

One would think that placement programs would be heavily used in this county. In the five vocational agriculture departments, 12 percent of the students were placed in supervised work experience. However, only 3.5 percent were placed in agricultural business with the remainder on farm placement. Sixty-three percent of the students maintained a traditional production project, with the majority being of limited scope. Twenty percent of the students maintained non-traditional production projects, such as pleasure horses, gardening, and small animals.

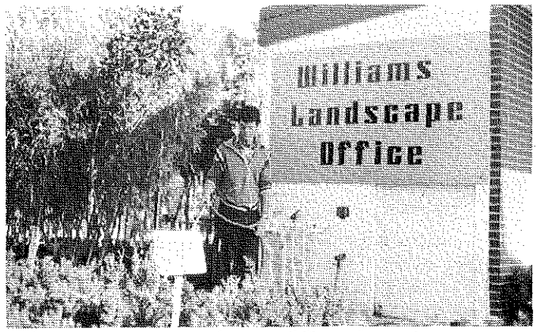
Teachers often gain new information and insights into agribusiness as their students demonstrate the skills they have learned. (Photograph courtesy of Sue Register, University of Nebraska)

Productive Man Work Units (PMWU's) are used in Ohio to compare the scope of different types of projects. One PMWU is the amount of work one person can normally accomplish in 10 hours. In this suburban county, PMWUs per year increased from a mean of 6.5 for freshmen to 27.3 for seniors; however, the median was 1.9 for freshmen and 4.0 for seniors. There were no differences in type of project between the 61 females and the 194 males.

Obviously, this one county may not be typical of Ohio or of other places in the United States. It may be illustrative, however, of some of the problems vocational agriculture teachers are facing in helping students plan their supervised occupational experience programs. Placement programs, while valuable to the students, are often hard to administer in difficult economic times. Even though SOE programs may be difficult to supervise, they must continue to be emphasized.

Summary

Supervised practice as an integral part of agriculture programs is essential for them to be vocational. They require time and effort but the payoff is worthwhile in terms of student development. Students should be encouraged to develop occupational goals, develop a yearly plan, and involve parents and employers. Supervisory visits need to be conducted by teachers to orient students, parents and employers to the program; assist in program planning; and provide instruction. Placement programs should receive increasing emphasis, especially for students who lack the resources to enter farming.



Placement experiences teach responsibility and commitment to an occupation. (Photograph courtesy of Sue Register, University of Nebraska).

A comprehensive training plan includes a wide variety of human-relations skills. (Photograph courtesy of Sue Register, University of Nebraska)

THEME

Helping the Disadvantaged . . . SOE for "Hard to Place" Students

By Jasper S. Lee

(Editor's Note: Dr. Lee is a Professor and Chairman in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, P.O. Drawer AV, Mississippi State, Mississippi 39762.)

Supervised occupational experience is for all students enrolled in vocational agriculture. Some students have characteristics which make it difficult for them to have placement programs. They differ from the other students to such an extent that they are said to have special needs. It is rare for a vocational agriculture class not to have some special needs students!

These students need help. The potential for some measure of success in agricultural occupations is often there. The challenge to the teacher is one of how to appropriately direct these students in the development of SOE programs. A teacher who is successful with special needs students can reap considerable personal gratification by observing them make substantive growth. Sometimes involvement in SOE is just the spark that is needed to help them overcome their special needs conditions!

The category of special needs to be addressed in this article is the disadvantaged. The characteristics which cause students to be disadvantaged are not always easily observable. Yet, special consideration is needed if these students are to make satisfactory progress in supervised occupational experience.

How Are Students Disadvantaged?

Disadvantaged students are those who have educational, socio-economic, cultural, or other conditions which prevent them from succeeding in vocational agriculture without special programs and/or services. Such students are often over age for their grade placement, have a low level of academic performance, lack motivation to achieve, and may have high absentee rates from school. These students can and should be helped. They can often gain considerable benefit from SOE programs.

Many disadvantaged students are unaware of what is needed to be successful. This applies to both school and later in work. Through appropriate SOE programs, they can gain many of the needed skills. The vocational agriculture teacher can often assume a powerful role, especially with students from deficient home backgrounds.

Students who have low levels of academic performance may be turned off to school. SOE programs may be the key to helping them find themselves and the important relationships of education and career success.

Students from deficient socio-economic backgrounds can often derive considerable benefit from contact with the working world. SOE can aid in developing an appropriate work ethic and contribute to economic self-sufficiency. Students from backgrounds where there is considerable reliance on welfare and other forms of aid may be exposed to work so that new values are formed. They may learn the importance of work and being a productive worker.

Cultural differences may act as barriers to work. SOE can help overcome these barriers. It is important for teachers to understand cultural diversity. It is not the role of vocational agriculture to eliminate cultural diversity, but to prepare individuals from diverse backgrounds to enter and advance in agricultural occupations.

What Special Considerations are Needed With Disadvantaged Students?

