

The Agricultural
EDUCATION
M A G A Z I N E

*September/
October
2018*

*Volume 91
Issue 2*



*Advocating for Agriculture:
Taking the Advocacy Approach*

EDITOR COMMENTS

by John C. Ewing

As I was reading the current issue of the Agricultural Education Magazine, I was reminded of the importance of being able to “tell our story” of agriculture in many ways. As educators I think we can all agree that our students all learn best in particular ways. Why then would we think that a “one size fits all” model for Advocating for Agriculture makes sense? Thus, I believe there are many ways to advocate for agriculture, and some modes will reach different people in more efficient manners when compared to others.

I was impressed with the way that co-theme editors, Hock and

Meyers, approached reaching a diverse audience by soliciting authors with diverse strategies to reaching the public through advocacy. As you will see throughout the issue, the authors are advocating for agriculture; not just helping people understand what agriculture does for them as an individual, but rather working to make all people advocates for agriculture. The authors share ways to develop advocates, and each article is unique in its approach. Some describe using social media to garner support. Others build support for the program through school/community connections, while other articles describe what you can do to promote agriculture, and its importance, within our own classrooms. The strategies

shared in this issue are all worthy of a thorough reading and understanding of how you can better your program, and all of agriculture. I challenge each of you, as a professional in agricultural education, to use the articles in this issue to help you develop, or enhance, your own plan for Advocating for Agriculture. Happy reading!



*Dr. John C. Ewing is an Associate Professor at The Pennsylvania State University and Editor of **The Agricultural Education Magazine**.*

THEME EDITOR COMMENTS

On the Road to Change: Moving from Literacy to Advocacy

by Gaea Hock and Courtney Meyers

Going somewhere different than where you are today requires movement. If we were to take a road trip to a new destination, we would need to fill the vehicle with fuel then put it into motion. This is also true when trying to initiate a change at the local, regional, or broader level.

In agricultural education and the broader agriculture industry, many areas need our attention and advocacy efforts such as recruiting agriculture teachers, generating support for your agriculture program, and gaining consumer acceptance of agriculture practices. While help-

ing others understand the various aspects of these issues is important, our efforts can't stop there. Addressing areas of needed change requires advocacy, and those efforts are most successful when one begins with obtaining knowledge. Advocacy efforts are grounded in knowing the subject, yourself, your program, and appreciating others' perspectives. However, successful advocacy efforts require action. If we envision the change we want to see is some distance down the road, literacy can fill the tank, but putting the car in drive requires advocacy.

This issue of The Agricultural Education Magazine will move past

the role of literacy efforts and focus on how you can improve your own advocacy skills and help your students hone theirs. Articles in this issue will address the foundational skills needed to effectively advocate, examples of successful advocacy efforts, specific strategies to participate in advocacy, and advice for how to teach your students to advocate.

In the first article, Casten establishes the basic skills needed to advocate. While many of us acknowledge advocacy is something we do, we may not actually be approaching our efforts in the best way possible. The author identifies key items you

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The Agricultural Education Magazine

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Front and Back Cover Photos provided by Gaea Hock and Courtney Meyers

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Subscriptions

Subscription price for *The Agricultural Education Magazine* is \$15.00 per year. Foreign subscriptions are \$25.00 (U.S. currency) per year for surface mail, and \$40 (U.S. currency) foreign airmail (except Canada). Orders must be for one year or longer. We can accept up to a three year subscription. Refunds are not available. Please allow 4 - 6 weeks delivery of first magazine. Claims for missing issues cannot be honored after three months from date of publication, six months for foreign subscriptions. Single copies and back issues less than 10 years old are available at \$5 each (\$10.00 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 Business Manager: Jay Jackman, National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) 300 Garrigus Building, 325 Cooper Drive, The University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky 40546-0215, Phone: (859) 257-2224, FAX: (859) 323-3919. E-mail: NAAE@uky.edu

Article Submission

Articles and photographs should be submitted to the Editor or Theme Editor. Items to be considered for publication should be submitted at least 90 days prior to the publication date of the intended issue. All submissions will be acknowledged by the Theme Editor and/or the Editor. No items are returned unless accompanied by a written request. Articles should be approximately four double spaced pages in length (1500 words). Information about the author(s) should be included at the end of the article. Photos and/or drawings appropriate for the "theme issue" are welcomed. Photos/drawings should be submitted in an electronic format (jpg or tiff format preferred – minimum 300 dpi). Do not imbed photos/drawings in the Word document. A recent photograph (jpg or tiff format preferred– minimum 300 dpi) of all authors should accompany the article unless photographs are on file with the Editor. Articles in the *Magazine* may be reproduced without permission but should be acknowledged.

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Publication Information

The Agricultural Education Magazine (ISSN 0732-4677), published bi-monthly, is the professional journal of agricultural education. The journal is published by The Agricultural Education Magazine, Inc. at 300 Garrigus Building, The University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky 40546-0215.

Periodicals Postage Paid at Lexington, Kentucky and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Agricultural Education Magazine, attn: Jay Jackman, 300 Garrigus Building, The University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky 40546-0215. Phone: (859) 257-2224, FAX: (859) 323-3919.

should consider as you tell your story as an advocate for a cause.

Our next article comes from Moore and Sheehan and provides two strategies you can put into practice when designing advocacy campaigns/efforts. SPIN and WIIFM are helpful for your own personal advocacy efforts and can be taught to your students to build theirs.

You do not have to be alone in your advocacy activities for yourself, your program, or the agriculture industry. Building the capacity for others to advocate on your behalf is crucial to build support and accomplish ambitious goals. Doerfert and Lawson discuss the benefits of fostering an advocacy army to go to battle for you and your program.

After establishing basic skills for advocacy and learning how to present your arguments in relation to the values people may have, we begin to look at several different levels of advocacy.

The first article in this group shares a personal example of someone advocating for her own role in agricultural education. Armour shares how she advocated for herself and the other agricultural education teachers in North Carolina when asking for an extended contract.

Carraway and Corum share personal stories of how they were able to leverage existing organizations to help them advocate for items in their program. Corum discusses how the Ag Teacher's Creed relates to advocacy while Carraway provides her perspective on the role of local media to promote your program.

Thompson discusses key achievements of the National Teach Ag Campaign and highlights several success stories from across the nation. We are all advocates for our profession, but we need to be aware of the efforts that have the greatest impact on re-

ducing the agriculture teacher shortage. Strategies shared in this article can be adopted by others as we work to advocate for agricultural education programs and teachers.

Many of the agriculture programs across the nation are located in rural areas and the vitality of rural education is important for their success. In her article, Barksdale discusses the need to advocate for rural education based on her own experience attending a rural school and her internship with the U.S. Department of Education.

Martin and Hartmann present the values individuals assign to agricultural practices and products and how that impacts communication efforts about key issues. As we advocate with more varied audiences, the authors remind us it is important to consider how audience members view the topic.

As we work to prepare our students to be advocates for the agriculture industry, we should look to others who are modeling effective practices. Pagett and Henry address the use of the #SpeakAg platform as a tool to improve advocacy efforts of young people.

Advocacy takes many forms, one of which could be labeled as lobbying for a cause. McLerran discusses her time working in Washington, D.C. and shares advice on how to make visits to the Hill for advocacy purposes more effective.

Our final article comes from Steede and Irlbeck. They designed and taught a course for undergraduate students that includes content you could integrate into a high school classroom.

We hope the articles in this issue will help enhance your own advocacy skills and assist you in preparing the next generation of agricultural advo-

cates. As you work in your classrooms to instill knowledge and encourage learning, we hope you will also inspire movement toward goals through effective advocacy efforts.



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The Art of Building Skills for Advocacy

by Jill Casten

My first job out of college was working for a U.S. Senator where I was often on the receiving end of many conversations with passionate advocates. Therefore, in the first stages of my career, the term advocacy conjured up an image of lobbyists in suits marching to the Hill in Washington, D.C. to take action on legislation or governmental reform. However, I quickly learned that advocacy is not owned solely by those in suits. Rather, it best comes from those who live and breathe the effects of legislation and everything that results from even the most basic levels of public opinion.

For the intent of this article, I think we can all agree on a definition of advocacy, in general, is the support for a cause or purpose. Over the course of my career in agriculture, advocacy has come to mean many things to me in the context of policy, personal conversations, and sharing our story through the lens of social media. From the most formal of situations like public speaking or lobbying our members of Congress, advocacy skills are crucial to telling the story of agriculture. However, the majority of us do not have those formal opportunities on a daily basis, but we do have conversations and share our lives on social media every day. In the years I have been working in this space of “advocacy”, I have learned

some transferable skills that can help advocacy efforts, no matter in what context you are applying them.

To me, advocacy begins with a good story. Stories connect with others through emotion and provide a visual that is often hard to forget. What I like about stories is that just about anyone can tell a good one. My 6-year-old nephew can tell a good story about showing his pig at the county fair. Even if I wasn't there, I can still see it vividly in my mind and hear it in the emotion of his voice as he moved his pig around the arena and came out victoriously with his blue ribbon.

From policy experts to agricultural educators and life-long farmers, those involved in agriculture have the greatest tool at their disposal through stories. So how do you enhance your storytelling skills? I have a few things everyone can work on. First, brainstorm a list of stories and examples about agriculture you have personally experienced. Whether it comes from something on the farm or in the classroom, we all have experiences to discuss. From my early days of raising sheep and working alongside my grandparents in their meat processing plant to currently taking over my family's farm with my sisters and their spouses, I try to pull from a lifetime of lessons learned and relatable moments that will resonate with listeners.

Once you have a good story in mind, think about how to make it as specific and simple as possible. Often, we get caught up in the details or down in the weeds of a story. Map it out first. What is the purpose or lesson of the story? What main

points support that lesson? Next, practice saying it – out loud. Tell it and retell it until you have it condensed to the most core points that will resonate with your audience in an efficient and impactful way.

Another element of storytelling is to make the story concrete for the listener. Use language to help paint the picture. Can they see in their mind what is happening? Perhaps your story aligns with something that is relatively “known” in the world. Use comparisons and analogies to help the listeners take something they “know” and connect it to our experiences in agriculture.

