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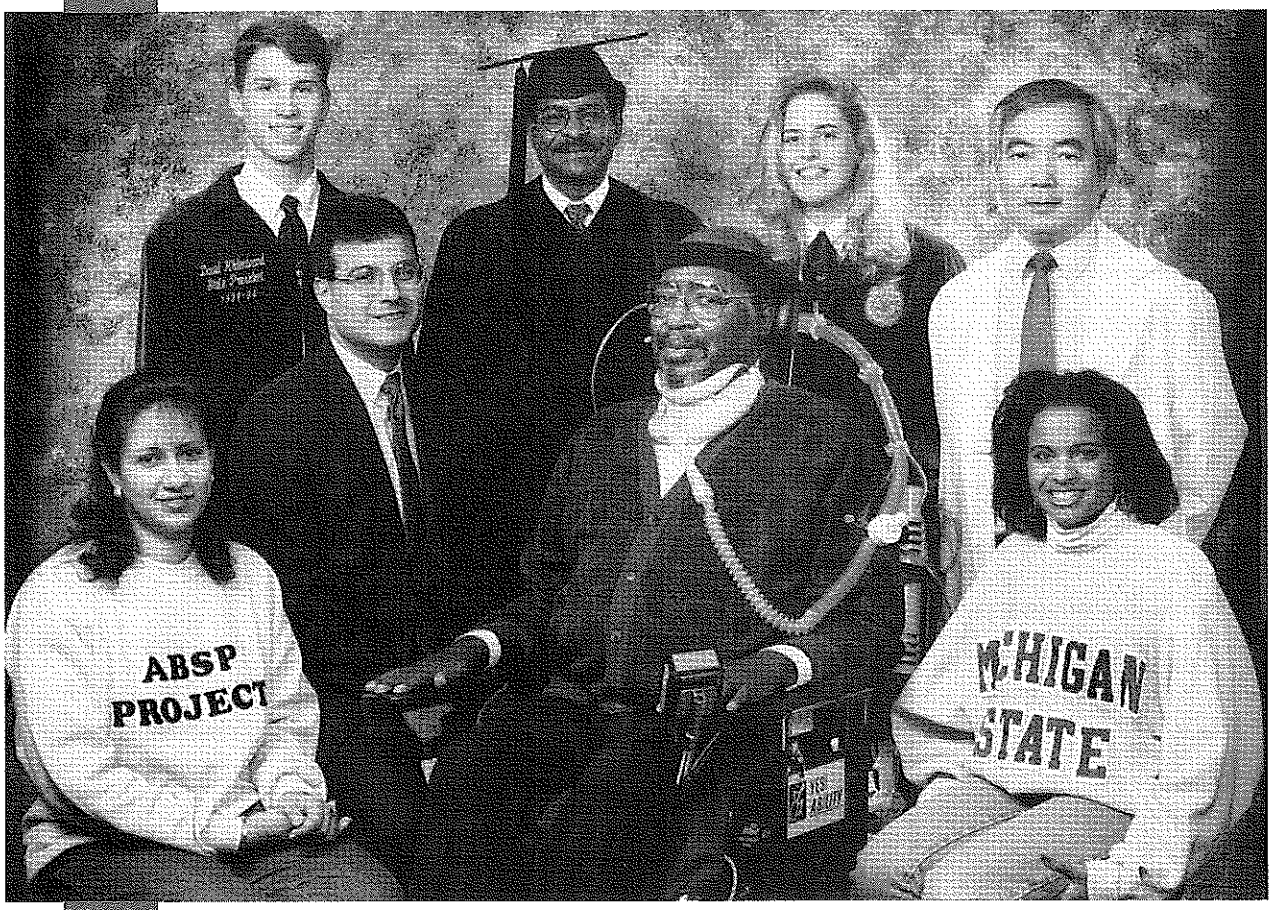


# Supporting Professional Diversity

## *The Need for Diversity*
## *Impediments to Diversity*
## *Strategies for Supporting Diversity*

THE
# AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION
MAGAZINE

June, 1994 Volume 66 Number 12



## Table of Contents



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# A Long Way To Go

BY ED OSBORNE

*Dr. Osborne is associate professor and program chair of agricultural education at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.*

How much ethnic and gender diversity in any profession is enough? We have made some progress in diversifying our student populations by gender at both the secondary and postsecondary levels, but we have a long way to go in developing a truly diverse corps of agricultural educators at any level. When I attend conferences, especially those for university agricultural education faculty, the IBM syndrome (white males in matching suits) is a little too familiar. The corps of agricultural educators at the secondary level is somewhat more diverse in most states from both an ethnic and gender basis, but much greater diversity is needed.

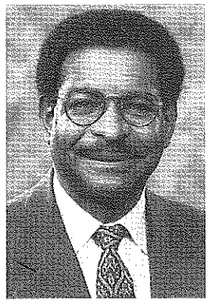
Why should a profession be concerned about how diverse its membership is? The medical profession is clearly dominated by white males. I hear friends complain about the lack of gender and ethnic diversity in physicians. Is the American Medical Association working to increase diversity? Is greater diversity even a stated goal of the AMA or its affiliate groups? For once, a comparison to the medical profession doesn't make education look second rate! In the business of educating people — all types of people — we cannot be optimally effective unless we have a diverse professional corps. Students under our charge, whether high school, college, or adults, must have positive learning experiences under the leadership of a diverse group of educators. Not only will this enhance learning, especially for minority students, it will also help to remove gender and ethnic biases and reinforce the idea that all people can work side by side toward a common goal. Diversity in the professions may even be a prerequisite for greater harmony and accepted diversity in society at large.

But how do we bring about greater diversity among agricultural education professionals? How much diversity is enough? Ideally, the ethnic and gender make-up of our profession should parallel the composition of our nation as a whole. Why aren't half of our secondary agriculture teachers or university faculty female? Why isn't at least 30% of our profession comprised of ethnic minorities? Several obvious circumstances explain our lack of progress in diversifying the profession. First, a large majority of secondary agriculture teachers and university agricultural education faculty are white males. In general, people tend to surround themselves with the familiar. Thus, most of our educators tend to consciously or unconsciously seek out members of the majority. Secondly, the absence of minority role models in agricultural education is striking. Thirdly, in general, minorities tend to shy away from agriculture as a career field.

Women and ethnic minority applicants should be given full consideration when making hiring decisions. In addition, special consideration may sometimes be warranted, even though such special consideration often creates tension between the majority and minority cultures. But as one author in this issue stated, many minority applicants have not benefitted from experiences comparable to those of the majority (white males in our case). Thus, what may be mistaken for a lack of ability among minority applicants may more accurately be due to a lack of life and educational opportunity and when given the opportunity, the ability of these applicants may meet or exceed that of other applicants.

So what can be done to increase the percentage of minorities in our profession? As several authors in this issue stress, an important key is the individual educator. While many policies and special programs now exist that are designed to attract more minority personnel into education, only through the action and initiative of individual teachers/faculty will these programs make a difference. The same holds true for our professional organizations. AAAE, NVATA, and NASAE can discuss this issue forever, but until individual educators decide to work to improve professional diversity, little progress will be made. The challenge to each of us is to become aware of our own biases, take the initiative to work with minority students and faculty, avoid the use of offending stories and language, and work within our own institutions to support diversity. This means encouraging diversity in our classrooms and programs, as well as in our faculty teams. To be sure, the dire lack of diversity within our profession will not be corrected overnight; we must persistently and consciously chip away at this difficult problem until all levels of the agricultural education profession are as diverse as the publics which we serve. To be satisfied with diversity short of this goal is to shortchange ourselves and our students of invaluable life experiences. ■

# Supporting Diversity: A Challenge and Opportunity for the Profession



BY EDDIE A. MOORE

*Dr. Moore is professor of agricultural and extension education at Michigan State University, East Lansing.*

In 1983, I had the opportunity to serve as President of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture (AATEA), an organization now called the American Association for Agricultural Education. As AATEA president, I assisted the leadership in the profession and others concerned about agricultural education in establishing the National Council for Agricultural Education. Those I worked with reaffirmed my belief that agricultural educators are some of the most dedicated, hardworking, and committed people that we are going to find in any discipline. However, it was depressing to learn that the profession lacked innovative, creative, visionary, bold, and dynamic national leadership. Since the Council has been in operation, it has provided some of the missing national leadership in the profession. Unfortunately, it is going to take some time for the Council to address a number of issues related directly to the Council itself. However, I believe the Council has the potential to provide even greater national leadership than in the past.

As was the case in the 1980s, agricultural education is confronted with a number of issues and challenges. The profession, the Council, and others who are concerned about agricultural education will need to determine priorities carefully. Considering changes in demographics, industry needs, and general societal needs, supporting diversity in agricultural education should be a high priority. The focus of diversity should be on people, programs, and the institutions/systems that are responsible for various programs in the states. The profession, as well as key individuals who are responsible for program delivery, would be ill-advised to join the rhetoric bandwagon of giving only "lip service" to diversity with little results. Such rhetoric frustrates many in the majority population because it implies that minorities are getting something the majority population may feel entitled to having. In fact, a variety of data clearly indicates that minorities and women are not receiving their fair share of resources. Such rhetoric also has the potential for frustrating some minorities because it increases their expectations. This publication is designed to assist readers in understanding diversity and to make some suggestions for effectively addressing this issue.