Disadvantaged students need opportunities to prove themselves. Proper SOE program selection can provide situations in which they can experience success. Placing such students into an employment situation before they are ready can be detrimental to the student, school, and employer. A little success may be all the motivation that is needed to help students overcome their disadvantages.

A first principle with disadvantaged students is to require SOE programs. By not requiring SOEP, the student will likely become more disadvantaged.

SOEP planning is particularly critical. Exploratory experiences in the school laboratory may be needed in the early stages of planning. Assessment of these experiences by the student and teacher will be valuable in SOEP planning.

Some students may only be capable of school-based, directed laboratory SOEP. It is advisable to place students in agribusinesses or on farms if they lack fundamental skills. Placing students who are not ready can result in damaged relationships so that future placement of other students is impossible.

Employers should be aware of student capabilities. The teacher may need to discretely discuss student deficiencies with employers so that employer expectations will not be too high.

Individual instruction and supervisory visits are more important with disadvantaged students. Greater attention to helping students adjust to work situations is often required.

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Helping the Disadvantaged . . .
SOE for "Hard to Place" Students

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What Strategies May Be Useful?

A teacher who is prepared to help disadvantaged students may need to use strategies appropriate to student traits. A few traits and possible strategies are as follows:

Student Traits	Possible Educational Strategies
A. Exhibits poor language development	A.1. Counsel into SOE program which initially requires little use of language skills. A.2. Provide individual remedial instruction in language skills. A.3. May need to use school-based, directed laboratory SOE until problem is overcome or reduced.
B. Frequently sleeps at school (and likely to sleep at placement station)	B.1 Encourage student to get adequate rest at home. B.2. Instruct that sleeping at school and on-the-job is inappropriate behavior. (Employers will not tolerate it.) B.3. If in a directed laboratory SOEP, provide regular and frequent supervision.
C. Frequently absent or tardy at school (and likely absent or tardy at placement station)	C.1. Instruct student that reporting to employment on time is essential. C.2. Make supervisory visits to assess student behavior and counsel as needed. If student is absent or tardy, determine why. Help student overcome the obstacle or cause. (It may be necessary to remove a student from placement if excessively tardy or absent.)
D. Occasionally steals from other students	D.1. Counsel/instruct the student about this problem. D.2. Use school-based, directed-laboratory SOEP. D.3. Provide frequent and regular supervision. D.4. If excessive, refer to appropriate counselor, psychologist, or other person.
E. From impoverished home	E.1. Counsel into a placement SOEP since home resources are not initially available. Ownership SOE programs might be used after earnings from placement are sufficient to finance ownership needs. E.2. Assist student in getting a loan or grant, such as from FmHA. E.3. Select placement station convenient to student's home if transportation is a problem.
F. Comes to school dirty	F.1. Counsel/instruct student about proper bathing, grooming and use of deodorant. F.2. Provide for student to bathe at school. (May use physical education shower facilities.) F.3. Counsel into an ownership or directed laboratory SOEP.
G. Clothes dirty or inadequate	G. Counsel about the problem as related to employer expectations. G.2. Arrange for student to get needed clothes from a local charity or church. G.3. Place at a station that provides uniforms for employers. G.4. Help student budget income from SOEP so that needed clothes can be bought. G.5. Instruct student in proper use of coin operated laundry, if appropriate.
H. Uses tobacco, drugs, and/or alcohol	H.1. Counsel student about problem as related to successful employment at training station. H.2. Establish a directed laboratory SOEP until problem is overcome. H.3. Refer to appropriate authorities (counselors, chemical dependency professionals, and others) for assistance with problem.
I. Appears malnourished	I.1. Help student gain access to school breakfast and lunch programs. I.2. Counsel student on proper nutrition and assist with nutritional problems. I.3. Refer to school nurse or other health professionals. (The problem may be due to disease and need corrective measures.)
J. Starts fights and/or excessive arguments	J.1. Arrange a directed laboratory program. J.2. Refer to school psychologist or other professional for counseling. J.3. Counsel on importance of proper behavior for success in SOEP. J.4. Placement may be possible when problem is overcome.
K. Exhibits unacceptable sex role (including tendencies toward homosexuality and prostitution)	K.1. Arrange an ownership or school-based directed laboratory SOEP. K.2. Discuss the importance of appropriate behavior in work, including dress, grooming, and sex preferences. K.3. Refer to appropriate professionals for counseling.
L. Pregnant (unwed)	L.1. If not currently placed, arrange a directed laboratory or ownership SOEP. L.2. If in placement SOEP, discuss with employer. Determine applicability of maternity leave and other policies. L.3. Arrange for student to obtain counseling from a qualified professional person in family planning, including abortion, infant care and contraception methods.

Summary: What General Procedures May Be Followed?

When teacher expectations for SOE programs are low, student achievement in SOEP is likely to be low. Disadvantaged students require positive approaches and adherence to standards of quality. How to cope with providing such an environment is a definite challenge. It is much easier to write-off disadvantaged students and not involve them in SOE. This, however, is not an appropriate professional behavior for vocational agriculture teachers.

