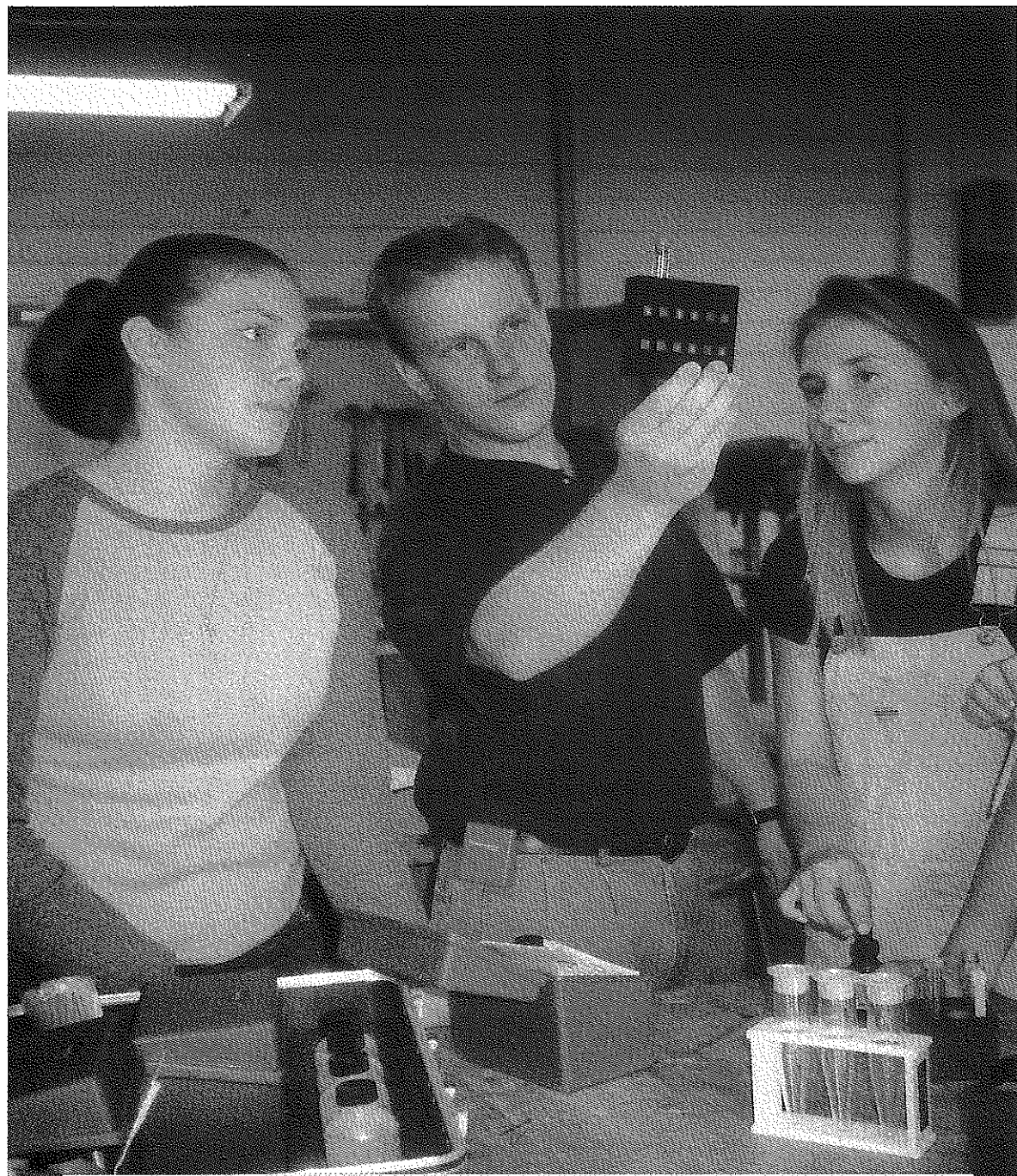


March-
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2003
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The Agricultural
EDUCATION
M A G A Z I N E



**The Role of the Teacher in
Advising Youth Groups**

The Many Faces of Advising

By Robert A. Martin

Serving as an advisor to a youth group is not always seen for what it really is – another form of teaching. When I hear people say that those teachers, instructors or professors who serve as academic advisors or club advisors serve a lesser calling, I am dismayed and discouraged. I believe just the opposite. Those who choose to serve as advisors serve a higher calling, in my opinion, and deserve to be justly rewarded.

Advising takes on many faces when one considers the various means by which we try to get input from significant others in our lives. The dictionary gives us some insight as to these various forms of input if we study the definition of “advice.”

According to the Random House College Dictionary, Revised Edition (1984), “advice” is defined in four ways or levels:

- ★ Advice is practical information offered to guide action or conduct.
- ★ Counsel is weighty and serious advice given after careful deliberations.
- ★ Recommendations are weaker than advice and suggests an opinion that may or may not be acted upon.
- ★ Suggestions imply some thing more tentative than a recommendation.

One way to consider the differences in the “levels” of advice described above is to contemplate the fact that The Ten Commandments were not meant to be the ten suggestions. (Ted Koppel, ABC News, May, 2002). Advice that has value can and should lead to action but the action taken should be the decision of the advisee not the advisor. Advisors of quality do their work out of a great sense and need to serve others. Not to tell others what to do but to provide a guide for appropriate decision-making by the advisee. When all is said and done, advisors of quality are very good at the following:

- ★ Listening
- ★ Questioning
- ★ Providing information
- ★ Outlining options
- ★ Caring
- ★ Inspiring

Additionally, advisors of quality refrain from doing the following:

- ★ Judging
- ★ Deciding for advisee
- ★ Doing advisee’s work
- ★ Criticizing
- ★ Overprotecting
- ★ Discounting other’s advice

The role of the teacher in advising students is an awesome task. As in the teaching process itself, advising is not an easy task. However, it is a critical task. Many teachers are not very good at it. On the other hand, many other teachers are very good at advising and they gain rewards for doing advising well by the actions they observe in their students. Advising can be its own reward for a job well done.

Speaking of jobs well done, special thanks go to all authors of articles in this issue of The Magazine. It is clear that there are several perspectives on advising and we need to continually review our approach to advising and determine the balance in our teaching-learning paradigm.

A special thanks goes to Mike Retallick for his work as the theme editor for this issue. He has assembled an interesting and thought-provoking set of articles.

Enjoy!



Robert A. Martin is Editor of The Agricultural Education Magazine. He serves as Professor and Department Head of Agricultural Education and Studies at Iowa State University.

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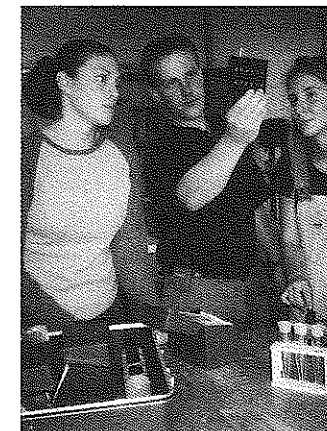
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Authors writing for the March-April issue of The Agricultural Education Magazine discuss the role of the teacher in advising youth groups. Agricultural educators have the opportunity to help students learn, grow, and develop. (Photo courtesy of College of Agriculture, Iowa State University.)



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Editor

Dr. Robert A. Martin, Professor and Head Department of Agricultural Education and Studies, Iowa State University, 201 Curtiss Hall, Ames, IA 50011, Phone (515) 294-5904, FAX: (515) 294-0530. E-mail: drmartin@iastate.edu Design and Layout: Stacie M. Turnbull

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Season of Success...Through Advising

By Michael S. Retallick

Pick your favorite annual crop or garden vegetable. It could be corn, soybeans, wheat, rice, sugar cane, or even sunflowers. It could also be tomatoes, squash, green peppers, or cucumbers. One could easily relate any one of these crops to the cyclical nature of advising.

Sowing the seeds

The reason many students choose to initially enter the agricultural education program is because of previous experiences and associations with agriculture or agricultural education. These seeds can be sown as early as elementary or middle school with FFA and 4-H activities conducted with those young people. Seeds can also be planted because of the press received from a service learning project. Another mean of sowing seeds is through positive experiences communicated by parents, former students, community members, other teachers, and in some cases school counselors. For what ever reason or combination of reasons, an interest has been sparked and the potential is there for a student to later enroll in the agricultural education program.

Emergence of seedling

Life in the program begins when the student enrolls in an agricultural education program. The opportunity exists for them to take advantage of a variety of experiences. Because they are new and their potential is yet untapped, they need nurturing, guidance, and support as they continue to grow. This need must be provided by the agricultural education instructor/FFA advisor.

Growth

Growth occurs as the student participates in classroom and laboratory activities, develops an SAE, and becomes involved in the FFA. It is through the combination of the three that the student is able to develop his or her potential for personal growth, premier leadership, and career success. It is through the guidance of the advisor that this occurs/

Bloom

Through the additional work and effort of the student, one can begin to see the student bloom into a productive citizen and young adult. As the student enters his or her final phase of secondary agricultural education, one can begin to appreciate and acknowledge the growth and metamorphosis the student has undergone. At this point, when the student's experience is drawing to a close, one can see that the student has actually further refined his or her skills and is now sowing seeds. These students are now the individuals who are talking to other potential students and parents about their experiences and what they have gotten out of the program. These students are now prepared to leave the program and start a new phase of their life.

Harvest

Like any crop, there comes a point in time when harvesting must take place. This is where we as teachers and advisors let go and where employers and communities become the benefactors. These groups reap the benefits of having active leaders who are positive role models, critical thinkers and problem solvers. For the advisor, this is a time to reflect on the extent to which the individual student has developed.

The reward for the advisor is two-fold. First, it is the realization that the program had a positive impact on the development of each individual. The second reward is the realization that we as advisors play an important role in this outcome.

Watching each student as an individual move through his or her "season", in my mind, is the most rewarding experience as an advisor. Watching students walk through the door on the first day of classes as a fragile seedling and then leave on the last day of their senior year as self-confident, successful young adults who can make a difference in the world is always amazing. This transformation is truly what advising is all about from the advisors perspective.

As an advisor, one of the most difficult things to grasp is the fact that each student and group of students are different, just as each growing season is different. Yet many times we hold the same expectations for each group and each individual believing anything less than matching previous success is failure. How often does an NCAA men's basketball team win consecutive national championships? So why should we expect such things out of our students year in and year out? Each season brings change, different challenges, and different circumstances as well as different individuals. It is the growth and development made throughout the season that is important and what makes a life-long impact.

