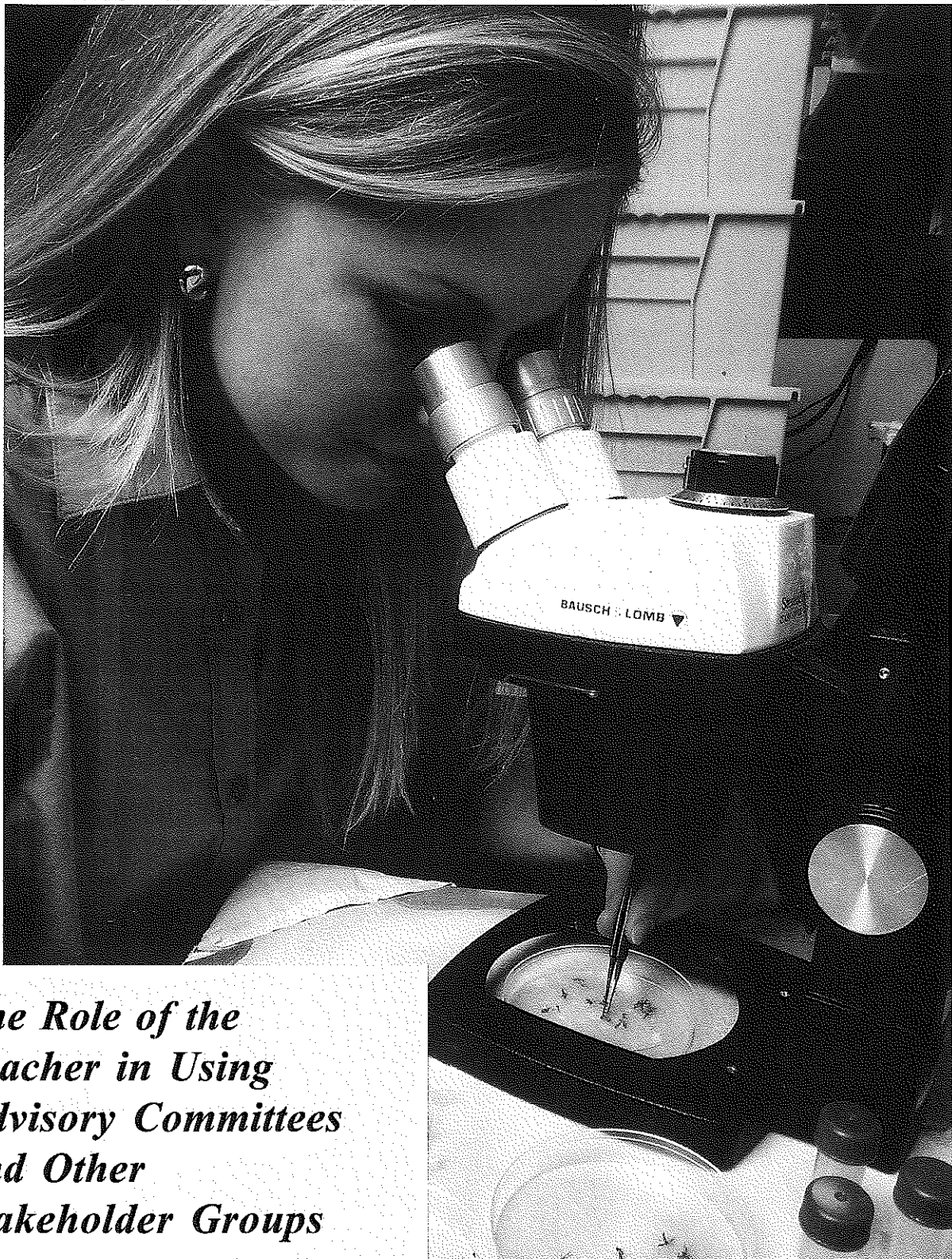


July-August  
2003  
volume 76  
issue 1

# *The Agricultural* **EDUCATION** MAGAZINE



*The Role of the  
Teacher in Using  
Advisory Committees  
and Other  
Stakeholder Groups*

# Advisory Committees: Cheerleading or Quality Control?

By Robert A. Martin

The major question regarding advisory committees has always seemed to be: What is an advisory committee supposed to do? This question usually generates various answers. A review of this issue of *The Magazine* will reveal a variety of viewpoints.

It is interesting to note that the words "advisory" and "advocacy" are located together in the dictionary. Advisory is defined as an act of advising, careful consideration, deliberation and recommendations regarding a decision. Advocacy is defined as a process of supporting or pleading a cause.

In the dictionary, the word advisory precedes the word advocacy. Isn't that the way it should be in using advisory committees? Advisory committees are first and foremost advisory e.g. they listen, gather input, deliberate, decide and recommend. Eventually, the efforts of the advisory committee may lead to advocacy. But if advocacy becomes the primary reason for an advisory committee it ceases to have as much credibility or objectivity. It's more like cheerleading as opposed to quality control. If the advisory committee is appointed by the school board or other institutional authority, as it should be, quality control is the goal. Advocacy will take its proper place as quality results come out of the program.

Giving advice is challenging work. Giving advice seems to imply that someone knows something about the matter under discussion. Therein lies the challenge. What is it that the members of the advisory committee know and about which they offer advice?

My agricultural advisory committee members told me they did not want to be asked what should be taught in agriculture or how it should be taught. One member boldly asked me how I got a teaching license if I couldn't decide the answers to those questions. Maybe it was the way I asked the question, but these committee members made it clear that they were not curriculum and methods experts. They knew a lot about the diverse agriculture in the area and they knew how to acquire resources, but the degree to which different topics should be taught and how they should be taught should be the job of the agriculture teacher to determine.

I learned to appreciate this perspective and made adjustments to my initial thoughts about advisory committees. It was a valuable lesson. It became clear that the best approach to use the advisory committee would be to seek input and reaction to departmental, curriculum and FFA/SAE goals, short and long term plans and selected activities.

One of the most productive activities conducted by my advisory committee was a community-wide needs assessment on agriculture. This activity gave the committee an opportunity to work as a team, work in the community and serve a specific purpose. The information learned through this activity helped improve the agricultural education program including the curriculum as well as FFA and SAE activities. More importantly, this activity brought a "sense of community" to the agricultural education program and efforts by the advisory committee to enhance this program. Eventually, this activity led the group to meet twice each year. One meeting

focused on goals and objectives for the total program – curriculum, FFA and SAE, and the second meeting focused on results. The agriculture teacher and FFA members organized and presented the essence of the programs at each of these meetings. Reaction, input, and recommendations from committee members helped enhance the overall program. The advisory committee then reported to the school board.

Two lessons were learned from this experience. First, advisory committees must have something to do. Helping set goals and evaluating results should be among the major activities of advisory committees. Second, the teacher of agriculture is a key factor in making this process work. The teacher is the initiator, catalyst, leader and facilitator. The teacher must have "political savvy" e.g. understand the community, seek input, build on community strengths and address local needs. Like so many other components of agricultural education, the teacher is the key. Advisory committees are very important and should be recognized as such by teachers. But it should be remembered that advisory committees are for quality control first and foremost. From this effort let the cheerleading begin.

Thanks to all authors contributing to this issue of *The Magazine*. Special thanks to Dr. Carlos Rosencrans for his work as Theme Editor. All your efforts are appreciated.

*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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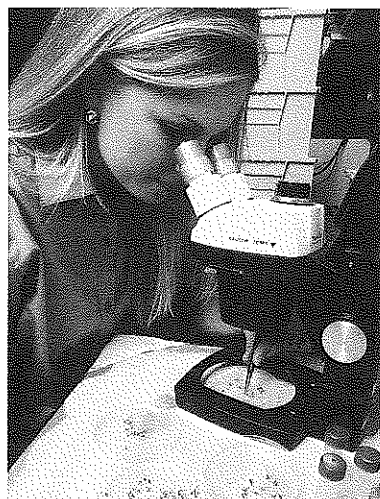
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*Authors writing for the July-August issue of The Agricultural Education Magazine discuss the role of the teacher in using advisory committees and other stakeholder groups, such as the FFA Alumni. (Photo courtesy of College of Agriculture, Iowa State University.)*



**Subscriptions**

Subscription price for *The Agricultural Education Magazine* is \$10.00 per year. Foreign subscriptions are \$20.00 (U.S. currency) per year for surface mail, and \$40 (U.S. currency) foreign airmail (except Canada). Single copies and back issues less than 10 years old are available at \$2 each (\$3.00 foreign mail). All back issues are available on microfilm from UMI University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. UMI University Microfilms telephone number is (313) 761-4700. In submitting a subscription, designate new or renewal and provide mailing address including ZIP code. Send all subscriptions and requests for hard copy back issues to the Editor: 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.

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 Design and Layout: Stacie M. Turnbull

**Publication Information**

*The Agricultural Education Magazine* (ISSN 07324677) is the bi-monthly professional journal of agricultural education. The journal is published by the Agricultural Education Magazine, Inc. and is printed at M&D Printing, 616 Second Street, Henry, IL 61537.

Periodicals postage paid at Ames, IA 50014; additional entry at Henry, IL 61537.

POSTMASTERS: Send address changes for *The Agricultural Education Magazine* to the attention of Robert A. Martin, Editor, Iowa State University, 201 Curtiss Hall, Ames, IA 50011, Phone (515)-294-5904.

# The Advisory Committee: Should *You* Have One?

By Carlos Rosencrans

Are you comfortable determining what you should be teaching your students? Are you searching for a better way to deliver a 21<sup>st</sup> Century curriculum? Are adequate resources available to you for implementing your program? Do you have good community support for your program? Would you like more community involvement in your activities? Are you looking for assistance with student placement programs within your community? Would you like more current knowledge of employment trends within the agriculture industry?

Depending upon how you answer these questions, you could have good reasons for having an advisory committee....you *should* have good reasons for having an advisory committee! An advisory committee's primary function is to give advice and make recommendations. The committee should review your existing program, including classroom curricula and textbooks. It should provide advice about curricula content, training techniques, facilities and equipment. Assistance in conducting surveys to learn what the community wants for their agricultural education program can be given.