A few principles to follow are:

Minimize student differences when in group SOE instructional situations. In providing instruction about SOEP, let it be known that all students are expected to participate; yet, each will participate in different ways and at different levels.

Develop a good understanding of each student's background and limitations. Use this information as the basis for individual student SOEP instruction and planning. (This information might be gained by interviewing the students, visiting students' homes, talking with parents, discussing individuals with counselors or school psychologists, and in other ways.)

Develop effective communication skills. The ability to communicate with students of varying cultural backgrounds and handicaps is particularly important. Make needed adjustments in teaching style and rate.

Have a good knowledge of potential SOEP placement stations. Some employers are not as receptive to student differences as others. Knowledge of employer expectations and preferences can aid in advising students on placement stations. (Of course, it would not be appropriate to openly discuss sensitive employer preferences with students. Handle this discretely!)

Know the competencies required in agricultural occupations. This will help match students with an appropriate placement SOEP. By knowing the competencies, students will not be advised into SOE programs they might be incapable of successfully performing.

Follow good personal practices — be patient, optimistic, creative, success-oriented, analytical, flexible, and understanding. Never rule anyone out as incapable of success in SOE.

THEME

Placement Businesses In The School

By Richard L. Cooper
(Editor's Note: Mr. Cooper is a Vocational Agriculture Instructor at Mountain View High School, Vancouver, Washington 98660.)

Agriculture programs in suburban and urban schools are presently having difficulty fulfilling the mandated requirement that all vocational agriculture students will have a SOE project. This will continue to be a problem in the future. Possible solutions to this problem that have been suggested include: group projects (which are normally nonsalaried and occur in the school laboratory), home improvement projects (such as painting a room or wiring an addition to the house), work experience projects (which may be placement but are primarily student initiated school year and summer jobs), and school operated businesses (which produce profits).

Benefits

School operated businesses are placement projects which could be the best answer to the suburban and urban agriculture programs' SOE project dilemma. They have the following strengths:

1. Close student supervision.
2. High levels of product quality.
3. Immediate feedback on business decisions.
4. Monetary returns for the school agriculture program.
5. Monetary returns for the student.
6. Clear and immediate evidence to school officals that the program is preparing students for wage earning and job entry.
7. Practical experience with business machines.
8. Practical experience with business methods such as advertising and publicity.

Procedures

When developing a school business placement program, the teacher or administrator must be concerned with: the type of business, day-to-day operation, profit distribution, conflicts with local businesses, getting started, perpetuating its existence, business financing, and criteria for admission of students into the program.

The first step will be to identify what business is most suitable to your school, laboratory, and community. Some of the businesses presently operating in Washington programs are: florists, retail sales of indoor and outdoor plants, landscaping, employment agencies, and laboratory project fabrication. Other types of businesses which might also be successful include: outdoor plant nurseries, tree surgery and pruning, seasonal activities such as Christmas wreath production and Easter decorations, and managing bee apiaries for flower pollination.

After prioritizing the business opportunities, special attention must be given to identifying the effects of the program on local businesses. If these effects are potentially negative school support from the business community could be damaged or even eliminated. In larger communities, businesses are clearly highly competitive so a school business is normally positively accepted and often the surrounding businesses give direct assistance.

Once the business type has been finalized, the method by which it is financed must be considered. Here are several methods which have been used successfully:

1. Local FFA Alumni sponsorship,
2. Loan from a local bank,
3. Local business sponsorship,
4. School initial financing with future self-supporting FFA Chapter sponsorship, and/or
5. A cooperative with student shares.

The success of obtaining financing, by any method, is based on a professional approach to the finance source.

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Placement Businesses in the School

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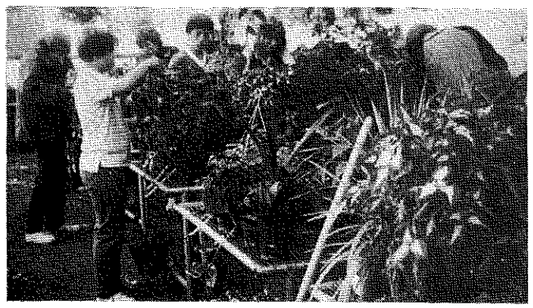
The entire business program must be prepared before contacting the money source. This will provide many answers to the financier. In addition most financiers will continue to be strong supporters of your total agriculture program if you, as the initiator of the placement program, work hard to make the program a success. Often an idea or project is only as successful as its initiator makes it.

Along with the initial financing a cash flow method must be chosen and maintained. Good business methods must be used to guarantee enough cash to keep the project financially stable. The areas of cash flow concern are: to operate in the black at all times, to use check or purchase order payment methods to pay all bills, to pay workers by check, and to hold a small reserve for unexpected expenses.