We must look beyond the trees to see the forest and remember what the student was like as a seedling, keeping in mind the growth that he or she has experienced as a part of your program. That, in and of itself, could be more dramatic and reward-



Advising, according to Retallick, is about challenging students to always do their best and creating individuals who are critical thinkers and problem-solvers. (Photo courtesy of College of Agriculture, Iowa State University.)

ing for that individual than any championship or award. It's not so much about the winning as it is about developing students to their fullest potential.

This issue of *The Agricultural Education Magazine* focuses on the role of advising. We, the readers, are blessed with a variety of perspectives on this theme. The articles provide us with some food for thought and insight into the various roles of an advisor. Special thanks to those who took value time out of their December and January schedules to put their thoughts into an article. This time of year is not the most relaxing and stress free time where one has ample time for other activities. With most teachers working on all those advising things like state FFA degrees, state proficiencies, American degrees, and a whole host of leadership events, there are generally not enough hours in the day to accomplish everything.

Through the articles in this issue you will come to realize the multi-dimensional role of advising. You will read an article from a pre-

service teacher who reflects on his previous experiences and discusses his perceived concerns within the profession. You will also read articles from current high school advisors who have varying years of experience. Other articles discuss the role of advising on the collegiate level. One discusses the role of advising collegiate clubs and organizations and the other discusses academic advising using the World Wide Web. Finally, the highlight for me was the article by Dr. Gary Moore who slaps us in the face with a bit of reality and challenges us to look at ourselves, as advisors, using the Golden Mean.

In closing, not long ago I was at a conference where the keynote spoke about managing the margins of greatness. He spoke of the little things that people do that make the biggest differences in their lives and their ability to succeed. In agricultural education, managing the margins of greatness is what advising is about. Advising is about providing students with opportunities to grow each season and being able to

appreciate each individual's margin of greatness.

Advising is much more than winning the next event. It is about challenging students to always do their personal best and creating individuals who are critical thinkers and problem-solvers. Advising is about providing opportunities for students to learn how to function in groups and, yet as individuals, be able to think for themselves and make moral, ethical decisions.

The ultimate reward of advising is the realization that you have made a positive, life-long difference in a young person.



Michael S. Retallick is the coordinator of Academic Advising and Undergraduate Programs at Iowa State University.

Advising on the Web

By Clark R. Harris and Steven R. Harbstreit

"The agricultural education website has become the model in the College of Education to aid our students and faculty in the advising process," was a comment made by Tweed Ross, the Director of Technology for the College of Education. The students in the KSU Agricultural Education program enjoy the convenience of the web.

Nick Regier, a freshman in agricultural education stated, "The KSU Agricultural Education website was a great help in planning my course of study. I was able to go directly to the web and see which courses I needed to take to work toward my major. The web took a lot of the guesswork out of my enrollment process and made everything flow smoother." Many of the agricultural education students at KSU find the information on the web helpful in their college experience.

Providing helpful information is an important responsibility of advisors, and it is an important component of the website. The website for the KSU Agricultural Education program (<http://coe.ksu.edu/ageducation/>) was developed to serve three main populations; current agricultural education students, prospective agricultural education students, and Kansas agriculture teachers. It was decided early in the planning of the page to utilize the website to provide important information to agricultural education students. The information provided enables students be more responsible for their education. The advisors are no the longer the keepers of the knowledge. Students can now access more information, faster than ever before. The information is available

24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Students no longer have to wait until an advisor returns from a workshop, a conference, or a student teacher visit to answer simple questions about the program.

The responsibility of advising students includes a wide variety of activities. Advisors help students make decisions about: course selection, emphasis area selection, scheduling of classes, understanding program requirements, and even helping students decide if they want to be in the major. The four main areas of the advisor/advisee relationship that have been supplemented on the web include:

- helping students with program requirements,
- helping students with enrollment,
- encouraging involvement in the club and profession,
- recruiting new students.

Program Requirements

The program requirements in the curriculum guide for agricultural education are fairly complicated and confusing to students. The program has special university requirements, requirements from the College of Education, and certification requirements. Students can access the program curriculum guide on the web and receive an understandable explanation of requirements, including information such as which courses work for the "global nonwestern cultures," "non-performance fine arts appreciation," and "literature" requirements. Students can also learn more about the Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST) and Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) assessments. They can learn about dates for test registration and assessment days. They can also

learn about alternative testing opportunities, and strategies for preparing for the PPST and PLT.

The website also has a link to the [College of Agriculture Student Handbook](#). The agricultural education students follow the policies in this handbook. It provides information about the academic calendar, college administration, departmental program contacts, College of Agriculture student organizations, a guide to student life, general academic policy, and academic procedures. The site attempts to put most of the information all in one place for the agricultural education students.

Student Enrollment

Important information and many of the important links needed for enrollment are located on the agricultural education website. This is critical since the university has chosen to discontinue printing a course line schedule. The enrollment page has links to the online course line schedule, the list of closed courses, intercession courses, and the undergraduate catalog. It has a link to the online system "K-State Access to Technology System," (KATS) where students can check transcripts, check financial aid, add courses, drop courses, and check their student financial account.

Student Involvement

Keeping an up-to-date agricultural education club calendar that lists activities and meetings encourages student involvement. Pages are also included that provide information about activities that the students can be involved with and pictures of past events. Many photos are included throughout the website to illustrate the many activities in which the agricultural education students are involved. A combination of the

website information, a club listserv, and a blackboard site for officers keeps the officers and members informed. The Blackboard site serves as an intranet for the officers. They can access all documents related to the club, have discussions on a message board, read announcements, go to related links, and chat on important topics. High schools and colleges without access to Blackboard can make a similar intranet system using Yahoo Groups (<http://groups.yahoo.com/>), and it is free.

Student Recruitment

One aspect of advising is in the recruitment of students. The website at the KSU Agricultural Education program is used for formal and informal recruitment. The website is designed for formal recruitment through a page entitled "Prospective Students." This page provides information such as: job opportunities, ten reasons to be in agricultural education, and teacher quotes on why they like teaching agriculture. The website provides links to KSU Admissions and the College of Agriculture. There is also an email link to set up an appointment with the agricultural education advisors. There is special information for transfer students, that allows them to

check on course equivalency from their community college.

Informal recruiting efforts include the inclusion of over 350 photos of students and teachers in instructional situations and in club activities. The point is to show prospective students the variety of instructional situations that they will encounter and the tremendous activities in which agricultural education students can be involved. Also the intent is to show KSU students in fun and leadership positions. Many of the high school students they know as local, district and state FFA leaders. One agricultural education student said, "Our website really showcases to prospective KSU students the awesome and diverse opportunities within the Agricultural Education program." High school agricultural education programs have the capability for this type of informal recruiting.

A student summed up the main intent of the page, "The Ag Ed page is a great way for students to get all the information they might need in order to succeed in college." The intent of the page is to serve the agricultural education students, by providing all of the information they need in agricultural education. This

same strategy can be adopted for any high school or college program. Think about what information, forms, etc. do your students need to succeed in your program. Think about which programs you want to promote to parents and prospective students, then allow your students to help maintain the page to provide them with application for technical skills. Technology is an exciting resource available to enrich programs, whether they are at the collegiate or the high school level.



Clark R. Harris is an Assistant Professor of Agricultural Education at Kansas State University.



Steven R. Harbstreit is an Associate Professor of Agricultural Education at Kansas State University.

A portion of the Kansas State University Agricultural Education website is shown. The site, according to the authors, is a great way for prospective students to receive information.

KSU AGED-Incoming Freshman

Address: <http://coe.ksu.edu/ageducation/prospectivestudents.html>

College of Education

Kansas State University

home | academic calendar | directories

February 5, 2002

K-State :: College of Education :: Agricultural Education :: Ag Ed Site Map

Prospective Students

•Students planning to major in Agricultural Education at K-State.

1. Set up an Appointment to meet with [Dr. Harris](#) or [Dr. Harbstreit](#)
2. Follow these [Steps to Becoming a College of Agriculture Student](#)

General Information
General Information
Kansas Ag Ed Staff
History - Photos
Photo Album

Aristotle, the Golden Mean and the FFA

By Gary Moore

Most people know that Aristotle was a Greek philosopher, but what does this have to do with the FFA? Aristotle developed the philosophical principle known as the "Golden Mean." It would benefit agriculture teachers to examine the Golden Mean and consider its implications to the FFA and agricultural education.

Simply stated, Aristotle's Golden Mean asserts there must be a balance between two extremes. Much of Aristotle's writing about the Golden Mean had to do with moral virtue. For example, if one were to look at the idea of Fear and Confidence, "Cowardice" would be one extreme and "Rashness" the other. "Courage", the desirable virtue, would be the Golden Mean.

In my 30+ years in agricultural education I have observed wide extremes in how agricultural education teachers regard the FFA. I believe there is a middle ground, a Golden Mean, we must embrace. In this article we will analyze and critique several positions taken by agriculture teachers regarding FFA and Agricultural Education.

The FFA Continuum

The diagram below (Figure 1) represents four observable positions in regards to the FFA embraced by agriculture teachers.

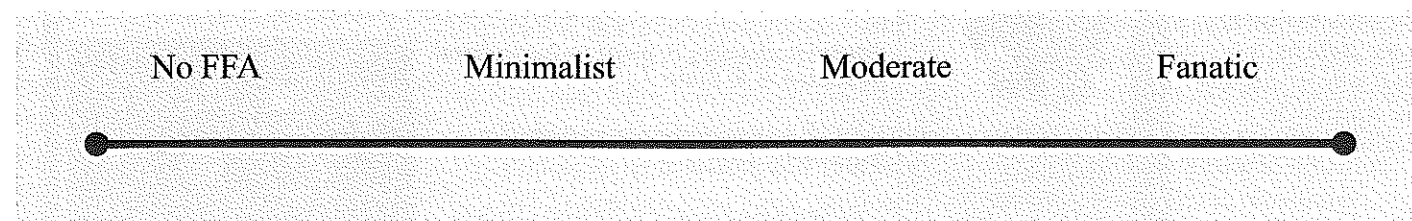


Figure 1: Observable Positions in Regards to the FFA Embraced by Agriculture Teachers.

No FFA – While it may be hard to believe, there are some agricultural education programs where there is no FFA. This is unconscionable. Students are being cheated out of valuable opportunities to participate in FFA opportunities. Since the FFA is considered to be an integral part of the agricultural education program by statute and practice, a teacher who willfully does not have a FFA is guilty of professional malpractice. There is even a legal term to describe this – nonfeasance (failure to perform, or complete neglect of, a required legal or contractual duty).