The advisory committee can also help to identify recent employment trends in business and industry; investigate the types of facilities and equipment currently used in business and industry; and assist with the development of student placement in school to work programs. The committee should have a clear understanding of what the agriculture teacher does during his/her extended contract time. The committee should make specific recommendations to the board of education, administration, and the agriculture teacher about agricultural education.

So, this advisory committee sounds pretty good, doesn't it? Now how do you go about establishing one? Solicit help from your administration. Committee members need to be persons who are concerned about the activities, concerns and direction of your program. Have your administration invite committee members to participate. Do not call people or invite them yourself; it is the district's advisory committee and it will have more accountability if the district's administration is the one that selects the members. You can certainly offer suggestions of people that you feel would be interested in serving and would be valuable assets to the group.

Discuss with your administration

who might make a good chair of the committee; then have the administration ask that person to chair the committee prior to the first meeting. Have the administration welcome the committee at the first meeting and set the stage for what the committee's purpose is. Involve your administration and the committee chair in establishing the agenda for that first meeting. Volunteer to serve on the committee; a good role would be that of secretary. As secretary, you can be sure to record the important discussions, and have suggestions or advice put in the form of a motion and voted on. By serving on the committee in any capacity, you are not only being actively involved, but showing that you value the committee and the contributions it can make to your program.

The advisory committee should only have to meet three to four times per year. Meetings should be conducted in a very orderly and structured fashion; members' time and willingness to serve should be respected by wisely making use of the time and effort they are giving. The committee may need to appoint sub-committees to investigate certain issues such as programs and facilities in other districts. On special issues the committee needs to explore further, resource people might come to the meeting to address the committee. Any of these activities are perfectly acceptable and indeed will help to make the advisory committee more effective. A diverse group of individuals from your community functioning in this fashion will be an invaluable resource for your program.

Be sure to have your adminis-

## Correction

The narrative and table within the article *The Supply of Student SAE Programs and Demand of Agricultural Careers*, in the May-June 2003 issue of *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, incorrectly noted data as "Illinois State Proficiency Agricultural Award Applications". The data should have been noted as "National Proficiency Agricultural Award Applications". We regret this error and apologize for any inconvenience or problems this error may have caused.



tration formally thank committee members as they rotate off the committee. The local FFA might recognize them by awarding them the Honorary Chapter Degree.

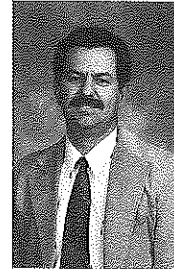
You might say that you don't need an advisory committee, because you have your alumni. The FFA alumni is an advocate of the agricultural education and FFA program. Your alumni should function similarly to an Athletic Booster Club, supporting the program but not directly making recommendations to the program. If the alumni are used as advisors for a program, they could be looked upon unfavorably by an administration trying to make changes to a program. You want your alumni to

always have a good relationship with the administration. If your advisory committee is working properly, you won't need your alumni to be put into that type of a position. You need your alumni as your support group and advocate for your programs.

So...an advisory committee... should *you* have one? Advisory committee...*you should* have one!

I would like to thank Dean Gagnon, Agricultural Education Consultant, for material used in this article. The other articles you will read in this issue of The Agricultural Education Magazine are most informative on the subject of advisory committees and stakeholder groups. Your colleagues

share with you some of their experiences and insight in utilizing advisory committees with some outstanding results. Hopefully you can use these ideas, make them your own, to the benefit of your program.



*Carlos Rosencrans is an Associate Professor in Agricultural and Extension Education at New Mexico State University. Rosencrans served as the theme editor for the July-August issue of The Agricultural Education Magazine.*

## *The Agricultural Education Magazine*

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The Agricultural Education Magazine is a great source of classroom-tested and teacher-proven strategies and programs. The Magazine is easy to read and use in teaching-learning situations at all levels. All professional educators in agriculture owe it to themselves to stay up-to-date on their profession. The Agricultural Education Magazine provides an excellent way to learn what other teachers are thinking, doing and planning. Subscribe to The Magazine (\$10 subscription rate) and get your annual dose of inspiration, encouragement and great ideas.

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# The Power of a Statewide Advisory Committee

By Lane Widner and Tom Dormody

In New Mexico, we've wanted to start a statewide agricultural education advisory committee that serves all levels of agricultural education (literacy, secondary, two-year postsecondary, and teacher education) for some time, but it kept receiving a low priority to other initiatives. The Department of Agricultural and Extension Education (AXED) at New Mexico State University (NMSU) received a three-year Carl D. Perkins Contract in 2001. Along with supporting curriculum reform, innovation in FFA leadership and career skills development activities, and new programs in pre-service and in-service teacher professional development, the contract called for the formation of a statewide agricultural education advisory committee. Little did we know when we first convened the committee in June 2002 at the State FFA Convention that the committee would initiate and help realize in less than a year one of the most significant achievements in the history of agricultural education in New Mexico.

We worked with Sandra Castillo, Agricultural Education Consultant with the New Mexico Department of Education, to identify highly committed and influential committee members. Two members are public school administrators, four work in the agricultural industry, three represent the New Mexico Department of Agriculture and non-governmental agricultural agencies, four are officers in the New Mexico Agricultural Education Teachers Association (NMAETA), one represents agricultural literacy programs, another, community

college agricultural education programs, and two represent the two university teacher education programs in the state. Sandra and the authors serve as ad-hoc members responsible for assisting the chair to develop meeting agendas and organize meetings, taking and distributing minutes, and most-importantly, actualizing improvements for agricultural education recommended by the committee. At the first meeting, members were placed in representative three-year staggered-term subgroups and a chair and chair-elect were elected. It was decided that the committee would usually meet during key activities, like the NMAETA Annual Conference, to increase attendance, awareness of programs, and member interaction with teachers, FFA members, and other stakeholders.

After a welcome and introductions, we briefed the committee on why they were needed:

1. To ensure the continuing importance of agriculture to the economy and way of life in New Mexico through the contributions of an articulated and viable statewide agricultural education program.
2. To ensure that agricultural education benefits from state and national education policy changes and initiatives.
3. To help build the resource and support bases for agricultural education.
4. To formulate strategies for marketing agricultural education.

We then opened the floor for members to share what they thought

were the most important issues and opportunities facing agricultural education in New Mexico in an effort to develop goals for the committee. Formulating strategies for marketing agricultural education surfaced as a key purpose for the committee. Questions were raised about how good a job we were doing collecting data and telling our story to legislators and the public. FFA and FFA Alumni were discussed as public relations and marketing tools. K-12 curriculum reform and the national standards and benchmarks for the Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources career cluster and pathways were also discussed at length.

But the issue that garnered the most discussion was the loss of positions and resources in state supervision of agricultural education. The New Mexico Department of Education once funded two professional staff and 1.5 support staff positions in agricultural education. Due to budget cuts and changes in focus, only the Agricultural Education Consultant position remains today, with responsibilities ranging from meeting with school administrators on agricultural education issues to global ones like participating on school accreditation teams. Much of the responsibility for leading and supervising agricultural education programmatic activities in curriculum reform, teacher professional development, and FFA have been transferred to NMSU and the AXED Department.

At the first meeting, the advisory committee committed to developing legislation to establish a supervisory structure and resource base they felt would continue to grow agricultural education in New Mexico. A legislative action plan surfaced during the second meeting of the committee

at the NMAETA Annual Conference in July. The committee adopted a resolution to present to the state legislature that detailed the importance of agriculture and agricultural education to the economy and way of life in New Mexico. The resolution was presented to NMAETA at their conference. NMAETA, also believing that change needed to occur, developed and adopted a parallel resolution, and evaluated their budget for funding to support a legislative effort.

After studying similar supervisory models from other states, representatives of NMAETA spoke with Dr. Jerry Schickedanz, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Home Economics at NMSU about potential legislation to establish an agricultural education state supervisory office in the college. Receiving his approval to move forward, NMAETA hired a lobbyist and asked stakeholders to begin their lobbying efforts. Education representatives on the statewide advisory committee began talking with leadership representatives within the state's school administrators association, the New Mexico Board of Education, and other organizations with a stake in agricultural education. A legislative packet was developed. Advisory committee members; teachers; lobbyists for NMAETA, NMSU, and the New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau; parents, and others distributed packets. Stakeholders discussed the importance of agricultural education with their legislators to gain support for any potential legislation. When the legislative session began in January 2003, many legislators were anticipating and fully supporting the agricultural education legislation.

Parallel bills from the House of Representatives and Senate were drafted by Representative Brian Moore of Clayton and Senator Carroll Leavell of Jal, respectively, to

“support the continuation of agricultural education programs statewide.” Both bills included funding to develop a supervisory structure and resource base for agricultural education in New Mexico. The House Bill also included funding for an incentive grant program to improve secondary agricultural education programs. As the bills began to travel through the proper channels and committees, stakeholders traveled back and forth to Santa Fe to testify and show support for the bills. As the end of the legislative session neared in March 2003, both bills were sent to a conference committee. The compromise bill provided agricultural education with a solid \$300,000 in recurring funds to NMSU and the College of Agriculture and Home Economics through the Agricultural Experiment Station appropriation. New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson approved the budget at the end of the session in late March 2003.

After a successful legislative campaign on behalf of New Mexico agricultural education, plans were formulated for utilizing the new funds. The funding will provide salaries, benefits, and operational support for four (4) new full-time staff positions: state supervisor of agricultural education and FFA, assistant state supervisor of agricultural education, assistant state supervisor of FFA, and a full-time office manager. The unit will be housed in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at New Mexico State University. Staff will work closely with the Agricultural Education Consultant in the New Mexico Department of Education. Officials in the College of Agriculture and Home Economics at NMSU are very excited about the opportunity to develop the agricultural education office, and see programs and students grow at all levels of New Mexico agricultural education.