Maybe you are trying to explain the importance of utilizing antibiotics and vaccinations in our livestock. When talking to another parent, connect this concept to their desire to vaccinate their children to keep them healthy or provide medicine to help them recover from an illness. Or perhaps it's talking to someone about the complexities of GMO technology utilized in crop production. I like to tie this concept back to the advances we have seen in the use of phones. For example, the apps and tools we have in our Smartphones allow us to be more efficient, safe and monitor a variety of aspects of our life. This is comparable to advances in crop and chemical technology, which have allowed farmers to be more efficient and combat natural obstacles such as lack of moisture and harmful pests to raise better crops. If you put your mind to it, there are multitudes of comparisons and analogies you can use to help the listener better understand our complex world of agriculture.

Beyond the crucial aspect of storytelling, the next skillset of advocacy comes in the form of listening and asking questions. To me, these two skills go hand-in-hand. And yes, these are skills you can practice and be mindful of each day.

Listening comes first and it is harder than we think. It takes concentration and mindful effort. Especially in the advocacy space, we must listen to understand the concerns of others. It is natural to want to cut in, defend, or shutdown when we hear something we do not agree with. But if we listen and truly seek to understand, we can hear the underlying values in the concern being voiced. It is through these values we can begin to connect with our audience or conversation partner.

After we listen, we should ask thoughtful questions. We often take this skill for granted, but asking questions can help us identify values and provide a better understanding of the issue at hand. Engaging through questions allows for the two-way flow of information in the form of conversations. Asking specific questions allows both parties to cut through many misconceptions and talk about the facts at hand.

Finally, there are a few other things to keep in mind as a part of the advocacy skills process. These are really skills of self-awareness and how it plays into getting your message across in a positive way. Know your strengths. I grew up on a row crop farm and raised sheep as a 4-H and FFA SAE project. I try not to put myself into situations where I share the issues of a beef or dairy farm. Admit when you are not an expert. Agriculture

is a vast industry and no one can possibly know the ins and outs of every type of farming practice, technology, or breed of livestock. It is also okay to admit you do not know something even within your realm of expertise. Making something up or sharing partial truths are detrimental to everyone. The far better response to a question you do not know would be to admit it, but also take the opportunity to offer and share resources. Following up with links to credible sources and introductions to those who are experts in the field of question take more effort but builds trust in our messages.

One of the most understated, yet important, tools of advocacy is related to self-awareness. This takes form in not getting defensive or overly emotional when confronted with a tough question or misconception. This is often the hardest part of advocating. From testifying in front of Congress and sharing an important message at a town hall to being attacked on social media, I have seen the best advocates push through these types of challenges.

While all these highlighted skills are important to advocacy, they are nothing without practice. I typically encourage the leaders I work with to start slow. Try these conversational and storytelling skills in a safe place, with extended family, your social circle, and those whom you have established trust. Once you get the hang of it, you will feel more confident and empowered to engage in a wider circle, such as your social media platforms. As mentioned in the introduction, there are a variety of formal and informal places where you can put your advocacy skills to work. As you gain the experience, seek opportunities within your community, in volun-

teer roles, and in your careers to implement your refined skills.

Any good advocate needs an arsenal of resources. These sites and organizations provide handy information and up-to-date resources on a variety of agricultural topics and issues:

American Farm Bureau Federation: <https://www.fb.org/>

The Food Dialogues: <http://www.fooddialogues.com/>

The Center for Food Integrity: <http://www.foodintegrity.org/>

GMO Answers: <https://gmoanswers.com/>



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The SPIN-WIIFM Method of Advocacy and Creating Buy-In

by C. Zane Sheehan and Lori L. Moore

Much of an administrator's day is spent putting out fires and solving problems: fielding calls from upset parents, solving conflict between staff members, dealing with the politics, and handling the pressure of educational testing, standards, and limited budgets.

The agriculture department and its FFA chapter likely intersect with more of these issues than most programs at the school, which means as agriculture teachers, we have an opportunity to support administration in ways others cannot. How we go about doing that deserves special focus.

Think of our relationship with administration like a bank account. We need to "invest" into the account, before we can make a "withdrawal." In asking for support from a principal or district director, we need to frame the situation in a way that makes sense, is mission driven, has clear consequences for not acting, and benefits them in return for contributing their time and energy. This approach is called the SPIN-WIIFM method and has five steps: Situation, Problem, Implication, Need and WIIFM, or What's In It For Me (adapted from Rackham's sales and marketing technique, SPIN Selling, 1988).

Situation

First, we paint a vivid picture of the situation. We give the situation some context. We cannot assume an administrator inherently understands and knows everything we know about what is happening. Whenever possible, specifically frame the situation using the purpose of the school and our program: our mission and values.

For example: The National FFA Organization is a required component of School-Based Agricultural Education. Local FFA chapters are youth-led by students in grades 7-12 whose mission is to develop leadership, personal growth, and career success.

Problem

Next, we describe the problem we see forming. Problems are usually discovered because something is frustrating, inefficient, or is not going the way it is supposed to be going. It is especially helpful to quantify the problem using facts, numbers, and statistics.

For example: Our ninth-grade enrollment is the lowest we have seen in the last four years. Enrollment has decreased for this class since they first joined the agriculture program in 7th grade.

Implication

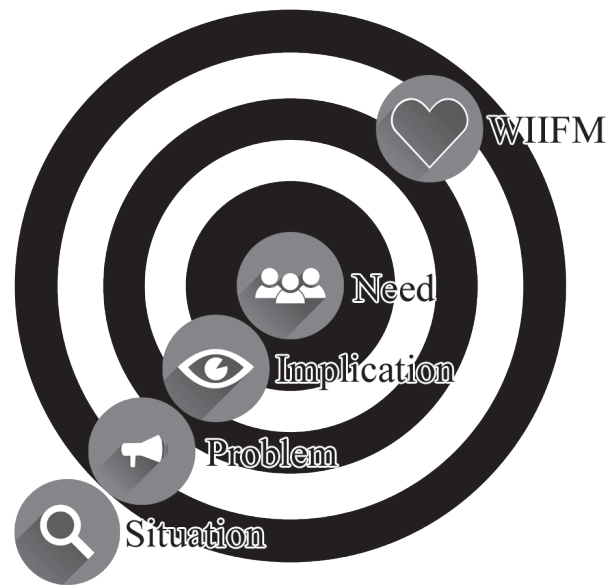
Then comes the most important part of the conversation: what happens if we do nothing to solve the problem? The goal is for both administration and the agriculture teachers to recognize the long-

term consequences of inaction on the problem.

For example: Typically, we retain about 70% of the students in our classes from 9th grade to their senior year. I am worried that when the current class is seniors, we may struggle to find enough students to lead our FFA chapter and its activities. That means projects like FFA's landscaping plots around our school and our community day of service will suffer.

Need (Action Statement)

Finally, we work together with administration to identify a solution. We share ideas we have to



address the problem and how we think administration can help. What specific action would we like them to take? What ideas do they have? What are they able to see administratively we are not aware of?

For example: We would like to host an agriculture department and FFA chapter Open House in January before registration for next year. At the Open House, upperclassmen could bring in animals, agriscience fair projects, conduct demonstrations for floral design and showcase SAE projects. We can connect with local business and industry to set up booths to share career opportunities in agriculture. Students could also provide materials and demonstrations for agriculture course offerings, serving as both an advocacy and recruitment event for the program. We would like your approval to host the event and any ideas you might have to make it more successful.

WIIFM

Close by appealing to the heart of an administrator. How does taking this action help them personally and professionally? How would life be better or different because of this action? What is the benefit (WIIFM) for them?

For example: Recruiting students into agriculture now will help balance enrollment numbers and ensure the community service and outreach events FFA coordinates will continue to positively impact the community when the 9th graders are seniors.

We could also pilot this program in the agriculture department, and if it is successful, expand it to the entire high school so parents and the community can see all the great things our school does.

Flipping the Conversation

The SPIN WIIFM method is even more effective when used as a dialogue. Instead of framing the discussion with statements, ask questions. How do you feel about our current 9th grade numbers? What might our events look like in four years if nothing changes? How could we work together to solve this problem? Questions create an inclusive conversation where administration has buy-in because they helped come up with the solution, instead of being told what to think.

Bringing it Home

While we approached this topic administratively, this same strategy can work with other stakeholders, and even our officer teams and members.

Every relationship has political capital, which is the influence we have with others based on our skills and knowledge, reputation and past history, and organizational authority. Sometimes we make investments in a relationship by supporting and offering help, which expands our capital, while at other times we cash in a favor and a make a withdrawal against that capital. We can more efficiently spend our political capital with our administration, stake-

holders, parents and the community by framing the Situation, clearly communicating the Problem and Implications for inaction, and proposing how others can help with a Need statement that is motivating and has worthy benefits (WIIFM).



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Building Your Advocacy Army

by David Doerfert and Cara Lawson

Creating change is hard. Doing it by yourself can feel like an insurmountable task. So why not get help?

In preparing this article, David Doerfert shared his initial advocacy army building experience with Cara Lawson. Growing up on a dairy farm in southeastern Wisconsin, Doerfert's mother and sisters were as involved in the farming operation as he, his father, and brother were. As a member in his local FFA program, female members were common and often served in leadership roles in the chapter.

Imagine his surprise as a beginning agriculture teacher in the early 1980s to find there were no female students enrolled in his courses. After some investigation, he learned the high school guidance counselor was not allowing females to enroll in agriculture. Despite meetings with the counselor, and subsequently with the principal, Doerfert was not making any progress on changing this practice. After sharing his frustration with some of the local farmers, he soon had volunteers to help. It wasn't long after two female farmers, a female veterinarian, and a female regional agricultural sales representative met face-to-face with the guidance counselor and the principal that the first female students enrolled in the agriculture program. It was at that moment Doerfert learned the value of having advocates for his agriculture program.

Throughout their careers, agricultural education instructors may need to create change within their programs or to school policies/procedures to advance their programs. Some instructors will find themselves in the position where they need to demonstrate their program's relevance in order to justify it being supported in the school system. While a single teacher can be a competent voice, a choir of voices is much louder – and often more effective. The key to effective advocacy efforts in education is the development and maintenance of relationships with local residents and leaders (Blackburn, Blackburn, & Williamson, 2017). Program alumni, parents, and community leaders hold the power to influence the future of local agricultural education programs.

The voice of the teacher, while competent, may not be taken into consideration as strongly as community leaders and supporters due to a possibility of perceived bias held by the teacher (Elpus, 2007). Advocacy is a means of building support for your vision, but it all begins with listening. Effective advocacy leaders listen and learn. Doing so will help you refine the focus of long-term goals, show you value support from others, and position you to overcome negative responses (Blackburn et al., 2017).