When I was in graduate school one of my professors told of a court case in Texas where a student had moved from one school district to another. The second school district had agricultural education but no FFA. Since the student planned to pursue advanced FFA degrees, and this opportunity was no longer available, he sued the school district and won.

Since the FFA can be a valuable motivational tool and reinforces student learning, it would be educationally stupid to not have a FFA. It is also expected from an ethical and legal standpoint.

Minimalist–Next on the continuum is the Minimalist. There is a FFA chapter and students pay dues but there is a lack of activity. In 2000, Zane Vaughn conducted a study of FFA program quality in North

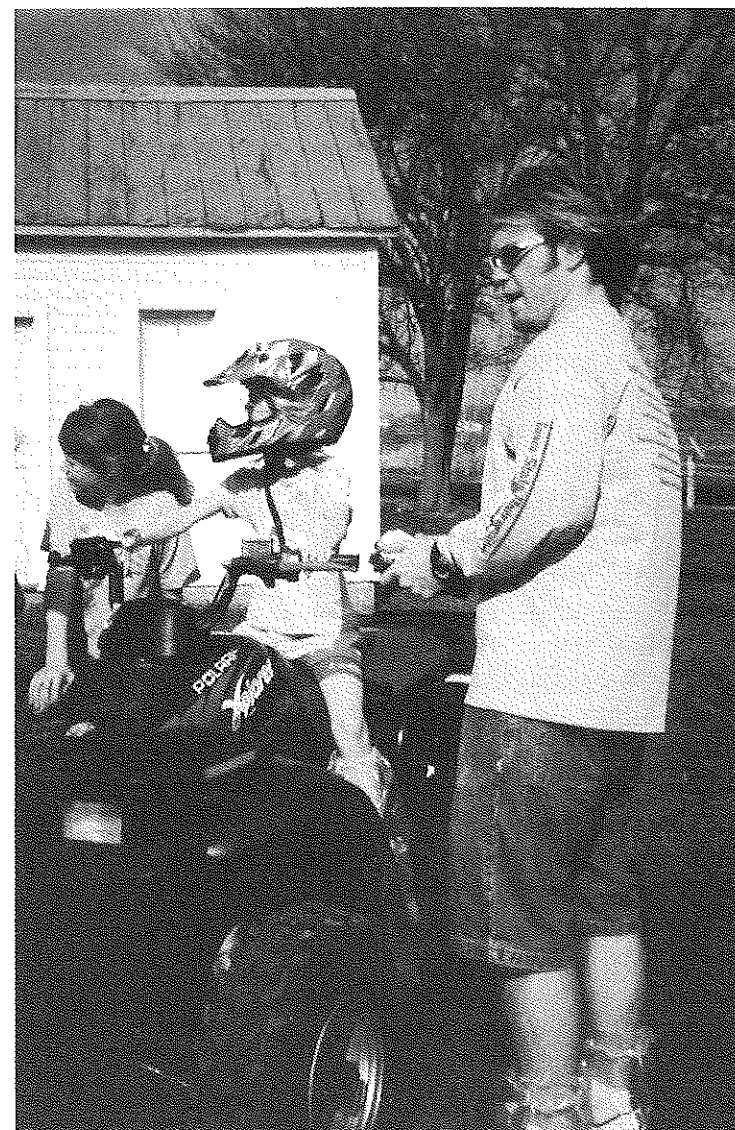
Carolina. The results were rather shocking. A large number of FFA chapters did not have an annual banquet or even regular FFA meetings. There just wasn't much going on in many of the chapters. While the teachers could claim there is a FFA chapter, it is primarily in name only.

Recently an agriculture teacher in one of my graduate classes complained that preparing a FFA team for a Career Development Event was just taking too much of his valuable time. This teacher, out of industry, would rather spend the time preparing to teach the state mandated end-of-course test. While there is a lot of pressure in many school districts to do well on the end-of-the course test, research tells us that participation in the FFA has greater payback for the student in the long run.

In Revelation 3:15-16 the scriptures state, "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth." This is a pretty accurate description of the minimalist FFA chapter. These lukewarm FFA chapters need to become hot.

Moderate–Aristotle would like to see a moderate FFA chapter. This is a FFA chapter that has capable officers and a challenging Program

Moore states that agriculture teachers fit into one of four observable positions in regards to how they embrace the FFA. (Photo courtesy of Stacie Turnbull.)



of Activities. There is an annual banquet, regular meetings with some substance, and some fun activities. FFA proficiency awards are given at the local level. The chapter participates in many FFA activities, but not all of them. The teacher involves as many different students as possible in the FFA.

The chapter participates in FFA activities that make sense for the curriculum taught and community. Students are taught skills in class that will be needed to participate in Career Development Events (CDEs) but the actual training of teams and practices occur outside of class time. The agricultural teacher

doesn't spend every minute of every day immersed in the FFA.

Fanatic – On the end of the FFA-Agricultural Education continuum is the Fanatic. The teacher may be known as the FFA teacher instead of the agriculture teacher. The students participate in every conceivable FFA activity and are always on the go. The curriculum that is taught in the class is the FFA Career Development Events (CDE). When one competitive event is over, instruction starts for the next. Students participate in FFA CDEs that have no relation to the curriculum taught in the school. The same set of

students tend to be involved in every FFA activity. The teacher will bend the rules as far as possible and might even break one or two along the way. The motto is to win at all costs.

Some years ago I was teaching a traveling seminar and we were visiting a Super Star FFA chapter in Southern Illinois. One of the students in the class asked the teacher how so much could be accomplished in a one-teacher department. The teacher somewhat reluctantly told of the breakup of his marriage. When ever the FFA replaces a marriage, family, etc. there is a lack of balance. Aristotle would not approve.

With the teacher shortage in agricultural education, we don't need teachers leaving the profession. The Fanatic is a perfect candidate to burn out. It simply is not healthy to the individual or the profession to have FFA Fanatics.

Conclusion

Agriculture teachers need to consider the Golden Mean when examining their agricultural education and FFA program. The old three circle diagram of agricultural education show that classroom instruction, SAE and the FFA are equal in size and overlap. The FFA circle is the one that needs to be examined. Is it equal in size in your program to instruction? It should not be much smaller nor should it be much larger than the instruction circle. When these circles are about equal in size, then you have achieved the Golden Mean. After all, I'm sure Aristotle had the FFA in mind when he chose one of the FFA colors in naming his philosophical principle.

Gary Moore is Coordinator of Graduate Programs in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at North Carolina State University.

Fulfilling the Mission of PAS

By David Blecha

"PAS-PORT TO YOUR FUTURE", "GATEWAY TO THE FUTURE", "BUILDING DREAMS INTO REALITY", AND "GETTING ON TRACK WITH PAS", are examples of themes used by the National Postsecondary Agricultural Students Organization (PAS). If you look at these themes closely, you will find they all relate to providing leadership opportunities for students. This blends well with the organization's mission, which is "To provide opportunities for individual growth, leadership, and career preparation". Any student enrolled in an agricultural-related collegiate program in all 50 states can become a local, state and national PAS member.

So how do we fulfill the mission of the PAS organization? In the state of Iowa, the PAS of Iowa organization has been active on the state and national level. The organization facilitates two state leadership conferences per year. The fall conference concentrates on career opportunities and development of personal, technical and leadership competencies. This is accomplished through a 2-day conference consisting of workshops, seminars and tours, where business and industry are key players in these activities.

The spring conference also provides workshops and tours but the main concentration is the Career Development programs. This allows the students to apply their skills and abilities in a variety of situations that enhance the learning process. The officials for these events are business and industry people, which again provides networking opportunities for our students. Students have an opportunity to qualify and participate in the same career development programs at the national level, thus a

reinforcement of learning.

If you would examine the components of these programs, you would find that you are probably incorporating most if not all of the types of learning, skills and competencies that are needed to participate in the PAS Career Programs.

For an example, the Crops Specialist Career program consists of three areas, the first being a comprehensive agronomic test. If you are covering material now that would provide for your students to pass the Certified Crop Advisor Certification Program, then you have this area covered. If you incorporate any identification of plants, pests, and diseases, then you have part two covered. The third part is then a problem solving activity, such as developing the least cost crop program for the next year's production cycle. If you are teaching an advanced crops class, then this could easily be an activity. If these kinds of learning opportunities are part of your curriculum then your student and potential PAS members are ready. The next learning activity will be to participate in this event at the state and maybe qualify for the national.

I ask again, *How do we fulfill the mission of the PAS organization?* Having been involved with the organization for many years, it is the attitude, the belief in, and the dedication for enhanced learning opportunities for the organization by the advisors. They are the key people that will provide the guidance, assistance, and information and actually promote the opportunities that PAS offers to the students. The PAS organization should be an integral part of the postsecondary agriculture educational process. This means you should be incorporating the benefits of this organization into your program curriculums. As

mentioned previously, most instructors are already incorporating most of the types of learning activities and information that is involved with the PAS.

Sometimes even though the instructors /advisers are supportive, of this organization, I know that some administrators are looking to cut back on costs. You will need to sell PAS on its benefits of being an integral part of your education programming in preparing students with individual growth, leadership and career preparation skills.

This all can be at the local level though an agriculture club or organization. All of these activities or similar activities can be conducted at the local level to involve and enhance student learning. The opportunity for students at the local level to work together and develop camaraderie as well as participate in career programs at the local, state, and national levels can be selling points.

Having been personally involved with local state and national PAS activities since 1980, I have seen the organization grow and continuously improve in educational learning opportunities.

As we visit with our Hawkeye Community College alumni, many still relate the experiences and how the state and national PAS provided opportunities to learn, make friends, and begin building a network for use in the future.

Can we afford not to make this opportunity available for our students?

For more information go to www.ffa.org and click on the PAS link.

David Blecha is an Agri-Business Instructor at Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo, Iowa, and a three-time National PAS Advisor of the Year.

Here by the Owl...Today, Tomorrow and Always

By Diane Runde

Over the past fifteen years as an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor I have had the opportunity to teach and advise over fifteen hundred students. Some of these students attended a small rural high school with a population of only 92 students, while others are my current students at Janesville Craig High School with a student population of over 1800. I have seen many differences between the students, curriculum, and FFA from my first year teaching in 1988 to the current class of 2003.

One of these differences is the type of student that is currently enrolling in agriculture classes and the FFA. Gone are the days when 80 percent of my students came from a production agriculture backgrounds. Gone are the days when less than 5 percent of your students worked after school jobs. Gone are the days when the school offered only FFA, band, choir, and sports as co- and extra curricular activities. In addition to multiple school activities to choose from, today's teenagers have a tremendous amount of peer pressure and social issues to deal with on a daily basis. All of these changes translate in to more challenges for you as the FFA advisor.