The day-to-day operation will vary with the business selected. A high labor business will need work schedules and a method to identify the hours worked by all employees. A time clock does an excellent job of maintaining accurate work records. A sales business could be based on business created by each sales person. In this case, accurate sales records must be maintained. This can be accomplished by using numbered receipt tablets, numerical contracts, or cash register identification codes. Seasonal businesses can be managed by a supervisor or manager, who can then employ variable number of students for the work load demand. For this type of business, the available manpower must be identified before the business is selected.

Choosing student employees will be an important task for the teacher in order to get the business started. After the business is established, it will have the tendency to attract students who are interested in the business and in making money. The importance of getting quality student employees can not be overly emphasized. They will make or break the business. A successful means to obtain good student employees is by using job applications accompanied by personal interviews.

After the student employees are selected, the business must begin providing a service or product to its community or service area. The product or service must be of high quality. This is one of the most important selling points for ensuring success for the business.



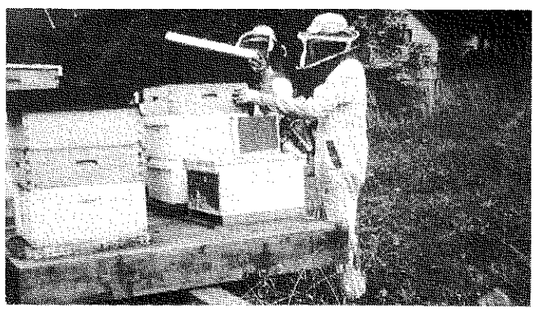
Mountain View students raise several hundred plants per year. The income from the plants is used for chapter expenses and wages for the sales people.

Students build portable greenhouses for agriculture students and community members. The students do all of the fabrication.

The clientele development or buyer group available is also very important. This is often centered around school employees. Therefore, the business selected must be based on who it is going to be serving. This may also make it more acceptable with the competing local businesses. Staying with the school employees and parents of students is less challenging to the local businesses. Some examples of school community needs are:

1. Foodstuffs
2. Special award florist needs
3. Landscaping plants
4. Reasonably priced labor source
5. Seasonal needs
   a. Christmas decorations (wreaths)
   b. Corsages
   c. Memorial decorations
   d. Halloween decorations
6. Plant pollination needs.

The longevity of the business will be based on the acceptance of the service or product by its clientele or buyers. Prompt service and high quality products at reasonable prices will enhance the probability of continued support for the business. If the price is too high, it will not sell. If the price is too low, the product may be considered inferior in quality and local businesses may consider it unfair competition. The product must also be common enough to generate monthly or yearly support from the school community.



Managing bees produces money, bee products, and a pollination source for flowering plants. Eight chapter-owned hives and fifteen hives for local farmers are managed.

The final step to making the supervised occupational experience school placement project successful is to provide profit or salary incentives. The income from the business must be sufficient to provide a reasonable wage for the student employees. The student employees or workers must be getting a return on their time and labor investment. The end product of most jobs or occupations is job enjoyment or satisfaction, continual learning, and income or wages to reward the employee for effort put out to make the business successful. They could be paid by varying methods:

1. Hours worked times a set wage,
2. Products sold with commission and sales incentives,
3. Shares could be bought in the business with income based on the share which the employee owns, and
4. Hours worked based on the total income and employee hours worked.

Summary

In conclusion, if teachers or administrators choose the school placement program to meet SOEP needs, they have the responsibility to be the public relations person for the program and they must complete the steps to having such a program. These steps once again are: selecting a business, evaluating its acceptance with community businesses, financing its beginning and maintaining a cash flow, developing an operation flow chart, choosing the student employees, initiating a source of clientele or buyers, and maintaining the longevity of the business by keeping clients, paying employees for labor provided and maintaining product or service quality.

THEME

SOE . . . Some Considerations

By Brenda Howard and Dennis Scanlon

(Editor's Note: Drs. Howard and Scanlon are in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802.)

On July 25-30, 1982, in Washington, D.C., over 200 teachers, teacher educators and state supervisors from 45 states attended the first National SOE Conference. The workshop was described as the "rebirth of SOE" and the "SOE revival." Regardless of the words used to describe it, the workshop was undoubtedly the beginning of a major reemphasis of SOE for the 80's. Perhaps a revival is the appropriate time to reexamine the basic components of the SOE system and decide whether any of the basics are in need of an overhaul to make them compatible with present day SOEP needs. Supervised occupational experience, in the most basic sense, is a method of instruction which emphasizes learning by doing. If we define learning as episodes during which motivated individuals attempt to adopt their behavior so as to succeed in a situation which they perceive as requiring action to obtain a goal, then it logically follows that if SOE programs are to be successful they must motivate students towards goals (occupational) which they (students) perceive as important. With this basic assumption in mind, we might begin examining SOE in terms of:

a) meeting the needs of the clientele group being served;
b) motivating the student to succeed;
c) the occupational focus of traditional SOE program.