Our country is over 200 years old, and there has been some progress in the area of race relations and diversity. However, the evidence would suggest that an enormous amount of work needs to be applied toward this major societal problem. Bowen and Jackson (1992) reported:

> The United States is increasingly recognizing that a society can be great and excellent if diversity is encouraged rather than suppressed through such concepts as melting pots and theories that promote homogeneity. However, to achieve the ideals of a great yet diverse society, countless struggles must be endured to educate the populace through a system of public education that has been predicated upon and dominated by the values, mores, and cultural heritage of Western Europeans in general . . . (p.1)

In attempting to decide whether diversity should be a high priority for the future, individuals and all entities that are concerned about agricultural education may wish to review projected demographic data. Hodgkinson (1985) stated:

> . . . by around the year 2000, America will be a nation in which one of every THREE of us will be non-white. And minorities will cover a broader socioeconomic range than ever before, making simplistic treatment of their needs even less useful. (p.7)

***"Considering changes in demographics, industry needs, and general societal needs, supporting diversity in agricultural education should be a high priority. The focus of diversity should be on people, programs, and the institutions/systems that are responsible for various programs in the states."***

This projection by Hodgkinson would suggest that the agricultural education profession has a role to play in light of this trend. It is believed that a variety of entities will serve the needs of an increasingly diverse population. Individually and as a profession, we need to determine whether we are willing and capable of responding effectively to the educational needs of minorities, females, and students with learning disabilities. At this point in the history of agricultural education, the evidence clearly →



reveals that we have not been very responsive to the educational needs of these important societal groups. Without a doubt, it would be a challenge for the profession to serve more minorities, females, and students with learning disabilities. However, I view this issue as an opportunity for the profession to demonstrate that it has the commitment, willingness, and leadership to be more responsive to these students.

My agricultural literacy experiences with elementary and academic secondary teachers over the last four years have proven to me that our profession could very well be leading the charge with respect to educational reform in the United States. Have we forgotten that some of the earlier leaders in education in the U.S. were agricultural education faculty in the nation's premier land-grant colleges? A case in point, the contributions of Dr. Walter French, the first professor of agricultural education at Michigan State University, were summarized very well by Noll (1968) when he stated:

> French, almost alone, was responsible for establishing a Department of Education on the Michigan State campus. Before he arrived, education was an orphan, a field which no one on the faculty valued as his or her interest. When he left it was a well-organized, well-established department in its own right, and French was recognized on the campus as a strong leader and a great teacher.

The profession has the responsibility of assisting higher education systems and other entities in meeting employment demands in the food and agricultural sciences. Since the profession is only serving a small percentage of available students, any attempt to meet future employment demands should be examined in the context of diversity. In looking at higher education data, it appears that land-grant colleges of agriculture and natural resources have not graduated enough students over the last several years to meet employment demands. In light of this situation, Coulter, Goecker, and Stanton (1990) stated:

> Unless enrollment trends reverse quickly, employers will look increasingly to higher education programs outside colleges of agriculture, natural resources, and veterinary medicine for qualified graduates.

If agricultural education perceives itself to be a part of the food, agriculture, and natural resources system, it will need to decide what role it has to play in assisting the industry in meeting the needs for highly competent workers. In order to meet future projections, the agricultural education profession and land-grant colleges of agriculture will have to take a serious look at the whole issue of diversity. The diversity issue will have to be addressed in the context of people, programs, and the institutions that are involved. Moreover, in order to be more responsive to diversity, the discipline and the nation's land-grant academy will have to develop more innovative, creative, visionary, dynamic, and bold leadership to reap the benefits of this opportunity.

As theme editor, I have asked a select group who are knowledgeable and have experiences in addressing the issue of diversity to submit articles for this publication. Reading, reflecting, dialoguing, and acting on these articles can provide an excellent foundation for achieving notable results in our attempts to support diversity in agricultural education.

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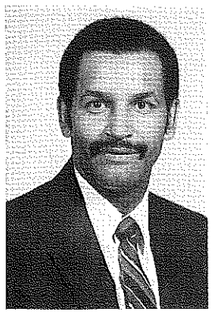
## About the Cover . . .

This diverse group is from the Michigan State University community. Seated from left to right is Shireen Assem, Assistant Researcher, Agricultural Biotechnology for Sustainable Productivity (ABSP) Project; Alexander Torres, Admissions Officer; Dr. James B. Hamilton, Consultant to the Provost; and Angela Moore, President of the Students Against Drinking and Driving Club at Okemos High School. Standing left to right is Dave Hildenbrand, 1993-94 President of the Michigan FFA Association; Dr. Eddie A. Moore, Professor, Department of Agricultural and Extension Education; Kara Bouchard, 1993-94 FFA State Vice President for Region V; and Dr. Melvin Yokoyama, Professor, Animal Science Department. (Photo courtesy of Bruce A. Fox, Michigan State University.)

# Reflections on the Need for Diversity: Desegregation vs. Integration



BY BLANNIE E. BOWEN

*Dr. Bowen is C. Lee Rumberger and Family Professor of Agriculture in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at Pennsylvania State University, University Park.*

Since the 1960s, most racial and gender segregation has been eliminated by legislation, executive orders, and judicial actions. This overt pressure quickly desegregated agricultural education by removing most legal barriers to participation. However, 35 years after the first mandates, the profession's quest for diversity is being severely hampered by repeated failures to distinguish between desegregation and integration. Thus, the integration of females and minorities into the fabric of a desegregated agricultural education is proving to be slow and difficult. Demographic trends suggest that effective integration cannot wait much longer.

## Current Trends

Females constitute almost half of the U.S. population. By the year 2000, ethnic minorities will comprise a third of all public school students (Pine & Hilliard, 1990). Currently, Hispanics and Asian-Pacific Islanders are the two fastest growing minority groups in the U.S. This growth means that California will be the first state where ethnic minorities constitute the majority. Florida and Texas will soon follow with minority majorities. Also, U.S. public schools are becoming more segregated as busing and other desegregation approaches are being abandoned (Manzo, 1993). Further, although the number of African American males who graduate from high school has increased significantly since the 1970s, the number that graduate from college is decreasing.

Collectively, these trends present golden opportunities, yet formidable challenges. For example, major changes over the past 25 years have done little to change the perceptions of some that agricultural education is still for white males. The profession often counters this perception with philosophical arguments that the race and gender of a teacher, professor, and supervisor do not influence who participates in agricultural education. However, 1992-93 FFA membership data provide a hint that perception may equal reality as it relates to secondary schools.

Females constituted a fourth of the 417,000 FFA members in 1992-93. Minority group percentages were: Hispanic-5.34%, African American-4.52%, Native American-1%, and Asian American -.46% (National FFA, 1993). From an access perspective, females constituted half of the student body in schools with FFA chapters, but only 27% of the FFA membership. The percentages for ethnic minorities were in closer harmony. In schools with FFA chapters, minorities constituted 18% of the student body and 12% of the FFA membership (Personal interview with Bernie Staller, FFA Chief Operating Officer, February 3, 1994). These gender and ethnicity discrepancies illustrate that changes are needed to strike an ideal diversity balance.

> ***"However, 35 years after the first mandates, the profession's quest for diversity is being severely hampered by repeated failures to distinguish between desegregation and integration."***

Diversity aside, the above data do not highlight the enormous potential to educate more students about the food and agricultural sciences. The profession now reaches only the tip of a gigantic iceberg. Even with the enrollment and FFA membership increases of the past few years, the profession serves only about 600,000 of America's 42 million public school students. Consequently, the profession must prepare more teachers who can deliver contemporary instruction for increasing numbers of rural nonfarm, suburban, and urban students.

## History As A Guide

History refutes the premise that minorities are not interested in the food and agricultural sciences. At the 1937 Southern Region Conference of State Supervisors and Negro Teacher Trainers, Elam (1938) reported that enrollments in Negro agricultural schools had increased from 1,025 during 1917-18 to 41,217 during 1935-36. Also, when the black New Farmers of America (NFA) adopted its constitution in 1936, there were 313 chapters and over 9,000 members (see Table 1). These numbers had increased to 1,000 chapters and 52,000 members when the NFA and the white FFA merged in 1965. By comparison, African Americans constituted approximately 4.5% of the FFA's 1992-93 membership.

History also indicates that before the NFA-FFA merger, there were many African → American teachers, supervisors, and professors. For example, a decade after the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917, the number of African American professors, supervisors, and teachers increased rapidly. An influx of federal funds into segregated states meant at least one Negro itinerant teacher trainer (supervisor) and a staff of teacher trainers for the 1890 institutions. By 1942, there were 936 Negro teachers (see Table 2). Ironically, federally mandated desegregation and resultant state compliance efforts in the 1960s and 1970s triggered the rapid disappearance of African American teachers, supervisors, and professors (Bowen & Moore, forthcoming).