One challenge that I have worked very hard to overcome is finding time for advising students. Just when can you find time to sit down with your officers? This year we are meeting before school since they all have a variety of after school commitments, just like most of our FFA membership. We have gone to a rotating meeting schedule that allows flexibility in when we meet.

One month we meet before school, one month during lunch hour, and the next month in the evening. I have seen an increase in the number of members who *regularly* attend the FFA meetings. More students can "fit" FFA meetings into their busy lives because of the flexible meeting times. Thus I have seen an increase in the number of members who attend the activities discusses, planned and organized at the meetings.

An FFA advisor has to be up to date and willing to learn new technology and ways to work with busy teenagers. My prepared speeches and job interview resumes were emailed to me from the FFA members this year. Thus, I could open these items at home, school, or where ever based upon when I had the time to read, proof and make suggested revisions. Then, I just emailed the copy back to the student who can work on it when and where their schedule allowed. Instant messenger and email has allowed me to advise several college students on their State and American FFA Degrees. We just get on-line and chat back and forth about where information needs to be placed. Then members email the completed degree as an attached excel file back to me. The current reporter prints and processes the chapter email on a daily basis.

But, as the type of FFA members has changed over the years, some of the key components to advising have remained the same.

I believe an advisor must be organized, honest and always keep what is best for the student in mind. Over the years, I have given advise on just about everything. Whether I am advising them on what university they should attend or what I think of their current boyfriend, I am always

honest and truthful to the students. Sometimes I think today's teenagers are looking for someone to help them make the tough decisions. They will look to you, as the FFA advisor, for advice on some issues that might be more appropriate for a parent, counselor, or religious person to answer. As the FFA advisor know when to refer students a professional in order to better help the child. I remember having more than one student ask for my advice and after I gave it to them, they said, "That exactly what my mom said, too." So, if you're honest and keep the child's heart in mind, you should not wrong with your advice.

My FFA advisor would always say, "Here by the owl" to me when I asked him a question, so when I took his advice and became an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor, I continued the "Here by the owl" tradition. As I told my first students in 1988, "If you ever need anything, don't be afraid to ask. I am here by the owl for a reason." I have told this to my students every year for the past fifteen years and plan to continue for the rest of my career. Once I have been their FFA advisor, they still consider me "Here by the owl... today, tomorrow and always and I wouldn't want it any other way.



Diane Runde is an Agricultural Instructor at Janesville Craig High School in Janesville, WI.

Advising a Youth Group or Herding Cattle?

By Brandi Rice

Rising at the first morning light, you set out to gather the cattle. You have collected the needed equipment, hired help, and have planned for any thing that could happen. Each person knows their duties and the cattle drive begins. The herd is well on its way to the destination and the hired hands are working well, keeping everything together. Then it happens, the herd is spooked. Every calf is headed in a different direction. Does this sound familiar?

Advising a youth group is like herding cattle, each student has his/her own ideas of what an FFA chapter should be; our goal is to head them all in the same direction. Just like any agricultural education instructor, I began with a vision of what the profession would be like. I grew up in a chapter with a strong tradition. As a young child I watched those I looked up to become leaders in the FFA chapter, and I knew that one day

I would do the same.

We participated in leadership events and "contests" (what we called them back then), because that is what our chapter did, there were no questions asked. However, my traditional prospective soon changed when I accepted my first teaching position in a program that had never had an Agricultural Education and FFA program before.

I am currently the agricultural education instructor and FFA advisor at Southeast of Saline high school in Gypsum, Kansas. Southeast of Saline is an average size rural school that serves several small surrounding communities. The school tried for many years to begin an FFA chapter and the dream became my reality during my senior year at Kansas State University.

I was hired in February as the agricultural education instructor and FFA Advisor, and I went into full swing designing the curriculum, ordering supplies and recruiting FFA members. My vision of FFA soon

changed when I began working with youth who had few experiences within leadership organizations. During the year, there were a few pieces of advice and experiences that helped develop the chapter, and bring the cattle together.

Gather students toward common goals

It is important to gather the herd at the beginning of the drive. Recruiting FFA members together can be one of the biggest challenges of advising a chapter. The members had very little knowledge of FFA; all they knew was what they had been told. We began by explaining what FFA was by sharing with the students and parents all of the events the FFA members can participate in, from Career Development Events, to leadership events, and scholarship opportunities. However, as any teacher knows, the FFA has so many opportunities; no single advisor can accomplish them all. This is where the cattle scattered.



For the students in the Southeast of Saline FFA Chapter, their hard work was realized when the Chapter received a gold at the 2002 Kansas State FFA Convention, and a silver at the 2003 National FFA Convention, for the National Chapter Award. Advisor Brandi Rice is shown with Chapter members.

Every student headed in a different direction with the chapter, and we needed to focus on certain areas to get started. We had to sit down and establish the goals for the chapter. Like most things at this point in the chapter, potential goals were provided, and the students picked through them choosing those that interested them most. This was the first taste of success and accomplishment as an advisor; the students were gathered together towards common goals.

Empower the students

At this point, it is important to identify the leaders of the herd and encourage them to assist the strays. At the beginning, the chapter was led by the advisor, because I was the only one that had an idea of which direction to go. The weight of responsibility was heavy on the advisor and light on the members. However, as they participated in more events and became more aware of the FFA organization, the students, especially the officers, began accepting more responsibility for the direction of the local chapter activities and events.

They decided to have a fun activity for FFA members to participate in each month. They began with a putt-putt night and by the end of the year the students had hosted movie nights, swim parties, and even an evening at the go-kart track. I witnessed the officers' move from being followers to becoming leaders. This was the next accomplishment for the chapter, the students were empowered.

Provide students ownership

It is easier to herd the cattle, if they know there is a reward waiting at their destination. The next challenge was providing the students with ownership of the organization. This increased in difficulty because the students did not fully understand the organization. We began by evaluating

our needs. The students agreed that we had to have chapter funds to achieve many of the goals we had set out to accomplish. It was evident that we had to conduct a fundraiser, and quickly.

Because this was the first major undertaking of the chapter, it was important for it to be successful. We began with clear expectations and guidelines for the project that was soon adopted by the agribusiness class. The students took the set guidelines and came up with the idea to make homemade salsa and market it to the school and community. They created their own products, container labels, and advertisements. Next, they conducted a taste test for their product to make sure there would be a demand for the product. Finally the product was made on an on-order basis to prevent over stock and waste of the product. Because the program had ownership by the students, it was a hit with the students and the community. This accomplishment provided the students ownership of the fundraising project and finally the chapter.

Set students up for success

It is easier to herd the cattle, if they know where they are going. It was time for the weight of responsibility to be placed on the students, instead of the advisor. In order to do this, the students had to be set up for success. While establishing our goals in the beginning of the year, the areas of the Program of Activities were presented to them to focus their goals into. The goals became the Program of Activities and the Program of Activities became the National Chapter Award that the students were responsible for completing.

It was now February, and time

for the students to take responsibility of the chapter. They were provided with the application form, a copy of the Program of Activities, and a dream for them to stand on the State Convention stage and be recognized in the National Chapter Program. Some students were more convinced the dream could become a reality than others, but everyone worked hard filling out the application, revising, and proofing until it was time to turn it in.

The dream had become a reality when the students were recognized in the gold division of the state and were off to national competition. Not only did the students get to travel across the stage at state convention, but at the national convention in the silver division as well. The third accomplishment was even greater because the students were set up to have their own success.

Even though I am in my second year of teaching, I face new challenges everyday advising the FFA chapter. I have witnessed members teaching others how to participate in career development events and explaining what it is like to attend leadership events. We have continued our success as a chapter and my role as an advisor has moved from a leader to a facilitator as the knowledge of the members and officers has increased. The youth organization is easier to lead and can accomplish more because even though each calf in the herd has its own ideas, the herd is headed in one direction.



Brandi Rice is the Agricultural Instructor at Southeast of Saline High School in Gypsum, KS.

Assessing Youth Group Opportunities: From Student to Advisor

By Charles Steiner

As a graduate student, I have been presented with several opportunities to advise and assist with the future direction of collegiate organizations. Being a graduate student, I was until recently a student member of many such organizations. I have been involved with organizations that were exceptional, while others were struggling to find a purpose. In looking at many factors associated with these collegiate organizations, I have found underlying factors that I believe affect the success of these organizations. One factor is the ability of the advisor to communicate the direction of the organization and provide opportunities for students to become active members in the overall growth and development of that organization.

Sound objectives and strong leadership are two other factors that often increase the interest in an organization and enable its leaders to encourage members to become actively involved in organizational activities. I have seen effective advisors instill the drive and determination within student officers and members to succeed. As soon as members feel the excitement and need to become involved, the organization will usually see greater success and increased learning possibilities.

The advisor must provide input and be willing to oversee the direction of the organization. Being an advisor is a responsibility that must be accepted enthusiastically in order to successfully carry out the organization's mission. The advisor needs to be in constant communication with officers and members and

provide any departmental or administrative assistance that they may need. The advisor can also provide insights and suggestions, but ultimately allows for the decision-making processes to be carried out by the members.

Advising should always allow opportunities for teachable moments. Organizations are led by officers who work closely together and must come to a consensus on decisions and actions taken. They must have the ability to actively involve members of the organization and keep a high activity and interest level within the group. When an organization is working well and members are actively involved then the advisory functions are somewhat diminished, but the teaching opportunities are endless. An advisor teaches officers and members about the importance of communication, committees, and the delegation of responsibilities. He can have an impact on individual development and on the overall group dynamics associated with student organizations. An advisor must instill the importance of the organization and the member's role within that organization. The advisor should be looking for opportunities to help those members gain a better understanding of what separates the exceptional organizations from those that may not have such a profound impact upon its members.

Since serving as a co-advisor for the farm operations club at Iowa State University, I continually realize the critical role advisors play in the effective and efficient functioning of a student organization. I have witnessed the importance of communication between advisors, officers and members. As the organization grows, so does the amount of time

and effort needed to keep everyone informed of future activities and the direction the organization may take. Successful advisors are typically a reflection of exceptional student leaders. Students have vast opportunities within organizations to acquire leadership skills. It may be an officer position, committee chairperson, agricultural council representative, or even as a member of a committee that will allow for leadership opportunities. If the organization is functioning correctly and effectively then a majority of its members will be learning and practicing leadership, communication and teamwork.

The biggest challenge I see facing advisors is understanding their role within the organization. An advisor should attempt to be a part of the organization but not the figure-head or person in control. Advisors and officers should provide members with the opportunity to be actively involved within the organization. The challenge for the advisor is to allow for the success of the organization, while having that success attributable to the student members.