The Clientele Group

Who are the clientele we serve in vocational agriculture? Population and demographic data suggest that less than three percent of the American population is engaged in production agriculture. School population data suggest that secondary school populations are declining and that approximately 42 percent of the enrollment in vocational agriculture classes are female. In addition, we are experiencing an increasing enrollment of ninth grade students with avocational intentions as 72 percent of the students enrolled in vocational agriculture are from non-farm backgrounds.

Who are the students we serve in vocational agriculture? More and more we are serving students who have a strong desire to be good FFA members and to study vocational agriculture but are hampered by lack of farm background, resources and experience. As we experience a rebirth of SOE, we might ponder the question of whether the new emphasis on SOE will reflect the needs of this new student group, or whether we are still selling traditional agriculture to a very non-traditional group.

Motivating the Student to Succeed

Atkinson and Feather (1966) suggested that the potential of any task to motivate is a function of three factors:

a) a person's motive to succeed, i.e., a good record of success highly motivates students to continue to succeed;

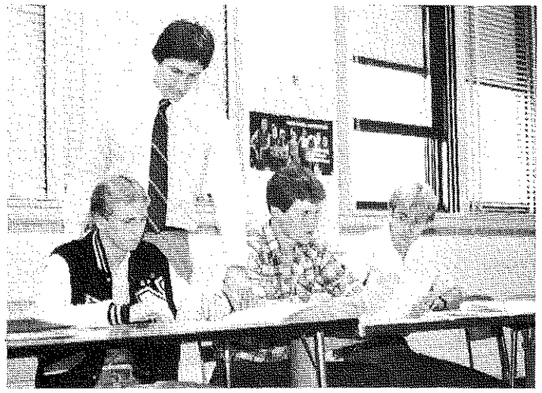
b) the probability of success, i.e., what are the chances of actually being successful; and

c) the incentive value to succeed, i.e., if successful, what is the reward?

They suggested that the motivational strength of any

(Continued on Page 20)

Career counseling between the instructor and the student is the first step to preparing for the placement experience. (Photograph courtesy of Sue Register, University of Nebraska)



A strong classroom program in production agriculture and agribusiness lays a solid foundation for placement experience. (Photograph courtesy of Sue Register, University of Nebraska)

SOE . . . Some Consideration

(Continued from Page 19)

task is directly related to the strength of each of the three factors. If, in a student's mind, the probability of successfully completing a project is less than 50 percent or the incentive value, i.e., reward for completion, is low; or the student's self image and record of success is extremely poor, then the task encountered, whether it be SOE or an other task, will become a source of frustration rather than motivation. If we choose to use SOE as a motivator; then we, as teachers, have the responsibility of insuring that the necessary prerequisites for success are in place prior to undertaking the project.

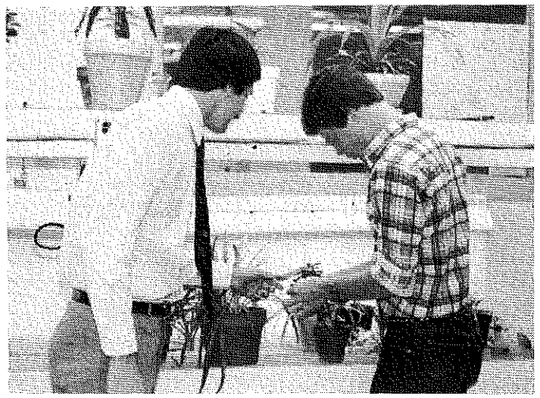
Quality SOE programs are those that provide the students with the greatest opportunity for success by insuring that the necessary prerequisites are there at the start. A poor quality SOE project that is beyond the scope, resources and abilities of a student will do as much to damage the potential of a student as no project at all. High quality SOE projects have been, and should continue to be, the cornerstone of our programs. If we continue to require projects of students with limited resources and abilities and fail to provide the necessary prerequisites for success, then we place in jeopardy the most potentially motivating tool we have: SOE programs.

The Occupational Focus

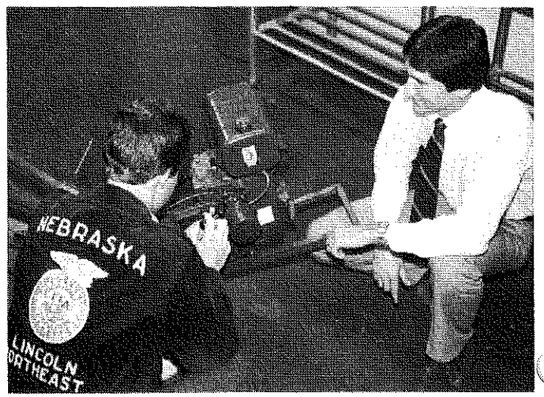
As we consider the changing needs of the clientele group, we must also look closely at occupations for which students are being trained. Recent occupational needs assessment studies in Pennsylvania and New York have clearly shown that the bulk of agriculture occupational demand for the future will be in the areas of agricultural products and services, not in the area of production agriculture.