The statewide advisory committee will play a critical role in developing and supporting the unit, and making recommendations for future unit initiatives.

The statewide agricultural education advisory committee will play a continuing vital role in the future of New Mexico agriculture and agricultural education. The committee is focused on the development, support, and marketing of a strong statewide agricultural education program. The 2003 legislative effort they initiated will provide the resources to achieve this mission. The new funding will provide the state with resources to add and improve secondary agricultural education programs, advance FFA, and reform curricula. The funding will support high-quality pre-service and in-service professional development of teachers in recognized need areas (Dormody & Torres, 2002)

Our statewide advisory committee has already made a huge difference in the capacity of New Mexico agricultural education to deliver outstanding programming. The legislative effort it initiated and championed shows that there truly is power in unity. With all that they've been able to accomplish this year, our recommendation to states without an active statewide agricultural education advisory committee is to add one to your Team AgEd today.

#### References

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*Lane Widner is the FFA Executive Secretary for New Mexico.*

*Tom Dormody is a Professor and Head of the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at New Mexico State University.*

# Managing Successful Alumni Relations

By David Agnew and Pam Jumper

An agriculture teacher fulfills many roles in any successful well-rounded agriculture program. Besides the obvious role of teacher and FFA advisor, the teacher may be mentor, counselor, safety coordinator, inspector, public relations manager, fund raiser, motivator, alumni chapter advisor, proud benefactor, etc. Some roles focus on the inward aspects of the program as teacher and FFA chapter advisor where there is direct contact with students. Some roles involve peers and administration and yet other roles require teachers to deal with the external public, parents, advisory council members and alumni. Success in fulfilling the first and most important "role as teacher and FFA Advisor" is in part due to knowing the responsibilities and boundaries and opportunities of that role.

The teacher in the role of advisor to an FFA Alumni Chapter can be a very positive and productive experience for the teacher and should benefit students in the instructional program and FFA Chapter. To some extent, success depends on knowing and following some general ground rules associated with the role of the teacher as advisor to the alumni chapter. These rules are not only important for the teacher to know and follow, but the alumni also.

The alumni chapter is said to help bring the dreams and vision of the teacher, developed in cooperation with the advisory committee, to reality. The efforts of the alumni chapter toward this vision are usually manifested in some specific activities relating to a program goal in which the teacher and the advisory committee agree has significant value to the program. These activities may be some annual event like a fund raiser,

providing a scholarship for a graduating senior, sponsorship of a FFA member to national convention or to Washington Leadership Conference, etc. The teacher should initiate a list of goals for the program and explain how the goals will benefit the students and community.

Alumni members will take the primary lead in accomplishing activities related to the goals and vision, while the teacher has a responsibility to give proper thought to the goals and vision of the program. The activities of the alumni will change as the vision changes or grows. Teachers may have a sensitive task when trying to refocus a chapter that has the habit of an activity embedded, long after the original goals have been met. It is important for the alumni and teacher to periodically review goals and activities to determine what activities no longer fit the program and identify new ideas or activities. If the alumni become too focused on a few high profile events like CDEs, this may alienate some members who want to see a well-rounded program, where the most good is accomplished for the most people.

Although the teacher and advisory committee are at the center of establishing the initial goals and objectives of the program, when it comes to activities alumni conduct in support of the goals, the teacher needs to be less involved. Being a low profile facilitator means not being too vocal, not offering to take the leadership to accomplish tasks charged to the alumni chapter. It may mean reserving your input until others have spoken, listening and asking questions which help keep the focus on the goals and at times it means compromising. It means being there to assist when needed. As adults, the alumni need less

direction and supervision than the students. There may, though, be times when the teacher needs to offer to help or even take the initiative in some way that helps the alumni chapter move forward with its agenda.

Providing new members the proper orientation to the mission and goals of the alumni chapter is important. All incoming Alumni members need to be aware of the local FFA chapter and instructional program, as well as the advisory committee and how that relates to the local and national goals of the FFA Alumni organization. This orientation can be done by the teacher or alumni members/officers. New alumni members need to have a good working knowledge of the high school agriculture program and the FFA since they become unofficial advocates for the program. Although alumni members need to understand that they function less in setting the program goals and more in implementation, their input and suggestions should not be discouraged. Orientation may be as simple as a few descriptive lines in a letter of welcome to new members as they join or a letter with a copy of the constitution attached, with member responsibilities highlighted. In some cases it can be placed in an informational brochure about the alumni or it may be explained in a group setting. Verbal reminders of the goals or purposes of the alumni at the annual fall kickoff meeting helps reinforce member awareness, however, there are advantages to having the key points defined on paper for future reference in case a problem arises. The orientation may not always be provided by the teacher but the teacher needs to insure that regular opportunities exist for new members to hear this information.



Don't be afraid to invite parents to join the alumni chapter - they generally want their child to have a positive FFA experience. Likewise, they want to know the teacher and help build these positive "educational experiences" in which their child will learn and grow. Parents may see the alumni chapter as a way to relive childhood experiences and to help their child have some of the same worthwhile experiences they had. Their involvement can be a great asset, but always shoot straight with parents. Be sensitive to their concerns, keep the focus on the good of the whole chapter in mind, without neglecting individual needs. Be fair, don't abuse their help and publicly acknowledge their help.

Many activities of the alumni provide opportunities to promote the efforts of the alumni, enhancing the image of the in-school program and alumni chapter. The teacher should rely upon alumni members to take a leadership role in certain aspects of the program that involve alumni efforts. Such efforts may include developing flyers, newspaper or radio interviews, and news releases about their activities. While the teacher and the chapter leaders or reporter may need to coordinate PR activities, such activities as the public recognition of alumni members and their contributions will be more the responsibility of the teacher. The teacher goes before the public and says, here is the successful FFA activity just completed and here is how the alumni was instrumental in the success of that event/activity. The annual FFA banquet is a great time to recognize the alumni chapter and their contributions, but don't wait until then to make all the announcements.

Communications and interpersonal skills are important in any role where the teacher has contact with other people. Teachers work with the students, the school administration,

advisory committee members, school board members, fair board members, community organizations, the alumni and the general public. The teacher is the main point, but not the only point, of connection between each of these groups and the agriculture program and FFA alumni. All of these groups can be sensitive, but school administration is the one that has the potential to have a direct impact on the activities of the program. This point is made to emphasize the importance of not dropping the ball when working with administration.

As with any organization, the potential exists for personality differences and frictions to develop. Take the time to gently explain and listen, and ask questions. Remember that people generally don't like surprises, but do like to be included in decision making. Don't share information with some and withhold from others. However, there is no need to share everything you know. As a teacher, you will be in a sensitive position to hear more than you want to know at times. Repeating that information will not likely benefit the teacher or the program. The teacher, while not overreacting, should be sensitive to differences in the group where there is potential for problems and work quietly to maintain unity in purpose. Working toward a common or shared goal, can go a long way toward neutralizing differences.

A little praise and encouragement will go a long way to helping the membership stay involved and feel connected to the organization. There is always a risk that recognizing some members will alienate others, but when in doubt, praise and encourage. Recognition can take place at different levels; some formal and some informal. The informal can do as much or more good as formal, and the teacher can hand these compliments out frequently. Formal recognition comes usually at an annual FFA banquet. While all alumni might be

recognized at the banquet, usually there will be one award given each year to the "Outstanding Alumni Member". As much as possible, the alumni chapter membership should decide and make the selection of someone they think worthy of the award. As the teacher, you might not always agree but you will almost always cause problems when you try to make the decision yourself.

Community leaders might have the drive to initiate the organization of an alumni chapter on their own, but most would wait upon the leadership of the teacher to make the first move. Having the facts about the role and purpose of the alumni chapter, advisors interested in starting an alumni chapter can then present to those interested individuals who could lead the effort in forming an alumni chapter. This may be all that is needed to get the organization started. Inviting a state staff, officers or members of other alumni chapters in the area could help focus interested parties on defining the goals and purposes of an alumni chapter.

The role of the teacher with regard to the FFA Alumni is generally as a low profile advisor or facilitator. The advisor role in working with an alumni chapter can be satisfying to the teacher/advisor and rewarding for everyone involved. The teacher should never underestimate his or her ability to have a positive impact on the success of an alumni chapter. Likewise, the teachers should not underestimate the potential for the FFA alumni to have a positive impact on the in-school students and FFA Chapter. An important fact to remember is that the alumni need guidance from the teacher to insure productive time management for students and alumni.

*David Agnew is Associate Professor of Agricultural Education at Arkansas State University and co-advisor to the ASU Collegiate FFA Chapter.*

*Pam Jumper is the President of the National FFA Alumni Council.*

# Don't Mess With...

By Gary Moore

Most people are familiar with the phrase, "Don't Mess With Texas." This is the tough-talking litter prevention campaign sponsored by the Texas Department of Transportation that started in 1986. The campaign reminds Texans to keep their trash in the car and off the roads.

My wife and I were co-presidents of the Cary (NC) High School PTA for two years. During this time, the phrase "Don't Mess With ..." took on a whole new meaning. Our PTA experiences in this 2,000-student high school has several implications for agricultural educators.

## Don't Mess with the Band Boosters

The strongest parent group on campus is the Band Boosters. These folks are rabid about the band. The Cary High School (CHS) band is nationally recognized and the primary reason is the support of the Band Boosters. They raise an astronomical amount of money each year to support travel and other band functions. The band boosters own a semi-trailer truck just to haul the band equipment. We learned early on to support the band boosters, and they would support us.

## Don't Mess with the Parents' Coalition for Excellence (PCE)

There is not a large minority population at CHS; yet they have a very vocal support group—the Parents' Coalition for Excellence. This group conducts after school tutoring programs and produces a variety of cultural events to recognize the unique heritage of minority

students. The PCE is willing to help all students, not just minority students. This organization is an effective voice for minority students and insures them a place at the table.