The advisors that are recognized for excellence and devotion to a particular organization are usually active in all aspects of the organizational process. However, they rarely are making the decisions or handling the overall control of the organization. Students can learn about leadership, communication, teamwork and professional development if the advisor takes the correct approach to advising. If the advisor decides to be overly involved in many aspects of the organization then the learning opportunities for its members will diminish.

An advisor must fully understand the purpose and people within his/her

organization. Understanding, that for students to learn they must be allowed to make decisions and develop activities without relying heavily upon their advisor. Assistance with the basic processes and feedback are essential, but allowing the student members the opportunity to impact the future direction of the organization is also essential. Students, who are provided the opportu-

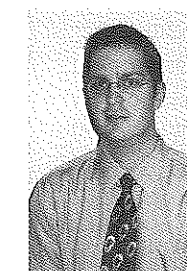
nities to lead, supervise, and make decisions within an organization, learn skills that may not be readily learnable in other segments of their education.

Serving as an advisor for any youth group or organization can be a large responsibility. Five basic concepts to remember when advising organizations include:

- √ Organizations are developed for members, not advisors.
- √ Advisors play a supportive role for the organization.
- √ Advisors need to be involved within the organizations activities.
- √ Look for ways to provide all members with a purpose and responsibility to the organization.
- √ Members make organizations.

Student organizations provide members with an opportunity to lead and learn outside the traditional classroom. The skills, friendships and networking that take place within organizations can have a profound impact on a student's professional development. The interest employer's show in the extracurricular activities of students strengthens the importance of being involved.

Serving as an advisor has helped me understand how important learning in this type of situation can be. If you enjoy teaching students, advising an organization can provide an excellent opportunity.



Charles Steiner is a Temporary Instructor and Co-Advisor of the FarmOp Club in the Department of Agricultural Education and Studies at Iowa State University.



The biggest challenge facing advisors, according to Steiner, is understanding their role within the organization. FFA advisor Brandi Rice is shown with her agricultural education students.

Expectations of a Future Agricultural Educator

By Josh Costello

As I prepare to enter the "real world" following my student teaching in December of 2003, I look ahead to all of the expectations that are being placed on my generation of teachers. These expectations will come from within myself as well as the school district for which I am going to be working. Those that weigh heavy on my mind are the new teaching standards that are about to come into effect, the probationary period before I am granted a renewal of my license, the demands of preparing for class every day, and the advisory role(s) that I will be asked to fill. One of the most challenging aspects will be successfully filling the advisor position. Along with this prestigious title come numerous benefits and responsibilities.

Remembering what we have talked about briefly in class regarding contracts, you have your 9-month school contract with, depending upon the school, a 20-40 day summer contract. The nine months in school are usually from 8:00am until 4:00pm and the occasional weekend for training and other job related courses. However, we all know that these aren't the hours that most of us put in. We usually find ourselves coming in early, staying late, and working the weekends to stay caught up.

Having just completed a semester of pre-student teaching at Darlington H.S. in Darlington, WI, under the supervision of Mr. Troy Lobdell, I have been exposed to a small cross-section of the life of an agriculture teacher. Also, thinking back to high school, I can remember countless mornings of arriving at the high school around 7am to practice for a particular contest, to have an officer meeting, or to crunch for the upcoming banquet that all of the students wanted to be flawless. When I wasn't playing sports, I found myself back in the agriculture room most evenings, for the same activities that had brought me in early that morning. There also seemed to be a suburban van leaving from the agriculture room

frequently on Friday afternoons or Saturday mornings to go to a contest, workshop, or leadership conference. At the time, going on trips, attending workshops and leadership conferences seemed like a wonderful life. These activities took me away from at least one day of farm labor, which I loved, and my father hated.

Now, as I prepare to become the "leader" of such organized chaos, the role somehow seems to not be quite as glamorous as it used to be. The countless hours, long weekends, and lack of down time appears to be an endless cycle. When school has let out for the summer and other teachers are enjoying some rest and relaxation, we agriculture teachers are gearing up for summer Super-

vised Agricultural Experience (SAE) visits, local, county, and state fairs, state FFA Conventions, and countless other picnics and alumni meetings.

Some might say don't push yourself so hard; it's not worth the headache. To those people I must say that I would not be doing my job properly if I didn't provide every possible opportunity, within reason, to my students. After all, isn't that why we got into education, to help educate the children of this great nation? Those options were there for me and I feel obligated to provide those same opportunities for success to my students. I can remember the proud look on my advisor's face when we won awards or competitions. To know that I had a hand in the success of an individual is what will make it all worthwhile. Also, as I sit in the teacher's lounge and listen to the news, I hear nothing but budget crises, teacher cuts, pay cuts, benefit cuts, program cuts and all of those wonderful phrases that get tossed around in tough financial times.

Soon, those teachers who sit back and don't advise or assist with extracurricular activities might find that they aren't as necessary as they thought they were. If I am an FFA advisor to the FFA and I am busting my tail to bring home trophies and awards to gain the school and the community positive recognition, they are going to have a hard time telling me and convincing the school board that they can't find the money to fund the agriculture program. As times continue to get tougher, we are forced to become more creative and resourceful in funding our clubs or

organizations. We find that we have to do more, with less. Not only in the classroom, but more so outside of the classroom, I found the ability to think outside the box and be creative.

There is no doubt in my mind that my involvement in agriculture programs, mainly FFA, has developed me into the individual that I am today. I was taught priceless lessons on life and leadership as I continued my involvement into the collegiate level. Advisors were there to guide and direct students at the high school level. They steered us in the right direction and made the tough decisions for us. Now they offer only suggestions and opinions at the collegiate level while allowing the students to more freely guide the direction of the club or organization.

As I currently serve as the president of the Agriculture Student Council and I just finished my term on the executive board for Colligate FFA, I have worked first hand with these advisors. I see the role of the college advisor remaining, for the most part, the same but I feel the role of the high school teacher/advisor is dramatically changing as society changes.

Schools are becoming more and more responsible for instilling the values and morals to their students as the interaction between parents and children decreases daily. I feel we are expected to teach some of the students the difference between right and wrong as we fill the parental role for students whose home life is less than desirable. As this trend continues to grow, the role of the educator/advisor will continu-

ally change. This burden will change agricultural education programs as we are forced to deal with these issues along with the changing population. Students now are one or two generations removed from the farm and are looking for a different aspect of agriculture than what we used to teach.

We, as educators/advisors, are charged with being a window to the past, while providing a door to the future. Not long ago we were teaching cows, sows, and plows. Now we find ourselves teaching genetics, Agricultural Law, reclamation and a whole host of other areas that weren't even dreamed about when I was born. Is this a bad thing? I don't think so, but to refuse to change and adapt to today's changing industry will almost surely spell doom for your particular program or organization.

The future for agricultural educators appears to be bright. With many new technical advances and constant research unveiling countless mysteries, the job appears to be pretty secure barring any new substitutes for food and fiber. The demands of agriculture teachers as advisors will continue to change, expand, and evolve as the years pass, but I feel that as long as we continue to do our jobs and remain teachable, we will always be able to meet and exceed the ever-changing goals and expectations of us as an advisor.

Josh Costello is an undergraduate in Agricultural Education at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

July-August Issue

The Role of Research in the Using Advisory Committees and other Stakeholder Groups (FFA Alumni, etc.).

Advisory committees are often credited with saving programs of Agricultural Education. How can advisory committees be put to use by teachers of agriculture? What suggestions could help teachers to start and maintain viable advisory committees? What role does the teacher have in conducting advisory committee activities?

Theme Editor: Carlos Rosencrans
New Mexico State University
Box 30003, MSC 3501
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88003
Phone: 506-646-4511
email: crosencr@nmsu.edu

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Life in Hell...Or Was it Heaven?

By Alan Spencer

I know. That is an odd title for an article on advising. In my five and a half years of teaching high school agriculture and working with FFA members, I have learned more than I ever thought I would. I remember how idealistic each of my college classmates and I were during our senior year classes. We were not clueless. We were young and inexperienced. In this article, I will cover some of my experiences.

The life of an FFA Advisor is unique. Few teachers start working with students before school even begins. I started my teaching career at West Marshall High School by taking the FFA Officers to Minneapolis to plan the Program of Activities for the next year. I did not know the kids and they did not know me.

"Kids" is the important word. When I started teaching, I was not much older than the senior FFA members. I had to really concentrate on acting like the adult and not acting like these kids were your friends from college. I have seen too many young teachers try to become friends with the kids. This never helps the discipline in classes.

During that first officer trip, two of the officers started arguing while we were on Interstate 35W during heavy traffic, over where to set a half full cup of soda pop. I was not going to put up with any of the bickering. I pulled over on the side of the interstate to dump the soda pop out. Of course, this incident was one of the few activities that the officers talked about when we returned home.

The FFA Officers scheduled an officer meeting during the first week of school. I worked with the officers on what their responsibilities were.

However, the chapter Reporter did not seem really enthusiastic about writing newspaper articles or working on the reporter's scrapbook. On the second day of school, the principal, Mr. Anthony, told me that the Reporter was quitting the FFA. I became really upset.

I have no tolerance for people who accept responsibility and then do not act. The fact that the student would not talk to me about the situation made it even worse. The officer team selected a replacement and the new reporter completed the first scrapbook since 1978. Since I started teaching in 1997, I have had to replace at least one officer each year for not performing his/her duties. To some of you, this may sound harsh. However, you must demand excellence to achieve excellence.

After planning the first FFA meeting with the officers, I found out that the chapter had never performed opening and closing ceremonies. Only the FFA members who were on the previous year's Conduct of Meeting team knew the ceremonies. I could not believe that the FFA Chapter had never done FFA ceremonies. This soon changed. FFA advisors need to remain strong in their dedication to the FFA and teach the members about the importance of traditions.

The surprises from the first two weeks of school gave way to a really good surprise for the whole chapter. In 1997, the West Marshall FFA Chapter received a Gold rating and fifth place in the National Chapter Award. The previous instructor completed the application. I received a letter from the National FFA stating that our chapter would receive a three star rating for the National Chapter Award and was

selected as a National Model of Innovations Finalist in Chapter Development. At the time, I was unfamiliar with the new National Chapter Award structure and I was not really sure what it all meant.

After speaking with other agriculture teachers in the state, I narrowed what our responsibilities would be as a national finalist. This activity really helped to bring the whole chapter together. We made plans on what to present at National Convention in Kansas City and who would present. Also, we had to make plans on how to get the whole chapter involved in the activities on the day the photographer from the National FFA would come to our school. This whole ordeal was very hectic, but also a very fun time for all of us.

