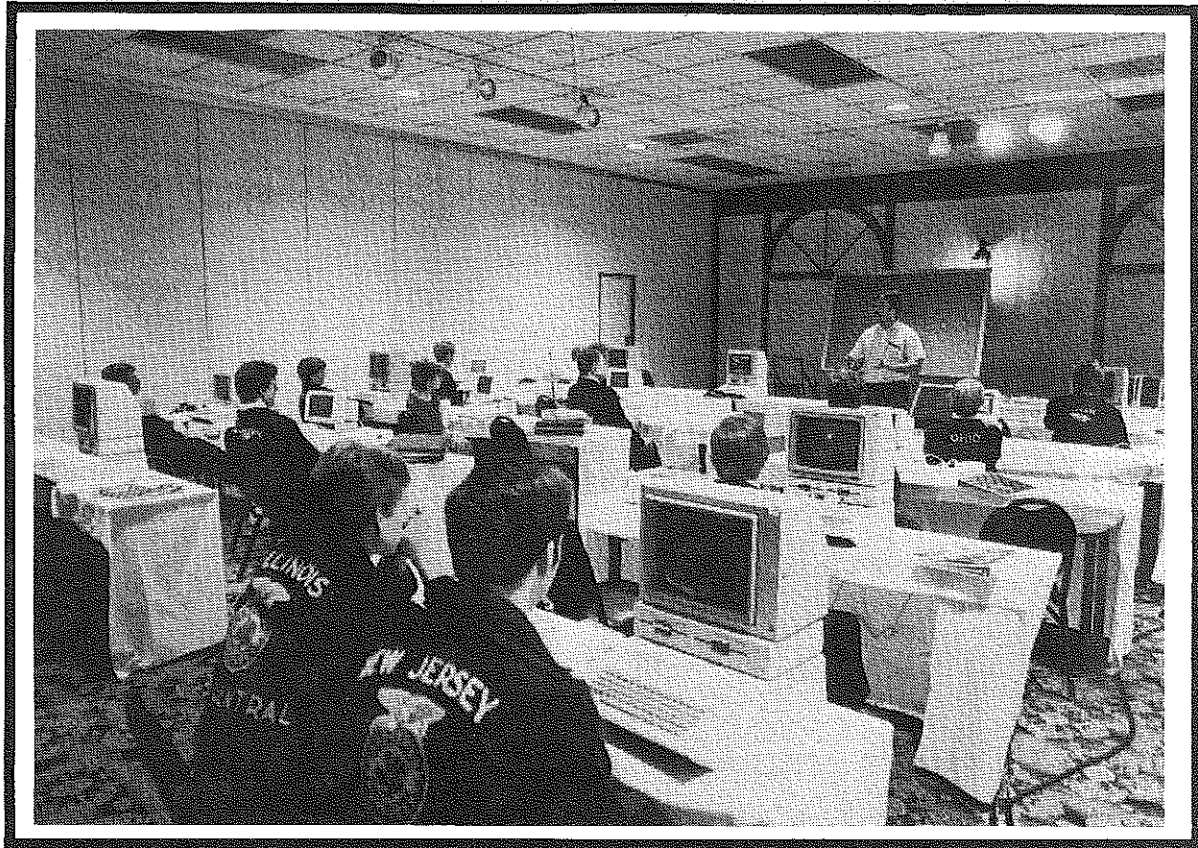


The

Agricultural Education

January, 1986
Volume 58
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Magazine



**THEME: Vocational Agriculture
And the Excellence Movement**



The Pursuit of Educational Excellence



By BLANNIE E. BOWEN, EDITOR

(Dr. Bowen is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education at The Ohio State University.)

Excellence themes have dominated the American education scene the last three years. Valid questions were and are still being raised in many quarters about the caliber of education America's schools provide. Declining scores on popular standardized tests and ineffective reading, speaking, writing, and mathematics skills provided some measurable answers. Meanwhile, high technology and related information delivery systems brought urgent demands that every student be computer literate. The current plan is to make every student be more humanistic and internationally enlightened. All of these missions must be achieved excellently, of course. But, just how is educational excellence to be judged?

Thanks to the excellence movement, vocational agriculture programs now face more stringent standards. Future content must be accurate and timely, science-based, and relevant to the needs of society. Teachers should expect closer scrutiny and be willing to provide evidence that their programs are indeed meeting the needs of the school community. While this new mode of operation appears a bit scary, it is realistic. Some comfort might be found in recent public opinion polls that show Americans are willing to pay more for education if it has high quality.