**Table 1: New Farmers of America (NFA) Membership Throughout the Years**

| Year | #of Chapters* | Active Membership* | State Associations |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1936 | 313 | 9,433 | na |
| 1941 | 927 | 25,781 | 17 |
| 1950 | 950 | 28,000 | 17 |
| 1953 | 1,008 | 36,942 | 17 |
| 1959 | 1,039 | 51,205 | na |
| 1963 | na | 58,132 | 15 |
| 1965 | na | 52,000 | na ** |

* - Data from *NFA Convention Proceedings* and *Guide for the NFA.*; ** - Maryland NFA Association had merged with the FFA; **na** - Data not available.

**Table 2: Full-time and Prorated Negro Teachers of Agriculture in 1942***

| State | Total # Teachers | Total # of Prorated Teachers | # Also Principals | # Teaching Non-Ag Classes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Totals | 936 | 369 | 144 | 225 |

*From W.N. Elam, Federal Agent for Agricultural Education, Special Groups (1944, p.25).

The above declines are often linked to (1) desegregation, (2) fewer African American farmers, and (3) minorities equating agriculture with slavery and low paying jobs. Bell, Powers, and Rogers (1987) believed that desegregation ended the infrastructure to sustain African Americans in agricultural education. Some say discriminatory post-desegregation certification practices also reduced the number of teachers. Others cite retirements without replacements and the African American teacher being assigned to junior high schools as other deterrents to participation.

Regardless of the causes, once African American teachers vanished, their strong community leadership roles were not sustained by white teachers. This situation severely impacted the 1890 institutions that graduated most African Americans. With few teachers to recruit students for the 1890s, the number of African American teachers plummeted.

## Preparing Minority Teachers

During the post-desegregation era, neither the predominantly black or white land-grant institutions, nor the predominantly white non-land-grant institutions have graduated many minority teachers. Thus, few teachers of any race now steer minority students into agriculture classes **and** college preparatory courses. This scenario validates calls for the minority teacher pipelines to be replenished. In response, stringent accountability systems are increasingly linking a university's state and federal funds to that institution's capacity to graduate minority students in proportion to the state's population.

From a progress perspective, writings in several publications confirm that gender equity has received much attention. Further, most in the profession agree that progress has occurred. On the secondary level, countless female students enroll in courses. FFA officer teams reflect gender equity progress. Females are increasingly being graduated and hired as teachers. Also, several universities have at least one female professor. However, many horizons remain.

In terms of measurable progress, agricultural education has had the least success with ethnic diversity. This is not surprising. From 1964-1966, virtually no articles were published in →

this journal about the 1965 NFA-FFA merger. Today, most professional publications focus on minorities, but the research literature is virtually devoid of minority oriented studies. However, now that the profession has chosen to seriously address integration 35 years after it was desegregated, ethnic diversity is being pursued on a number of fronts.

The FFA has hired a minority staff member to enhance its diversity. In 1993, the AAAE Diversity Work Group produced a monograph (Bowen, 1993) and discussed diversity in vocational education (Bowen & Jackson, 1992). Both monographs are available through ERIC. Also, the NVATA and other segments of the profession are implementing diversity initiatives.

## Solutions

The following illustrate efforts that should have a long-term, positive impact on the quest for integration. During summer 1994, Penn State faculty will conduct a one-week intensive workshop for 10 minority high school science teachers and 20 of their 9th-11th graders (Bowen & Bowen, 1994). The goal is to expose teachers and students to food and environmental sciences curricula. Participants will be recruited through extension offices in the state's urban centers. This workshop is being funded by the University at a cost of about $6,000.

Further, the Institute for Future Agricultural Leaders (IFAL) that Jasper S. Lee initiated at Mississippi State University in 1982 is another viable option. Although that program was discontinued after 10 years, the concept has been adopted in North Carolina. In cooperation with the Farm Bureau, North Carolina State, and North Carolina A&T, each conducts summer IFAL programs for 30-40 high school students. Residential programs of this nature can provide solid university experiences for minority students who can become first generation college students.

Also, Texas A&M University conducts an innovative program (Ag JumpStart) for minority students who have limited agricultural experiences and by traditional measures, limited potential for success in college. To date, this program is producing more high caliber minority students for the food and agricultural sciences.

Nationally, the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) organization is increasing the number of minorities in the food and agricultural sciences. Since its founding in 1988, MANRRS has grown to include more than 300 students and 150 professionals in more than 30 chapters. On several campuses, white faculty advise the chapter. An annual conference rotates between 1862 and 1890 campuses. Future plans include creating high school chapters, such as the one at Saul High School in Philadelphia. However, few agricultural educators are seizing the opportunity to enhance diversity through MANRRS.

## Summary

Since the 1980s, agricultural educators have used various approaches to diversify the profession. Many efforts are being attempted to diversify the supervisory staff, teacher corps, and teacher education faculty. NVATA, NASAE, AAAE, and most universities have diversity committees, task forces, and study groups. However, demographic trends suggest that gender and ethnic diversity must be pursued more aggressively if agricultural educators wish to be major players in America's educational enterprise during the next decade.

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# Understanding Impediments to Diversity in Agricultural Education


BY LINDA WHENT

*Dr. Whent is an agricultural teacher educator at the University of California, Davis.*


Two years ago, for the first time in the history of the University of California, Davis, incoming minority freshmen students outnumbered white students. As these enrollment figures illustrate, changes in the demographics of the application pool and in college admissions policies are bringing about a greater diversity in freshman classes (Davis, 1991). John Naisbitt, in his book Megatrends, predicted that the population diversity in states such as California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona were examples of future population trends across the nation (Naisbitt, 1982). Yet, in the United States the agricultural education profession continues to exhibit a severe shortage of teachers and students from diverse populations. A study by the National FFA Organization (1993) revealed that 26.5% of the FFA membership was female, and only 11.9% were non-white. As U.S. agricultural educators plan for the future with an increasingly diverse population and prepare to serve a global economy, there is a great need to recruit and retain members of diverse populations in teaching programs. However, often members of minority populations are impeded from entering agricultural education because of embedded biases of teachers and white students.

## What Are Embedded Biases?

Embedded biases can be subtle or blatant and are usually unconscious. They are expressed when teachers and/or students have preconceived ideas about a specific race or gender that limits the acceptance or success of that group in specific programs or careers. People with embedded biases can subtly or blatantly treat some people as less than equal. One example of embedded bias came from a California survey where a man reported to an open-ended question of how to improve a program with the following statement: "I am not sexist, but I don't think women should be allowed into the program." Obviously, and sadly, this man was unaware of his embedded bias toward women. It is important to note that any time people are excluded because of gender or ethnicity, and for no other reason, they are facing discrimination.

## Embedded Biases That Impede Access Into Agricultural Education

Results from a national agricultural education 1991 diversity survey sent to college agricultural education departments revealed that many agriculture teacher educators did not perceive recruitment, retention, and support of students from diverse populations as a problem or concern in agricultural education. In addition, female students were not perceived by some teacher educators as minorities. When agricultural educators identify minority populations, they need to look at the profession as a whole, not just their student population. Minorities and women are most certainly underrepresented in the agricultural education profession across the nation. Anyone can observe the disparity at any agricultural education meeting, at any level of the profession. The failure on the part of people in the field of agricultural education to even notice that women and minorities are poorly represented is an indication of just how deeply embedded and how unconscious the bias is.

> ***"Yet, in the United States, the agricultural education profession continues to exhibit a severe shortage of teachers and students from diverse populations... often members of minority populations are impeded from entering agricultural education because of embedded biases of teachers and white students."***

Embedded biases can be expressed in many ways. It is common to observe embedded biases toward people of other cultures. A teacher who assumes that most African American, Chicano/Latino, or Native American students require special help or cannot complete work as well as white students is expressing an embedded bias. Students will perform to the standards set by a teacher. Because of bias, teachers may have lower standards or expectations for students from diverse populations. Instructors may unconsciously base their expectations of student performance on factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and appearance, instead of on ability (Green, 1989). As a result, the teacher's expectations can encourage or discourage participation and achievement of students. Consequently, minority and female students may not be challenged to achieve to their highest ability. →

Many agricultural educators seem to be unaware of their embedded biases against women working in agricultural education, for example, educators who discourage female students from undertaking projects that require physical or quantitative work. Educators who refer to parallel groups using terms of unequal weight, such as *men* and *girls* rather than *men* and *women*, are expressing this bias, as is the teacher who routinely assigns managerial tasks to males and clerical tasks to females. An educator (at any level in agricultural education) who tells sexual jokes, shows slides of nude women, or circulates demeaning handouts of women or ethnic minorities during a class, lecture, or meeting is showing a total insensitivity to the women in the audience, as well as exhibiting his own bias.

> ***"Minorities and women are most certainly underrepresented in the agricultural education profession across the nation. Anyone can observe the disparity at any agricultural education meeting, at any level of the profession. The failure on the part of people in the field of agricultural education to even notice that women and minorities are poorly represented is an indication of just how deeply embedded and how unconscious the bias is."***

Probably the most common bias toward women in agricultural education is the expectation that they want to, or are capable of, teaching only horticulture. This is not true. Many women, given the opportunity, excel in the areas of animal science, agronomy, and agricultural mechanics. However, the effort of trying to overcome this deeply embedded bias reduces the number of women who try to break the stereotype.