## Don't Mess with the NJROTC Boosters Club

In the first year of our presidency, a new program was established in the school. This was the Naval Junior ROTC program. They were the new kids on the block and were just getting started. The PTA provided support to get them up and running. We suggested they might want to organize a boosters club. They did. The booster club raised money, provided transportation for trips, served as chaperons at a variety of functions, and helped train the drill and rifle teams (since there were no seasoned upperclassmen). It didn't take long for this booster group to start flexing its power. It even lobbied with the Chairman of the state Board of Education in regards to counting JROTC for PE credit.

## It is OK to Mess with the Agricultural Education Program.

Cary High School has a rich agricultural education tradition. Some of the top teachers in the state either taught or student taught at CHS. During my tenure as PTA president, the agricultural education program was closed; and it deserved to be closed. Why?

Some years earlier a new teacher was hired. This person was an industry-trained teacher and did not want a 12-month contract. She wanted to spend the summers on the beach. There was an active FFA alumni associated with the program. The new teacher was given a list of the members and leaders. She didn't

want to bother with an alumni group. She also didn't want a FFA because that was a farm organization. She decided to have a horticulture club. Basically this teacher discarded the traditional components of a strong agricultural education program.

Enrollment in the program steadily went downhill. In order to justify the program, the teacher decided to teach special horticulture classes for the special education students. Enrollment continued to plummet. The administration finally had no choice but to close the program. Since the booster group (the alumni) was no longer involved, there was no one to lift one finger to keep the program open. And even I was not willing to support this program that charaded as an agricultural education program. I had tried to work with the teacher, but she chose her own path.

## Lessons Learned from Cary High School

There are numerous reasons why an agricultural education program needs a support group (alumni, booster club, advisory committee or whatever you want to call it). A support group can:

\* *Help keep the program on track.*

Rookie teachers (and even experienced teachers) can use all the help they can get. A strong support group can help point the program in the direction it should go. If there had been an agricultural education support group at CHS, the program would not have disintegrated.

\* *Help secure finances, equipment and facilities.*

There are hundreds of examples

across the nation where agricultural education support groups have raised funds to support the agricultural education program. Some North Carolina examples include:

- The South Rowan FFA has a mini-bus and a new red barn on the school farm.
- The West Carteret FFA has a 17 ft. cargo trailer to assist with setting up and working at the Seafood Festival.
- The Southern Guilford FFA Alumni sponsors a rodeo with receipts being used to support scholarships, the chapter banquet, and student

participation in a variety of FFA events.

The alumni helped with all these projects. Support groups can make things happen

*\* Help prepare teams.*

There is no law that says the agriculture teacher must prepare all the Career Development Event teams. Support groups can help. The ROTC boosters at CHS spend hours with the rifle team. With the time demands on an agriculture teacher, it would be wise to have assistance in training teams.

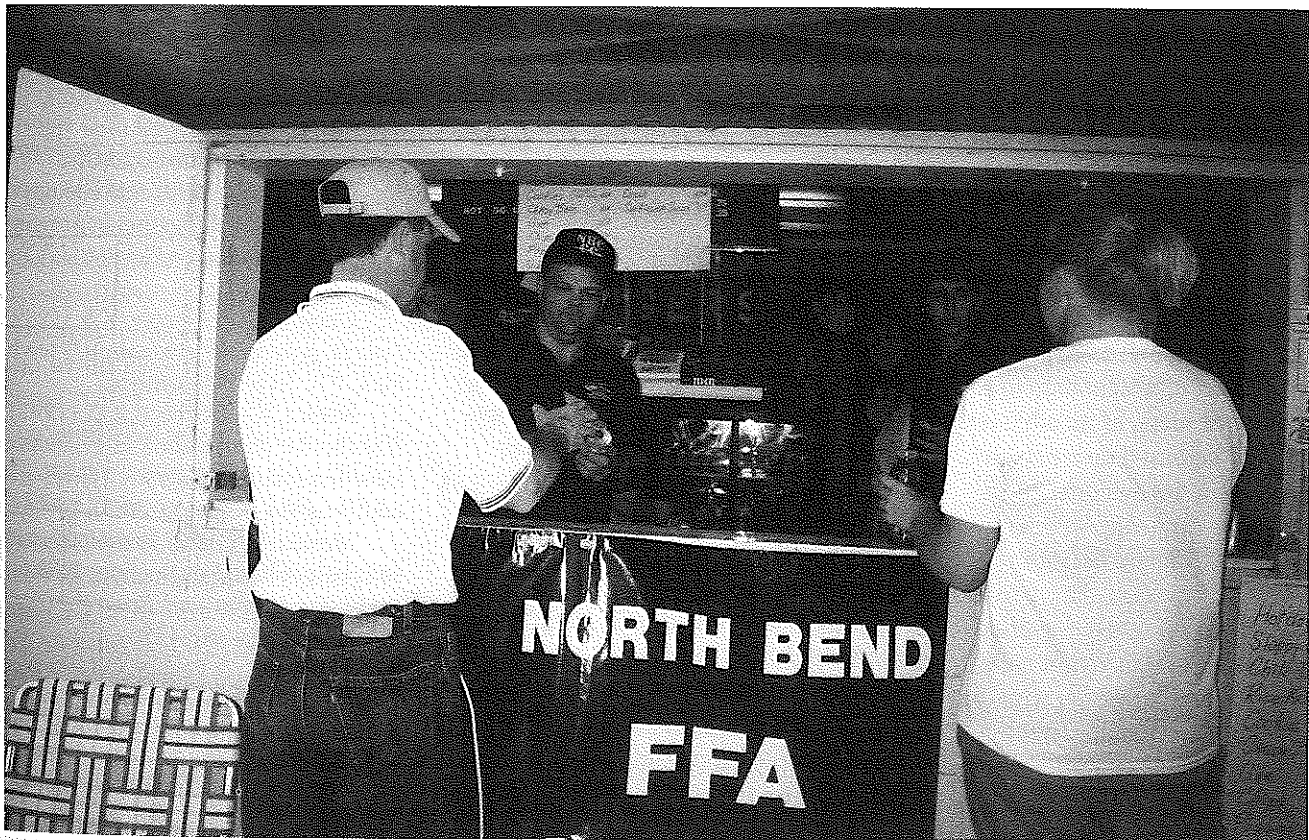
*\* Be an advocate for the program.*

A support group can be a powerful advocate for the agricultural education program. At CHS no one messes with the band, ROTC or minority students because of their strong support groups. Programs with strong support groups don't get closed. In some schools we (agricultural education) are in the minority. We need a support group.

If we have a support group, then the new slogan can be "Don't Mess With ... the Agricultural Education Program." It is stupid not to have an agricultural education support group.

*Gary Moore is a Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at North Carolina State University.*

## **"Don't Mess With ... the Agricultural Education Program."**



*Gary Moore encourages readers to form a support group, such as the FFA Alumni, to help strengthen agricultural education programs. "In some schools we (agricultural education) are in the minority. We need a support group," Moore says. North Bend FFA Alumni members are pictured, raising funds and awareness, through the organization's concession stand. (Photo courtesy of Rebecca Renner.)*

# Defining and Choosing Stakeholders

By Kathleen D. Kelsey

Including stakeholders in decision making processes has a long and rich history in secondary agricultural education programs. Stakeholders have traditionally been recruited to serve on advisory boards and meet periodically to advise the agricultural education instructor on program priorities and activities. Recruitment to the advisory board depends on defining who is a legitimate stakeholder in the program. The literature offers advice on who should be considered as a stakeholder and offers some terminology to help us think more clearly about including stakeholders in our programs.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest three categories for defining stakeholders: 1) "agents" such as teachers and staff who are associated with the program, 2) "beneficiaries" or students and members of the community who benefit by the program and 3) "victims" who have suffered or lost opportunities as a result of the program. Stakeholders can also be defined as people whose lives are affected by the agricultural education program and whose decisions can affect its future (Gold, 1983).

Stakeholder representation in a participatory process, as an advisory board should be based on a person's *relative stake* in the outcome and a *commitment to the program* (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The participatory process is also envisioned as a democratic conversation where members of the community actively negotiate a teaching and service agenda with the school (Mathie & Greene, 1997).

Defining and choosing stakeholders for participation in setting the agricultural education program agenda should be based on (a) *legitimate stakeholders* (b) who have *sufficient program knowledge* to contribute to the process in meaningful ways, and

(c) whose self-defined *stake in the school is also high* (Greene, 1988).

Once stakeholders are chosen, their role needs to be determined. Meaningful participation is defined as shared decision making. Stakeholders should not be viewed as advisors offering prescriptive advice or passive recipients (rubber stamp committees), but rather engaged in a collaborative decision making process with school employees (Greene, 1988). By understanding and agreeing upon stakeholder roles and responsibilities, all stakeholders will be in a better position to appreciate and accommodate multiple perspectives in a pluralistic approach to educating their children (Thomas & Palfrey, 1996).

The difference between stakeholder-informing (prescriptive) and stakeholder-collaborative approaches is that the first merely seeks to consult with participants and the latter seeks to solicit their full collaboration in decision making (Ayers, 1987).

The role of stakeholder is conceptualized as providing substantive focus for priority setting. Stakeholders are envisioned as negotiators with school personnel (also seen as stakeholders) in determining the most important program concerns that the school should be providing to the community (Greene, 1988). Stakeholder participation should also be considered non-contingent in that stakeholders are included in any given activity regardless of participation in previous activities (Greene, 1988).

Obtaining stakeholder input is not without challenges. Gaining meaningful and diverse stakeholder collaboration into agricultural program priority setting represents a radical departure from the traditionally autocratic and hierarchical process of serving only those with the resources to support their agenda. Stakeholder-based priority setting calls for an enhanced and sustainable means for insuring

equitable public participation that includes the community at large. Pseudo-empowerment of stakeholders must be avoided through collaboration at all levels of priority setting (Mercier, 1997).

Involving stakeholders is a time consuming process that requires teachers to reduce their control in directing the agricultural education program. Teacher autonomy is also reduced by having to negotiate the curriculum with stakeholders. However, the outcome is a more participant-centered program that comes closer to meeting the authentic needs of students, parents, and the community.