Recruiting Your Troops

While advocacy efforts often occur after an issue and desired action have been identified, there are steps you can take before a need

arises to create your advocacy base from a community of potential influencers. According to Daly (2011), your advocacy network should be refined to reflect diverse backgrounds, which will aid in the diffusion of ideas. Further, creating a group of diverse advocates who can come together to share a common message and reinforce a goal will reflect more power and substance on your program's behalf (Moore, Ard, & Monty, 2016).

To identify your army of advocates, consider those who have been or will be affected by your program, who have spoken in support of your program in the past, and who might like to collaborate on issues (Moore et al., 2016). These individuals will typically fall into three segments: (a) current decision makers including elected officials such as the town mayor, council, and schoolboard members; (b) internal persons, which might include students, other teachers, and staff; and (c) external persons like business leaders, families, and community influencers (Blackburn et al., 2017). Your recruitment efforts will require you to build key partnerships with parents, nonparent taxpayers, and local community business owners who are unlikely to be ignored by decision makers (Elpus, 2007). In the end, you want to recruit individuals who are articulate, knowledgeable, respected, convincing, connected, influential, energetic, and futuristic (Blackburn et al., 2017).



Figure 1. The Role of the Agricultural Education Instructor as a Leader of Advocates. Adapted from “Advocacy: Championing ideas and influencing others,” by J. A. Daly, J. A., 2011, Yale University Press.

Preparing Your Troops

Once your army of advocates has been identified and assembled, there are steps you can take to develop their readiness to help you. As the advocacy leader, your ability for sharing high quality information, providing a consistent message, maintaining confidentiality amongst your advocates, addressing important issues in a direct manner, and valuing dissent will go a long way in building trust and developing long-term relationships (Blackburn et al., 2017). To be effective, you will also need to go the extra mile to maintain credibility, honor people’s time, and keep in regular contact with your army (see Figure 1).

Part of preparing your advocacy army is equipping them

to share your vision, convey the problem, and/or present a compelling message. The most effective pieces of equipment for your troops will be compelling stories, easy to share facts, and memorable images. The four women who advocated in favor of female enrollment in my high school agriculture courses shared personal testimonies of their careers. These stories tapped into their basic values, beliefs, and experiences to demonstrate how females can be successful in agriculture. Another source of stories will be your students—their “firsts” (e.g. first FFA jacket with their name on it, their first FFA convention), their moments of overcoming challenges, or even their dreams and career aspirations. Capturing those stories in 60 words or less will help your army share those perspec-

tives with others.

Research has shown pictures and images are much more likely to be remembered than words (referred to as the pictorial superiority effect). Given this, consider what images or graphics you can have available for your advocates to also easily share with others. Be sure all the stories, images, and messages shared will not only enhance your army’s efforts, but also communicate the brand you want associated with your program.

Consider using digital media in your advocacy efforts to keep your troops informed, prepared, and networked to each other. Recent history has shown how digital media (including social media) have been effective tools in political or societal change efforts. Your effort should start with a great,

user-friendly website that shares memorable and sharable stories/images of student and program success. From here, decide which social media tools will (a) increase your reach; (b) increase the effectiveness of communication and mobilization efforts; and (c) serve as an immediate information point for your troops. Do not try to use all the possible digital media tools available. Rather, choose tools you can effectively manage and monitor while completing the other tasks of your job.

Creating urgency is key to an advocacy effort. Urgency is rare because it is not a natural state of affairs. If your program has been in existence for decades, it will be easy for your troops to be complacent. Real urgency is an essential asset to advocacy and must be created and re-created similar to a coach giving pre-game and half-time speeches to his or her team. A “sense of urgency” is the extent to which our senses (such as sight, hearing, and touch) perceive a situation or problem is important; and whether that situation or problem require deliberate versus swift or urgent action (Kotter, 2008). True urgency is a set of feelings; an ambitious determination to push beyond obstacles. As such, aim for the heart to elicit the right kind of emotions for your effort.

Keeping Your Troops Happy

Be sure to measure and celebrate the successes of your advocacy efforts. While many people will only focus on the final outcome, the improvements in number of advocates, creation of supportive materials, increases in information downloads, or posi-

tive social media activity are also “wins” for your army. Make sure they are aware of all the wins as well as the overall victory. You should also find a way to celebrate it with your troops—even if it is a simple thank you for their help. Let your advocates know they are vital to the continued success of your efforts, and that without them, the cause will falter (Daly, 2011).

As you consider your strategy for building an army of advocates for your agricultural education program, remember strong programs are easier to advocate for than those of substandard quality (Elpus, 2007). Approach your advocacy efforts with optimism and positivity, and keep the basic needs of people in mind. As the teacher and leader of your agricultural education program, you must work to ensure your army of advocates is educated and prepared to advocate on your program’s behalf by ensuring an understanding of your program’s intrinsic value to the students and community (Elpus, 2007). Make it easy for your advocates to promote your program by serving as a resource, captain, and trooper.



Dr. David Doerfert is currently a professor and associate dean of the Graduate School at Texas Tech University. He has also been a high school agriculture teacher and state FFA advisor in Wisconsin, worked at the National FFA Organization and National FFA Foundation, as well as at Iowa State University.



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Advocating for Yourself: Making Your Voice Heard

by Shelley Armour

One of the hardest things as a teacher, in my opinion, is advocating for yourself. For instance, advocating for a reasonable class load, number of students in each course, teacher well-being, extra duties and compensation. It is especially difficult when negotiating increases in pay and benefits. This discussion is made even more difficult when you consider some of the negative feedback surrounding recent teacher protests. Comments I saw included: “You knew you weren’t going to get rich being a teacher.” “Teachers only work 10-months of the year, so they don’t need to be paid as much.” “Money needs to go into schools, not teachers’ pockets.”

While there are those who support teacher pay increases and value what we do, it is often difficult to speak up when the louder voices are unsupportive. When speaking up, especially on a potentially unpopular topic, it is important to know your worth. You are a valued member of not only your school staff, but your student’s lives, their family’s lives, and your community.

It took me about 10 years of teaching before I truly grasped this concept. Yes, I was replaceable, but I also brought my own value to the agriculture program. Over time, I became more aware of what was going on politically and started speaking up for my students and myself.

The reality is, it is in the best interest of students to have high quality teachers who care about helping them grow. High quality teachers are

not going to be recruited or retained if they are not valued both professionally and financially.

It goes against my nature to fight for myself, but I will fight hard for my students. Through a recent experience I learned that once I focused on what is best for my students, the fight for myself wasn’t as intimidating.

My latest advocacy project was initiated after North Carolina recently passed a state law that made every agriculture teacher in the state a 12-month employee. There was language that made it possible for districts to not only use allotted state months of employment, but also local funds to make this possible. While the spirit of the law was to have 12-month agriculture teachers receive full benefits during the summer months, some districts were using summer contracts (10+2) to meet the letter of the law. This means agriculture teachers do not earn leave and cannot use any leave during the extra two months. If you don’t work, you don’t get paid.

Legally, this was allowable and perfectly within the district’s rights. My district was one that wanted to utilize a 10+2 contract. I did not see this as fair nor within the spirit of the law. I work a lot of extended days and weekends during the school year and continue to work hard during the summer to ensure every duty is met. I earn my summer employment months by continuing to engage my students in the summer and I also earn the ability to utilize annual leave rather than work straight through the summer without a break.

I believe being able to take some annual leave is necessary to reset myself spiritually, mentally, and physically for the coming school year. I know if I continue my pace straight through the summer months, I will burn out by October, which does not benefit my students.

To achieve my advocacy goal, I followed a number of steps outlined below.
Step 1: Follow the Chain of Command

It would be much easier to go straight to the top, but you never want your principal to be blind-sided. My first step was to express my concerns to my principal about how this law was being interpreted. I cited parts of the law and gave examples of how I believe it should be interpreted. He supported me and went to the county level. The answer he received didn’t satisfy either of us.

At that point, I sought his approval to invite a Board of Education member into the discussion. This Board of Education member jumped in because they were familiar with and valued Ag Ed programs in the county and supported true 12-month contracts. This is why you must keep others informed about the great things going on in your program.

Ultimately, this effort went to the Superintendent and Board of Education lawyer who decided in my favor for the agriculture teachers in my county.

Step 2: Follow Up

Gaining a favorable verdict isn’t the end of this advocacy project. While the process of having the contracts approved seemed simple, this was a new way of doing things for the county so there were extra check-offs for approval. It is at this step that advocacy involves follow-up, sometimes a lot of it, until the result is met.

Continued on pg. 15

The Agricultural Education Magazine

Advocating for Your Agricultural Education Program

by Candis Carraway and Adam Corum

It is no surprise to anyone in the profession that agriculture teachers have many roles and responsibilities. Unfortunately, many overlook one of the most important tasks – advocating for their agricultural education program. It is imperative agriculture teachers advocate for their programs with various stakeholders. In this article we will each discuss one strategy we found effective when advocating for our agricultural education programs.

Advocating via Personal Communication - Adam Corum

A strategy that has worked really well for me is simply communicating personally about my program with people. I believe personal communication can easily be broken down into three main groups, which are all addressed in the last three paragraphs of the Ag Teachers Creed.

Stakeholders: “I will work for the advancement of agricultural education and I will defend it in my community, state and nation.”

When communicating with stakeholders, albeit parents, community members or legislators, there are a few main things to remember. We need to know our programs. This sounds basic, but if a community member asks you, “How many students do you have in your program?” and you reply with “a lot” it does not shed nearly as good of a light on you or your program than to respond with “I

get to see 147 smiling faces each day.”

You need to be informed about what is going on at local, state, and national levels. This includes agricultural education, general education, and FFA. Let’s face it, as an Ag Teacher, your job is to be the liaison between your school and community. If you are not informed about what is happening in your world, how can you effectively advocate for it?

You need to be proactive and not reactive. Be the person who is bragging about the great things your students are doing in the community. Find the places stakeholders in your community gather and spend time there. This may require having weekly coffee at the local auto parts store or attending a local chamber of commerce dinner regularly. Whatever it takes in your community, be visible and available.

You need to remember Ag Teachers are not the only busy people in a community, your stakeholders are as well. Whether it is a local farmer during harvest or local legislator, be concise when telling your story or asking for support. One effective strategy is the elevator speech. An elevator speech is where you distill everything you want to say into 30 seconds or less. I am sure you teach your students this skill, but you also need to remember to practice it yourself.