A lack of patience by agriculture teacher educators and students toward people with different languages, dialects, or thinking processes has often been observed. Language bias is commonly exhibited when speech patterns are sometimes perceived as less intelligent (Green, 1989). It follows that people from other countries or cultures whose thinking processes may be different (for example, circular rather than linear) are perceived by white people to have confused logic and to be less intelligent or less capable of clear thinking.

Some embedded biases can be identified by the vocabulary agriculture teachers use in their classrooms. Since usage and style change over time, care must be taken to keep abreast of changes in terminology. For example, in the 1960s the term *Negro* changed to *Black*, and today the term is changing again to *African American*. Many American students of Mexican ancestry prefer to be called *Chicano* or *Latino* instead of *Hispanic*, and today most Asian students are offended when called *Oriental* (Davis, 1991).

Embedded bias can become very blatant during the employment process. While departments of agricultural education are likely to recruit all qualified students, regardless of gender or ethnicity, this standard is not necessarily followed when it is time to hire a new teacher or faculty member. People tend to recruit and hire others like themselves, and the agricultural profession is not exempt from this pattern. A white male will tend to hire another white male, even when more qualified women or minority applicants are seeking the position. Rationalizations against hiring people from diverse populations have included:

1. Women are not physically strong enough for the job.
2. Teachers already in the field will not accept a woman or minority.
3. Women will marry and leave the profession or job.
4. Minorities are lazy and will not get the needed work done.
5. There is no need to increase participation of diverse populations.
6. Men resent the competition or distraction of women in the workplace.

Minority and female students are often subjected to blatant discrimination when they are passed over for employment. A reason for hiring women and minorities in agricultural education programs is generally due to required hiring quotas and restrictions, rather than a futuristic vision to broaden cultural diversity.

## What Impedes Student Participation in Agricultural Education?

Many agriculture teacher educators identified recruitment of members of diverse populations into their program as a problem. Unfortunately, many students of diverse populations have reported that even when they are recruited into a program, they are often treated as unwelcome outsiders; they have described numerous forms of subtle bias that they encountered (Simpson, 1987; Woolbright, 1989; Green, 1989). Although educators are usually unaware of their biases, expression of embedded biases cause women and minority students to feel a sense of alienation and can hinder their personal, academic, and professional development (Davis, 1991).

Many white male teachers tend to use only white male models and examples when teaching. Students who are working toward a career in agriculture want to envision themselves in that career. When all class information is presented with white male standards, people from→





diverse populations are robbed of their vision and may feel excluded and alienated. Educators who use case studies, examples, and anecdotes composed only of white males most likely don't realize that they are ignoring over half of the population. The worst example of blatant embedded bias is the use of racist or sexist jokes during class, professional meetings, and events. When this type of discrimination occurs, people from diverse populations feel embarrassed and insulted.

People from diverse populations do not want to be conspicuous, singled out, or separate. It is difficult to be the only minority or woman. Students need to feel that they are included in the activities and workings of the department. To ensure an acceptable comfort level and minimize alienation, members of diverse populations require a critical mass of people as a support group. If most women and minority students in a department are involved with clubs "of their own kind" rather than the FFA, they may be sending a message that they do not feel a part of the agricultural education group.

Another impediment contributing to the underrepresentation of minorities in agricultural education is a bias on their part against agriculture. Many minority populations perceive farmwork as degrading and agricultural careers synonymous with hard fieldwork, low status, and low pay. At the present time, there are very few minority role models in agricultural education to change this perception. This problem represents a "Catch 22" situation: in order to increase their enrollment in agriculture, minority students need to be provided with examples of successful minorities in prosperous agricultural occupations. However, women and minority role models cannot be established unless members of diverse populations are actively recruited and supported by the agricultural industry.

## How Teachers Can Remove Their Embedded Biases

Educators in the field of agriculture, through conscious effort, work, and practice, can become aware of their own biases and the biases of their students, and they can work to reduce them. The first step in removing embedded biases is to become aware of the biases. Self-examination may be necessary in order to identify embedded biases. Educators can start by asking their students about the cultural climate in their classes. Care should be taken to talk with members of diverse populations privately, in a location where they do not feel threatened by discussing their true feelings.

Teachers should also take the time to become aware of the feelings and goals of minority and female students in their classes. They should correct any language patterns or case examples that exclude or demean any member of their classes. Each student should be treated as an individual and shown respect for his or her values and ideas. Teachers tend to give more praise and attention to white male students. Consequently, teachers need to remember to offer deserved praise to women and minority students as well. Examples and information that include people from diverse populations should be used during lessons. Whenever possible, gender neutral texts and handouts should be used and/or generated.

The issues of impediment of diverse populations into agricultural education should be discussed during sectional, regional, and state meetings. Invite people from the state Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action programs to share information about diverse populations with teachers during these meetings. Teachers can be encouraged to become more informed about the history and cultures of women and minority students in their community and state.

People of diverse populations cannot excel in agricultural education and overcome embedded biases if they are not given the opportunity to do so. There is a need to open doors and minds to the recruitment, retention, and hiring of people of diverse populations. One token woman or minority as a student or teacher does not adequately represent a critical mass, nor does it represent our increasingly diverse population. But the gender and the color of the agricultural industry is changing. Agricultural educators need to make greater strides toward acknowledging their unconscious biases toward people of diverse populations and move forward to accept the changes and challenges of the future.

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# Mentoring Diverse Populations: An Ongoing Process

BY MARQUITA CHAMBLESS JONES

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Any discussion about mentoring diverse populations, particularly within agriculture and related fields, must be preceded by a brief discussion of the concept of attracting diverse populations into these fields. In many colleges of agriculture across the nation, the number of ethnic minority students enrolled in degree programs is relatively small. Thus, mentoring and retention of these students is often not considered as high a priority as is recruitment.

Enrollment of minority students in baccalaureate degree programs in agriculture and related areas at land-grant institutions ranged from a low of 2% of total enrollment in agriculture in 1978 to a high of 5% in 1985 (National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, 1986). In Fall 1990, enrollment of minority students in agricultural degree programs represented approximately 7.3% of total baccalaureate enrollment in land-grant colleges of agriculture (Litzenberg, Suter, & Whatley, 1991). During the late 1970s and early 1980s, attempts to attract minority students into agricultural degree programs met with limited success. In recent years, programs such as the Minority Apprenticeship Program (MAP), hosted by Michigan State University, and the Agricultural Institute for Minority Students (AIMS), held at the Pennsylvania State University, have experienced success in attracting minority students into degree programs in agriculture and related areas (Chamblee, 1986; Gardner, 1991).

Innovative recruitment strategies are continually being designed and implemented to attract minority students into agriculture-related fields and to improve the negative perceptions that many youths have of agriculture (Larke & Barr, 1987). The distorted perception of agriculture held by minority youth continues to be a difficult problem which colleges of agriculture must face (National Research Council, 1988; Hunte, 1992). As projected shortages in the supply of trained agriculturalists become more critical, increasing the enrollment of minority students in agriculture-related degree program areas may provide one means for meeting the demand.

## Pre-College Mentoring

For colleges of agriculture, the process of attracting minority youth, particularly at the 7th to 12th grade levels, is not simply a matter of exposing them to educational and career opportunities in agriculture and related fields. Of greater importance is exposing these young people to role models, that is, minority undergraduates studying in these disciplines and minority professionals practicing in them. In many cases, meeting with people who are actually working and studying in a given field can have a significant impact on a young person's career choice.

High school students participating in pre-college summer programs at universities benefit from having ongoing contact with undergraduate students enrolled in degree programs. High school students can relate more closely to undergraduates than they can to professionals and often feel freer to ask more pointed questions about campus life and the difficulties associated with being an "aggie." Regardless of whether a student attends a predominantly white or a predominantly minority college or university, being enrolled as an agriculture student usually puts them in a minority. Pre-college recruitment programs, such as those identified earlier, should build in opportunities for interaction and mentoring between minority undergraduates and prospective students.

## Pre-Professional Mentoring

If colleges are successful in their recruitment efforts and the fall brings an influx of new minority students, then the mentoring process steps up to a new level. The freshman year is a critical period in the academic and social development of new students and a time when a faculty or peer mentor can ease a student's transition from high school to college (Ellis, 1993). For minority freshmen enrolled in agriculture-related programs, interacting with other minorities studying agriculture and related fields can reduce feelings of isolation (particularly at predominantly white institutions), as well as ease the transition to college-level work. At some institutions, student chapters of organizations such as Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) provide students with the opportunity to network with minority agriculture students and faculty from their campus and from across the nation.

Contact with faculty members is also key to retaining students. Because of a lack of minority faculty members in many colleges of agriculture, non-minority faculty must take a more →





active role in mentoring minority students if their department or college's recruitment and retention efforts are to be successful (Gibbons, 1993). The need for one-on-one personal interaction with a faculty member is not unique to minority students. However, for some students, having a faculty member take personal interest in them dispels the notion that white faculty are unapproachable and disinterested. Likewise, non-minority faculty members should not feel that minority students are not interested in establishing mentoring relationships. Non-minority faculty also need to understand that the task of mentoring minority students should not automatically and solely be directed to those few minority faculty in the college. This often causes increased stress and can actually hinder the professional development of the minority faculty member. Many of these minority faculty members are often in need of mentors themselves.