Judging Excellence

Status reports must be made on all phases of the educational delivery system. To understand the reports, however, reports on the reports must be written, packaged, and carefully distributed through the mass media. Fortunately, Phi Delta Kappa, a professional education fraternity, prepared a 12-page brochure to summarize some of the major reports. This writer received two very clear messages from that summary report: (1) America must do a better job of educating its future generations and (2) Gimmicks and quick-fixes simply will not work.

Unfortunately, several of the solutions being proposed and imposed have had a major negative impact on local vocational agriculture programs. The solutions forced America to re-think the academic versus vocational education questions. The result is that many students must decide by the 10th grade if they plan to attend a four-year college. No matter which route students take, they should have quality educational experiences. Several mechanisms are now in place to evaluate educational quality.

Achieving Excellence

This issue of THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MAGAZINE examines the effect that the quest for excellence is having on vocational agriculture programs. Dr. Ronald A. Brown of Mississippi State University, the theme editor, asked several leaders to share their thoughts with the profession. To help achieve subject matter excellence, most of the 1986 issues will relate to staying current with technical agriculture. Contact the theme editors if you have articles or materials to contribute to the pursuit of excellence. The bottom line is that vocational agriculture professionals must be very good — excellent in fact.

Editorial Staff Named by Editor

Seven outstanding agricultural educators have been selected by the Editor to help prepare THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MAGAZINE the next three years. Their terms of service will end December 31, 1988 when a new editorial staff assumes responsibility for the publication.

Regional Editors

John D. Parmley of Kansas State University is the Central Region Editor. Parmley taught vocational agriculture in Colorado and has been active in several professional organizations. His interest area involves the undergraduate preparation of vocational agriculture teachers.

Carroll Shry, a vocational agriculture teacher in Mary-

land, is the North Atlantic Editor. Shry is very active in the NVATA and his interest area is horticulture, a topic he has written about extensively.

Phil Zurbrick of the Department of Agricultural Education at the University of Arizona is the Pacific Editor. His outstanding classroom teaching has been recognized by several groups. Zurbrick has written extensively about local vocational agriculture programs.

Willie J. Rawls of Fort Valley State College assumes the Editorship for the Southern Region. Rawls has a special interest in supervised occupational experiences for students and has written extensively about that topic.

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Articles and photographs should be submitted to the Editor, Regional Editors, or Special Editors. Items to be considered for publication should be submitted at least 90 days prior to the date of issue intended for the article or photograph. All submissions will be acknowledged by the Editor. No items are returned unless accompanied by a written request. Articles should be typed, double-spaced, and include information about the author(s). Two copies of articles should be submitted. A recent photograph should accompany an article unless one is on file with the Editor.

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The Pursuit of Educational Excellence

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Special Editors

Joy Cantrell, a faculty member in Agricultural and Extension Education at Pennsylvania State University, is the Book Review Editor. Cantrell was a 4-H Youth Agent in Mississippi and now works with the Extension Education program at her university. She has a special interest in computer applications for agricultural education.

Providing teaching experiences for agricultural education undergraduates is the special interest area of the Teaching Tips Editor, Jerry Peters of Purdue University.

Peters uses a strategy called Reflective Teaching so his students can get laboratory teaching experiences.

The Picture Editor is Jacque Deeds of Mississippi State University. She taught vocational agriculture in Oregon and was very active in the NVATA. Deeds now works with the Agcommunication majors and the student organizations in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at her university.

Please contact these individuals if you have articles, photographs, or related materials to submit. Questions, comments, or concerns should also be provided so the profession can have the best possible monthly journal of agricultural education.

THEME

Vocational Agriculture and the Excellence Movement

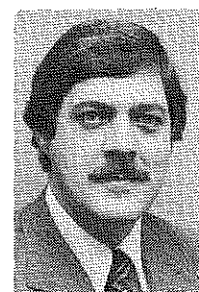
When we see friends, one common greeting is "how are you?" Sometimes we actually want to know; often we are making conversation. As we look in 1986 at another friend, vocational agriculture, "how is it?" We should really want to know!

About a dozen major reports and other minor ones have been issued during the past few years concerning the status of education, its problems, and proposed solutions. We reacted in varying ways to different reports — sometimes with fear or disdain and sometimes with pride or hope. One overall concern is that most of the reports failed to deal directly with vocational agriculture. In many cases one cure was offered for everyone and every ailment, regardless of program purpose or career goals, abilities or interests of students.