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# A Helping Hand to Our Most Valuable Resource

By J. Frank Saldaña

It's no surprise that more than one half of our national agricultural education teachers don't make it through their fifth year. Moreover, even more overwhelming they are amongst the thousands of general education instructors who leave as well. However, agriscience teachers are different. They have access to community support. Often times, they are so overwhelmed by their day-to-day activities they forget to ask for help. When they finally realize that help is available, many are already "burnt-out" and are ready to hand the program over to someone else.

One major strategy that the National FFA Organization and National FFA Alumni are supporting is committing resources to mobilize legions of alumni/volunteers to support all levels of Ag Ed/FFA with emphasis at the local program level. Creating effective local partnerships, of which volunteers is one part, one of the seven keys to Local Program Success (LPS). Local practicing agricultural education teachers under a project co-managed by the USDE and The Council created LPS. FFA and Agricultural Education has a history of commitment to creating successful local agriculture education programs and will be increasing staffing dedicated to local program success.

A study "Predictors of FFA Program Quality in North Carolina" conducted by Zane Vaughn, North Carolina State University, indicates that multiple teacher departments/

chapters is a major force in successful local programs. Nationally, nearly 3,500 local agriculture education programs have only one teacher. One strategy to enhance the program in single teacher departments is to mobilize alumni/volunteers to serve as additional "arms and legs" for the local teacher. These volunteers are critical in local program planning, resource development, serving as the "institutional memory" when teachers leave, mentoring members, creating SAE development opportunities, building community support and the list goes on.

A critical need in agricultural education is the availability of personnel on all levels. It is believed that an effective local volunteer support group will help first year teachers more effectively "take the reins". This could reduce the 25 percent non-renewal rate among new teachers. It also seems logical that the extra "arms and legs" of an effective local volunteer support group will reduce the work load, time commitment and the sense of being overwhelmed that results in "burn-out" and ultimately teacher resignation.

In short, there is a deep need to keep good teachers in the fold. An effective local alumni/voluntary support group could be of great assistance in reducing turnover. The student to teacher ratio has expanded rapidly and today is approximately 90 to 1. How can effective individual student development and SAE development occur when a teacher must manage educational/leadership experiences for 90 students? Again, an effective local support group of alumni/volunteers can be a terrific asset in helping to build strong local programs.

For more than 75 years agriscience instructors have definitely made an impact on millions of young people. So, get out there... start an alumni affiliate and volunteer for your local FFA. The partnership and friendship could keep the teacher smiling for many years to come.

*J. Frank Saldaña is the National FFA Alumni Executive Director and National FFA Organization Volunteerism Manager.*

***If you would like to volunteer at the local, state or national level, please contact J. Frank Saldaña, National FFA Alumni Executive Director and National FFA Organization Volunteerism Manager at (317) 802-4292 or [fsaldana@ffa.org](mailto:fsaldana@ffa.org).***



# On Advisory Councils and Democracy

By Jeff Miller

Agricultural educators, for decades, have been reminded in the form of textbook and handbook chapters, journal articles, and newsletter and magazine pieces that advisory councils are integral parts of successful agricultural education programs. The teacher educators and authors who have touted advisory councils over the years have pointed to many benefits, including the following:

- Being publicly accountable
- Increasing local political and financial support
- Improving insight regarding realistic training and society-ready graduates
- Developing placement connections
- Increasing diversity

As a more recent reminder to agricultural educators, each of these important benefits is expounded upon below; however, a more timely and equally important characteristic of advisory councils exists, one which has not appeared in the education textbooks and professional development articles of the past few decades: *Advisory councils are democracy in action.* By encouraging participation in the process of considering the will of the people concerning public programs, advisory councils support the democratic principles upon which our nation was founded; *they are patriotic.*

There have been relatively few eras in history when American patriotism has been more appropriate than it is presently. While thousands of young men and women work overseas to defend our nation

physically, the patriotic charge at home is to uphold liberty and democracy in our own society. And participation is the cornerstone of that liberty and democracy, so said President Grover Cleveland in his first inaugural address (The Avalon Project, 1997):

“Every citizen owes to the country a vigilant watch and close scrutiny of its public servants and a fair and reasonable estimate of their fidelity and usefulness. Thus the people will impress upon the whole framework of our civil policy—municipal, state, and federal; and this is the price of our liberty and the inspiration of our faith in the Republic.”

The democratic nature of advisory councils has been ever present but rarely recognized. So, in these times when patriotism is especially in vogue, a new emphasis on encouraging participation in the democratic process of advisory councils is now, more than ever, appropriate. Therefore, after a review of the traditional benefits of advisory councils that have been discussed in education texts throughout the years, it is the democratic nature of advisory councils that will be the final highlight of this article.

## Being Publicly Accountable

Administrators in agricultural research, extension, and education have become acutely aware over the last two decades of the importance of demonstrating accountability for their programs. Sophisticated reporting systems and elaborate public relations efforts are now permanent fixtures for many public organizations that must prove their value to the people.

For the same purpose, local advisory councils for agricultural education programs also have become permanent fixtures and have

been tied to public funding. For example, The Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 required federally funded programs to be served by a local advisory council. Additionally, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 required private industry and public school partnerships in vocational education (Phipps & Osborne, 1988). These were efforts by governmental leaders to increase public accountability of vocational education programs.

## Increasing Local Political and Financial Support

When schools are publicly accountable, and when they act on the wishes of those in the community, the public feels empowered and involved. Scanlon's explanation (as cited in Law, 1994, p. 140) helps clarify this concept: “Incorporating the community into a school district policy-making structure ... reaffirms the supposition that the schools belong to everyone.”

The dynamics of community involvement and support can become cyclical. As local community members and political leaders become more involved, they are likely to be more supportive politically, financially, and morally; meanwhile, they are likely to become even more involved in programs they support.

## Improving Insight

Experiential learning is the foundation of agricultural education, and to improve opportunities for realistic training is to improve agricultural education. Logic dictates that the best ideas about realistic training come from realistic sources—those in the community who practice what agricultural educators teach. Law (1994) said that most vocational educators believe community mem-

bers (individuals and institutions) want to become actively involved in schools and have much to offer all of education, particularly vocational education. In the same textbook paragraph, Law said that meaningful learning experiences occur within the community of which the school is a part. This benefit, alone, is motivation enough to invite community members to participate in an advisory capacity.

### Developing Connections

Once relationships with community members are formed, those community partners become potential employers of students in the program. Law's comments on this particular benefit are profound: "The school should open its doors to the citizens of its community and, in so doing, open the doors of the community to its students" (1994, p. 141). According to a recent study, 86 percent of FFA members go on to colleges and universities after high school (National FFA Organization, 2001); however, that leaves at least 14 percent who need to be placed immediately upon high school graduation, and many of those 14 percent will look for employment within the local community. For the sake of these students alone, placement connections between the agricultural education program and the local community are essential.

### Increasing Diversity

The term diversity has many connotations, the most popular of which relate to demographics like ethnicity and gender; however, diversity of ideas and diversity of curriculum is also important in an agricultural education classroom. Advisory councils comprised of members of varied ethnic backgrounds, gender, professional skills, and interests can lead to diverse agricultural education programs. Diverse councils also provide an important system of checks and

balances so that the program they serve can avoid stagnation and remain progressive. Small (2001) noted that "finding ways to include non-traditional partners can be very beneficial, and will increase community awareness and provide opportunities you have never imagined."

### Promoting Democracy

Obtaining stakeholder input should be envisioned as a democratic conversation where members of the community at stake actively negotiate an agenda (Mathie & Greene, 1997). Therefore, advisory councils should be comprised of passionate, stakeholding members of the community—people who will remain enthusiastic about their cause. It is this enthusiasm that leads to cooperative dialogue and sometimes even to constructive argument. And these arguments must be embraced—they lead to progress and they are the core of democratic progress.

Renowned educator Robert Hutchins once said, "The death of democracy is not likely to be an assassination from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment" (Bartlett, 1980, p. 845). In the midst of an often apathetic society, now is the time to promote participation. Encouraging enthusiastic community participation through advisory councils is an unquestionably patriotic act leading to positive change in agricultural education programs and the communities in which they exist.

### Conclusion: Paying it Forward

The people who participate on advisory councils likely have recognized the aforementioned benefits. More importantly, they have recognized and embraced their civic and patriotic duty. Their job is tiresome and sometimes relatively thankless. However, if an advisory council produces even a portion of the benefits discussed in this article, the service provided by the council

members is invaluable. And the best way for an agricultural educator to repay the favor might be to "pay it forward."

Agricultural educators should seek out their place to participate in such a capacity. Advisory boards serving college and university agricultural education departments or technical and trade schools would value input from agriculture teachers. Alumni councils, philanthropic societies, and many other organizations that make use of advisory councils would value members who participate with passion and enthusiasm. Besides, it's a democratic and patriotic responsibility.

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# Revelations of a First Year Teacher

By Daniel D. Foster

"The great organizations are drawn forward by a compelling vision of the future. A vision is a clear mental picture of what the organization will look like when the organization has achieved its mission." ~ Peter Stroh

As a new teacher, I had been instructed that it was important to put into place as quickly as possible an advisory board. To drive this point home, I was whacked across the brow with the trusty Phipps & Osborne *Handbook on Agricultural Education*, otherwise known as the agriculture teacher's bible.

However, I had a fear or hesitation associated with putting together an advisory board because of the importance that was placed on it. I believed that it was so important, and not wanting to screw it up, I dragged my feet or hesitated to implement. This proved to be a fortunate mishap as it allowed me to assess the needs of the community and the program. During this time, I determined numerous key points of an effective advisory board.

*Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work.*

~ Do not slap an advisory committee together. Think it through. You are entering into a relationship and as with any relationship make sure you do your homework first.

~ If you want people to be involved and to exceed expectations, be very detailed of what expectations are and what needs to be done.

~ Don't wear out or run your good horses in the ground. No doubt your community abounds with many effective desirable partners who could add to the committee, if asked.