## Professional Networking and Mentoring

A student's need for relationships with professional role models or mentors does not magically end once they complete their baccalaureate degree. The need for such relationships merely changes, and it differs according to the direction the individual takes after graduation — whether an advanced degree or a position in the work force is pursued.

The mentoring process for graduate students is generally assumed to be built into their relationship with their graduate advisor. However, this is not always the case; and although students can gain much from their academic advisor, it is still important for them to establish and maintain a support network of peers, faculty, and professionals both internal and external to their academic department. Nevertheless, the advisor-advisee relationship does provide a foundation for a mentoring experience for the graduate student. The same is not always true for young minority professionals beginning employment in agriculture and related industries. Likewise, new minority faculty members experience the need for support and advice from more senior faculty or administrators. While some companies and academic institutions may have formal mentoring programs in place, many others do not. Thus, new employees often "learn the ropes" through frustrating trial-and-error, from the grapevine, or by identifying role models and mentors on their own.

## MANRRS: Mentoring At All Stages of Academic and Professional Development

As this discussion has described, the mentoring needs of diverse populations vary. Academic institutions, governmental agencies, and private corporations must focus on strategies to meet these needs and thereby enhance minority participation at all levels of society. The establishment of a mentoring network for minority students and professionals in the agricultural and related sciences was once little more than a notion held in the minds of a few individuals. However, in 1986, through the efforts of a small group of minority students and professionals, the national society for Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) was established.

MANRRS developed from the desire to promote agriculture and related fields as areas providing strong career opportunities for ethnic minorities, as well as from the need to provide a support network for minority agriculture students and professionals. The objectives for the organization include the following:

> 1) To increase the number of students studying the agricultural sciences and related fields at both the undergraduate and graduate levels; (2) to foster a bond of fellowship among the students, faculty, staff, and administrators in colleges or schools of agriculture; (3) to emphasize the importance of the agricultural sciences and related fields and to inform people of professional opportunities in the agricultural sciences and related fields; and (4) to aid in the recruitment and placement of ethnic minorities in professional positions in the agricultural sciences and related fields (Foster & Henson, 1992).

Once a fairly small, regional effort, MANRRS is now a national organization made up of several hundred members across the United States. The organization represents diversity of ethnic backgrounds, as well as diversity of academic disciplines and professional entities. The membership of MANRRS includes secondary students (7th through 12th grade), college students, academic professionals, industry and corporate representatives, representatives from state and federal agencies, and private foundations. For many undergraduate and graduate students, as well as young professionals, MANRRS serves a vital function in providing a network of role models at academic institutions, government agencies, and industry. For established professionals, MANRRS provides the opportunity to serve as mentors and to ensure that a legacy of minority participation will continue beyond them.

Colleges of agriculture and natural resources must work cooperatively with organizations like MANRRS to provide adequate mentoring opportunities for their minority students. Professional organizations, trade associations, corporations, and government agencies should also form partnerships with MANRRS to promote positive work environments that will welcome and respect difference. Commitment to creating such an environment will ensure that future leaders in the food, agriculture, and

*(continued on page 16)*

# Supporting Diversity: An Unfinished Agenda

BY EDDIE A. MOORE

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In recent years, agricultural education has made remarkable progress in responding to a variety of challenges and opportunities. The National Council for Agricultural Education, the profession, foundations, the private sector, and other entities have assisted in achieving tremendous results in the last six years. However, if the agricultural education academy is going to reach its potential, it will need to give greater attention to supporting diversity. The focus of this diversity should be on **people, programs**, and the **institutions/systems** that are responsible for program delivery.

A general review of the data regarding these components would suggest that the discipline is just beginning to carry out the **mission** as stated by the Council (1991). We could easily rejoice in our accomplishments over the last several years, maintain the status quo, and make some minor adjustments in a number of areas. Some in the profession may say that the accomplishments in recent years have been revolutionary. At best, I would suggest that the changes have been evolutionary in nature. As a founding member of the Council, I believe we are in the early stages of achieving one of the most important goals of the Council. This goal, of course, is to give leadership that highlights futuristic planning designed to stimulate creativity; develop fresh initiatives; create a climate for renewal; and emphasize the importance of successful programs and the development of new programs.

## People, Programs, and Institutions

Hacker (1992) reported that in 1990 the U.S. population consisted of 74.2% Whites, 12.5% Blacks, 9.5% Hispanics, and 3.8% Asians/others. The academy will need to assess seriously how we compare in relation to society at large. Comparisons should be made in relation to the composition of the people in one's state. Some basic, yet specific questions for serious discussion are as follows:

1. Are students enrolled in agriscience programs and members of the FFA representative of available students (elementary, middle school, junior high school, and high school) in the respective states?

2. Are the numbers of employed agriculture teachers, state personnel, teacher educators, and administrators representative of the populations in the states?

If the discipline is going to achieve its mission, it will have to decide first and foremost what criteria it will use to determine success, particularly in the area of diversity. A case in point, the National FFA Foundation (1993), reported that the FFA consists of 88.2% White or European Americans, 5.3% Hispanic Americans, 4.5% African Americans, 1% Native Americans, and .5% Asian Americans. The Foundation also reported that females represented nearly 27% of FFA's membership and 31% of the chapter officers. These data would suggest that the FFA is basically serving one group, White or European Americans. Some could argue that the focus of future diversity efforts should be on enrolling more minority students and increasing membership in the FFA where programs are currently being offered. This may very well be a good starting point for some school districts where minorities are available in large numbers. However, the academy should be looking at offering more innovative and creative programs in order to serve a larger school population, including minorities, females, and students with learning disabilities. Such program offerings should be integral to ongoing programs in the schools. In Michigan, we have reaffirmed our belief that elementary and secondary teachers are most eager to use agriculture and food industry concepts to enhance the learning of science, mathematics, language arts, social studies, music, and other academic subjects. The discipline should be congratulated on its exceptional service to a small school population. However, to continue on this narrow path of serving only a small percentage of the school's population will be detrimental to our discipline. Moreover, our discipline will be continually affected by such issues as declining enrollment, program curtailment, reduction in staff and resources, and in some cases, total program elimination. Simply stated, agricultural education will have to serve a larger school population, including minorities, females, and students with learning disabilities, in order to remain viable.

## Personal Experience Regarding Students and Programs

When I began teaching, female students unfortunately were not allowed to become members of the FFA. However, I asked the question after attending my first FFA convention as a new teacher, "Why aren't blacks serving on the state FFA officer team?" Several black agriculture teachers indicated that the →



*"However, the academy should be looking at offering more innovative and creative programs in order to serve a larger school population, including minorities, females, and students with learning disabilities. Such program offerings should be integral to ongoing programs in the schools."*

system was not ready for a black FFA state officer, even though the New Farmers of America (an all African-American youth organization which started in 1935) had merged with the FFA in 1965, three years prior to the time I raised the question. Many of the responses from white professionals were that they could not find any qualified black youth to serve as a state FFA officer. When I returned home from the FFA convention, I also learned that it had been over 15 years since a student from the county where I was teaching had served as a state FFA officer. The last individual from the county who served as a state FFA officer was serving as president of the school board and president of the local bank. As a young teacher, I recognized that I was working in one of the poorest counties in the state, but I was determined to produce a state FFA officer from the county. Since eighth graders could enroll in agriculture classes, I identified five to six students I thought had the potential for becoming a state FFA officer. One student became a strong leader in the local FFA chapter and competed very well in various FFA public speaking contests. In 1972, this student became a state FFA officer, and just happened to be the state's first African-American officer.

Today, the Okemos, Michigan high school student body consists of about 86% White and 14% minority students. The information to follow is regarding a African-American female student, and to some extent, a European-American female student. The African-American female student took drafting, word processing, and automotive tune-up (from the former agriscience teacher). At the end of her sophomore year, she worked as a student researcher at the United States Department of Agriculture Avian Disease and Oncology Laboratory. She completed the college prep curriculum in addition to taking a number of advanced placement classes, such as chemistry, biology, and Spanish. In a leadership capacity, this student and the other female student were the first female team to serve as co-presidents of the student body. These two students, along with other school officials, participated in a ground-breaking ceremony for a nearly $40 million high school over a year ago. This African-American female student just happens to be one of my daughters. Several lessons could be learned regarding diversity from these two personal experiences.

The second issue is regarding the composition of the current agricultural education profession. We normally view the profession as being teachers, state staff, teacher educators, department chairpersons in colleges and universities, and other staff responsible for the FFA, NVATA, FFA Alumni, young farmer programs, postsecondary programs, and related entities. How do we compare with the composition of society? More specifically, how do we compare with the general population in our respective states? In order to bring about some of the most needed fundamental changes in agricultural education, the academy will have to look more like the population in various states. More diverse personnel in the profession will create diversity in mission, philosophy, policies, programs, institutions/systems, and ultimately a clientele more representative of the general population.