Traditionally, SOE projects have focused on production agriculture as the keystone around which all agricultural related occupations are centered. The basic theory is that a thorough knowledge of production agriculture is necessary to adequately serve the producer. While there is fundamental truth to the statement, the fact still remains that over 90 percent of students currently enrolled in vocational agriculture will work in agricultural related businesses.

Supervised occupational experience programs, both production and placement, should reflect occupational experiences in the major areas of agricultural employment. In addition, occupational experiences should emphasize the development of communication, writing, and employability skills necessry for survival in the modern day agribusiness community. While many skills can only be learned through hands-on experience, other cognitive skills (thinking and reasoning) can be taught through intensified classroom teaching including simulation and games. A careful review of occupational experiences, both placement and production, would lay the ground work for providing instructional alternatives for tasks which are nice-to-know but not absolutely essential for competently performing on the job.



Skills supervised and practiced in the laboratory will give confidence when performed on the job. (Photograph courtesy of Sue Register, University of Nebraska)



Diversified laboratory training will better prepare students for agribusiness employment. (Photograph courtesy of Sue Register, University of Nebraska)

Some Considerations

As we search for a solution to the SOE dilemma amidst declining resources, populations and dollars, we are constantly taunted by recurring tradition. Should we tamper with an integral component of a highly successful system which has helped produce the most efficient system of agriculture in the world? In the light of shifting and declining populations and resources, the answer is yes.

We must modernize SOE programs to meet the needs of a changing clientele. Programs which have been traditionally production oriented must expand their curriculum and the corresponding SOEP component to meet the needs of the agribusiness community. Expansion of the curriculum to include course offerings in such areas as horticulture, small animal care and agribusiness sales and service would open up new vistas of occupationally related SOEP. In programs with large numbers of students from non-farm rural and urban populations, consider the use of existing facilities, resources and laboratories to provide group and individual SOEP. We offer the following suggestions, for your consideration, which may improve the quality of SOE programs:

- Grow two crops in your greenhouse. One crop would be for school use, the other for SOEP use. Set up your SOE training program in a business-like manner. Students would share in profits in a direct relationship to the success of the production and sale of the crop. Rotate the students so they perform various job skills. Sales to the public should be involved so the students can develop proper communication skills.
- Use a resource which is unique in your geographic area as a training station. In the northeast, many FFA chapters operate maple sugar houses. This type of situation may also be used as a group SOE program.
- Subcontract with an agribusiness (nursery, landscape, horticulture, or agricultural mechanics business) to perform services for group SOE programs. Mail order agribusiness companies may require workers to set up facilities which have been ordered in the area.
- The floriculture students who need SOE programs can serve the needs of the school and faculty with year-round crops and designs. Consider small jobs in floral design for the holiday seasons, and at special functions such as receptions and weddings.
- Students can meet the needs of the community by designing and producing custom farm equipment to meet the specific needs of the farmer.

Hopefully, this will promote closer ties with agribusiness and industry to insure that every placement or cooperative occupational experience is in fact a "quality" experience which provides the student with necessary employability skills after graduation. In short, we must retool the system to meet the needs of a diverse student population and a growing agribusiness community. We must seek new, cost effective ways to develop occupational proficiency in our students, and we must provide SOE experiences which have the potential of success . . . for our students, ourselves and the agribusiness community.

Reference

Atkinson, John W. and Norman T. Feather. A THEORY OF ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1966.

ASSISTANTSHIPS & FELLOWSHIPS

1984-85 Report . . .

Assistantships and Fellowships in Agricultural Education

BY A.P. BELL

(Editor's Note: Dr. Bell is Head of the Department of Agricultural Education at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, North Carolina 27411. He prepared this article on behalf of the Publications Committee of AATEA.)

The 1984-85 survey by the Publications Committee of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture of assistantships and fellowships in agricultural education reflects the reporting of 23 institutions. The findings are published to aid prospective graduate students in selecting an institution at which to study and to help them obtain financial assistance.

Key to Understanding

The information is provided in the following order: Nature of assistantships (number available); number of months available during year; beginning month of employment; amount of work expected; monthly remuneration and other considerations, such as remission of fees; whether aid is for master's, advanced graduate program or doctoral students; source of funds; the 1984 deadline for application; and

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Assistantships & Fellowships In Agricultural Education

the person to be contacted. Slight variations in this pattern are due to the nature of the data provided by reporting institutions.

University of Arizona

Research Assistantships (2); 9 or 12 months; June or August; one-half time, 20 hours/week; $600 per month; out-of-state tuition waived; master's; department budget; March 1 or 6 months prior to enrollment; Floyd G. McCormick, Department of Agricultural Education, The University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona 85721.

Auburn University

Research and Evaluation (1-2); 12 months; June or September; 15 hours/week; $480-$560 per month; doctoral; March 1 for June appointment and July 1 for September appointment; Richard A. Baker, Vocational and Adult Education, Auburn University, 5032 Haley Center, Auburn, Alabama 36849.