When I interviewed for the job at West Marshall, I was offered a teaching contract with thirty extended days. The superintendent, Mr. Kennedy, said that the amount of days on the extended contract was "negotiable." If I kept a record of all hours I worked outside of the regular school day, I would have the chance to talk to the School Board about increasing the extended days.

I kept good track of my hours that year - it almost made me sick to think about all of those hours. My wife and I did attend the March school board meeting and presented my plan to increase my extended days from thirty days to fifty days. I was hoping for at least an increase to forty days. The school board reviewed my proposal, moved to accept the proposal for the increase to fifty extended days, and passed the motion. I felt as if the hours I worked with the students to make the agriculture program and the FFA chapter successful were all worth it.

FFA advisors can sometimes become involved with volunteer activities above the chapter level. During my second year of teaching at West Marshall, I was asked to be an Advisor that would assist the State FFA Officer Nominating Committee. This meant that I would have to spend time at that activity and not be with my students at our State Leadership Conference. There was some honor in helping with the Nominating Committee, but I soon found out that you still must leave the students with a chaperone.

In 1999, our chapter stayed at the hotel across the street from the convention center. This was very convenient, however, I would never stay that close again. While working with the Nominating Committee, the mother of one of my students came to inform me that she had just returned from the hospital with her son who had just received stitches for a bad cut on his face and lost a tooth. The students relayed a story to me that involved them going back to the hotel, without approval, and going swimming. The student, they said, had run in the pool area, tripped, and hit his head on the floor.

When we returned home the next day, one of the out-of-school members who attended the conference had to talk to me. She had heard the real story of the "pool incident", and wracked with guilt about what she had heard.

She relayed the story of how the student did not trip and fall. He had a tendency to try to get under people's skin just for fun. The other student to which he was giving a bad time just could not take it anymore and hit him in the face. The punch knocked out a tooth and gave him the cut that required stitches. All the students made sure the story that they would tell me was the same.

I told the story to the principal, Mr. Herbst, who interviewed the

students. Mr. Herbst handled the disciplinary actions. I spoke with the students about trust and how the trust had been broken. I also learned that an extra chaperone is definitely a good thing to bring with you to a conference.

In the summer of 1999, I started as the new agriculture teacher and FFA Advisor at Manson Northwest Webster (MNW) High School. MNW offered a twelve month contract and facilities that included a classroom, large office next to the classroom, and a large agriscience lab area. The agriscience lab area was half aquaculture lab and half junk storage space. My wife and I worked for two months to clean out the area. Piles and piles and piles of junk were loaded into the dumpsters and hauled away. Years of pack-rat agriculture teacher collections were cleared out to utilize the space better.

My wife and I spent hours on creating a new look for the agriculture department. We made sure that when the students came in on the first day of school, they knew that there were changes for the better. We painted a large FFA emblem on the wall, put up posters, and brought in plants. The first two years in a new environment helped me become a better teacher and FFA advisor.

I taught the first two days of school and met with the FFA Officers. A few activities surprised me. I discovered that the 22nd Annual MNW FFA Trapshoot was approaching quickly when the teacher from a neighboring school called to ask about registration time. I discovered that large tanks of tilapia are a challenge for someone who has never had experience with large tanks of tilapia.

I also discovered that being gone for the entire first full week of school doesn't improve classroom instruction. On the Sunday after school started, I felt this pain in my side. At the hospital, the doctor said

that my appendix needed to be removed. I spent one night in the hospital and the rest of the week in bed watching cartoons.

The FFA Officers had to prepare everything for the trapshoot on their own that week. I attended the trapshoot and was able to stand straight most of the day. I learned that when pressed, FFA members could complete the task on their own. My job was just to make sure that it was done right.

When I look back over my teaching career, I am amazed at how I have grown more confident than the "confidence" I exhibited when I first graduated. Sometimes I was frustrated my job. Other times I loved my job. For me, the job was always about the students and working with FFA members. To borrow a horticulture saying, I have seen students blossom and grow to levels they never knew existed.

In February 2003, I took a new step in my career path. I now serve as the Executive Secretary/Treasurer of the Iowa FFA Association. I loved teaching high school, but I will really enjoy working with the Iowa FFA Officers. The opportunity to work with all FFA events in Iowa was too good to let go.

My wife probably remembers the trials I went through during my first few years better than I do. I know sometimes I really needed the support of my wife to go back to school the next day. If I had any advice at all to a beginning teacher, I would tell you to find a support person with which to share ideas and experiences.

Was my life hell? No. Was my life heaven? Not always. However, I know that I am a better person for my experiences.

Alan Spencer is the Executive Iowa FFA Secretary/Treasurer at the Department of Education in Des Moines, Iowa.

Food for Thought...What is Happening to Agricultural Education Enrollment?

By Michael S. Retallick

What direction is agricultural education enrollment headed? Is enrollment in agricultural education classrooms increasing? Based upon the types of students in our classrooms, are we meeting their needs? Do we, as secondary teachers, encourage and promote the complete package of agricultural education, which includes the classroom and laboratory, FFA membership, and SAE participation, to the extent which we should?

If you expect to get complete answers to these questions in this article, you will be disappointed. The purpose of this article is to spark some interest and debate over our current enrollment trends using one state as an example. It is only through asking and attempting to answer these thought-provoking questions that the profession will strive to improve and meet the needs of both today's and tomorrow's students. Findings related to enrollment trends in Iowa's agricultural education programs are presented as a foundation for posing and trying to answer the questions we must ask ourselves.

The findings were obtained through the analysis of agricultural

education enrollment, FFA membership, and SAE participation data that were collected in Iowa from 1991-2001 (Iowa Department of Education, 2002; Iowa FFA Association, 2002; Iowa Governor's Council of Agricultural Education, 2001). The Iowa Governor's Council on Agricultural Education, in conjunction with the Iowa Department of Education has collected data annually since the 1990-1991 academic year. The findings were interesting to say the very least. Here are a few things that were discovered (Retallick, 2002).

Enrollment Growth (1991-2001)

- ★ Total enrollment in Ag Education has grown each academic year and has shown a net increase of 6,871 students, nearly a 22% increase. Eleven straight years of increased enrollment!
- ★ The percentage of females in Ag Ed courses has increased from 15.29% to 27.92%.

- ★ The percent change in Agricultural Education enrollment by gender:
 - Male 3.67%
 - Female 122.34%
 - Total 21.82%
- ★ In six of the eleven years, more students participated in SAE than FFA
- ★ Percent change in each of the three components of Agricultural Education:
 - Classroom and laboratory 76.34%
 - Supervised Ag Experience 59.56%
 - FFA Membership 29.90%
- ★ Percent change in the type of SAE programs (based upon the number of students enrolled in each):
 - Business Ownership 393.94%
 - Production Ownership 9.93%

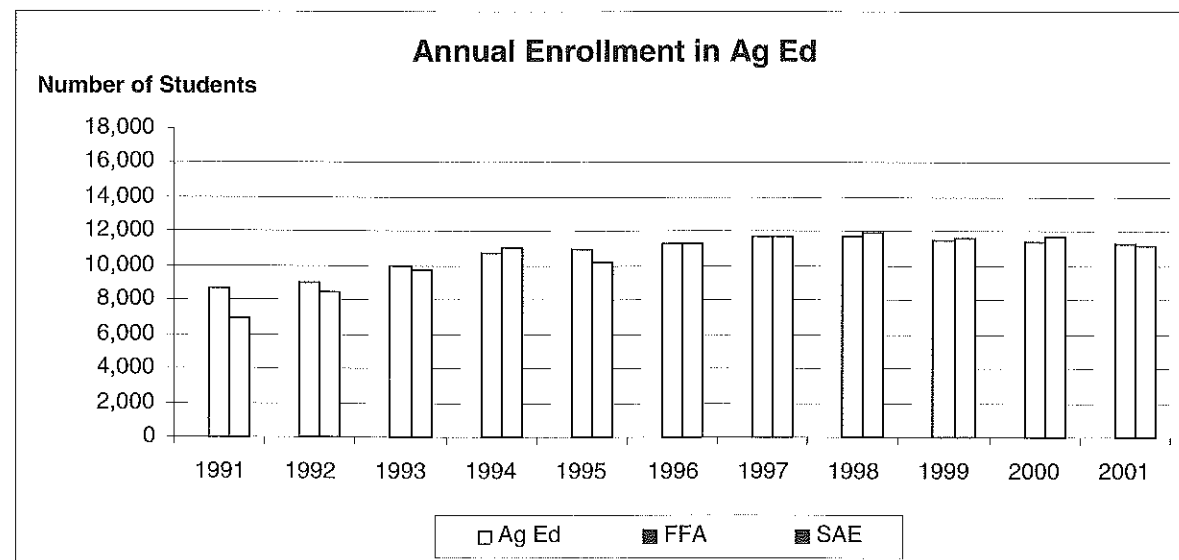


Figure 1: Annual Enrollment in Iowa Agricultural Education (Retallick, 2002).

- Agribusiness Placement 188.84%
- Production Placement 113.08%
- Agriscience Projects 511.11%

Enrollment Decline

- ★ The percentage of Ag Ed students with a SAE has declined from a high of over 95% in 1994 to a low of 70% in 2001.
- ★ SAE participation peaked in 1998 and has declined by 6.38% from 1998-2001.
- ★ FFA membership peaked in 1997 and has declined by 3.13% from 1997-2001.
- ★ The percentage of Ag Ed students that joined FFA has declined from 99% in 1992 to just over 71% in 2001.

These findings have provided concrete evidence and insight into our agricultural education programs in Iowa. It also raises several questions that all of us in the profession should be considering and attempting to address at all levels of the profession.

- ★ How long can Ag Ed enrollment continue to grow while FFA membership and SAE participation decline?
- ★ What has caused this enrollment phenomenon to occur since the late 1990's?
- ★ What will happen if this enrollment phenomenon continues?
- ★ Are SAE and FFA no longer important components of a complete agricultural education program?
- ★ What types of educational experiences are students, advisory councils, and other stakeholders encouraging local programs to consider?

- ★ What changes have you made in your local program in the past five years? ...Are changes in curriculum and programming needed?
- ★ Do our current students (or teachers) place less value on SAE and FFA experiences today?
- ★ What kind of growth have you seen in the various types of SAE programs at the local level?
- ★ Do you promote/encourage students to consider agriscience or exploratory programs as a Supervised Agricultural Experience?
- ★ Can agricultural education survive on the local level with only the classroom and laboratory component?
- ★ What has been done to entice non-traditional students (including, but not limited to females) into your programs?
- ★ Do the enrollment trends signal a change in agricultural education? ...If so, how do we address the related issues?