School Staff: “I realize that I am a part of the school system. I will work in harmony with school

authorities and other teachers of the school.”

There are two main best practices when it comes to advocating for your program to other school staff. First, make them feel valued. This can be done in many different ways. It could be having your students write thank you cards for the small things they do to help your program or by letting those teachers know how much you appreciate what they are teaching and how it helps the students in the program.

Second, do a little bit extra. I personally like to think about it the way it was best explained to me. If you go on a camping trip, and every person only does one thing, and for everything else replies, “That is not my job,” it will not be a pleasant experience, and most likely, the last trip that group takes together. However, if everyone chips in, helps out, and picks up the slack, everyone walks away happier. The same thing applies in the school community. We ask a lot from other people – we need to remember to give back. It could be as easy as covering a class for a teacher who has to take his or her child to the doctor, showing up to the football game Friday night to support the team and coaching staff, or volunteering to cook for a teacher appreciation event. Little gestures go a long way and people will notice.

Students: “My love for youth will spur me on to impart something from my life that will help make for each of my students a full and happy future.”

Remember: never stop selling your program. Whether it is to your current FFA President or to the student who is not even in your class, you need to always be selling your program. We teach our students they are leaders and people look up to and follow their example so we need to remember the same applies to us. If we are unhappy and complacent in our job, we will not attract or retain students. Complacency in our job leads to student apathy. We need to remember students feed off our energy. Positive energy will help your program grow.

Just like you need to advocate for the students with stakeholders, you need to advocate for agriculture and career and technical education with the students. When you can give students anecdotes of the success of former students or members as well as facts and figures of current jobs in agriculture, you will attract and retain students.

Advocating via your Local Newspaper and Media - Candis Carraway

Every town is unique and different, but most have a method of getting the news out (even if it is on a county level instead of a city level). It is important agriculture teachers discover what news outlets are available and introduce themselves to those staff members. In every town I worked, there was a newspaper for the county. I made it a point to introduce myself to the newspaper staff and find out who was responsible for covering school related articles. I would then set up a meeting with

this person and bring my chapter reporter and possibly a few other members from my public relations committee. I found the newspaper personnel were more receptive when I brought students with me. We would use this as an opportunity to inform the newspaper about our program, some of our activities and take them a calendar highlighting our big events. We would then ask them to demonstrate how they wanted us to submit news stories and photos for publication. I found this process worked well and we were able to get stories published in a timely manner. We would also make sure to invite the newspaper representative and editor to our local FFA Banquet. When deemed appropriate, someone from the newspaper would be awarded with an Honorary Chapter Degree. Usually after receiving the recognition, they were even bigger supporters of the program.

After meeting with the newspaper staff, I would meet with my public relations committee and discuss what type of articles would be best to send to the news-

paper. Our goal was to have at least one article a month in the newspaper. The students would create a list of possible article topics based on our calendar of events then assign a member to take lead on each article. These students were responsible for writing the article and gathering the photos. I proofread each article and gave feedback. The students would then make the needed changes. After I reviewed it again and found it acceptable, we would send it to someone else to proofread. Sometimes this was another one of our Ag Teachers, but often it was a secretary or another teacher in the school. I think it is great to get someone outside your department to proofread important documents and articles for you to check for clarity.

Advocating via the use of the local media channels worked really well for me in my 16 years of teaching agriculture in three different counties. I also loved that I was able to give my students some



ownership while decreasing the amount of work I had to do.

Final Thoughts

We acknowledge there are many other strategies and avenues that could be used for advocating your agricultural education program, but these are the two we found to be the easiest for all agriculture teachers and programs to understand and implement. These strategies are simple and straightforward and provide opportunities to include your students in the advocating process. The method you use is not as important as the fact that you actually have a plan to make advocating for your agricultural education program a priority.



Adam Corum is the Agriculture Teacher at Bridgeport High School in Bridgeport, Washington with 10 years of experience. He is currently serving as the President of the Washington Association of Agricultural Educators.



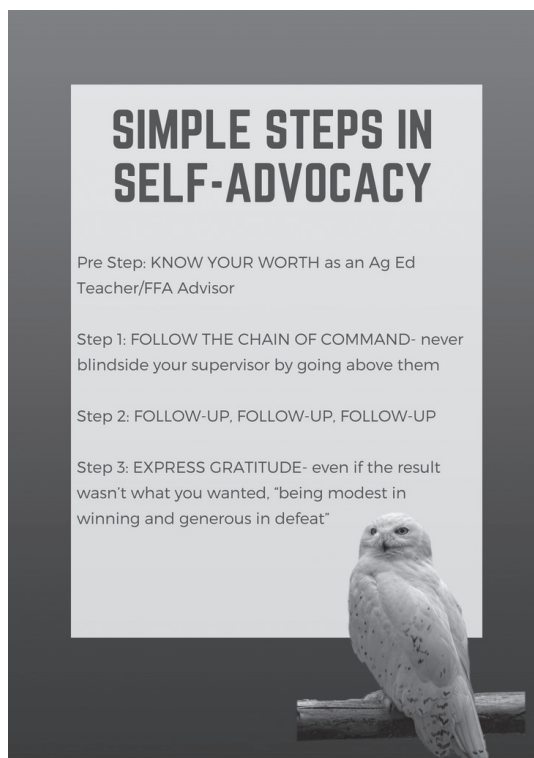
Dr. Candis Carraway taught secondary agriculture for 16 years and is currently in charge of Agriculture Teacher Preparation at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas.

Continued from pg. 12 Advocating for Yourself

Step 3: Express Gratitude

The final step to an advocacy project is expressing gratitude for those who helped you along the way. Even if the process had its share of bumpy patches, everyone involved played a part that can be recognized in the spirit of gratitude. It is important to remember this is a professional problem, not a personal problem. However, it can feel very personal when it involves something you are passionate about such as teaching.

I wish I could say the process was without stress and worry, but it wasn't. I had to keep telling myself that it would benefit my students and my program. Sometimes we need to repeat the following mantra: "I am a good teacher and I am worth this."



SIMPLE STEPS IN SELF-ADVOCACY

Pre Step: KNOW YOUR WORTH as an Ag Ed Teacher/FFA Advisor

Step 1: FOLLOW THE CHAIN OF COMMAND- never blindside your supervisor by going above them

Step 2: FOLLOW-UP, FOLLOW-UP, FOLLOW-UP

Step 3: EXPRESS GRATITUDE- even if the result wasn't what you wanted, "being modest in winning and generous in defeat"



Shelley Armour teaches at D.H. Conley High School in North Carolina. She is in her 14th year of teaching and is passionate about advocating for her students as well as other teaching professionals.

Advocating for Future Ag Teachers: The National Teach Ag Campaign

by Ellen Thompson

The National Teach Ag Campaign (NTAC), started in September 2009, is an initiative of the National Council for Agricultural Education (The Council), led by the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE), with funding support from the CHS Foundation, Corteva Agriscience Agriculture Division of DowDuPont, Herman and Bobbie Wilson, BASF and Growth Energy. The NTAC was designed to be the place where teacher recruitment and retention strategies could be piloted, examined and most importantly – shared. In the last nine years agricultural education has made tremendous strides in ensuring a quality and diverse supply of agriculture teachers who will cultivate the next generation of leaders, problem-solvers, entrepreneurs and agriculturalists. Through the goals of raising awareness of the need to recruit and retain quality and diverse agriculture teachers, encouraging others to consider a career teaching agriculture and celebrating the positive contributions agriculture teachers make in our schools and communities the NTAC has raised the bar for all of education.

Everything we do at the NTAC must contribute to the mission. Every program needs to either recruit or retain an agriculture teacher. Programs must be sustainable and effective. Adhering to this framework is important for transparency, accountability

and success. To make sure the programs are contributing to teacher recruitment and retention meticulous tracking, data collection and program analysis is ongoing.

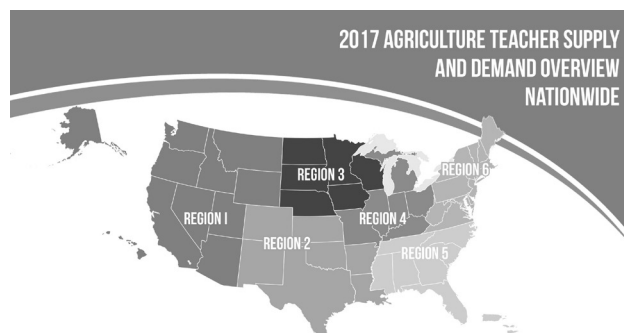
As we close in on the 10th Anniversary of the NTAC, it is clear the initiative has been transformational. This transformation is due to the collaboration and commitment of so many agricultural education professionals at the local, state and national level. According to the last four years of quality and comprehensive data analysis collected through the AAAE National Supply and Demand study; degree enrollment has increased from 2575 in 2014 to 3172 in 2017, the number of new graduates taking their first job has increased from 69% to 75%, school districts continue to

open new programs and expand existing programs, retention rates are at record levels from 95% in 2014 to 96% in 2017, teacher certification programs have increased from 84 institutions in 2014 to 101 institutions in 2017 and gender diversity among current teachers has started to neutralize with 44% female and 53% male. At the same time alternatively certified hires have increased from 183 new hires in 2014 to 356 new hires in 2017, the majority of graduates are now Caucasian females. Knowing, and comparing these and other variables drives everything we do.