~ Try to avoid parents of students in the program or keep them to a minimum on the board. It adds to the credibility of the board when they are not viewed as a parent booster club. This is not an alumni chapter; it is a visioning group and strategic planning process.

~ Have a representative from each segment of industry reflected in your community. The Willcox Agricultural Education Advisory Board is comprised of members representing the following industries: ranching, grain/forage production, agricultural processing, education, agribusiness/accounting, agricultural sales & service, orchard industry, agricultural construction/mechanics, and the controlled environment or greenhouse industry. One concerning shortfall of my board is the lack of special populations represented but I am working on remedying that.

~ Have your vocational director, principal and yourself as agriculture instructors serve as ex-officio members. Be sure that they receive all agendas, minutes and mailings.

~ Do not meet once a year. Meet quarterly, with meetings having a specific purpose.

~ Send agendas ahead of time with a time for adjournment printed on them. Adjourn at that time - incomplete business items will go under unfinished business for the next meeting. This conveys a sense of value of time appreciation to your board members.

~ Have your governing school board issue letters of invitation to serve and appoint the board. This clarifies who the advisory board serves. The school board empowers the advisory board and gives it a strong sense of responsibility and duty to a program, not an individual

teacher. When the advisory board is then called upon to give a report to the school board, they will be viewed as a legitimate voice. Provide names to the school board to appoint or choose from, then have them issue the letter of invitation.

~ To begin, you have a committee of six with two serving one-year terms, two with two-year terms and two with three-year terms. After the first year, everyone is on three-year terms with 1/3 of the committee turning over each year. This provides for fresh blood and enthusiasm, have no one serve consecutive terms.

~ Select a chair-elect from your newly appointed members, have the actual chairman be in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year, and then you will have a past chair in their 3<sup>rd</sup> and final year of their term.

~ Have the school district match the committee's donation of time by providing support staff to take minutes and mail agendas.

~ Do not worry about asking "busy" people. Busy people are usually busy because they get the job done. We can utilize these people if we are specific, goal and task oriented with our requests.

~ Do not organize a war party. Do not bring people together to just fight a fight or deal with problems. Allow them to be there to deal with the good things and the problems. You must stay positive and then they will be there to help you in your time of need.

*Leaders are people who focus attention on a vision. They know what they want and are very results oriented. It is their intense focus on worthwhile outcomes that draws others to them and to their cause. ~ Warren Bennis*

I waited until January to call eight specific individuals to accomplish our goals with the specific request of a 6-

month appointment to get the ball rolling and to handle some very large decisions that I foresaw coming down the pipe. This allowed me to have assistance in setting up the long-term advisory board mechanism. An advisory board if properly constructed should not create more work or cause more stress. It should relieve stress and work from the agriculture teacher. I wanted to put myself in a position where I was reporting to the board and serving them, not the other way around. Just as with students it does take some training, we do need to set them up for success, but then they take it farther and run longer than anyone else could have ever dreamed.

Since implementing the Willcox Agricultural Education Advisory Board, the program has had many positive things occur. The school district committed a half million dollars over a period of 5 years to improve the facilities available to the agriculture education program and assist it in achieving the mission of developing students for careers in the food, fiber and natural resource industry. This is the first facility upgrade of any magnitude since 1956. In addition the Willcox FFA Chapter received more earmarked tax credit donations than any other extra curricular program in the school district. Students were being placed in positive working Supervised Agriculture Experience Program Environments and plans are under way to implement a more formal internship program. Over \$4000 in scholarships were awarded to Willcox FFA graduating senior members by the advisory board and the sky appears to be the limit for the future.

*Where ever there is a clear vision of something exciting and meaningful, people don't have to be pushed into getting things done. The Vision pulls them forward. ~ Steven Jobs*

If we want to have the community involved, we must have a way to specifically allow them to be involved at their comfort level. We must show them a clear vision of the future. You

need a menu of items for their involvement.

Remember our National Strategic Plan for Agricultural Education states that there was a time when people struggled to cultivate ten acres of ground and provide for their families. Today, agriculture and Agricultural Education have the power, knowledge and equipment to build a world beyond our imaginations. You know that. You know that you are training students for more than 350 careers in science and technology, but does your community know? Do your stakeholders, your administration, your parents, even your students, do they know?

We talk about telling our story, but there are different stories to tell and they all need to be told to optimize team work. The "who I am" story shares experiences that have shaped your own beliefs. An example for myself included letting the community know that I was a product of the system. It was important for them to know the possibilities. I parlayed my FFA and Agricultural Education experience into a fully funded collegiate experience at a prestigious land grant university, and their son or daughter might also.

The "who we are" story: The values of FFA are repeatedly told in many different formats, from the creed to the motto to the mission statement. Make sure your key stakeholders recognize, know, and understand that FFA is a student driven organization. If they see it happening, they know that students organized, planned and executed the plan of that particular event.

The "where are we going" story: Show how students have achieved challenging goals. For my program, I was proud to make sure that everyone that this year our students won 1/3 of all proficiency awards in the state, six state degrees, two American FFA degrees

and was the only chapter in the nation to win two SAE Development Grants. I want them to understand that our students are exceptional. In any community, volunteers and individuals want to be associated with the best, with winners. Let your community share in your program successes and they will in turn cushion you in those moments of defeat.

Because we are dealing with volunteers, we must remember that volunteers do not usually get money, promotions or extrinsic benefits. So, what motivates them? It is the intrinsic value of being involved with something good. They believe in what we are doing and want to be a part of it and like being recognized for helping. So help them sustain that sense of mission and the energy that goes with it:

- ◆ Assign real work. Volunteers will do small stuff, but don't give them undesirable work all the time. Help them escape drudgery, let them help with research, planning and hands-on work.

- ◆ Set the standard high. Your best supporters want to take pride and stand out, be the best, in what they do. Setting high standards and working to help them meet those standards satisfies that need.

- ◆ Match their commitment. Recognize their contributions without fail and reward them with additional responsibility, as well as perks. They are the best because they want to work.

Great things begin with a vision, but succeed with a plan. Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now. The National Strategic Plan for Agricultural Education states that the greatest agricultural resource is the human resource. Are you tapping the maximum potential of the human resource in your community?

*Daniel D. Foster is an Agriscience Instructor and FFA Advisor at Willcox High School, in Arizona.*

# The Veterinarian Care Council

By Kevin Scott Sherman

The Veterinarian Care Council (VCC) began in the 1990's and consisted of local veterinarians who served on the agricultural education program's Advisory Board and wanted to work directly with students as both role models and instructors in animal health and management. The VCC was developed over a period of six years to support the local agriculture program and the veterinarians involved. The veterinarians supported the school by providing animal health care at the cost of supplies. They served as animal welfare support protection in case of complaints to the local humane society. They were real-life professional resources to the agricultural program and they provided students with instruction and hands-on opportunities. In return, the veterinarians had the opportunity to work on animals that may have been new to their base knowledge as well as finding future employees. In the spring of 1996, fifty veterinarians and over forty students were involved in this program. This group of professionals supported students in agricultural education and over 300 animal projects located on the school grounds.

## From the Advisory Committee to Vet-care Council

Before formally beginning our VCC, we had restructured our agricultural education program advisory committee. We wanted to have those clients (students) and stakeholders (those having a tie to our program) involved in making the

tough decisions needed to move our program from being exploratory to one that was strong in academics infused with hands-on skills. In doing this we split the committee into four different groups. Three of the groups were subject matter base and the fourth group included parents, graduates, school personnel and others that had interest in the total program. The three subject groups included applied zoology (animal science), applied botany (ornamental horticulture) and natural resources (forestry). The committee met both as a total group to make decisions that would support all students in the Agricultural Education program, as well as in subject matter groups. The veterinarians on our applied

zoological sub-committee became the start of the VCC. Up until the beginning of the VCC, local veterinarians would donate their time as well as their resources in the care of over 300 animals located on the school grounds

## The Setting

The school that housed this program was centered in the middle of San Jose, California. San Jose is a large community of nearly one million people. Students attending the school came from the local area as well as those students that were bused as part of the district's desegregation court order. Almost 100% of the students attending the school had no direct tie to agriculture. So

## November-December 2003 Issue

### *The Role of the Teacher in Developing and Promoting a Vision for Agricultural Education.*

Where is the profession going? What role does the agriculture teacher have in shaping the future of the profession? What is our vision for Agricultural Education? What visioning process should we use to develop a preferred future for local programs?

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Articles Due to Theme Editor: October 1, 2003  
Articles Due to Editor: October 15, 2003



both traditional and non-traditional animals were used to recruit and provide hands-on SAE opportunities for students. Major animal groups included amphibians, cats, fish, goats, llamas, parrots, poultry, pot-bellied pigs, reptiles, rodents, sheep and others. We found that those students raised in the city were more familiar with these animals through television, zoos, and pet stores than animals associated with farming or agriculture. Also, we found that some students were scared of animals cared for by traditional agriculturalists. Thus students used these unusual animals for their SAE program, to apply both hands-on practice and knowledge that could be transferred to required instruction in agricultural production, care, and management of animals.

### **The Nuts and Bolts of the VCC**

In setting up the VCC, we looked for veterinarians interested in working with our students and had expertise with the animals that were living at school. Four major areas were examined and we found clinics that would represent our animals. Professionals included those with expertise in livestock care, avian and exotic animal care, small animal care, and amphibians and reptile care. The specialists came from several different locations across the county.

One week per month, each veterinarian and a technician (many times) would come after school to work on animals that were ill or in need of routine care. Thus, each week centered on a different specialty. This process allowed students to have between 8 and 10 opportunities over the course of the year to be involved in a specific specialty area. There was never more than one VCC per week. If

there were emergencies at the school, students would have the opportunity to be involved in the care and management of the emergency taking place. This was done by allowing students to help the veterinarians who were specialized in the care of that species of animal. Sometimes students would have to miss a class or stay at school late at night or come early in the morning. In a few cases, students would be trained on technical care of animals that had been very sick and needed extra-ordinary care at the school's facility instead of the animals being kept at the clinic.