## Personal Experience

Several years ago I had the opportunity to direct a leadership development program at Michigan State University (a collaboration between the College of Education, the College of Human Ecology, and the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources). Earlier efforts by a variety of systems failed to recruit minorities, women, and educators with disabilities into leadership development programs. I strongly believed that if the institutions involved had a fair and more equitable system for selecting candidates, educators who were representative of the general population would be selected for such programs. A fair and equitable selection system was developed with the assistance of university faculty and state department personnel. The selection committee also consisted of a representative body. During a targeted recruitment effort, more highly qualified educators than expected applied for the program. Based upon a fair and equitable selection process, the final list of participants was representative of the state's population. Some states are beginning to examine seriously the challenges which are related to diversity in agricultural education. For example, Lazelle (1993) reported:

> Currently the State Division of Vocational Education, Sex Equity Office, is funding research to see why one-third of the students in the undergraduate Agricultural Education program at the University of Idaho are women, yet under 3.5% of the high school agriculture teachers in Idaho are women . . .

In order for agricultural education to be more responsive to the needs of students, industry, and the population in general, unique and bold leadership must be exemplified in the institutions/systems that are responsible for the discipline. This includes administrators in public school systems, state departments of education, and universities. The following are several suggestions for advancing diversity in various institutions/systems: →

1. Develop an in-depth knowledge and appreciation for diversity;

2. Assist personnel in developing a knowledge and appreciation for diversity;

3. Assess current efforts that are already providing meaningful diversity results;

4. Revise mission to include diversity as an integral part of the institution/system;

5. Make diversity an integral part of establishing priority needs and goals;

6. Establish future employment needs and give priority to hiring underrepresented groups such as minorities, handicapped persons, and women;

7. Set timetables for achieving priority goals within a three-to-five year period;

8. Establish a system for monitoring goals, evaluating and reporting progress;

9. Provide effective leadership for diversity by remaining well-informed, openly demonstrating a serious commitment to this thrust, leading by example, and focusing on results rather than process.

10. If meaningful results are not achieved, be innovative and bold enough to modify strategies in order to achieve the results.

## Future Challenges

This decade will test our commitment to diversity as no other has. The task ahead is awesome, the challenges are many, and yet the opportunities are unlimited. Do we who are concerned about agricultural education possess the willingness, capacity, and breath of vision to respond effectively to the needs of a society that is already more diverse than at any other time in our history? The data would suggest that diversity in agricultural education should be viewed as a high priority for the profession, land-grant colleges of agriculture, and other connecting entities. Dan Moore, Vice President-Programs, W.K. Kellogg Foundation (1993) stated:

> We believe the differences between people should be celebrated and discrimination, however subtle, should be deplored. In both cases, explicit attention must be given to issues of diversity. To do otherwise would be not only unjust, it also would fail to draw upon the unique capacities each person possesses.

In all of our efforts to address diversity effectively, Dan Moore (1993) also commented:

> . . . No one person or group of people, no matter how privileged or credentialed, should be entrusted with finding the solutions. In decision making, government, private businesses, and public institutions should heed the diverse voices of the people they serve . . .

The personal experiences and related information in this article have been mentioned to demonstrate the type of commitment and leadership that will be needed in the academy to effectively address the diversity issues. I feel confident that the academy has the potential to address this issue effectively. To do so requires unprecedented changes in how we view ourselves, other people, programs, and the institutions/systems that are responsible for program delivery. Clearly, time, events, and more importantly, accurate data, will provide the evidence about whether our discipline was able to address this unfinished agenda — diversity in agricultural education.

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## Mentoring Diverse . . .

*(continued from page 13)*

natural resource industries reflect the growing diversity in the United States and the global diversity that already exists.

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# Professorial Roles in Supporting Diversity in Teaching, Research, and University Service


BY CATHY FAULCON BOWEN

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As organizations, public and private, began to acknowledge the changing demographics in the United States, diversity became the buzzword of choice. Finding a committee within an organization whose charge is to improve diversity efforts is common. What is diversity and why the increasing concern about it? The simplest definition of diversity is different. With people, diversity refers to differences with respect to age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, race, gender, physical and mental abilities, sexual orientation, spiritual practice and other human differences. In part, diversity is an issue because the media constantly remind us that the demographic characteristics of the country's population are changing drastically. In the near future, it is projected that current ethnic minorities (e.g., African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanics) will become a numerical majority. In 1992, nearly 32 million Americans were over age 65. By 2020, that number is expected to grow to about 55 million. In addition, people who share the same "differences" have organized into groups and gained attention from political leaders because

> ***"In part, diversity is an issue because the media constantly reminds us that the demographic characteristics of the country's population are changing drastically. In the near future, it is projected that current ethnic minorities will become a numerical"***

of their collective voting power. On the surface, the focus on diversity appears to be out of concern for fellow humans. A closer look may reveal a concern for economic gains and survival as a country. Organizations, public or private, can no longer continue to conduct business as usual if they wish to exist in the future.

In universities, much of the concern for diversity centers on making sure educational programs are: (1) reaching or accessible to people who in the past have not received equal attention, 2) assuring that curricula include diverse perspectives, 3) providing students with opportunities to develop skills and experiences in working with people of diverse backgrounds, and 4) supporting the diversity of the university's work force.

Most universities have plans and ongoing activities to strengthen diversity efforts. These plans and activities, however, are virtually useless without the active involvement of a key player in the university, the professor. Professors' roles in university teaching, research, and service are three major functions of universities, especially those institutions established by the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. The remainder of this article describes ways that professors contribute or can contribute to university diversity plans. Why the focus on the professor? While universities, colleges within universities, and departments within colleges may have formal documents explaining their diversity plans, actual implementation of them (especially those that have long-standing positive effects) will be achieved largely in **increments by individual professors through individual actions**.

Regardless of the course or type of teaching environment (e.g., formal or nonformal), there are general strategies that all educators can use as guiding principles to improve diversity efforts. Six common strategies include the following:

**Become aware of stereotypes you have based on past experiences.** Each person brings to any situation previous experiences that influence his or her feelings, behaviors, and thoughts. Carefully examine yourself and assess whether or not you have biases that could affect your behavior or hinder diversity efforts.

**Treat all contacts with respect and as individuals.** While people share commonalities with an ethnic or racial group, they are still individuals who are different from their respective group.

**Don't use language that excludes or devalues any group.** Use both "he" and "she" in group discussions. Avoid comments that make assumptions about students' experiences. For example, a statement such as, "You remember when you went to the movies on →

Saturday afternoon and could watch all the shows you wanted for $.50?", might be better stated as, "Years ago in some areas of the country, people could watch all the movies they wanted on Saturday afternoons for $.50."

**Be sensitive to terminology that is acceptable to various groups.** One puzzling concern educators have is how to address or refer to different groups in ways that are not offensive. In short, what do you call them? While some guidelines exist for what is preferable for specific ethnic groups, the most logical thing to do is to ask the group for their preferences. This is especially true if you will have repeated contact with them. While this may sound too direct for some, this approach leaves no question about which terms are preferred. However, the professor must be aware that preferences may differ among age groups and may change over time.

**Become informed about the histories and cultures of different groups.** While a certain level can be achieved by reading, a more enjoyable and perhaps meaningful way to learn about other cultures is by spending time with members of diverse groups in their homes and communities. You don't have to travel around the globe to do this. Someone who has a different cultural background may live a few houses away or in a neighboring community. Specific areas you can learn more about include customs, holidays, celebrations, religious practices, roles of family members, decision making, family management, communication norms and behaviors, work attitudes and practices, and recreation and leisure habits.

**If the above strategies seem too numerous to remember, use these two guidelines; put yourself in the other person's place and treat them the way you like to be treated.** Learn to respect people who are different from you. If everyone applied these guidelines to all aspects of university life, diversity would not be a buzzword of the '90s.

## Teaching in Nonformal Settings

This section focuses on nonformal educational situations, such as those found in Cooperative Extension programs and nondegree adult education programs. At the university level, much of professors' involvement in nonformal educational programs may be performed through professional educators at local levels (e.g., county extension agents, public and private school teachers). The most powerful efforts toward diversity of professors who work in nonformal settings may be by example. This includes but is not limited to: 1) how they handle educational situations with other educators, 2) their personal behavior and sensitivity towards all people, 3) how they react to or include viewpoints that differ from theirs or the norm for a particular group, 4) the type of resource materials they use and make available for others to use, and 5) efforts made to reach audiences that are harder to work with because they require more time, different resources than those readily available, and those whose ethnic background is different from their own.

Professors and other educators who work with nonformal educational programs routinely seek the input of final users of the programs and resources throughout the selection, design, development, and evaluation of programs. While this is important for many educational programs, it is especially true for Cooperative Extension. If programs are not useful or do not meet the needs of the intended audiences, they will not be used.