In short, when comparing changes in enrollments from 1991 to 2001, the overall growth of the three components of agricultural education is exciting and worthy of celebration. However, the fact that the growth of the three components vary considerably and that SAE participation and FFA membership have declined for the past several years raise concern and cause one to ask even more difficult questions. What should one make of these findings when Agricultural Education enrollment in Iowa has continuously grown each year while FFA membership and SAE participation has declined since 1997 and 1998, respectively? Also, should Iowa be commended or concerned

since enrollment growth has been primarily due to the increase in female participation? Do these findings reflect similar trends that are occurring within your program? ...within your state?

I challenge each of us as professional agricultural educators to ponder the enrollment trends and attempt to explain what these findings really mean to our profession. Ask yourself whether your state is faced with similar issues and what the future holds for agricultural education on the local, state, and national levels. How will these trends impact your career, your profession, and the lives of your students in your community and state?

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Michael S. Retallick is the Coordinator of Academic Advising and Undergraduate Programs at Iowa State University.

Connecting Consumers to the Farm: Research Results from Agriculture Day in Los Angeles

By Denise Skidmore

Each day urban consumers influence human rights, child labor, environmental sustainability, price, availability, local economies and personal long-term health with their food and fiber purchase and consumption decisions. Most are not aware of the long-term impact of their decisions ultimately leading to food security. Consumers do not connect farming issues with food. Connecting young consumers to the farm introduces basic agrarian concepts, increases awareness of the food chain and promotes a healthy diet. Agriculture Day was

designed to initiate the discovery of the role of food, fiber, flowers and forests in our everyday lives.

Agriculture Day in Los Angeles was held on March 22, 2002. Eighty volunteers from California Women for Agriculture and ten volunteer presenters from various agriculture industry organizations dedicated their day to the Los Angeles Unified School District. These ninety volunteers donated an estimated \$40,000 in time and resources to make the event possible. The Agricultural Awareness and Literacy Foundation organized the event and spent \$5,000 on student busing and other event costs. The Los Angeles Unified School District Nutrition

Network contacted the schools and provided a 90-minute teacher in-service prior to the event highlighting the instructions for the student pre-test and post-test evaluation. Student pre-testing was conducted as part of the student preparation. During the event, students spent 120 minutes of instructional time at six hands-on interactive lessons highlighting fiber, good bugs and bad bugs, a "live" food guide pyramid, irrigation water, how plants grow and dairy cows. Students also experienced live farm animals and farm equipment.

Fifteen Los Angeles Unified District schools were represented at the event. Fifty-seven teachers brought approximately 1,200 stu-

dents. Teacher surveys and student work samples were collected and chaperone exit interviews were conducted as approved by Los Angeles Unified School District Program Evaluation and Research Branch.

More than 700 anonymous works were submitted; however, of those, only 213 students (18%) submitted a completed pre and post sample. Of those, only 1.4% (3) of the students associated agriculture with farming before the event. One hundred percent of the students identified agriculture with the production of food, fiber and/or flowers after experiencing Agriculture Day in LA.

Ten teachers responded to the post-event survey. These teachers indicated this event triggered an average of 162 minutes of classroom time integrating agriculture into lessons before Agriculture Day and 280 minutes with follow up lessons after the event. The foundation raised the question that the teachers who responded were probably those most interested and therefore would spend classroom time on agriculture anyway. Did any of the other teachers spend any time on agriculture beyond the event? (The event date was the Friday before Spring vacation, which may also have decreased response.)

A phone survey randomly calling non-respondent teachers was conducted narrowing the questions to two: How many minutes did you spend teaching about agriculture before Agriculture Day? How many minutes did you spend teaching about agriculture after Agriculture Day?

Sixteen teachers responded to the calls. These teachers indicated they spent an average of 106 minutes before the event and 232

minutes after the event. This confirmed the theory that the teachers who initially responded to the survey were those teachers most interested in teaching agriculture as demonstrated by the number of minutes. However, the foundation is encouraged that although the phone interviewed teachers did not take time to provide a written response to the survey; these teachers did continue to spend considerable time on agriculture lessons in the classroom.

The total survey and phone interviewed teacher responses of twenty-six teachers (45%) indicated each spent an average of 134 minutes before and 256 minutes after the event. Teachers commented on the need for appropriate follow-up materials. This emphasizes how important it is to provide quality follow-up lessons correlated to the event. In addition, the teachers mentioned the event motivated them to incorporate agriculture into their curriculum.

Eighty-three parent chaperone exit interviews were conducted with eight non-respondents due to a language barrier. Participants indicated, on average, a 2.62 point increase (on a scale of 1-10) over how much they knew before the event as compared to how much they knew after the event. Ninety-eight percent of the respondents indicated they are more likely to think about agriculture as they buy groceries.

After the event, the students' work samples displayed an association of farming, water, bugs, flowers, soil and livestock with the word "agriculture." These results indicate that Agriculture Day in Los Angeles was very successful in meeting the goals of the event. This experience shaped each student's definition of agriculture and his/her ability to

understand and comprehend the world around him/her. Agriculture Day provided students a unique experience to reference throughout their lives.

Agriculture Day was also successful in motivating teachers to spend classroom time integrating agriculture into the curriculum. Motivating teachers to continue the lessons is essential to justifying the cost of the event. Each student received an average 8.5 hours of agriculture-integrated instruction including lessons at the event and class time, thanks to the teachers. The agriculture community's investment becomes more long lasting and effective when teachers are motivated and provided materials to utilize agriculture to teach state standards and skills.

Urban teachers need to be inspired and provided the tools to teach agriculture. Urban students deserve the opportunity to experience first hand how food, fiber, flowers and forests contribute to their lives. This study concludes that Agriculture Day and similar events increase the participant's knowledge about agriculture and connects consumers to the farm. Further studies are planned for the 2003 event.



Denise Skidmore volunteers as president of the Agricultural Awareness and Literacy Foundation and education director for California Women for Agriculture. Denise works as the education coordinator for Hilmar Cheese Company Visitor Center.



Plant doctors, at the Agriculture Day in Los Angeles, explain integrated pest control with "good" and "bad" bugs. Approximately 1,200 students and fifty-seven teachers, from fifteen schools, learned about agriculture during the event. (Photo courtesy of Denise Skidmore.)

Teaching the Standards of Reasoning

By Rick Rudd and Kris Grage

"Angus cattle are superior to Hereford cattle."

"Pioneer seed corn is better than any other brand."

"Chevrolet makes a better truck than Ford."

Do these statements sound familiar? If your students were anything like ours, they make statements like these daily without really thinking through their claims. When asked to defend their points of view, their arguments often fall far short of convincing anyone. We can help our students build arguments to defend their points of view as well as critique the strength of claims made by others by utilizing the universal intellectual standards proposed by Paul and Elder (2001).

Let's use the following example of an argument made for taxing farmers to pay for nitrate clean-up in a local river:

"Everyone knows that farmers pollute the water with nitrates in their fertilizer! Farmers use tons of fertilizer every year to grow their crops. Much of this fertilizer runs off of the surface or leaches through to ground water, eventually polluting our river. The nitrates in the water are not safe to drink and cause serious health problems. Farmers also exploit animals on their factory farms just to make a profit. Since the farmers put the nitrates in the river they should pay to remove them. We should tax farmers to pay for nitrate clean-up!"

Defining Reasoning Standards

Clarity – A critical standard in evaluating statements, facts, and information. If a fact presented is unclear we cannot evaluate it any

further. We must insist on clarity as we evaluate information. Clear information is interpreted the same way by reasonable people.

We must give this person high marks for clarity. The argument is presented such that we can understand it clearly.

Accuracy – When reasoning through evidence and information we must know if the evidence, statements, data, etc. is true.

We cannot tell from this argument if the information is true. We should ask for more details from the presenter to be able to gauge truth. These statements appear to be mostly based on opinion and information that is not verifiable truth.

Precision – Statements can be clear and true but lack precision. We need to have precise information, facts, and data that we can use in reasoning.

This argument gets low marks for precision. Words like tons, much, and severe are open to interpretation and are not precise enough for the listener to make an informed decision about the argument.

Relevance – We are often bombarded with information that does not apply to our situation or even pulls us away from the purpose of our thinking. We must ask if the information is relevant and useful in addressing the concern at hand.

The statement about animal exploitation is loaded with emotion and is not relevant to this argument.

Depth – Deep thinking addresses the complexity of the problem being addressed. Simple answers for complex problems cannot adequately address the issue.

This argument is shallow in its approach to a very complex issue. Nitrates can come from agriculture but they can also come from golf courses, housing developments,

industry, and even thunderstorms.

Breadth – Breadth is exhibited by good reasoners who seek out sources of information that are outside of their existing knowledge, influence, or comfort zone. Those who exhibit broad thinking seek divergent points-of-view.

This opinion is narrowly focused and does not have a breadth of opinions or points of view.

Logic – Finally, good reasoners apply the logic questions to their thinking. Does this make sense? Does this conclusion follow from what I know?

Although on the surface some would agree that the argument conclusion does flow from the points made in the argument we must consider the strength of the points themselves. Since the argument is based on ill-formed premises we would conclude that the argument is not logical.

These standards can be used to analyze arguments or claims as well as to gauge the strength and truthfulness of information and assumptions. When students are asked to apply these standards to their own thinking, they will likely give more thought to their positions and learn to build their beliefs on more solid facts, information, and data.

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Rick Rudd is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication at the University of Florida.

Kris Grage is a Graduate Assistant in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication at the University of Florida.

Agricultural Education vs. Vocational Agriculture

By Tony Boehm

I have the pleasure this fall semester of teaching college seniors enrolled in Agricultural Education about FFA and teaching agriculture (I'll try not to ruin them). The lesson our first day was about the history of Agricultural Education, and we visited about where we have been and where we are going. I talked about the change from Vocational Agriculture to Agricultural Education, and we found ourselves discussing an important question. Is Agricultural Education an academic course or a vocational course?

In 1917 the Smith Hughes Act was passed so that high school students would be taught how to farm and work directly after high school. Today, better than 90 percent of students from my school go on to post-secondary education. Should the goal of our program be to prepare students for careers after high school graduation, or should we concentrate on career exploration and preparation for college? As agriculture and agricultural education continue to diversify, is it even possible for educators to truly prepare students for careers by teaching them the skills they need?