Given the initial goal of the NTAC to be a one stop shop for teacher recruitment and retention here are some of the most effective recruitment and retention strategies being implemented through the NTAC and the State Teach Ag Results (STAR) program. Launched in 2014, there are currently 36 states enrolled in the STAR program. Please look for a complete list of strategies and resources on the Teach Ag website www.naae.org/teachag

Recruitment strategies

- Invitation only events: Agriculture teachers and others nominate a student they think would make an excellent agriculture teacher. Coordinate a special event for those students. Examples include a luncheon or breakfast during State FFA Convention or a



	REGION 1	REGION 2	REGION 3	REGION 4	REGION 5	REGION 6	NATIONWIDE*
AVERAGE SALARY	\$43,000	\$42,660	N/A	\$43,986	\$40,619	\$45,200	\$43,093
EXTENDED CONTRACT DAYS	28	47.5	27	43	37	13	39
AG TEACHERS	1,872	3,079	1,224	2,059	2,358	1,298	12,890
AG PROGRAMS	1,102	2,230	1,043	1,511	1,759	921	8,471
FEMALE/MALE TEACHERS	893/729	1,489/2,300	600/624	888/1,130	1,036/1,322	676/687	5,682/6,782
FULL-TIME/ PART-TIME TEACHERS	1,778/84	3,399/480	1,151/73	2,045/14	2,349/0	1,270/28	11,892/698
NEW POSITIONS	70	65	11	31	30	9	216
NEW PROGRAMS	30	39	26	20	47	27	189
RETIREMENTS	20	48	20	23	27	20	168
LEFT TEACHING	65	178	44	98	87	38	510
ALT. CERTIFIED/NON-LICENSED HIRES	42/11	89/29	37/10	62/7	114/38	32/13	356/106
POSITIONS TO FILL	135	280	71.3	141	125	60	812.3
PROGRAMS CLOSED/POSITIONS LOST	12/20	8/11	5/3.7	2/11	19/19	6/7	51/71.7
UNFILLED FULL-TIME POSITIONS	40	11	2	0	13	6	72
UNFILLED PART-TIME POSITIONS	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION GRADUATES	117	270	80	105	111	57	740
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION GRADUATES TEACHING	107	191	59	85	79	35	556
AG ED MAJOR ENROLLMENT	540	978	378	591	472	163	3,142



www.naae.org/teachag
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AGRICULTURE TEACHER SUPPLY AND DEMAND HIGHLIGHTS

- The demand for agriculture teachers continues due to program growth, expansion, retirements and openings.
- School districts value the agricultural education model of rigorous STEM based classroom and laboratory instruction, experiential learning and leadership development.
- The retention rate of agriculture teachers is historically high at nearly 95%.
- Individuals majoring in agricultural education is increasing even as other education content areas are experiencing decreases.
- The conversion rate of agricultural education graduates is at an all-time high of 76%.
- The majority of new agricultural education majors are Caucasian female.
- School districts are hiring an unprecedented number of alternatively certified and non-licensed teachers to fill open positions due to demand.

2017 National Supply and Demand overview.



More than 250 students across the country have participated in Teach Ag signing events over the past three years.

campus VIP day. Attendees will be able to engage with each other, hear why teaching agriculture is a great career choice, receive degree program details, meet state agricultural education leaders and engage in a Q&A session. When possible hold a parent session in conjunction that highlights job opportunities, financial aid, college overview and Q&A.

- **Signing/Declaration events:** Typically held during State FFA Convention as a pre-session activity, during a general session or in the career show area. Have all the institutions provide the names of new and transfer agricultural education majors. Invite the new majors, their parents and agriculture teacher to be part of the declaration event. Announce the students and have them sign a non-binding commitment to Teach Ag. Take pictures and have the institution they are attending provide a token like a baseball hat, shirt, or other institution branded item.
- **Teach Ag workshop offerings:** Workshops may happen anywhere students are gathering. The general outline consists of activities related to teaching agriculture along with a teacher Q&A panel. Most effective if administered by high

energy current teachers or agricultural education majors. Attendees should walk away with next steps information and leave their contact information.

- **Collegiate engagement:** We often think only of secondary recruitment but recruitment may come from multiple sources including students in other college or university majors, second career individuals and those teaching in another field. Recruitment events for these audiences may include an interactive career fair booth, presentation to undeclared majors, collaboration between the Ag Ed club and other on campus groups as well as direct one on one mentoring with current agricultural education majors and identified individuals.
- **Job Shadow:** A coordinated effort to identify potential high school juniors and seniors that allows them to shadow an agriculture teacher for a day, not their own. In Kansas, the Kansas Association of Agricultural Educators accepts applications of students and pairs them with high quality teachers. The program gives the student a unique perspective and the teacher a chance to mentor an up and coming teacher for a day.
- **Ag Teacher keynote:** Identify passionate and inspirational agriculture teachers to provide the keynote spotlight talk at convention sessions, camps, conferences and gatherings.

Preservice retention strategies

- **Collegiate collaboration and exchange:** Create opportunities for agricultural education majors to engage with agricultural education majors across the state and those at institutions outside the

state. For the last few years Purdue has hosted and then visited several institutions including Michigan State, Western Kentucky, Illinois and Ohio State. Events may include program tours, networking, evening festivities, professional development, industry tours and on campus classes.

- **Program tours:** Agricultural education majors want to engage with current teachers and programs as early and as often as possible. Create an annual program tour experience. Identify a region in the state to visit. Schedule program and industry tours as time permits. Prioritize areas where students are least familiar to help break down geographic barriers. Partner with other institutions to make it an even richer experience.
- **State and Regional professional development inclusion:** Develop special preservice tracks or workshop sessions at state, regional and national conferences. Early professional development experiences and networking with current agriculture teachers may improve retention rates.
- **Ag Ed internships:** Arrange for agricultural education majors to spend the summer interning with an agriculture teacher or agriculture teachers. The internship experience will be valuable for the future teacher and current teacher host. Mandate summer conference attendance and other related events as part of the internship for even more impact. Given that nearly all summer internships are now paid this particular strategy may be quite expensive. The estimated cost per intern is approximately \$3,000-\$4,000 for 8-10 weeks.

- Student teaching scholarships: With all the testing fees and extra costs associated with student teaching and inability to work, scholarships are extremely enticing and may contribute to retention.
- Teach Ag ambassadors: Preservice Teach Ag ambassadors are a recruitment and preservice retention tool. Once trained they become a valuable extension of the Teach Ag message by delivering workshops, classroom presentations, staffing recruitment booths and posting on social media. The assignment gives the future teacher a chance to earn money while presenting and building lasting bonds with other ambassadors.

Current teacher retention strategies:

- Fill the bucket/Welcome baskets/ Swap shop: Implemented by several states to give a warm welcome to new teachers. The packages may include 5-gallon buckets filled by other agriculture teachers with all kinds of useful items (Kleenex, red pens, granola bars, hard drives, lesson plans, clipboard, etc.) or baskets filled with snacks and school supplies. New York holds a swap shop where agriculture teachers bring things from their classroom they no longer need and use a ticket system to allow teachers to swap items. New teachers get a golden ticket and early access to the swap shop.
- Trading Cards: The brain child of Dr. Falk and the University of Idaho the trading cards are now used in several states to recognize teachers and encourage students to engage with successful teachers. Cards are made for teachers with a baseball card style. Students

must collect cards from the teachers during state FFA convention. Those who collect the required number of cards receive a prize. Teachers are encouraged to talk about teaching agriculture when a student asks for their card.



Teachers may use the cards as a recruitment tool or as their professional business card.

- Ag Teacher Family Tree: Developed at North Carolina State by Dr. Travis Park the Ag Teacher Family Tree poster is a visual display of all the connections an agriculture teacher has made in their profession. The family tree certificates are laminated or framed for classroom display and may be updated annually.
- Work/life blend professional development (XLR8): As the demand on agriculture teachers increases NAAE created a special series for agriculture teachers in their 7-15th year of teaching and addresses a number of timely topics. Some states implement this as a state level version of the National XLR8 program or embed components into professional development gatherings throughout the year.

- Early career academy (alt license inclusion): Early career individuals need additional support, especially those we are not familiar with agricultural education or may have been hired under a special license variance. These may be summer events or a year-long program with webinars, conference calls and face to face meeting checkpoints.
- Loan forgiveness: A few years ago the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation developed their own student teacher scholarship and loan forgiveness program to assist in reducing the financial burden placed on early career teachers. Since this time other states have developed similar programs for student teachers and early career teachers.
- Mentoring programs: Mentoring programs come in different styles; formal and informal. They may even take the form of a statewide expert list that anyone may use when they have animal science, proficiency, chapter award applications, plant science, floral design, etc. questions. A mentoring program of some type should be a part of every state retention plan.

Communication

Nothing is more important than developing a consistent and organized tracking and communication plan to maintain contact with individuals interested in agricultural education and monitor recruitment and retention progress. At the NTAC we maintain a series of touchpoints which may be duplicated or modified for state level use.

- NTAC website – lesson plans, activities, games, videos, job openings, state certification re-

quirements, testimonials, parent resources, preservice tools, news articles, announcements, publications, supply and demand profiles, downloadable promotional materials, nomination and sign-up links.

- Social Media – All Twitter, Facebook and Instagram posts are part of our communication plan.
- E-newsletters
 - New Teacher News – a monthly e-publication for early career teachers.
 - Teach Ag Times – a monthly e-publication for High school and college students.
 - Monthly update – HTML for internal and external stakeholders.
- Tagged to Teach Ag kit – special designed boxes anyone may purchase at cost through the NTACTION to encourage someone to teach ag. The kit includes a card, t-shirt and numerous other logo giveaways along with reasons to teach ag and tools to help the person tagged become an agriculture teacher.

Tagged to Teach Ag Kit



Last year the NTAC distributed more than 500 tagged kit. The kits are sold and shipped at cost.

September-October 2018

Inclusion and diversity

Everyone; student, teacher, supporter, state staff leader, teacher educator and all those who are still finding their way to agricultural education need to know they are welcome and safe to be their authentic self no matter their ability, background, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status or geographic location. Inclusion and diversity representation and training is key to the mission and goal of ensuring all agriculture classrooms reflect the communities they serve. I&D commitment is embedded into ALL Teach Ag programming through training, unique experiences with others, policies and representation. Including everything from the music we use in our videos, the food we serve at our events, the teachers we select to highlight, the speakers we contract with, the location of gatherings, the look and feel of our promotional materials and the programs we offer.

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Ellen Thompson has served the National Teach Ag Campaign in various roles over the past nine years, most recently as the Project Director. The National Teach Ag Campaign is an initiative of the National Council for Agricultural Education led by the National Association of Agricultural Educators. Prior to her position with the National Teach Ag Campaign, Ellen taught high school agriculture for eight years in Sauk Centre, MN. She is a Minnesota native and received a B.S. in Agricultural Education from South Dakota State University and a M.Ed from the University of Minnesota.

Advocating for Rural Education

by Savanna Barksdale

In the spring of 2018, I was able to intern with the Department of Education in the Office of School Support and Rural Programs. The lesson I cherish most from my internship came from an interview with a director of a charter school in Arizona. Mark Sorensen's school is so remote it became the first off-grid, solar and wind-powered school in the country. With his emphasis in community involvement and cultural values, Dr. Sorensen said the secret to unlocking the power of being rural is realizing that our communities have "unique gifts."