We are a part of the public education system and are affected by the changes that take place — and there are several, with almost every state initiating significant reforms. Secretary of Education William J. Bennett recently told Congress that a groundswell of concern has been transformed into a wave of reform. Nearly all major reforms currently planned or underway have been developed and implemented at the local or state level, even though the reform reports were national in scope. This means that it is my responsibility and yours to improve vocational agriculture at the local and state levels. We must be concerned, we must plan, and we must be proactive, not reactive.

Changes and Perspectives

This issue of THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MAGAZINE looks at changes and the need for changes in vocational agriculture. You will see reports from the perspectives of our top leadership at the national level, Dr. Larry D. Case, Senior Program Specialist, Agriculture Education, U.S.



By RONALD A. BROWN, THEME EDITOR

(Dr. Brown is a Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at Mississippi State University, P.O. Drawer AV, Mississippi State, Mississippi 39762.)

Department of Education and Mr. Coleman Harris, Executive Secretary, National Future Farmers of America.

You will see suggestions from agricultural industry provided by Mr. Carl F. Gerhardt, Senior Vice President, Alfa-Laval, Inc., Agri-Group, and Past Chairman, FFA Foundation Sponsoring Committee, and from Dr. Jan Henderson, The Ohio State University, who looks at the role of the local community in the excellence movement.

A vocational agriculture teacher perspective is provided by Mr. Walt Schuh, NVATA President and vocational agriculture teacher in Bow, Washington. Dr. David Cox provides a teacher education perspective.

Summary

These viewpoints will be worth little, however, unless we work cooperatively and positively for improvement. We need to hold to the principles which make our program an effective one. Our pragmatic base, skill development through experiential learning, and our focus on developing the whole person for life must not be lost. Yet, improvements can be made in vocational agriculture. Our students do not live in the same kind of world that we did when we graduated. Change is inevitable. Will we be proud of our role in these changes?

THEME

Agricultural Industry and Vocational Agriculture — The Excellence Movement

A revolution is taking place in agriculture that will change the face of our industry forever. This revolution is the commercialization of agriculture, a move from a production orientation to a business orientation. This move has been taking place subtly for many years but has now moved to an extremely accelerated pace. The acceleration is, of course, caused by the severe economic crunch, or "farm crisis" as some call it, of recent years. Many of the poorly informed would hasten to scream: beware factory farming, corporate/big business farming is taking over agriculture. The more prudent would calmly reply: no, agriculture must now be run as a business based on what economics dictate rather than judging success by bushels per acre or ribbons won at a state fair.

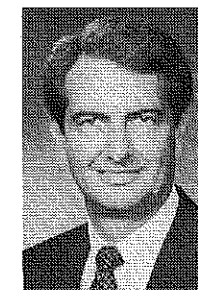
The structural change now taking place will, in the long run, be beneficial for the agricultural industry of our nation. This change brought about by economic realities of supply and demand forces "the excellence movement" to occur throughout agriculture. To restore the agricultural industry to profitability, all industry segments must strive for excellence and become profitable with existing levels of demand for our products. Let's look briefly at three segments of our industry: agricultural business/industry, farming, and agricultural education.

Business/Industry

Someone once said "when farming coughs, the rest of agriculture gets a cold." Those providing equipment, supplies, and services have had a severe cold for some time. The wise ones have realized that increased demand and/or higher prices will not cure this cold. They have turned to the excellence movement, restructured their companies, and developed new ways to compete.

Instead of relying on bigger volume and/or price increases to improve profit margins, they look toward improved efficiencies and operating methods. Striving for excellence in areas such as:

- Quality control - do it right the first time, less work, lower warranty cost.
- Efficient selling - telemarketing, "rifle" versus "shotgun" media plans, etc.
- Plant modernization - tooling investments for state of the art production.
- R&D productivity - focus on projects that bring "near term" versus "blue sky" results.
- Employee relations - interactive programs to involve employees in decision making along with management. Work with organized labor to establish realism in wage and productivity expectations.



By CARL F. GERHARDT

(Mr. Gerhardt is Senior Vice President of Alfa-Laval, Inc., Agri-Group, 11100 North Congress Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri 64153.)

- Vendor relations - a partnership versus adversarial relationship with suppliers.

The companies with excellence movements underway to address these and other operational areas are making a successful return to profitability and have bright futures. Moreover, they are finding great satisfaction in this success. Anyone can successfully run a growing company in an expanding market. But, those who have built successes in a declining market are truly examples of the excellence movement in the agricultural industry.

Farming

We said earlier that commercialization was a move to business versus production orientation. This certainly does not mean that production technology has any lesser importance in the future. To the contrary, it has equal or perhaps even more importance as breakthroughs in genetics, electronics, and other technologies find their way into practical farming applications at ever-increasing rates.