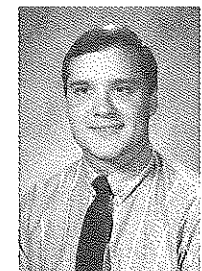
Currently, at both the federal and state level, there is much discussion about teacher standards, testing of students, higher standards of education, and an increased emphasis on

the "academic" courses of Mathematics, English, and Science. No one is talking about increasing the number of electives or technical courses required to graduate. We need to realize that it may become increasingly difficult for local school districts to keep elective and technical programs. How can career and technical courses compete in a changing educational environment? We need to somehow tie ourselves to Math, English, and Science courses and prove to those who will make decisions about what is "best" for our schools that there is value in Agricultural Education beyond preparing students for careers and/or college. Do we stand a better chance of survival if we are viewed as an academic program?

I had a long talk with another Agricultural Education instructor about his thoughts on the future of our programs. He replied that it is not impossible to envision an Agricultural program without mechanics. Could our programs survive on plant science, animal science, agricultural economics, and leadership? What percentage of our students choose careers that are mechanical in nature? How much welding, engine work, or tractor restoration will our students do in their future careers? Are these skills more important than plant propagation, record keeping, and entomology? In the short time that we have with these students, we need to teach the skills that are the

most important to the most students. I am not saying that we should cut out all mechanics from our programs, but let us at least think about possible means of positioning ourselves for the future of our instructional area. We have long fought the image that Agricultural Education is not a shop class. You need to defend your curriculum when someone asks you "Why do you teach the skills that you do?". I hope you have a better answer then "Everyone should at least learn how to cut a board and pound a nail". If this is your goal, your school board president may think you are being paid too much. If Agricultural Education is an academic program that prepares students for college, identify which career skills are important to college preparation and teach only these.

I realize that I have asked a lot of questions and have not presented many solutions. I do not have answers to all of these questions, but I cannot keep from thinking about what the future of our profession may look like, and how we will meet the challenges we will face. If we wait to think about these questions until politicians tell us how to teach, we will be much too late. We need to be prepared. We should continue to evaluate the purpose of our profession, and make sure our curriculum helps us reach that mission.



Tony Boehm is employed by the Richland County Vocational Center and teaches Agricultural Education at Richland Jr/Sr High School at Colfax, ND.

Correction

The volume number for the January-February 2003 issue of The Agricultural Education Magazine was incorrect. The volume number should be 75, not 76. We apologize for any inconvenience or problems this may have caused.

Service Learning for Preservice Agriculture Teachers

By Rudy S. Tarpley

“My call tonight is for every American to commit at least two years — 4,000 hours over the rest of your lifetime — to the service of your neighbors and your nation.”

— President George W. Bush, State of the Union Address, January 29, 2002

The call to service issued by President Bush is not new to our nation. Many previous leaders including President Clinton made appeals for national public service. Further, professionals in education have recognized service-learning as a viable means of delivering hands-on, experiential training. “At its heart, service-learning is a form of experiential learning that employs service as its *modus operandi*” (Crews, 1995). Educators from K-12 schools to colleges and universities use service-learning to enhance traditional approaches to education. Listed by Kraft and Swadener (1994) as benefits of service learning are the prospect for active student participation, the ability to meet the needs of communities, the opportunity to apply newly-acquired skills and knowledge, and a chance to learn how to learn.

These concepts are not new to

agricultural education. “Agricultural educators have long been practitioners of service-oriented activities in our communities” (Martin, 2001, p. 2). FFA acts as the conduit for service (Davis & Scott, 2001).

Additional advantages of service-learning include gaining life and communication skills, the development of innovative approaches to teaching and additional benefits to the community. Mattingly and Morgan (2001) emphasized the incorporation of service-learning into FFA activities. This could take the form of the Partners in Active Learning Support (PALS) program and a better use of the FFA Program of Activities Community Service committee. Because of these endeavors, the National FFA Organization remains a leading youth organization in the area of service-learning.

These authors concluded that the best thing about service-learning was that the students are covertly learning because they were actively participating in something that interested them. Finally, service-learning is something every teacher should develop.

Providing Service Learning to Preservice Teachers

While the case supporting service-learning is well-documented for agricultural education/FFA, more can and should be done for preservice agricultural education teachers. Students majoring in agricultural education make ideal candidates for the service-learning model. Consider that most agricultural education majors have graduated from secondary programs with service components, they have chosen careers to further their service involvement, and they are in

positions at universities to serve beyond the local level. Many agricultural education majors and Collegiate FFA members already assist with state and national agricultural education and FFA activities.

Collegiate FFA can serve as the chief medium for this experience. Consider that Collegiate FFA has historically functioned as the professional organization for agricultural education majors (Vaughn, 1978). Collegiate FFA members have already shown an interest in serving the agricultural education profession simply by joining the organization as collegiate members. This interest in service can be nurtured by infusing Collegiate FFA members into the service aspects of the profession. In the near future we may refer to Collegiate FFA as the “service arm” of the National FFA Organization.

Collegiate FFA Involvement

Including Collegiate FFA in the service of local, state and national activities can involve all members of the agricultural education profession.

* College and university teacher education programs could find events where the profession can be served by Collegiate FFA members. These activities should be beneficial for the collegiate members as well. For example, assisting with Career Development Events serves the profession and exposes the collegiate members to important aspects of their future careers in agricultural education.

* Local FFA chapters can invite Collegiate FFA members to participate in activities, especially those which utilize the skills and knowledge already acquired by students majoring in agricultural education. Activities could range

from classifying livestock at the local stock show to preparing the officer team for the end-of-year banquet.

* State staff members can build a Collegiate FFA component into their program planning. State fair events, state officer training, state convention activities, state and national degree applications evaluation, and state Career Development Events all provide opportunities for preservice teachers to develop skills. This also provides an opportunity for preservice teachers to interact with teachers, students and state staff personnel. Few state staff members would turn away assistance from former active FFA members who are preparing to be agriculture teachers.

* State agriculture teachers can involve Collegiate FFA in the summer program. Observing master teachers during the summer and participating in the activities provides a valuable experience for preservice teachers. Further, Collegiate FFA members would profit from participation in summer inservice workshops.

Agricultural education has served

the community, the agricultural industry, and our youth for over 75 years. The FFA has been instrumental in this endeavor. Now is the time to include preservice teacher education in this undertaking. One primary medium for this service learning should be through Collegiate FFA. Collegiate FFA members can participate in service-learning in a variety of methods which will benefit those being served as well as the participants. For Collegiate FFA members who are agricultural education majors, the service-learning activities will be valuable training for their future careers as agriculture educators.

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Rudy Tarpley is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Agricultural Systems Technology and Education at Utah State University. Dr. Tarpley is also the Advisor of the Utah State University Collegiate FFA Chapter.

Tarpley suggests that service learning should be an important aspect of FFA Chapters Program of Activities. A presenter at Agriculture Day in Los Angeles, explains the lie food guide pyramid. (Photo courtesy of Denise Skidmore.)



“I’m Not a Traveling Man!”

By G. Victor Beekley

G. Victor Beekley (a pseudonym) taught agriculture at 1000-student Country High School, grades 9 to 12. His experiences, recounted in a series of vignettes, describe the challenges and opportunities teachers face as they teach and learn from students.

Promptly at 3:00 p.m. after sixth-period classes had dismissed on a clear and warm spring day in late April, agriculture teacher G. Victor Beekley and five students departed in Beekley’s car for a two-hour trip to the state capital city to attend the State FFA Convention. It was the first time for any of the students to attend a convention. Each was wearing proudly a new or recently cleaned FFA jacket.

Four of the five students are juniors, one is a senior. Two will be awarded the State FFA Degree. Henry, a happy, likeable, chubby junior lives on a small subsistence farm. His father is a public works employee of the county. Henry and his older brother Joe, a senior agriculture student, will be the first two members of their family to graduate from high school. Of the five students traveling with Beekley, Henry is without doubt the least traveled, embarking perhaps on the most extensive trip of his life so far.

Beekley had learned that traveling with students provides unique opportunities to get to know students – their interests, how they spend leisure time, what they talk about, what is going on at home, and what is or is not going on at school including insightful observations and impressions of teachers. Beekley found that on these trips the trick is to pay attention to driving and to listen to very interesting conversations. His strategy is to rely on students to

select the topics they talk about; however he is not reluctant to pose a question or make a leading comment to encourage further elucidation of particularly intriguing subjects or concerns that students discuss. Of course, Beekley can never anticipate either what will be discussed or the direction the conversation takes.

On this trip, the students began describing their past travels. None had extensive travel experience, but one after the other began to describe trips they had made outside the county, usually with their parents or other family members, to see relatives, attend some event, or perhaps go on vacation. As one student concluded his escapade, another would take center stage describing a favorite trip. These travelogs emphasized two points – how far they had traveled and how long they had been away from home. Not unexpectedly, as the stories progressed from one student to the next the tendency was for both distances traveled and days away from home to increase.

Beekley soon realized that this line of story-telling could very well put Henry on the spot, since his travel experience could probably most accurately be described as nil, at best. Henry had yet to speak, but Beekley knew that sooner or later someone would blurt out “Henry, where have you been?” That question would put Henry in an uncomfortable if not embarrassing position so he began to scour the countryside and rack his brain for a question or comment to interject at an appropriate time to take Henry off the hook, hopefully before the inevitable question was posed.

When four of the five students had described a trip, Beekley knew now was the time to change the subject. But before he could do so, the students skipped Henry in the

rotation and began a second round of travelogs. The second time around the trips tended to be to more distant places and the time away from home longer. Beekley now began to get doubly concerned since, after two rounds, Henry would really be in trouble when he was asked the inevitable question. So Beekley readied his strategy, but before he could spring it, Raymond asks, “Henry, where have you been?”

Quick as a wink, Henry, in a confident and self-assured voice replied, “Men, I’m not a traveling man!” And without missing a beat, the conversation turned to other topics with Henry an enthusiastic and contributing participant.

What did Beekley learn from this episode? First, that Henry’s self-esteem was well intact. He was not down and out about the fact that his economic and social circumstances had deprived him of adventures many of his friends had experienced. And upon reflection, Beekley realized that he has providing Henry an opportunity to become a “traveling man” – an outcome that in the long run would be just as important as providing instruction to increase Henry’s knowledge and skill in agriculture. Imagine what Henry’s contribution will be during the next bull session on travel – hopefully what he experienced and learned during the convention, but surely traveling to the state’s capital, staying in a hotel for the first time, and ordering a hamburger and milkshake through room service that was served with what Henry labeled “weeds” (parsley) on the tray at a cost twice what he usually paid at the fast food restaurant on the street. Yet, Beekley mused, “I wonder if he tipped the bellhop.” Well, that will have to be another trip and another lesson in Henry’s continuing education on becoming a traveling man.