The Strength of Rural Schools

As someone who attended a rural school, I deeply related with Dr. Sorensen's appreciation of the high level of community involvement that is intrinsic to small, rural schools.

Another memory that made a lasting impression from the Department was the day the interns finally had the chance to meet Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. Surrounded by all the interns from various backgrounds and states at her conference table, Secretary DeVos asked each of us to tell her about the most memorable moment from our K-12 experiences and one thing we would like to improve about our schools.

As the other interns were talking about their favorite moments from school, I was wracking my brain to qualify the most mean-

ingful moment from my education. In my mind's eye, I saw my mother standing in the middle of the high school gym at a Friday pep rally. At Farwell I.S.D., the entire school body fits inside the basketball gym, and that day, almost everyone was wearing pink t-shirts as planned for the "pink-out" pep rally for breast cancer awareness. Other teachers and community members who were also battling cancer were standing next to my mom, who was just the Spanish teacher to everyone else. The feeling that my family was not alone in my mother's battle with cancer because of the support of my school and community brought tears to my eyes that day. When it came time for my turn to speak at the conference table, I briefly shared that moment.



The interns moved on to answer the second question. Some answers involved improved mental health resources at school and enhanced early education opportunities. My response was to have had the chance to take an Advanced Placement course. It seemed so basic compared to the requests of my peers who came from more urban areas.

Dr. Sorensen was right that rural schools have a unique relationship to their communities. Community unity might be the greatest strength of a small, rural town, and the time

is now to use this strength to promote equal educational opportunities in rural schools.

Rural Schools REAPing Benefits

The Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) is a valuable tool in the rural advocate's belt because it is one of the few federal policies created to meet the unique needs of rural schools. The National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition (NREAC) and most rural education groups call for directing more funding to REAP, described as "a proven formula program that supports rural innovation" in NREAC's list of legislative priorities found on their website. REAP funding is administered through the Office of School Support and Rural Programs (SSRP) at the U.S. Department of Education. REAP funding was first authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and was amended and reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, according to the Department's webpage on ESSA.

David Cantrell, the director of SSRP and one of my direct supervisors during my internship, always reminded us to be lenient and flexible when working with rural administrators who could be acting as superintendents, business managers, and grants managers for their schools all at the same time. The SSRP office serves schools that still operate out of a two-room schoolhouse to schools like the one I graduated from – 11-man football, 1A division, and 40 students in my grade.

A Rural Education Policy Victory

Rural education advocates may not have the loudest voice on the Hill, but organizations like the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), National Rural Advocacy Coalition, The School Superintendents Association, and The Rural School and Community Trust work to ensure federal policies are leveraged to benefit rural schools. These organizations applauded the passage of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, which reauthorized the Perkins Act in early August 2018.

With half of the school districts in the United States considered rural by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), there is an inequality in the representation of advocates for rural education in Washington, D.C., and across the nation. When rural school districts are facing budget crises and severe teacher shortages, like in Louisiana and many other states, the focus is on providing the best services to rural students with limited resources. These critical situations do not allow time or money to be directed towards rural advocacy, but increasing awareness of the needs and disparities of rural students in state and federal legislatures could help direct more funding and resources to help alleviate these struggles.

Being a rural advocate could be as simple as making sure your school administrators are aware of their eligibility of REAP grants. More information about the REAP grant programs can be found at <https://www2.ed.gov/nclb/freedom/local/reap.html>. Joining a national, state or regional rural advocacy organization or coalition would make it easier to stay informed on current legislation and issues that impact rural schools. These

groups empower their members to vote for congressional representation that prioritizes rural education funding.

The involvement of rural education associations in the reauthorization of the Perkins bill proves rural education is represented in state and national politics. With REAP grants structured to serve rural schools, rural education advocates can also trust the U.S. Department of Education is a powerful resource in efforts to advance educational opportunities. The national #RedforEd campaign serves as a perfect example of legislative victories resulting from educational grassroots efforts. This campaign slogan has been used by a multitude of education associations at national, state and regional levels to mobilize education advocates and provide a platform on social media to tell their stories. Proponents for rural schools have the tools and resources needed to amplify the unique needs of rural education, but there is a lack of a unified grassroots movement. From teachers and administrators to parents, rural communities should take advantage of their greatest strength of supporting each other to give all rural students the equitable education they deserve.



The cost of transportation is an immense operational burden that sets rural schools apart from their urban counterparts. Advocates claim transportation is a major reason why flexible funding, like offered through REAP, is the best kind of federal investment in rural education.

SIDEBAR

REAP funding is equally split between two different grant programs: the Small, Rural School Achievement Program (SRSA) and the Rural and Low-Income School Program (RLIS). SRSA provides discretionary grant funding directly to rural school districts – the technical term is local education agencies. Eligibility for the SRSA grant formula is based on a definition of “rural,” average daily attendance and county population density. The rural classification is determined by NCES locale codes or districts that meet a state approved definition of “rural.” SRSA grants are extremely popular in the rural education world because the formula captures rural schools who may not have staff to manage grants applications and compete with schools with more available funds and resources. The RLIS grant structure sometimes depends on each state education agency, as they are the recipients of RLIS funding. State education departments then administer sub-grants to school districts, but they have the freedom to structure sub-grants as long as they comply with REAP requirements.



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Who is Actually Against Agriculture?

by Michael J. Martin and Katherine Hartmann

The answer to the question posed in the headline is simple: no one is against agriculture. Everyone must eat and everyone uses agricultural products. Only someone who is on a hunger strike and naked is actually acting against agriculture, and that individual would rather be fed and clothed. If we understand that people actually value agriculture, then why is the perception that people are against agriculture so dominant?

Agriculture is more than just a career or task; it is a value-laden concept. Agriculture represents a set of values that are rich, diverse, and sometimes conflicting. The theme of advocacy in agriculture highlights this point. People who want to advocate for a specific position in agriculture must first understand the different values that comprise that position in order to effectively advocate. First and foremost, there is no one who is actually against agriculture; rather, there are differing value sets around agricultural positions and these are what cause divisions. Second, while people are entitled to their own values on agriculture, no one set of values is more true than another value set.

To illustrate this point, let's examine a contentious issue in agriculture today: the utilization of animals for food. Many people are on both sides of the issue. The readers of this magazine would probably argue animals should be raised and sheltered for the end goal of human consumption (meat, milk, eggs, or any other product from the animal). We would probably say this is a conventional agricultural view. The completely opposite view of this issue would be the people who argue animals should not be used for human consumption. This viewpoint could be labeled as vegan.

Can someone have a farm or ranch with animals who is a vegan? The answer is yes. For example, a horse ranch or wool farm (raising sheep for only wool) would fit this title. The key to these operations is that no animals are killed. Many of us do not conceptualize a farm or ranch in this way, but these operations exist. While those who manage these types of operations would view themselves as a valued part of the agricultural system, how many of us would see them this way?

Perhaps most important, the issue of utilizing animals for food consumption is not just a simple polar issue. The space between no-kill and meat farms and

ranches is filled with many different people and types of operations. The following list provides just a few examples:

1. People who are vegetarian (do not eat meat but will eat animal products like eggs, milk, and honey).
2. People who have flex-diets (eat fish but not land animal meat).
3. People who prefer to eat game meat rather than agriculturally raised meat.
4. People who will consume meat products only if they come from grass-fed and/or cage-free operations.
5. People who will consume animal products only from sustainable and organic operations.

The reasons why people would choose any of these positions vary greatly and depend on individual preferences. Furthermore, these



Hollyhock Farm is a fiber farm that produces wool without killing any animals. The two lambs pictured are Violet and Rosebay.

positions are often strongly held. Anyone advocating on the issue of utilizing animals for food consumption should be ready to have a conversation that recognizes the values of people anywhere on the spectrum of using animals for food.

The important question this article introduces is how to think about agricultural values when



This is the yarn spun from the fleeces of Violet and Rosebay. Wool is an important agricultural product.

you are preparing to advocate for a particular agricultural issue. We argue for three simple steps:

1. Be honest with who you are and your position. Recognize that your view is important, but it is not the only position. Do not hide your position from your audience.
2. Recognize there are a variety of positions for each agricultural issue. Let your audience know there are no black and white issues in agriculture.

3. Spend time researching and thinking about the different positions of your issue. Be ready to have conversations with people from as many different positions as possible. The more you can speak to different audiences, the greater chance you have of being successful.

We must never lose sight that in order to be successful in advocating for agriculture, we must value and respect the audiences we serve.



Michael Martin is an Assistant Professor at Colorado State University focusing on agricultural literacy.



Katherine Hartmann is the Coordinator of Undergraduate Programs for Agriculture Education at Colorado State University and Owner of Hollyhock Farm.

#SpeakAg: From a Hashtag to a Movement

by Riley Pagett and Jordan Henry

Medium-rare. You?

No way, dude. Well-done with a side of ketchup. Victoria, what about you?

I actually don't eat meat.

When you get 296 blue corduroy jackets in the same room and pose the question, “How do you prefer your steak?” you’re bound to get about that many variations of steak prep, or in Victoria’s case, asparagus prep.

What started as an innocent question around home-cooked protein quickly turned into a spirited debate for state FFA officers attending this summer’s National FFA Organization’s inaugural State Officer Summit in Washington, D.C. The meat question was followed by questions like, “What’s your favorite fast food restaurant?” and “What’s your favorite meal of the day?” Each question elicited more impassioned responses than the one before it. Perhaps students felt compelled to share their fiery opinions with others they had just met the night before at conference registration out of a duty to their individuality or the region of the country they represent. Or, perhaps students just felt comfortable sharing their responses—a comfort that often comes when we situate ourselves with those who think the same way we do. Or, perhaps this next generation of leaders have only been

exposed to one, maybe two, viewpoints on a number of issues in politics, culture, and, especially, food and agriculture.

The March 2017 National FFA Advisor Needs Assessment Report indicated 67 percent of FFA advisors requested more resources on agricultural literacy and advocacy for their student members. In a follow-up question, advisors answered that they especially desired resources on “techniques for understanding and sharing all agricultural issues with those who have little knowledge of agriculture” and “lesson plans to teach students the art of communicating, listening, understanding other views, and advocating.”