Colorado State University

Research Assistantships (5-8); 9 months; September; 20 hours/week; $465-$700 per month; tuition waived for GTA's; master's and doctoral; university and Contracts and Grants; April 15; Donald L. Richardson, Department of Vocational Education, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado 80523.

Teaching Assistantships (3); 9 months; September; 20 hours/week; $465-$700 per month; tuition waived for GTA's; master's and doctoral; university and contracts and grants; April 15; contact same as above.

University of Connecticut

Assistantship (1); 9 months; September; 20 hours/week; $5665-$6098 per year plus waiver of tuition; master's, sixth year or doctoral; State funding; March 1; Alfred J. Mannebach, Department of Higher, Technical and Adult Education, U-93, School of Education, University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut 06268, (203/486-4813).

Cornell University

Teaching Assistantship — Internship (1); 12 months; June or September; 15 hours/week; $6,724 annually ($257.89 bi-weekly); waiver of tuition and fees; doctoral; State funding; April 15; William E. Drake, 204 Stone Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 14853, (607/256-2197).

Research Assistantships (3); 9 or 12 months; June or September; 15 hours/week; $4,900 for 9 months, $6,724 for 12 months ($257.89 bi-weekly); waiver of tuition and fees; master's and doctoral; Hatch Act Research Funds; April 15; contact same as above.

University of Florida

Assistantships for research; plan and coordinate in-service activities; curriculum development (3-5); 9-12 months; August; 14-20 hours/week; $435 per month; out-of-state portion of fees waived; master's; varies depending upon position; April 1; C.E. Beeman, Department of Agriculture and Extension Education, 305 Rolfs Hall, Gainesville, Florida 32611.

Iowa State University

Research Assistantships (4); 12 months; July or September; 20 hours/week; one-half time; $600 per month; fee reduction; master's or doctoral; Agricultural Experiment Station and special projects funded by State and Federal Agencies; March 1; David L. Williams, Department of Agricultural Education, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

Fellowships (2); 12 months; September; 20 hours/week; $600 per month; full fees paid; master's or doctoral; USOE for Minorities and Women, Double Major or Major/Minor Program — Agricultural Education and a selected Technical Agriculture Area; March 1, 1984; contact same as above.

Kansas State University

Teaching Assistantship (1); 9 months; academic year; August 22; 16 hours/week; $512 per month; out-of-state fees waived, in state fees reduced; master's and doctoral; March 15, 1984; Ralph Field, Department of Adult and Occupational Education, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas 66506, (913/532-5535).

Louisiana State University

Research and Teaching Assistantships (2-3); 9 or 12 months; August; 20 hours/week; $450-$650 per month; tuition waived; master's and doctoral; March 15; Gary Moore, School of Vocational Education, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803.

Michigan State University

Graduate Assistantship (1); 12 months; September 15 through August 15; 20 hours/week; $650 per month; doctoral; Carroll H. Warmhoff, Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824.

Mississippi State University

Research Assistantships (2); 10 or 12 months; July or August; one-half time; $650 per month minimum; out-of-state fees waived; doctoral; March 1, 1984; Jasper S. Lee, Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, Post Office Drawer AV, Mississippi State, Mississippi 39762, (601/325-3326).

Teaching Assistantship (1); 9 months; August; one-half time, $600 per month; out-of-state fees waived; master's, educational specialist, or doctoral; March 1, 1984; contact same as above.

University of Missouri-Columbia

Research Assistantships (2-4); 9-12 months; July and September 1; 20 hours/week; $555 per month; out-of-state fees waived; doctoral; May 1; Curtis R. Weston, Agricultural Education, 435 General Classroom Building, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri 65211.

Teaching Assistantships (2-3); 9 months; August 20; 20 hours/week; $700 per month; out-of-state fees waived; doctoral; May 1; contact same as above.

Montana State University

Graduate Research Assistantship (1); 9 months; 12 hours/week; $4,200 per year; out-of-state fees waived and tuition reduced in-state by one-half; March 1; Montana Agricultural Experiment Station — Ag Production/Ag Business Manpower; Max L. Amberson, Agricultural and Industrial Education, Montana State University, Cheever Hall, Bozeman, Montana 59717, (406/994-3201).

Graduate Teaching Assistantships (2-4); 9 months; 12 hours/week; $4,000-$4,440 per year; out-of-state fees waived and tuition reduced in-state by one-half; March 1; contact same as above.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Graduate Teaching Assistantship — Assistant Instructor (1); 9 or 12 months; 30 July 1-September 1; 30 hours/week; $1,000 (negotiated); fee remission; master's or doctoral; April 1; O.L. Gilbertson, Agricultural Education, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 302 Agriculture Hall, Lincoln, Nebraska 68583.

Graduate Teaching Assistant/GRA (1); 9 or 12 months; July 1-September 1; 20 hours/week $500, fee remission; master's; April 1; contact same as above.

New Mexico State University

Teaching Assistantship (1); 9 months; September 1; one-half time; $640-$700 per month, out-of-state tuition waived; master's; March 15, 1984; Leon Wagley, Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, New Mexico State University, Box 3501, Las Cruces, New Mexico 88003.