The message is: We must have farmers who are as astute in business management and finance as they are in the production of food and fiber. Said another way, we must have an excellence movement to bring modern business manage-

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The Cover

Students in vocational agriculture must acquire relevant skills so they can use the latest in high technology. These students are acquiring hands-on skills during the FFA's Computers in Agriculture Conference. The students were winners in the computers competition their states held earlier in the year. (Photo courtesy of Dwight Horkheimer of the National FFA Center).

Agricultural Industry and Vocational Agriculture — The Excellence Movement

(Continued from Page 5)

ment practices to the farm in the '80s and '90s in the same way that production technology occurred in the '50s, '60s, and '70s. Nowhere in American industry has production excellence advanced to the degree as it has in agriculture. But, farmers have one of the lowest returns on investments of any industry.

One should not form the impression that big business or big corporations involved in farming are necessary to bring on business management excellence. To the contrary, the family business unit is perfectly capable of this type of excellence movement and has proven to be the most efficient farming structure. But, it can no longer do it without modern business management. Education is the key to making this happen and in many cases it is already occurring today as long as we can keep key, well educated young people coming back to the farm.

Agricultural Education/Vocational Agriculture

Having served on the FFA Foundation Sponsors' Board for four years and Chairman in 1985, I have developed a special concern about the need to train our leaders of tomorrow. We have a dramatic structural change occurring throughout agriculture, including in the classroom, in vocational agriculture. The question is: Can we have an excellence movement occur in vocational agriculture fast enough to keep pace? The answer, in my opinion, is both yes and no.

It is no doubt occurring to the degree possible within the present structure. Just as many companies have adapted to current times and profited by them, so have many vocational agriculture programs at the national, state and local level. But, let's look at the structure. Vocational agriculture programs in secondary schools are basically geared to train for production agriculture as are most agriculture college curriculums. That must continue but where do we train the prospective farmers and agricultural industry students how to survive/thrive in the business world? This is critical if you accept the premise that we must move our primary orientation from production to business management.

Forget tradition and all the bureaucratic reasons why change is difficult and let's be futuristic for a moment. Let's develop a whole new perspective to educate agricultural leaders of the future starting in high school. Give them the

options to get as much or as little production agriculture and business management as they need, depending on career plans. They must have room for the needed college preparatory courses within these curriculums. Then, design post secondary education to continue where this leaves off. All the way through secondary and post-secondary allow for "ag" and "non ag" courses as necessary to round out the career needs. Further, and of special importance, include involvement in FFA leadership activities irrespective of the career path or curriculum chosen, and regardless of to what degree, allow FFA supervised occupational projects to be "massaged" to allow for this participation. How many times have we heard, I got most of my leadership training and "real education" from the FFA, not "from school." Business executives, as well as farmers, constantly make that statement.

The National Council for Vocational and Technical Education in Agriculture (NCVTEA) was formed to address the very issue of excellence in this system. But, it will take some time. I would challenge the NCVTEA as well as all other leadership bodies in agricultural education to adapt a phrase from the book, *IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE*. "Do it, try it, fix it." This phrase was used to describe how excellent companies get results fast; they have a bias for action and constantly try. They have an attitude of "do it, try it, fix it."

The oversimplified and superficial "new perspective" suggested above is only intended to propose that something new be tried. Progressive educators are in a much better position than I to say what should be tried. In business and industry, we would come up with two or three workable models. Then, design test markets in limited pieces of geography and establish a limited time frame long enough to produce identifiable results, but short enough to ensure forced decision making. By "doing it, trying it and fixing it," a workable solution can be found that produces excellence and fast results. A plan like this should be put underway quickly to ensure excellence in vocational agriculture for years to come. The current agricultural revolution will not accept the status quo any longer.

The FFA creed is a brilliant piece of wisdom. It has stood the test of time and was far ahead of "In Search of Excellence." The phrase "achievements won by the present and past generations of agriculturalists; in the promise of better days through better ways" says it all. We can't wait for the "better days" of improved economic conditions to cure farmers' coughs or agribusiness's colds. We must do it through "better ways." Better ways is what the excellence movement is all about.

Coming in February . . .

Staying Current: Agricultural Mechanics

The Excellence Movement and Local Programs

By WALTER SCHUH

(Mr. Schuh is a Vocational Agriculture Teacher at Burlington-Edison High School, Bow, Washington 98232.)

The philosophy of what is important for a student's education to meet the needs of today's society has completed a 360 degree circle. For many years, students passed through the educational system acquiring the academic as well as the necessary vocational skills needed to be useful citizens in society.