In May 2017—after recognizing teachers’ desire for more advocacy resources and heeding the advice of stakeholders that young people need to better advocate for all food and agricultural systems and issues—the National FFA agricultural advocacy and literacy platform launched the Effective Advocacy Model. This four-step model allows for a strategic, holistic approach to literacy and advocacy (see Figure 1). For consistency and ease of use, the model is similar to other National FFA development models such as the National Chapter Awards and Program of Activities

models, and, in this case, addresses the cyclical stages of effective advocacy.

The four steps are:

1. Plan our conversations/events/activities through knowledge of our audience and an understanding of the issue at hand.
2. Develop our key message(s) and solidify what we want to accomplish.
3. Do the work or deliver our message through keynote, conversation, outreach, or other appropriate methods of delivery.
4. Reflect on our outcomes and adapt to improve for future advocacy opportunities and repeat.

Since its inception, 7,500 students have applied the model to their agricultural literacy and advocacy efforts. Students in Wisconsin taught lessons on farm

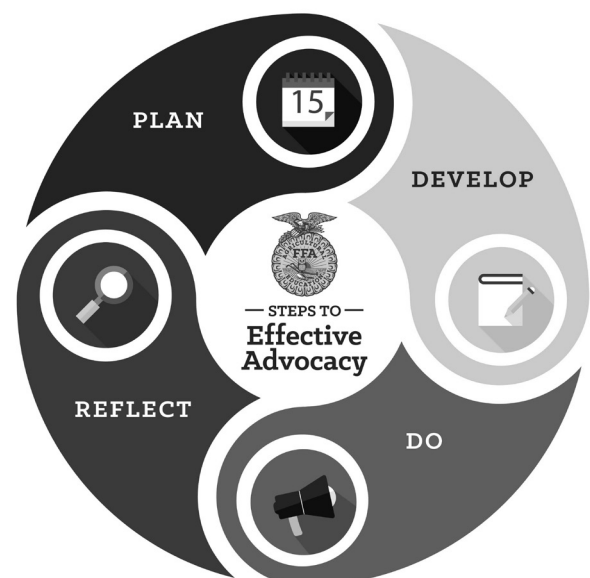


Figure 1 Effective Advocacy Model

The Agricultural Education Magazine

equipment and types of agriculture to kids at a nearby elementary school. Students in Oklahoma called local farmers to thank them for growing healthy, nutritious foods and then encouraged their classmates to write thank you notes to other farmers in the area. State FFA officers at the State Officer Summit met with 212 congressional offices to discuss the importance of agricultural education, research programs, and other initiatives in the Farm Bill and similar pending legislation.

National FFA puts the model to use through #SpeakAg Dialogues, a forum similar to National Public Radio's "Intelligence Squared," and designed to promote discussion, sound reason, and effective conversation to transcend the polarized opinions of today's agriculture. The dialogues exposes student members to multiple sides of hot-button agricultural issues.

First, platform sponsors, students, and interested stakeholders plan the discussion through a brainstorm of relevant issues in food and agriculture. These issues could range from the prioritization of farmland use to litigation impacting the way hog farms do business in North Carolina to soybean trade in China. Once an issue is selected, National FFA writes it in the form of a question. For example, questions for past #SpeakAg Dialogues include: "What is the biggest challenge a young person will face in their first five years back on the farm?" and "Why do other countries trade agricultural products with the U.S.?" This plan stage also includes determining the target audience — ranging from state FFA officers to conference attendees — and the site location — ranging from the

annual National FFA Convention & Expo to existing conferences and summits.

Next, National FFA identifies key experts in academia, business and industry, nonprofits, and other areas of work who develop their messages and individualized responses to the posed question. So, if the question was, "How should America prioritize its farmland?" the responses might be "feed," represented by a major leader in animal health; "food," represented by a chef or nutritionist or expert in growing food for human consumption; and "fuel," represented by an energy company. From there, the #SpeakAg Dialogues is hosted at the predetermined conference or event, and experts representing their particular response to the posed question enter into an Oxford-style debate while sitting amongst students, to determine the most favorable answer to the question of the day. At the start of the dialogue, students *do* by voting on their preferred response through an online voting system. At the end of the dialogue, students *reflect* on what they heard from experts, how certain opinions made them feel, and how their perceptions might have changed. Then, they vote again to indicate their preferred response to the addressed topic.

When the second round of numbers come, students can visualize open-mindedness; factual, reasonable discussion; and the power of communication with those who disagree. It's also where we can visualize effective advocacy, not just the straight-to-social-media kind, and expose a generation to viewpoints they might not have previously considered.

Victoria's response and the response of her meat-eater friends at the State Officer Summit this summer was part of a #SpeakAg Dialogues featuring the question, "What is your greatest area of concern in food today?" That night, students were asked to choose between food labeling, food waste, and food affordability as their greatest areas of concern. Initially, 47 percent voted food waste, 34 percent food labeling, and 19 percent food affordability.

"Food waste, because when you see people in your community go hungry and know that your own family doesn't even think twice before purchasing food they might never get around to eating, you know you have a problem," said a state officer from Kansas.

"Food labeling, because I can't even go to the grocery store without seeing misconceptions about food like the food my family and I grow on our farm," said another officer from California.

"Food affordability, because my mom said our grocery bill is astronomical and only getting worse," said an officer from Tennessee with two snaps from others at his table — a sign that his peers agreed with him.

After having discussions like these at their dinner tables and hearing experts representing animal agriculture, U.S. politics, and nutrition speak to the areas of concern, state FFA officers voted again. This time, 48 percent were for food affordability, 29 percent for food labeling, and 23 percent for food waste. That was a 29 percent increase for food affordability.



Other #SpeakAg Dialogues have seen this kind of percentage change too. For example, when asked about the future of food production in America, and when given “organic” and “conventional” as the selected responses, students chose conventional agriculture as the future of food production in both votes, but not without several students changing their vote to the organic bracket first. And, while there are no winners or losers in #SpeakAg Dialogues, experts receiving such a drastic sway to their responses ought to feel proud — not for championing or overpowering the discussion, but for feeling as if they were behind a changed perspective for a subset of students in an hour’s time.

#SpeakAg Dialogues is representative of the Effective Advocacy Model and of a strong belief at National FFA that FFA members need to lead their communities in the language and understanding of agriculture. When stronger voices are created through resources-sharing and modeling, and when FFA members effectively communicate with their friends and family, consumers and producers start

feeling a lot more like neighbors instead of enemies. As a result, healthier dialogues about food and agriculture take place across the nation and around the world. #SpeakAg is more than a hashtag. It is a way of thinking; a movement; a language. It’s simple, too — FFA members can take the knowledge they learn in the classroom, their supervised agricultural experiences, and FFA to bring insightful, first-hand experiences to communicate agriculture to others. By becoming fluent in agriculture and sharing their knowledge, FFA members can make a difference in their communities and our world.

1 The State Officer Summit is a three-day advocacy training experience open to all 375 state FFA officers in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Training focuses on serving as an advocate and developing clear and consistent messaging for agriculture, FFA, and agricultural education.



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Jordan Henry is the Education Specialist - agricultural literacy and advocacy - for the National FFA Organization, and is also based in Washington, D.C. She directs the #SpeakAg Dialogues and other work of the agricultural literacy and advocacy platform. Originally from Michigan, Jordan earned a B.S. in community development from Central Michigan University.

Adventures in Advocating for Agriculture

by *Elissa McLerran*

When I was younger, I told my family I wanted to “get paid to talk” when I grew up. Modest, right? Fast-forward 20 years later, and ironically enough, that’s practically what I do. As a Legislative Assistant, hired primarily to work on agriculture and food issues, much of my day consists of talking with and listening to people about issues, challenges, and things that need to be improved. Audiences vary, but I meet with everyone from cattle farmers to dietitians. However, I also meet with many people who do not have a background or first-hand experience in production agriculture, so I spend a lot of time crafting a message that can be transformed and translated to fit the audience.

In my work, I have the opportunity to cover a wide range of topics. This has allowed me to chat through sticky subjects that have multiple, nuanced layers or need to be boiled down into simpler lingo. Audiences often include people with no personal, first-hand knowledge or connection with how our food and fiber are grown. They may be unaware that their interest in and knowledge about agriculture is crucial to the maintenance and improvement of healthful food production. Well-informed people can help improve the physical health and economic and political stability of the world by promoting good agriculture policy and practices. For these reasons, I have decided to share personal experiences and lessons I have learned.

Lesson 1. Experiences shape opinions.

I grew up in a conventional farming family in a rural southern town. Conventional production is what I understand best and where I draw my personal preference line in the sand. But I have also come to understand that some people prefer other types of food production. I come from a “meat and three” background, which in the South is haute cuisine. A “meat and three” plate is a meat and three sides, but the key word here is meat.

Before I went to college, when I heard the word vegan or vegetarian, the image that came to mind was people with dreadlocks, arms wrapped around trees in a forest, and with recycle symbols tattooed on their biceps. Not that any of these things are bad, I just hadn’t been exposed to anyone who practiced veganism or vegetarianism. I was floored when my freshman college chemistry lab partner was vegetarian, something I learned the hard way. During a class discussion one day, meat-alternative diets were being discussed. I quickly shared my opinion about how I thought only hippies could be vegans/vegetarians, and asked why anyone would NOT want to eat meat anyway? At first, my partner just sat there quietly, then he shyly said, “I’m actually a vegetarian.”

Once I picked my jaw up off the floor and got the taste of foot out of my mouth, I quickly apologized for making rude assumptions. He was extremely gracious and said, “I get that a lot.” But then he let me ask as many questions as I wanted. He explained that his parents were vegetarian and raised him the same way. While we had different upbringings, we were able to share a conversation.

My experiences shaped my opinions, giving way to preconceived notions.

Having this encounter, though it was a bit embarrassing, opened my mind to others’ experiences. While my lab partner didn’t convert me to become a vegetarian, he helped me understand viewpoints different than my own, which should be the goal in any conversation—not necessarily to change someone’s mind, but to learn from each other.



This instance taught me that, while my attitudes stem from what I’ve experienced,

I do not always need to be the first to share my opinion, and I should try to learn from others when I have the chance.

Lesson 2. People crave dialogue.

I once had a coworker who told me she did not eat chicken because there are too many hormones and steroids injected into the birds, making them unhealthy and unsafe. When I heard this, I was pretty shocked and felt the heat rise in my face as my frustration grew. When I asked where this information came from, she told me it was from a Netflix documentary she had watched.