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University

Assistantships (3); 9 months; August; 10 hours/week; $300 per month; University budget; July 1, 1984; A.P. Bell, Head, Department of Agricultural Education, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, North Carolina 27411, (919/379-7711).

The Ohio State University

Teaching associateships (1-2) in Agricultural Education; 12 months; July 1 or later; one-half time, $525-675 per month, in- and out-of-state fees waived; doctoral students; February 1; Dr. J. Robert Warmbrod, Dept. of Agricultural Education, The Ohio State University, 208 Agricultural Administration Building, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, OH 43210, (614/422-6321).

Research associateships (3-4) in Agricultural Education; 9 to 12 months; July 1 or later; one-half time; $450-675 per month; master's or doctoral; February 1; contact same as above.

Teaching associateships (1-2) in Agricultural Mechanization; 12 months; July 1 or later; one-half time; $650-700 per month; in- and out-of-state fees waived; doctoral students with teaching experience; March 1; Dr. Joe Gliem or Dr. Byron Bondurant, Dept. of Agricultural Engineering, Ives Hall, 2073 Neil Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210, (614/422-8972).

Research associateships (12-15) in Vocational Education; July 1 or later; one-half time; $615 per month, doctoral; $510 per month, master's; in- and out-of-state fees waived; February 1 (will accept applications year round); Dr. Robert E. Taylor, NCRVE, The Ohio State University, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210, (614/486-3655).

Oklahoma State University-Stillwater

Teaching Assistantships (2) Undergraduate Professional Courses; September 1; 20 hours/week; $630-$685 per month; out-of-state fees waived, possibility of partial fee waiver scholarship; doctoral, University funds; August 1, 1984; contact same as above.

Research Assistantship (1) Assisting in Computer Programming and ERIC searches, writing RFP's, Development of literature reviews for staff research and possibly assisting in teaching research design course in Agricultural Education; 10 months; September 1; 20 hours/week; $630-$685 per month; out-of-state fees waived, possibility of partial fees waiver scholarship; doctoral; Experiment Station funds; August 1, 1983; contact same as above.

Teaching Assistantship (1) Assisting with Introductory and Advanced Ag. Mech. classes; 10 months; September 1; 20 hours/week; $630-$685 per month; out-of-state fees waived, possibility of partial fees waiver; master's or doctoral; Agricultural Mechanics funds; August 1, 1984; George Cook, Department of Agricultural Engineering, 109 Agriculture Hall, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078, (405/624-5129).

Oregon State University

Assistantship (1) Supervise student teachers and teach undergraduate courses; 9 months; September; $867 per month and staff fee reduction; master's in Agricultural Education acceptable but prefer Ph.D. candidate in Vocational Education with Agricultural Education major; Soft money — grants; July 1, 1984; Lee Cole, Agricultural Education, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon 97331.

The Pennsylvania State University

Teaching and Research Assistantships (4); 12 months; August; 20 hours/week; $750 per month; remission of fees; master's and doctoral candidates; March 1; Samuel M. Curtis, Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, 102 Armsby Building, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802, (814/865-1688).

Purdue University

Teaching Assistantship (1); 10 months; August-May; teaching undergraduate courses and supervising student teachers; $494 per month with remission of fees; Master's or Ph.D.; Departmental Funds; March 1, 1984; William B. Richardson, Vocational Education, Purdue University, South Campus Courts F-25, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907.

Utah State University

Teaching Assistantship (1); 10 months; September; 20 hours/week; $550 per month; out-of-state waivers; Teaching and student teacher visits, manpower studies, preparation of curriculum resource materials; B.S. Degree; minimum of three years' teaching experience; professional membership; able to meet Utah State University requirements for graduate study; have completed GRE examination; Master's degree only; March 15, 1984; Gilbert A. Long, Department of Agricultural Education, Utah State University, UMC 48, Logan, Utah 84322, (801/750-2230).

University of Wisconsin-River Falls

Graduate Assistantship (1); 9 months; September; 15 hours/week; $470-$490 per month plus remission of out-of-state fees; master's; State funding; March 1; Richard A. Jensen, Department of Agriculture Education, University of Wisconsin-River Falls, River Falls, Wisconsin 54022.

National FFA Officers Elected

The FFA elected six new national officers on November 12 in Kansas City, Missouri. The six were selected at the 56th National FFA Convention and will lead the organization for a year.

Seated (left to right): Bill Caraway, 19, of Clovis, New Mexico, National Secretary; Ron Wineinger, 20, of Marion, Kansas, National President.

Standing (left to right): Rhonda Scheulen, 20, of Loose Creek, Missouri, National Vice President, Southern Region; Chuck Duggar, National Vice President, Central Region; Melody Lawson, 20, of Peoria, Arizona, National Vice President, Western Region, and Carol Irvine, 19, of Gaithersburg, Maryland, National Vice President, Eastern Region. (Photograph courtesy of the National FFA Center.)