Along came the "Sputnik Era" and the big demand for people with skills in math and science. This was followed by a demand for people with skills to build and maintain the modern space age equipment that was developed and designed by the people with high level skills in math and science. Now society is saying today's educational system is not meeting the needs of our students in the basic educational processes. The excellence movement is stressing more math, science, and English and less vocational education, even to the point of dropping it from the secondary curriculum, as has been suggested by Secretary of Education William J. Bennett.

What is being overlooked by these people is that vocational education is a tool just like math, science or English, to be used by the student to achieve the basic skills that society says are necessary. The difference is that vocational education uses the problem solving and practical problem approach. In a comprehensive high school the vocational program and the academic program should complement and not compete with each other.

Effect of Excellence Movement

The effect of this movement on local vo-ag programs has been widespread. It has caused many vo-ag teachers to spend many hours re-evaluating their local program, and updating them to meet this new challenge. And that is not all bad. Sometimes we tend to get into a rut and do the same thing year after year only because we feel comfortable doing it that way and, being humans, fear the unknown. That's human nature. At times it takes something like the excellence movement to bring about the needed changes in programs. For as long as I can remember there has always been one challenge after another in our profession. I look at the excellence movement as another one of these challenges.

Vo-ag programs have made many changes over the years since their beginning in 1917, when the primary objective was to give the student the needed skills to do a better job of producing food and fiber with the most up-to-date information available. Agriculture is still the number one industry in this country. No one has lost his or her need for food or fiber. It is because of modern technology that one person can produce so much that we don't need as many people producing food and fiber. Instead we need a strong work force trained in the skills needed to supply,

process, distribute, and market what is being produced. And these people need a strong background in agriculture. Choosing this type of career starts at the secondary level. This is where I see the need for the vo-ag program at the secondary level to assist students in their career selection by giving them the necessary experiences.

Local Program Needs

The local programs must first be meeting the needs of the local community. Where are the graduates going? What are the graduates doing after high school? What careers are available in the local community for the graduate? And what skills are needed by the graduates to fill these careers? These are questions that have always been important to the local program. But today they are even more important. The student today is wanting to prepare himself or herself for a life's work. We need to be able to show the students that the vo-ag program does prepare them for a career that will allow them to remain in the local community. The effect of the excellence movement has also caused the local program to demonstrate how science is taught in vo-ag through fertilizer analysis,

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For the first time starting July, 1985, a local vocational agriculture instructor sits and votes as a member of the National FFA Board of Directors. (Photo courtesy of Myron Sonne.)

The Excellence Movement and Local Programs

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embryo transplants in dairy animals, and plant growth and reproduction; and how math is taught through records and record keeping, balancing feed rations, figuring a bill of materials for an agricultural mechanics project, and figuring a debt-equity ratio in farm management problems;

and how English is taught through public speaking, creed contests, job interview contests, parliamentary procedure training, group discussions, and written reports.

Summary

The overall outcome of all of this will depend for a large part on the dedication, drive, and goals of the local vo-ag teacher. But I believe that when the dust settles and it is all over, vo-ag programs across this country will be a lot stronger because of the excellence movement.

THEME

The Excellence Movement and the FFA

Growing concerns about the quality of public education as reflected in student test scores and their ability to succeed in college were the primary factors which led to numerous national studies and reports regarding the quality of public education. The basic conclusion of most of these studies was that public schools should focus much greater attention on strengthening basic skills. These recommendations led state educational leaders and many of the state legislatures to increase graduation requirements. In addition many colleges and universities have increased entrance requirements in areas such as science, math and foreign languages.

This excellence movement has resulted in increased student enrollments in academic subjects (math, science, English, and foreign languages) and decreasing enrollments in elective subjects which include vocational agriculture. In addition to these forces impacting on enrollment, the agricultural industry has been and is currently going through massive economic stress and restructuring. When the profitability of agriculture is down, it follows that enrollment in vocational agriculture will be down. This has been true in the past. Our best example is in the '70s.

When the huge international grain sales hit and we pulled out the fences and started planting from road to road, we saw increasing commodity prices, increasing land values, increasing vocational agriculture enrollment, and increasing FFA membership. FFA's record membership was 509,735 in 1976-77. It is also important to note that our total student population has been decreasing over the past 10 years. This is also an important factor. We can feel good that our enrollment did not decline as much as the general high school population during the first few years, but unfortunately, that hasn't been true the last two or three years. It has dropped because of the other factors affecting our program.