While I was a bit taken aback at the first comment, I knew that if I popped off a snarky answer, a barrier would immediately go up between us, and I would not be able to share my opinion as freely. She wasn’t looking for debate, she was seeking dialogue.

What I've found in this instant information age is people are not always looking for more information. They crave conversation.



Instead of snapping at her and telling her all the ways she was wrong (which might have been my kneejerk reaction), I opened the conversation for further dialogue. I asked questions and listened. I was able to share with her that hormones and steroids are not allowed in the raising and growing of chickens. I also shared that farmers, like my own family, treat their animals with the highest level of care because they are concerned about the well-being of their animals and consumers. They produce safe, quality food products.

By listening to my coworker and asking her questions, we were able to engage in an honest dialogue about concerns she has with the food industry, and I was able to share my experiences with her and alleviate many of her specific concerns. I may not have completely changed her opinion on everything, but I was able to share scientifically sound information coupled with personal testimony. She ended the conversation by saying, "Maybe I shouldn't believe everything I see on TV."

Lesson 3. Speak up but be credible

With everything I have said about myself in the previous sentences, it may be hard to believe, but there have been many times when I was afraid of rocking the boat and sharing an opinion I felt might be unpopular or hard to defend. However, I've realized if I don't share my own experiences and first-hand knowledge, others will; and others' thoughts may be skewed because of a lack of accurate information. I must be

willing to speak up.

With the willingness to speak comes the responsibility of being a credible source. I must do my own research to make sure I share factually and scientifically sound information. With so much information and noise-cluttering communication outlets, credibility is key.

I recently had a conversation about cell-cultured meat that some refer to as "clean meat." Person-



ally, the phrase "clean meat" concerns me as a food and agriculture advocate. If something is called clean, will consumers think other food is dirty? In my meeting with proponents of labeling this product as clean, the meeting attendees shared the reasons why they feel it should be labeled this way. They asked me what I thought and what my background was, and admittedly, I became a bit shy. Then I remembered the importance of speaking up and letting my voice be heard.

I shared the reasoning for my concerns with using the term "clean meat." How families like mine who are commercial poultry and beef producers work day in and day out to provide the most wholesome, quality foods. I am concerned the labeling of this meat product as "clean" will lead to increased consumer mistrust and degradation of the safe prac-

tices we have in the food industry. While we didn't change each other's minds, the meeting ended with the group saying they would like to stay in touch as products continue to be developed and come to the marketplace.

Communicating about agriculture and food production to a very diverse public may not always be easy, but it will always be necessary. I believe those in agriculture have the primary responsibility for educating those who are not. When faced with the opportunity to share your story, speak up. Be a credible source that people seek out for dialogue. Help shape the opinions of the public by bringing your experiences to the table, and always be willing to listen to the other side of the story.



Elissa McLerran grew up in a family where visiting on the porch and sharing stories with her family and neighbors was a regular occurrence. She developed a love of conversation, and after earning her bachelor's degree in Agri-Business Management from Tennessee Tech, went on to earn a Master's of Science in Agriculture Communications from Texas Tech to hone her communications skills. Now she's pursuing her dream of weaving together agriculture, politics and sharing conversations as a Legislative Assistant in the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington, D.C.

The Agricultural Education Magazine

Advocating for an Advocacy Course

by Garrett M. Steede and Erica Irlbeck

Over the past few years, agricultural advocacy has become a popular term across the country. Consumer understanding of the agricultural industry has quickly become a priority for industry and commodity groups, and employers are looking for people who can successfully advocate for the industry. Countless job postings indicate the need for a candidate who can advocate for the industry.

At Texas Tech University, we saw an opportunity in our curriculum to meet the needs of those hiring our graduates. At the same time, many of our students and alumni shared they felt uninformed about various segments of the industry. For example, someone may feel very confident discussing the cotton industry, but did not know much about the dairy industry. This lack of confidence hinders their willingness to speak up and advocate about these less familiar areas of agriculture.

Agricultural advocacy is often a combination of interpersonal, online, written and persuasive



communications combined with industry knowledge. We saw a need to teach these concepts collectively to prepare our students to advocate for agriculture.

Guided by the input from our students and alumni, combined with a qualitative study of key leaders in agricultural advocacy, we developed the Advocating for Agriculture course at Texas Tech.

The Course:

The purpose of the Advocating for Agriculture course is to expand students' understanding of the agricultural industry and their role as communicators in providing the connection from the producer to the consumer. The course is designed to help students develop skills in persuasive writing, speaking, and online communication regarding issues facing production agriculture, agricultural policy, and consumer perceptions surrounding agriculture.

To accomplish the purpose of the course, the students learn – through guest speakers – about the various sectors of the agricultural industry in the Lubbock, Texas, area as well as commodity groups, cooperatives, water resources, and Cooperative Extension. Students also learn skills related to audience analysis, public engagement, listening, interpersonal communications, intercultural communications, and public speaking.

The assignments in the course include participating in AgChat on Twitter, posting weekly tweets, writing an agricultural news report, conducting an audience analysis, and completing a post-course reflection paper. We also created several unique assignments for the class. One was

the elevator speech where students were assigned a common misconception about agriculture and had to role-play the situation with a classmate to



help that person gain a better understanding of the industry. Another assignment was a trade show booth that required the students to research an agricultural company or commodity and promote it in a mock trade show. Students were also required to identify an existing agricultural advocate on social media, follow the person for several weeks, and describe what this person is doing to advocate for the industry.

The Response:

As with every new course, we learned and adapted each semester. Most students who took the class said they enjoyed the guest speakers and learned from the real-world application activities. Each semester when we started the elevator speeches, the students disliked them greatly. They said they felt uncomfortable being asked challenging or controversial



questions regarding an industry they were not comfortable with, however; we knew students would commonly find themselves in situations just like this in the real world, so we pressed on. At the end of each semester when we looked at our course evaluations and the students' writing reflections, students would consistently say their favorite part of the class was the elevator speeches. They recognized this activity was challenging at first, but they eventually became more comfortable and ultimately enjoyed defending agriculture using sound listening skills, asking genuine questions supported by a desire to better understand the individual's viewpoint, and sharing their own personal experiences and knowledge in a manner that allows them to connect with individuals on a personal level.

Making It Your Own:

While the manpower within your department may or may not allow for you to add a course such as this to your curriculum, we hope to offer



some options for including aspects of our curriculum into other courses you may teach. One assignment we as instructors enjoyed was the This Week in Agriculture assignment.

At the beginning of the semester, students were randomly placed into teams of two and assigned one week during the semester when they would follow agriculture news carefully. On the last day of class that week, they would give a 15-minute report about what happened. We stipulated this assignment could not be a PowerPoint presentation, but students could make an infographic for the week, a newsletter, or a video. The idea behind this assignment was to demonstrate to students the importance of following agriculture news so they stay informed and are adequately prepared to advocate when questions or concerns arise from friends, family, or even strangers.

This assignment could be applicable in almost any agriculture course. Adding the elevator speech activity to this would be a great way to incorporate two of our assignments into your already existing courses to provide more real-world context to your content area.

Ultimately, this course evolves every semester. As new issues within agriculture arise and new communications platforms become popular, the course must be shifted to best develop the agricultural advocate. As you consider adding an agricultural advocacy course to your curriculum – or adding some of these assignments to a currently offered course – keep in mind that as we develop agricultural advocates, we must prepare our students to communicate from a level of understanding. We must teach them to listen more than they speak and to share their own knowledge and per-

sonal experiences not from a place of pride or anger, but from a place of caring and hope for improving agriculture's reputation.



Garrett M. Steede, Ph.D. completed his doctoral degree in agricultural communications and education at Texas Tech University in May 2018. Steede is now a teaching assistant professor of food, agricultural and natural resource communication at University of Minnesota.



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**Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation
 (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)**

1. Publication Title The Agricultural Education Magazine		2. Publication Number 0 7 3 2 4 6 7		3. Filing Date Sept. 30, 2018	
4. Issue Frequency Bi-monthly		5. Number of Issues Published Annually		6. Annual Subscription Price \$15.00	
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®) 300 Garrigus Building, 325 Cooper Drive, UK Campus Lexington, KY 40546-0215				Contact Person Wm. Jay Jackman Telephone (include area code) (859) 257-2224	
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer) 300 Garrigus Building, 325 Cooper Drive, UK Campus Lexington, KY 40546-0215					
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank)					
Publisher (Name and complete mailing address) Wm. Jay Jackman 300 Garrigus Building, 325 Cooper Drive, UK Campus Lexington, KY 40546-0215					
Editor (Name and complete mailing address) John Ewing 215 Ferguson Building University Park, PA 16802					
Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address) Wm. Jay Jackman 300 Garrigus Building, 325 Cooper Drive, UK Campus Lexington, KY 40546-0215					
10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)					
Full Name		Complete Mailing Address			
The Agricultural Education Magazine (not for profit -- no stockholders)		300 Garrigus, 325 Cooper Drive, UK Lexington, KY 40546-0215			
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> X					
Full Name		Complete Mailing Address			
12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one) The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months <input type="checkbox"/> Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)					

PS Form 3526, July 2014 (Page 1 of 4 (see instructions page 4)) PSN: 7530-01-000-9931 PRIVACY NOTICE: See our privacy policy on www.usps.com.

13. Publication Title The Agricultural Education Magazine		14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below July-Aug 2017- May-June 2018	
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation			
		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)		1,213	1,125
b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail)	(1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	1,121	1,032
	(2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	0	0
	(3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®	0	0
	(4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)	25	25
c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))		1,146	1,057
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)	(1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541	0	0
	(2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541	0	0
	(3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail)	0	0
	(4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)	0	0
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))		0	0
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)		1,146	1,057
g. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3))		67	68
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)		1,213	1,125
i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)		100	100

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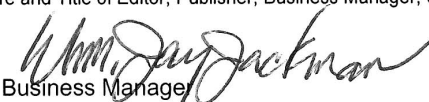


**Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation
 (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)**

16. Electronic Copy Circulation		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Paid Electronic Copies		755	677
b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)		1,901	1,734
c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)		1,901	1,734
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I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.

17. Publication of Statement of Ownership
 If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed
 Publication not required.
 in the Sept/Oct 2018 issue of this publication.

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner

 Business Manager
 Date
 September 30, 2018

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