## Research

Research is an important component of a university's total program. Carefully planned and executed research usually benefits society. Incorporating diversity into research programs can be accomplished in several ways. Establishing interdisciplinary research teams can add an interesting twist to some projects. However, this could also make achieving project objectives more difficult as diversity may bring obstacles that have to be removed. Establishing collaborative projects with other organizations is another way diversity can be incorporated in research projects. Studying different populations, involving diverse groups in all phases of projects, getting the reaction of others to your ideas, and publishing in places that reach new audiences all incorporate diversity into research projects and programs. A drawback, especially when working with unfamiliar audiences, is the extra time it may take to nurture working relationships. In many cases, funding agencies and university reward systems do not permit the luxury of the time it may initially take to include diverse perspectives into projects. However, these barriers must be removed to effectively generate new knowledge as it pertains to diverse audiences.

## Service

It would be difficult for universities to exist without the committee service provided by faculty, staff, and students. Being an active participant on university, college, or departmental committees that have a charge to deal with diverse issues is a common way professors support diversity efforts. Unfortunately, sometimes this type of support may be limited to making recommendations to decision makers. By informally supporting diversity efforts, professors may have a greater impact. Informal support might include serving as advisors to student organizations and making presentations to diverse groups about an ongoing research project or subject of interest. One of the most

*(continued on page 23)*





# Diversifying the Agricultural Sciences: Roles for Leaders

BY GWENDOLYN L. LEWIS

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One of the most pervasive problems of the American education system is insufficient educational opportunities for minority students. Agricultural sciences education is no exception. To address and help rectify this situation, USDA, through its Office of Higher Education Programs (HEP), has a comprehensive, long-range agenda to promote the recruitment, retention, and training of minority college and university students in the food and agricultural sciences at all degree levels. Our goal is to increase the ethnic and cultural diversity of the food and agricultural scientific and professional work force by promoting the educational achievements of minority Americans. One mechanism chosen for accomplishing this goal is to strengthen institutions serving groups underrepresented in the food and agricultural sciences.

Through the CSRS Office of Higher Education Programs, USDA supports and encourages efforts designed to provide the expertise required by the Nation's modern, high-technology, knowledge-based food and agricultural system. These efforts include providing national leadership and financial support aimed at:

- Strengthening college and university degree programs for minorities in the food and agricultural sciences,
- Improving the pedagogical skills of college and university faculty to maximize student learning in multicultural classrooms,
- Producing minority graduates needed to fulfill the Nation's requirements for food and agricultural scientific and professional expertise, and
- Stimulating private sector initiatives and coalition building between the public and private sectors.

These goals are addressed by a comprehensive set of programs at USDA. The 1890 Institution Capacity Building Research and Teaching Grants Program is central to the effort to strengthen food and agricultural sciences at the historically black land-grant institutions. The Research Apprenticeship Program for high school youth, the 1890 USDA Scholars Program, and the newly initiated Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program all work to attract minority youth to pursue careers in the food and agricultural sciences. The Summer Teacher Enhancement Program conducted collaboratively by federal laboratories is one of the strong components of coalition building between the federal government, state and local governments, and schools.

USDA strongly advocates capitalizing on the full intellectual resource base of the Nation by incorporating every segment of the population into the scientific and technical work force in the food and agricultural sciences. To diversify the human resources pool in the agricultural and food sciences, USDA urges systemic reform of the education system at all levels, targeting groups historically underrepresented and underserved in mathematics and science education. While all levels of education should be addressed, some levels are key decision points for many students. We should pay special attention to:

- assisting teachers of minority students, particularly middle schools, to understand the nature of science — specifically food and agricultural sciences — and how to introduce these to young people in ways that are both interesting and pedagogically sound;
- mentoring students by means of research opportunities at the high school and college levels; and
- ensuring 2-year college students are targeted, given that the majority of minority college students attend 2-year colleges only.

Efforts at the federal level can only suggest directions the leadership in agricultural education might take to be effective in incorporating minorities into the agricultural sciences. Leaders in reform efforts can contribute to the effort in myriad ways. Some of the initiatives I feel the leadership can and should undertake are the following:

- Ensure that intervention efforts to improve the education of minorities comes as early as possible in the education continuum.
- Provide strong financial incentives and support for individuals from underrepresented minority groups to study the food and agricultural sciences.
- Focus on increasing the participation of minority students and teachers (including teachers in training) in science education reform. To achieve this we must help strengthen minority institutions' research and teaching capabilities, especially in the food and agricultural sciences, through →

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cooperative research and teaching efforts, faculty and student exchanges, and cooperative curriculum reform.

- Support mentoring and other programs to help recruit and retain minority students in the food and agricultural sciences.
- Evaluate programs and projects as an essential component of assuring that minority participation is satisfactory and that activities to improve participation are revised, eliminated, or expanded, as appropriate.
- Disseminate information on effective programs.
- Cooperate with federal government partnership efforts and build coalitions with business and industry, professional associations, school districts, state education departments, and others to strengthen educational programming for underrepresented minorities.
- Assist both new and experienced workers in achieving access to education that provides them with requisite competencies for success in the work place.
- Make the link between the work place and education stronger, more apparent to the student or worker, and more accessible to all.
- Increase the visibility among minority groups of the remarkable careers available at all levels of education in the food and agricultural sciences. While some science-related careers areexperiencing an overabundance of job applicants, such is not the case with many occupational areas of the food and agricultural sciences. Expanded apprenticeship opportunities for minority students would go a long way in making agriscience careers more visible.
- Expand use of the latest technologies in teaching to make the curriculum more attractive and effective and to make courses accessible from the home or office, thus relieving some of the difficulties faced by non-traditional students, among whom are many motivated minorities and women.
- Cooperate with and use government, university, and industrial laboratories more extensively to expand outreach and hands-on research experience for students and teachers at all levels. These opportunities must be specifically targeted at the underrepresented groups and teachers of such students.

In conclusion, I want to paraphrase a medical school recruiter who worked hard to recruit minority students and felt strongly that they should be admitted.

Students with modest test scores can succeed, but they must be taught. They do not necessarily have the ability already, as do some students who have received every advantage, to learn without our assistance. Hence, with such students we must "be all that we can be" as teachers, mentors, and guides.

And, I would add, as administrators we must be all that we can be in designing, evaluating, financing, and negotiating education programs that are effective for students from diverse backgrounds.

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**Coming in July . . .**

**Theme —**
***Innovative Curricula***

- **Small Animal Technology Program**
- **Innovative Elementary Agriscience Curriculum**
- **Focus on Agricultural Technology**
- **Making Community Connections**
- **Aquaculture Curriculum**
- **Money Management Curriculum**





# Supporting Diversity at the Local Level: A Perspective From Teachers

BY MEECEE BAKER & MARCIA MAGILL

*Ms. Baker (top) is an agriculture teacher and Ms. Magill is an English teacher at Greenwood High School, Millerstown, PA.*

As the make-up of our classrooms rapidly changes to reflect the growing percentage of racial and ethnic groups in our country, attention to diversity becomes an educational imperative. Much literature has addressed the need to rework curricula and pedagogy so that all may grow and be enriched, allowing and encouraging pride in cultural differences while creating a school climate of unity, acceptance, and belonging. But what importance is "diversity" to those schools, mostly rural, whose complexions are unchanged by the larger permutations in the "outside world," to those schools where the racial and ethnic population is less than one percent? Is diversity important to us? Should it be?

Unquestionably, yes. If schools are to equip students with the skills necessary to actualize their potential, as well as to succeed as citizens and workers, students must be aware of the diversity of that larger context in which they will find themselves. As educators, we would hope they would, in the least, be accepting not only of the differences that distinguish us, but also the similarities that bind us.

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However, since opportunities for diversity awareness do not naturally present themselves in schools so homogeneous in composition, a conscious and concerted effort, both school-wide and in individual classrooms, must be made to create such a climate.

## School-Wide Awareness Programs

First steps, however small and rudimentary, need to be taken in any awareness endeavor, and so the Student Council of Greenwood High School devoted its focus for the '93-'94 school year to "Diversity Awareness: Learning to Appreciate the Differences Among People."

The Council acknowledged that the vast majority of the students had little or no contact with racial or ethnic minorities beyond the bounds of the stereotypes provided by television and movies. Their goal, then, was to help diminish the ignorance in which prejudice can flourish and grow by sharing information about the cultural heritage of various minority groups and their unique contributions to society.

Each month a specific racial or ethnic group was highlighted. Daily "fast facts," via the announcements, shared with students information they most probably did not know about the honored group. Bulletin boards and showcases were utilized to display, among other things, posters, maps, photographs, traditional clothing, and artifacts indigenous to each group's cultural heritage. Food service personnel became involved, preparing and serving traditional meals of the various ethnic groups, in lieu of the standard cafeteria fare.

The Student Council also sponsored assemblies to further heighten students' perception and understanding. During Native American Awareness Month, for example, Mardella Lowry Sunshine spoke about the Lumbee culture and beliefs and shared some of the traditional folk legends of her tribe. In December, when Jews in America were the focus, Mark Powers, National Director for Jews for Judaism, explained to students the basic tenets of his faith, as well as the historical base for Jewish religious observations. Most of the students had never before seen a person wearing a yarmulke. They were, as they were in all the awareness assemblies the Council sponsored, inquisitive and interested in all our guest had to say. There was, with little exception, a naïvete in their wide-eyed curiosity and sometimes amazingly simplistic questions, but they were ignorant from lack of exposure, not unwillingness to learn.