Challenges and Opportunities

As a result of the excellence movement, the economic stress in agriculture, and the decreasing student population, vocational agriculture and the FFA are facing challenges at all levels. The National FFA is impacted first by the declining FFA membership. As stated above, the na-



By C. COLEMAN HARRIS

(Mr. Harris is the National Executive Secretary of the Future Farmers of America, P.O. Box 15160, Alexandria, Virginia 22309.)

tional membership high of almost 510,000 was in 1976-77; the most recent membership count, 1984-85, is 434,090. A declining membership has caused the National FFA Organization to make some major adjustments. Three prime examples are as follows:

1. Adjustments to Reduce Cost. The National FFA dues are \$2.50, which represents a major part of the income available to run the organization and deliver six issues of THE NATIONAL FUTURE FARMER Magazine to the homes of each student. With the membership drop, adjustments were made by:

- eliminating selected travel
- combining job responsibilities
- reducing the size of the magazine
- delaying building and grounds improvements
- contracting for selected services.

2. Adjustments to broaden the financial base. Starting in 1981 the organization moved to a functional budgeting system. This called for all expenses to be applied against the function where the expense occurred. For example the 1985 National FFA Convention registration fee was \$15, up from \$8 in 1982. This increase has occurred in order for those who come to the convention to pay for the convention, including staff salary expense, travel, and all other costs occurring in Kansas City. Other moves to broaden the base include:

- Leadership Conferences (WCP) and International Programs (WEA) fees are now set at levels which pay all direct and indirect costs.
- Agriculture Computer Education Services (ACES) - A

support subscription service for agricultural education provided by the National FFA Supply Service. This service will provide teachers the opportunity to preview and buy software from the FFA Supply Service at reduced prices. This service also offers the opportunity to broaden the FFA's financial base in the future.

3. Movement of selected projects, programs, and activities to the National FFA Foundation. With the shrinking National FFA Organization financial base due primarily to a decline in membership, many projects, programs, and activities have been moved to the National FFA Foundation for funding. Most of these projects have been sold by the Foundation as special projects to business and industry.

Examples of activities once funded by the organization which are now funded by the Foundation are as follows:

- National FFA Week
- Convention Proceedings
- National Band, Chorus, and Talent
- FFA Center Interns
- Audio-Visuals
- Between Issues
- National Officer Scholarships

These moves have saved FFA members over \$200,000 and have kept member dues from being increased because of inflation. Although Foundation sponsors fund the direct costs of these programs, the Organization still must fund the overhead expenses such as staff salaries, telephone, office, and travel. Many other changes will occur on the National level as agriculture changes. The organization is presently undergoing long-range strategic planning which will bring other innovative new ideas and changes to the organization.

The Future

The major concern regarding the effect of the excellence movement is not the impact on the National FFA, because through good management and the continuing support of the FFA Foundation and the National FFA Alumni, we will continue to function and serve the needs of our students. The big question is, will students in cooperation with their parents select vocational agriculture/FFA as a part of their high school education? And, will we (Agricultural Education) adjust to student needs and societal and agricultural changes in order to appeal to tomorrow's high school student? The FFA at the National level must be a part of the answer to this question.

To assist in promoting our program, the FFA has organized a National Educational Program to educate the public on the positive career opportunities that agriculture offers. Following are selected moves and elements of the educational effort being made by the National FFA to help develop awareness and to promote the program.

Public Service Announcements. In 1984 the FFA developed the first nationwide PSA campaign. A team of 258 vocational agriculture instructors and state leaders worked cooperatively to arrange for 450 TV stations and 2,500 radio stations across the nation to carry the message. In addition, over 5,000 newspapers and 200 agricultural magazines accepted the print PSAs.

This was the springboard which led to the 1985 PSA campaign, funded by John Deere and starring Eddie Albert. This time the campaign focused on the variety of agricultural careers available to young people and the importance of vocational agriculture and FFA. Over 650 TV stations participated.

The 1986 campaign is sponsored by Monsanto and was released in Kansas City at the 1985 National FFA Convention. It will promote over 200 exciting careers in agriculture.

New Career Brochure. As part of the 1986 PSA campaign, Monsanto also funded the development of a new color brochure which will foster a positive image of agriculture, agricultural careers and Vocational Agriculture/FFA. The brochure was introduced at the convention and copies are available for purchase by chapters for use in their recruiting efforts.