One special note: Since so many animals were kept in such a large community, any sign of a health problem was noted and in many cases veterinarians would come to the school or animals were brought to them for evaluation. It was felt that it was prudent to be extra cautious since so many people in and out of the program saw the animals. Some of these on-lookers included those that were involved in animal welfare groups.

At the beginning of each week, the veterinarian and the topic to be discussed was posted for students. The first 20 students signed up for each session were allowed to be involved in the program. Once a student signed up it was his/her obligation to attend. On the day of the visit, students would meet in the classroom for instruction.

Initially, the veterinarian would lead a discussion, with the students, focused on emergency and preventative care. Then students and the veterinarian would attend to the animals. On slow weeks, special topics on the use of equipment or tests were discussed and students practiced hands-on activities. Students had to sign in for the session to get credit. Every 18 hours

a student could earn one elective credit, up to 5 credits per semester. The student in charge of the school's animal health care program took attendance at the end of each session. Students were granted extra hours of credit on their report card based on the number of VCC sessions in which they had participated. If an animal had died before going to a clinic for care, the veterinarian for that species would work with the students to discover the cause. Sometimes a post-mortem would be involved.

### **The Conclusion**

From the use of this program many benefits were derived. Students desiring to become veterinarians had the opportunity to examine if they really wanted to pursue this type of work. Some students decided not to become veterinarians. Students had the opportunity to learn from specialists in the field of animal health. This allowed the instructor to be a mentor. The school's animal projects were well cared for. The veterinarians had the opportunity to look for possible workers for their clinics. Overall, this program became very important to those who loved working with animals. It also allowed our advisory committee to learn about the program by having people involved on a weekly and on-call basis.



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# Managing Advisory Committees

By Jaime Castillo

The Cooperative Extension Service (CES) is charged with developing and delivering research-based educational programs in the areas of agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, economic development, and home economics based upon identified needs. The CES has maintained bragging rights for 100 years in its ability to deliver practical, focused, and timely educational programs to its constituency based upon relevant needs. One strategy for this success is the development and effective use of advisory committees.

Since the inception of the Cooperative Extension Service in 1914 advisory committees have been used to gain program-planning input from the grassroots level, which has contributed to Extension's success.

This success, however, does not come easy. Managers of advisory committees must keep a few strategies in mind to reach the full value of an advisory committee. These strategies include:

- \* Communicating the purpose of the advisory committee
- \* Key membership is critical for leveraging success
- \* Orient!
- \* Productive meetings
- \* Communicating accomplishments and provide rewards

## Communicating the Purpose of the Advisory Committee

There is a fine line that must be delineated between advice and oversight. The purpose of an advisory committee is to provide input and make suggestions on relevant educational program needs,

nothing further. Those who receive input from advisory committees must not allow committees to become empowered to make managerial decisions regarding their employment or judge the quality of their work. This can be avoided by providing advisory committee members with a job description. The job description should include a job title, a description of the work to be done, how the work will be done, time commitment, required qualifications and skills, and the names of individuals with whom committee members will work. Advisory committees may be called upon from time to time to support Extension initiatives so it may be wise to explain this in the job description as well. Job descriptions can also lead to individuals eliminating themselves from further consideration to serve on the committee once they read what would be expected from them. The next step in forming



For those people willing to put in the effort necessary, advisory committees provide program-planning input from the grassroots level.

the advisory committee is to determine the appropriate size.

### **Key Membership is Critical for Leveraging Success**

Quantity and quality are important when creating an advisory committee. The advisory committee should be made up of 5-10 members, but the members have to be the RIGHT ones. Advisory committee members should be selected based upon the various interests, businesses, and communities that the educational programs serve. Some recommendations for advisory committee members include highly involved individuals who support community initiatives; key leaders of the community, such as the mayor and county commissioners; and business representatives.

Membership diversity is also an important factor to consider with advisory committees for two reasons. First, diverse ethnic and gender representation will help focus outreach efforts to underrepresented and underserved communities. Second, it is easy to ask those whom we are familiar with what we should be doing, but what about those that we aren't working with? What are their needs? Diversity of members in ethnicity, gender, and background also yields diversity of thought. If we fail to ask those who are not like us what their educational needs are, then we have more problems than an advisory committee can resolve.

### **Orient!**

Most of us have heard the saying, "failing to plan, is planning to fail". The same goes for designing an effective advisory committee. Failing to properly orient an advisory committee is surely failing to plan. An effective advisory committee is not the result of chance. Advisory committee members must be oriented. Following is a list of topics

that should be included in an orientation:

- √ The role of the advisory committee
- √ Job descriptions
- √ Bylaws (including staggered term lengths)
- √ Time commitment requirements
- √ Overview, including organizational chart and brief history of the organization
- √ Brief training, including:
  - ~ Program Planning Process
  - ~ Group Process Skills
  - ~ Data gathering and interpretation skills

A newly formed advisory committee can be oriented all at once. New members should be oriented as needed.

### **Productive Meetings**

Advisory committee members are volunteers and as volunteers they are taking time away from their own jobs to help us find direction in ours. For this reason it is imperative that advisory committee meetings be productive. Consider the following suggestions for conducting effective advisory committee meetings:

- √ List the intended objectives of the meeting
- √ Provide a written agenda
- √ Stay on track
- √ Assign key discussion leaders
- √ Encourage participation
- √ Summarize accomplishments and assign tasks
- √ Start and end on time

Advisory committee meetings should be scheduled on a quarterly

basis with communication between each meeting. Failure to meet on a regular basis may lead advisory committee members to believe that the committee's existence is only on paper.

### **Communicate Accomplishments and Rewards**

While all strategies for creating effective advisory committees are essential, communicating and providing appropriate rewards is one that should not be taken for granted. Quarterly summaries of accomplishments towards program goals should be provided during advisory committee meetings. This strategy is important for two reasons: 1) advisory committee members have the opportunity to see accomplishments of program goals, which they helped establish; and 2) knowledge of accomplishments may serve as an intrinsic reward for committee members.

Remember that not all individuals welcome every type of reward. Some people are content with a simple thank you, while others like to read their name in the newspaper. The key here is to make sure that you are creative in the types of rewards given to advisory committee members. If you are not sure what types of rewards would be appropriate for advisory committee members, ask them. Providing input is in their job description.



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# Diversity is Not a Dirty Word

By Robert Jackson and Chansi Williams

Can you imagine seeing the world in only black and white? Or not being able to experience a realm of colors such as brown, red, yellow, green or blue? Doesn't that seem pretty boring? Your answer to these questions might determine how important you feel cultural diversity is. Many efforts to promote minority involvement in the field of agriculture exist but the percentage of minorities in the field of agriculture still remains extremely low.

Although the overall numbers remain low the gradual increase in the number of minority students proves that there is a need for agricultural education teachers to become more diverse in their role as teachers and advisors.

Cultural diversity is not only a race issue; it involves differences in gender, culture, language, sexual orientation, religion, ability and demographics. Henry stated in *Beyond the Melting Pot* "Today's college graduates will work in a more diverse society than those of previous generations. Growing percentages of our country's population are people of color" (Henry, in Ingram, 2001).

Agricultural Education is a very diverse field and affects everyone around the world. Many minorities are discouraged from entering an area of agriculture by parents, teachers, and mentors because of historical perceptions and lack of encouragement to enroll in an agriculture course.

If you ask K-12 students what

they think about agriculture it may surprise you how many young people equate agriculture with either being a farmer or planting a tree. It is unfortunate because those students are missing numerous opportunities and future experiences in agriculture.

Advances in technology have benefited the agricultural field by minimizing the amount of labor on farms and increasing the amount of jobs/careers off farms. It has been well documented that a minute portion of the total population works directly on the farm.

In order for teachers to dispel the myth about agriculture, they must play a vital role. Students need to know that biotechnology, microbiology, veterinary science, agribusiness, management, landscape design, food science etc. are all connected to agriculture.

Before we can move forward, we must leave stigmas of the past in the dust. Past negative associations of jobs in the agricultural field are labor intensive and not prestigious, when in reality many opportunities are now very sophisticated, and technical employees are highly skilled and well respected.

To encourage minorities to enroll in the area of agriculture, we developed a Top Ten List to promote diversity in agriculture. The following examples might aid you in creating diversity within the classroom.

1. Encourage students to apply to summer internship programs, such as the one offered at Iowa State University in the College of Agriculture.
2. Educate yourself about the cultures of your students.
3. Make time in your lesson plan to learn about different cultures i.e. have a theme each week.
4. Encourage interactions among all people in the classroom regardless of culture, background or differences.
5. Have students give presentations on their different cultures represented in the class.
6. Collaborate with other areas of study within your school such as the English department. The English teacher might look at some well-known authors within a certain culture and you could concentrate on past and present agriculture in the same area.

**Melnick & Zeichner (1988) state, "Teacher candidates, for the most part, come to teacher education with limited direct interracial and intercultural experience, with erroneous assumptions about diversity among youngsters and with limited expectations for the success of all learners." (p. 89).**

7. Take field trips to places where people of different backgrounds work together to achieve a common goal.

8. Organize a classroom swap. Students from rural environments would go to a school in an urban environment and vice versa. It might require some time to organize, but the rewards will be astronomical.

9. Tap a diverse community and network resources to provide guest speakers and job shadowing experiences (eg. government agencies, businesses and civic organizations).

10. Creatively borrow from other teachers. Building relationships among co-workers will encourage the desire to promote diversity within the classroom.

Other beneficial practices for teachers are adapted from an instrument used by Luft (1996):

1. Provide opportunities for students to view women and men, minority and majority persons, and disabled and able-bodied persons in a variety of agricultural roles.

2. Alert students to stereotyping when it occurs in instructional materials.

3. Expose agricultural education students to diverse role models in various agricultural occupations.

4. Work with the counseling staff to ensure that students do not make classroom decisions about enrollment in agriculture classes based on misleading stereotypes.

5. Encourage students to inquire into the historic involvement or exclusion of minority groups and women in agricultural occupations.