Another recent innovation has helped to bring the diversity of the outside world to our provincial and racially homogenous student body. For the past two years, Greenwood High School has subscribed to The Whittle Education Network, which daily broadcasts "Channel One," an up-to-date, upbeat news program hosted by teens for teens. Students watch Channel One News in homeroom for fifteen minutes each day. Although in several states Whittle Communications has met with resistance, legal and theoretical, to their pro- →

gramming in schools, it has been a positive cultural experience for our students. They have actually seen and heard young persons of Asian, African, and Hispanic descent work, laugh, and talk together, without color or culture being an impeding factor. What's more, because of the youthful focus of the program, they see that they have much in common with teens from all over the world — that we are, indeed, bound by the common joys and pains of humanity and need not be divided by our more superficial differences.

While it is necessary to create and nurture a school-wide climate of acceptance and awareness, it is essential that diversity also be an integrated part of the curriculum in individual classrooms. A look at the agriculture program at Greenwood High School will illustrate how such integration can be effectuated.

## Classroom Awareness Program

An easy avenue to introduce diversity awareness into any agriculture classroom is with guest speakers. Your local community can provide a wealth of interesting presenters. We have invited Peace Corps volunteers, retirees who travel, missionaries, university and extension personnel, and exchange students to address our classes. One more notable presentation was given to the agriculture department by Ray Dillman, a retired railroad worker who currently farms several hundred acres. Dillman, a well known outdoorsman and photographer, has traveled to many continents with hunting expeditions. Dillman's colorful presentation highlighted the wildlife and agriculture of the regions he visited. Another well-received guest lecturer was a neighboring agriculture teacher, Virgil Gutshall. Gutshall traveled to China in the summer of 1993 as part of a group of Americans studying the small and medium sized methane gas digesters in China. Gutshall gave an exciting slide presentation that not only enlightened the agriculture students about the agricultural industry, but also the culture of the Chinese people. The agriculture students seem especially receptive to speakers and feel free to ask questions if they have first known them as community members.

Guest speakers can help introduce diversity into the agriculture classroom, but the integration of a global curriculum takes diversity awareness one step further. This past year, the Greenwood Agriculture Department pilot tested a project entitled, "Globalizing the Curriculum," for the Pennsylvania State University (Jones et al., 1992). This unit can be used as individual lessons or as one complete unit. One activity, the Global Market Board Game, helps students practice exchanging currency in an effort to help ease their fear of the metric system. Although the class of sophomores enjoyed the entire unit, their favorite exercise was preparing a smorgasbord of delicacies with

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recipes from a selected country.

How hard is it to address diversity with agriculture students? Perhaps author Dolphis Weary best answers that question.

> "Where do we begin to overcome the barriers of race? By becoming friends with the stranger sitting next to you." (Weary, 1993, pg. 52)

Where do agriculture students sit next to strangers? At the National FFA Convention, which is held in Kansas City, Missouri, each November. At the convention over 30,000 FFA members, advisors, parents, and guests from across the nation and the world gather to conduct FFA business, compete in contests, and make new friends. Like many advisors, I have required the Greenwood FFA members attending the conference to gather names and addresses of others from at least ten different states. These members often then begin to correspond. Just last week, one excited young member learned about the Mardi Gras from a Cajun pen pal she had met in Kansas City. Not wanting our members who don't attend the National FFA Convention to miss the opportu-

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nity for correspondence with friends from across the country, several colleagues from Hawaii, Louisiana, and Ohio were contacted to solicit names of potential pen pals. Junior high members seem most excited about having an FFA pen pal. With technology advancing at such an alarming rate, will an FFA electronic mail system with bulletin boards for special interests be far behind?

Diversity awareness in the agriculture classroom can be successfully addressed with guest speakers and diversity-oriented curricula, but even more progress in students' appreciation of other cultures comes from individual contact with friends met through the FFA Organization. →



## Conclusion

Diversity awareness at Greenwood has met with two-fold success. First, faculty and students have begun to think beyond their traditional comfort zones. Second, diversity awareness programming has been well received. Even though Greenwood High School has made small strides toward diversity awareness, these efforts cannot be viewed with a once and done mentality. Rather, appreciation for diverse cultures should be ever present in schoolwide initiatives and the individual classroom alike.

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Weary, D. (1993). Daily guideposts 1994. New York: Daily Guideposts Associates Inc. ■

## Professorial Roles in . . .

*(continued from page 18)*

informal and perhaps effective ways to support diversity in university environments is by mentoring a person who is from a different culture or ethnic group than your own. This mentoring relationship gives professors and students a chance to learn firsthand about others in an informal way.

## Warnings and Roadblocks

Supporting diversity efforts in university environments will be easier for some than others. Factors that affect how successful efforts are include personalities, sincerity of the faculty, support from administrators, the tone set by administrators to foster individual efforts, and university reward structures. For some, the inability to say "no" may lead to overload and a lack of time to concentrate fully on accomplishing assigned responsibilities. Thus, what began as a sincere attempt to contribute to diversity efforts often results in failure. This problem is being solved somewhat by universities that incorporate diversity into the responsibilities of all faculty and administrators. When diversity efforts begin to be included in yearly performance evaluations, there will be an increase in individual diversity efforts.

A special warning for professors and other educators who work in nonformal settings — don't be discouraged if your first attempt to work with diverse populations gets off to a rough start. Some audiences may have been treated unfairly in the past or perceive that they have been treated unfairly by your institution. Therefore, initial attempts to provide educational programs or collaborative projects by persons outside their community may be met with anger or unfriendly gestures. However, such initial rejection cannot be used as an excuse for not promoting the university's diversity goals. Focus on positive programs and activities that can be developed once the roadblocks are removed. Be persistent and sincere about your efforts. The effectiveness of any diversity plan is highly dependent upon the positive interaction that occurs between and among different people involved in educational programs — the individual faculty member, the students, and clientele.

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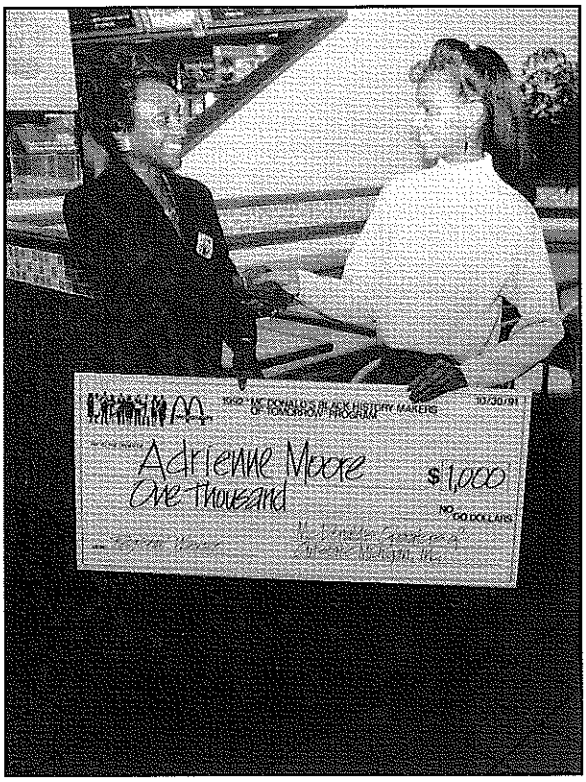
## Coming in August . . .

**Theme — *Instructional Technology***

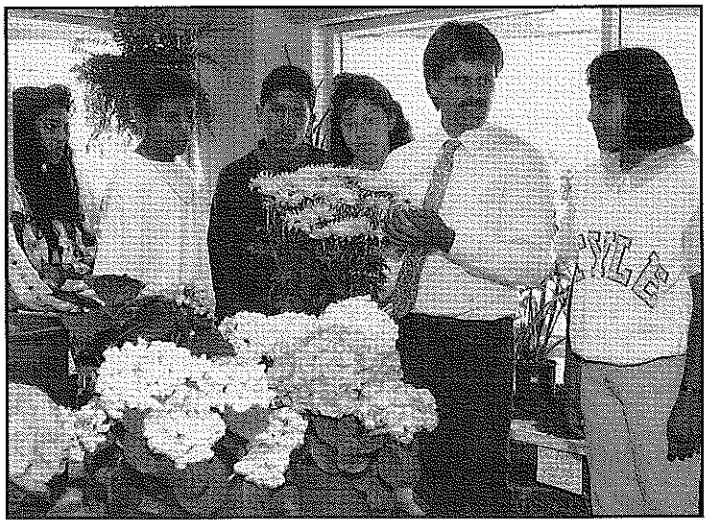
- **Using the Information Superhighway**
- **Using Internet**
- **Interactive Video Networks**

## Stories in Pictures




Major corporations like McDonald's are supportive of diversity. Theda Rudd (left), operator of McDonald's in Okemos and East Lansing, is shown presenting an award to Adrienne Moore, Co-President of the Okemos High School student council. (Photo by J.D. Small)

Miguel Guerra, agriculture teacher at Righetti High School, Santa Maria, California, instructing students on the land laboratory.



Students learn about plant care in a horticulture class with Mike Morales, Kingsbury High School, California.