Recruitment Theme Show. "Be All You Can Dream" was the title of the 1984 FFA theme show produced by Bill Stagg, FFA's Audio Visual Specialist. This 7-1/2 minute film made available to chapters nationwide was developed primarily for use with potential students and their parents. This show has often been referred to as the best visual ever produced for informing and exciting students and adults about Vocational Agriculture/FFA. Over 1,300 chapters and state associations purchased the visual. This film, sponsored by The Wrangler Brand, is not dated and is still available through the FFA Supply Service. Wrangler also sponsored another new visual that was premiered at the 1985 convention. Of the same high quality as the 1984 show, this one explores several career paths in depth.

National T.V. Special. In March 1985, "Agriculture's Next Generation - A Conflict of Interest" was viewed in 43 states by over 5 million people. In addition this first-ever national TV special was taped by hundreds of vocational agriculture instructors for use in community and school meetings. Plans call for a second special in early 1986 in conjunction with the educational campaign. Monsanto has already committed to be a full one-third sponsor of the special.

National FFA Week. Under the theme of "FFA . . .
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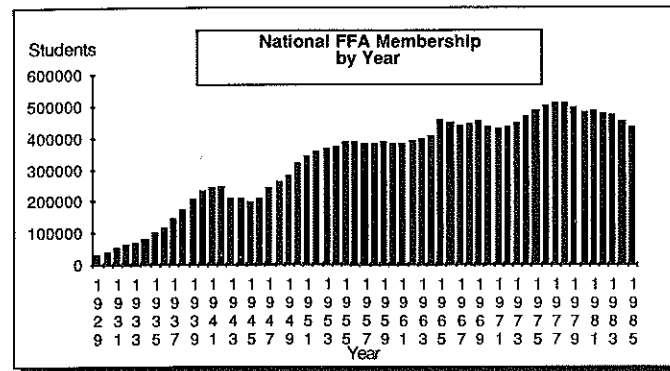


The 1986 FFA theme projects a positive, forward direction to potential students and community supporters. Numerous materials are available to aid in recruitment and promotion. Billboards, audio-visuals, posters, pens to placemats, buttons and bumper strips are available to help promote the Ag Ed/FFA message.

The Excellence Movement and the FFA

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Leaders for the New Fields of Agriculture," National FFA Week has a strong recruitment message. The message appeals to students who respect the leadership training of the organization and who may not realize the wide variety of



This chart shows the membership history of the National FFA Organization from 1928 to 1985. 1985 membership - 434,090.

career opportunities available in agriculture. This new theme and all of the communications vehicles that are available, including a sharp color recruitment poster, will help reinforce the educational campaign. FFA Week is sponsored by Estech, Inc.

Your Help Is Needed

We will continue to do all that we can on the National level to assist chapters and state associations in promoting the positive aspects of agricultural education and the FFA. But, to do this, your ideas and input are essential. Share your thoughts and ideas about how the National FFA can help you. We exist to serve the members of the FFA and the agricultural education profession.

The Future Is Bright

Yes, agriculture is in transition today, but all the agriculture industry experts we visit with agree that following a few tough years, agriculture and our youth will experience another great period of agricultural prosperity. We must demonstrate to our students positive, constructive leadership and work together to meet our common goals.

representatives in order to keep up with new and emerging trends. As the trends are identified, agricultural education professionals must face the realities of change and exchange information among themselves and others so that they can identify the needed program modifications, and the best methods of achieving them. In addition, new program thrusts must be communicated to the general public so that societal understanding and support is maintained. Societal support is necessary if the program is to survive in the public education system.

To enhance the existing communication and program management systems, national leaders have developed a new mechanism: the National Council for Vocational and Technical Education in Agriculture. The Council, officially formed in 1984, represents a national partnership designed to stimulate creativity, develop fresh incentives, and create a climate for renewal for the agricultural education field. It has established the following objectives: (1) to provide a forum in which the profession can address important issues and generate solutions for common problems; (2) to serve as an advocate for the improvement and further development of vocational and technical education in agriculture at the local, state, and national levels; (3) to involve business, industry, government, and education leaders in the development and evaluation of quality instructional programs, through the process of discussion and decision-making; and (4) to provide a structure to develop supporting resources from both public and private sectors.

As one of its initiatives, the Council proposed that a study be conducted on vocational and technical education in agriculture, particularly at the secondary level. It was envisioned that this study would (1) identify what contribution vocational agriculture has made to excellence in education and the American agriculture industry; and (2) form a basis upon which to make recommendations to improve the effectiveness of future programs, and ensure that they address current trends and meet the demand for excellence.