6. Discuss ethnic and cultural diversity and public policies related to agriculture.

7. Recruit minorities to enroll in agriculture classes.

8. Use persons from diverse cultural/racial groups and disabled persons as resources in the classroom.

9. Promote festivities and celebrations in relation to the minority cultures of the students enrolled in agriculture.

10. Conduct on-going evaluations of the teaching strategies and instructional materials used to teach about ethnicity and culture.

The most important thing that you can do as an educator is to get involved and get your students involved. Melnick & Zeichner (1988) state, "Teacher candidates, for the most part, come to teacher education with limited direct interracial and intercultural experience, with erroneous assumptions about diversity among youngsters and with limited expectations for the success of all learners." (p. 89).

If you can demonstrate that you are interested in culture and diversity, your students are sure to follow. Although you are the teacher, you will be amazed that at some point you will become the student and also a learner. The techniques mentioned above are meant to improve diversity within the classroom, but you will be surprised at their overall effect on your classroom. Students will become more enthusiastic because they will feel like they have a viable role in your classroom.

The Italian proverb "Rome was not built in a day" is also true in terms of diversity. We are not going to make huge strides overnight, the goal for diversity is a slow process historically. Through our collective and continuous efforts we can create

healthy, vibrant learning environments.

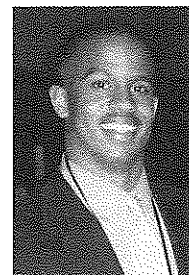
These suggestions and comments should make you reflect and think of ways to become more aware of how important cultural diversity is within the field of agriculture. Incorporate some of these suggestions within your teaching and you can contribute to influencing students to gain interest in the field.

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# Embracing the Role of Science in Agriculture

By Salvatore A. Sparace  
and K. Dale Layfield

To most people, "agriculture" means the production of plants and animals for consumption or use by mankind. It follows that "agricultural education" centers on teaching methods used for the agricultural production of plants and animals. However, the knowledge base and infrastructure upon which we achieve these ends have changed tremendously over the past 10–15 years. Based on the application of a variety of contemporary advances in science and technology, modern agriculture has seen vast improvements in the ways we approach plant and animal production.

In this new era of agriculture, we will continue to see the development and practice of such techniques as "precision agriculture" (the use of satellite technology and global positioning devices for micro-managing farms and improving crop production), "genetic engineering" for the movement or altered expression of genes controlling desirable traits in plants and animals, and "bio-pharming" (the production of pharmaceutical or industrial chemicals like anti-cancer drugs and biodegradable plastics in animals and plants).

In addition to a much greater reliance on science and technology in modern agriculture, America has seen some notable changes in the demographics of agriculture (Table 1). Over the last century, there has been greater than a 60% decrease in the total number of farms with a corresponding threefold increase in

the average farm size. This has been accompanied by a 95% reduction in the fraction of the population residing on farmland and a 79% reduction in the number of farm workers. The total land in agricultural production peaked in 1950 at 1.2 billion acres but has been steadily declining (by about 25%) ever since (NASS, n.d.). In view of the greater dependence of modern agriculture on science and technology, these are compelling statistics that underscore the declining numbers of careers in production agriculture with a shift towards careers in the basic sciences that support production agriculture. Despite the increasing roles that science and technology play in our lives, the scientific literacy of most Americans has not kept pace with the science-based technologies that impact their lives (Glenn, 2000; NRC, 1999). As a result, there is justifiable concern that America's educational system will not be able to provide an adequate supply of individuals with the necessary skills and background in science and technology that will be required by the emerging industries of an increasingly science-based economy (Glenn, 2000; NRC, 1996). This has led to a greater emphasis on standards-based science education at all levels in our school systems in recent years.

The responsibility for providing improved science education cannot rest solely with high school science teachers. The need to enhance the science education aspects of agriculture have also been recognized for some time (National Research Council, 1988). Agriculture teachers are in a strategic position to positively impact the science education of our young citizens. What better way to teach the fundamental concepts of

science than in agriculture where the entire process of science can be applied to such a meaningful example of "science at work". Agricultural educators in America must rise to the call to help prepare our students with the appropriate scientific and technological background to pursue the science-based agriculture careers of the future.

At first impression, retooling to teach agriculture within the scientific context upon which it now so greatly relies may seem like a formidable task. Many teachers may feel unprepared to undertake a more science-based approach to teaching agriculture. However, as pointed out in another article appearing in the May-June 2003 issue of *The Agricultural Education Magazine* (Layfield and Sparace), changes in SAE and FFA activities bring promise. Various individuals and agricultural education support groups have developed or introduced a number of meaningful ways to not only bring the science back into agricultural education, but also to recognize the achievement of excellence by both students and teachers in science-based agricultural education activities.

Agriculture teachers cannot be expected to carry the entire burden of agricultural education reform. One of the best ways to enhance the scientific literacy of future generations is through changes in the pre-service education of agricultural educators. Clemson University is responding to the changing needs of agricultural education in South Carolina in a number of ways.

The revised Agricultural Education Major now includes three new courses: "Teaching Agriscience," "Agriscience Institute," and "Biotechnology in Agricultural Educa-

tion.” Through these courses students will be exposed to the contemporary theories, techniques, careers, and teaching resources in science-based agriculture. Clemson University faculty also explore opportunities to foster greater mutually beneficial interactions between high school science and agriculture teachers to enhance overall high school science education in South Carolina and to re-align state agricultural education standards with the national science education standards. In future years, a number of resources will be developed and available to the agricultural education community.

### Concluding Comments

The objective of agriculture has been and always will be the production of plants and animals to feed or serve mankind. However, our approach to agricultural production has come to greatly rely on the applications of modern science and technology for a variety of recent improvements and innovations. At the same time, this has been accompanied by a shift in career opportunities (and perhaps, interests) from traditional production agriculture to science-driven agricultural development. These trends underscore the

reality that all agriculturalists, ranging from the farmers directly involved in growing plants and animals to those involved in the handling, distribution or processing of agricultural commodities, and even the consumers of these products, will require a much greater understanding of the scientific principles employed in the development and production of agricultural products. The approach by agricultural educators can be greatly enhanced through revealing the true nature of the science involved in agriculture and by preparing students for the emerging careers in science-based agriculture.

All teachers of agriculture should be encouraged to embrace the role of science in agriculture. How wide open are your arms and your mind?

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**Table 1. Then vs. Now: Changes in Some Demographic Characteristics in U.S. Agriculture Over the Last 100 Years**

Characteristic	Then (1900)	Now (1997)
Total Land in Production (millions of acres)	838	931
Total Number of Farms (millions)	6.4	1.9
Average Farm Size (acres)	147	487
% of Population Living on Farms	39	1.8
Number of Farm Workers (millions)	13.6	2.9

\* Adapted from "Trends in Agriculture" — <http://www.usda.gov/nass/pubs/trends/>

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- Esters, Levon T.....November-December 2002
- Frick, Martin.....November-December 2002
- Fritz, Susan.....September-October 2002
- Grage, Kris.....November-December 2002, March-April 2003
- Gruis, Dale.....September-October 2002
- Grunklee, Dave.....January-February 2003
- Harbstreet, Steven R.....March-April 2003
- Harlin, Julie.....July-August 2002
- Harms, Breanne M.....January-February 2003
- Harris, Clark R.....March-April 2003
- Holmes, Madelyn.....July-August 2002
- Hoover, Tracy S.....November-December 2002
- Jones, Linda.....January-February 2003
- Kelln, Chris.....May-June 2003
- Kinsey, Sharon.....November-December 2002
- Kitchel, Tracy.....May-June 2003
- Knobloch, Neil A.....September-October 2002, November-  
December 2002, January-February 2003, May-June 2003
- Ladlie, Kara.....September-October 2002
- Layfield, K. Dale.....May-June 2003
- Malone, Doug.....July-August 2002
- Marable, Blane.....September-October 2002
- Martin, Robert A.....July-August 2002, September-  
October 2002, November-December 2002, January-  
February 2003, March-April 2003, May-June 2003
- McClure, Amanda L.....May-June 2003
- McDermott, Michael.....January-February 2003
- Melodia, Anna.....November-December 2002
- Miller, Glen.....September-October 2002
- Miller, W. Wade.....January-February 2003
- Moody, Linda.....July-August 2002, September-October 2002
- Moore, Gary.....January-February 2003, March-April 2003,  
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- Moore, Lori.....November-December 2002
- Morgan, Chris.....July-August 2002
- Murphy, Tim.....July-August 2002
- Myers, Brian.....January-February 2003
- Navarro, Maria.....September-October 2002
- Parr, Brian.....November-December 2002
- Patterson, Jim.....July-August 2002
- Place, Nick.....November-December 2002
- Ramsey, Jon W.....May-June 2003
- Retallick, Michael S.....March-April 2003, May-June 2003
- Rice, Brandi.....March-April 2003
- Ricketts, John.....November-December 2002
- Roberts, T. Grady.....September-October 2002, May-June 2003
- Rudd, Rick.....November-December 2002, March-April 2003
- Runde, Diane.....March-April 2003
- Schut, John H.....May-June 2003
- Settle, Sheila.....January-February 2003
- Shinn, Glen C.....September-October 2002
- Small, Tony.....November-December 2002
- Smith, James H.....July-August 2002
- Smith, Lee.....January-February 2003
- Sparace, Salvatore A.....May-June 2003
- Spencer, Alan D.....September-October 2002, March-April 2003
- Steiner, Charles.....March-April 2003
- Strom, Todd.....July-August 2002
- Swafford, Dan.....May-June 2003
- Triptow, Liz.....May-June 2003
- Trivette, Nancy J.....November-December 2002
- Turnbull, Stacie M.....September-October 2002, January-  
February 2003
- Tuttle, Sabrina.....May-June 2003
- Wellert, Patrick.....January-February 2003
- Whittington, M. Susie.....November-December 2002
- Wilson, Mary.....May-June 2003
- Woods, Michael.....July-August 2002, September-  
October 2002, May-June 2003