National Study

On December 18, 1984, the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the National Academy of Sciences signed an agreement stating that the three agencies would jointly sponsor a study to carry out the objectives outlined by the National Council. The research is currently under way. The Board on Agriculture of the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences is responsible for administering the study. The panel, which was appointed by the Board and is responsible for conducting the study, was selected to represent a wide range of agricultural concerns. Membership categories of the panel include those expert in:

- Education Policy and National Needs
- Agricultural Education and Training Needs
- Contemporary Challenges in Agricultural Education
- Educational Needs

In choosing the panel, consideration was also given to having representation from national agriculture leaders as well as those outside of agriculture. The composition of the panel was designed in this way to enhance the objectivity of the study, to help establish greater recognition for voca-

tional agriculture education, and to contribute to creating a realistic blueprint for developing future programs.

Questions and Issues

The panel is confronted with several questions. However, due to limited resources, the study will not be able to address all of them. Those questions that remain unanswered may stimulate agriculture education professionals to pursue answers to pressing issues affecting the achievement of excellence in their program. The questions are:

1. What technological and economic changes are occurring in agriculture which indicate a need for redirection of the vocational agriculture programs in the secondary schools?
2. How can vocational agriculture education contribute to the maintenance and improvement of the U.S. leadership position in domestic and international agriculture?
3. How are the educational reforms, called for by recent national reports, affecting vocational agriculture instructional programs and enrollments in the American high school?
4. How can the instruction in vocational agriculture contribute to excellence and reform in the American high school, and how should vocational agriculture programs be coordinated with academic instruction?
5. What educational outcomes are to be achieved by vocational agricultural instruction in the nation's high schools?
6. Who should be taught vocational agriculture subject matter and skills?
7. What content should be included in the vocational agriculture curriculum?
8. How should the different levels of agriculture education be articulated? (For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agriculture in the Classroom program, adult and young farmer programs, and college and university agriculture programs.)
9. To what extent is the Future Farmers of America (FFA) developing leadership to meet the changing needs of the agriculture industry?
10. What are the real reasons for the decline in enrollment in agriculture programs at all levels?
11. What changes will be required in the recruitment, preparation, certification, and retraining of teachers to meet the future needs of agriculture education programs?
12. What policy and/or legislative changes are needed at the local, state, and national levels to facilitate the implementation of new and revised agricultural education programs in secondary schools?

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Disclaimer: The Federal regulations by the U.S. Department of Education had not been released at the writing of this article. The regulations will provide additional guidance and could change some of the interpretation given in this article.

This article is the opinion of the author, and no official policy of the U.S. Department of Education is intended nor should it be inferred.

THEME

Agricultural Education: Striving For Excellence

Since the release of the National Commission Report entitled "A Nation At Risk," a major educational reform movement has swept the country. State and local boards of education have examined high school graduation requirements and made numerous changes which are placing a considerable amount of emphasis on what is known as the "new basics." At the same time, many colleges and universities have increased their admission requirements. This shift to the new basics puts a high demand on students' time and is gradually reducing the numbers of choices they have for elective courses. All of this has been done in an effort to achieve what the American public demanded — excellence in education.

Agriculture has also been undergoing many revolutionary changes. The crisis of an over-abundance of food stock is contributing to an unstable environment. The economic and political decisions associated with it are dramatically changing the structure of today's agricultural industry.

As a result of the changes occurring in public education and agriculture, enrollment in agricultural education programs is declining. And now, the question before the agricultural education community is, what must be done to adapt to the contemporary world and to prepare for the future through the achievement of excellence in agricultural education.



By LARRY D. CASE

(Dr. Case is Senior Program Specialist for Agriculture Education, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20202.)

Excellence in Agricultural Education

If agricultural education programs are to achieve the status of excellence, and survive in the educational marketplace, agricultural education professionals must be responsive to the social, educational, and agricultural changes taking place at the local, state, and national levels. These programs must provide highly motivated, well-trained personnel to serve the agricultural industry as well as function in the public education sector. To accomplish these objectives, two elements are essential: an effective communication system and efficient program management.

Decisions are as good as the information provided to the decisionmaker. This is why during changing times, it is critically important to communicate with agricultural

Agricultural Education: Striving For Excellence

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Former Secretary of Education Terrel Bell, Secretary of Agriculture John Block, and President of the National Academy of Sciences, Frank Press, (seated left to right) signed a cooperative agreement for a Nationwide Study of Secondary School Agriculture Education. Present for the signing were (standing, left to right): Cliff Nelson, representative of the AATEA; Les Olsen, representing NASAE; Jim Guilinger, representing the Ag Ed Division of AVA; and Larry Case, Senior Program Specialist for Agriculture Education. (Photo courtesy of Larry D. Case.)

As stated earlier, decisions are as good as the information presented to the decisionmaker. The panel members need input from the profession. Any person with relevant information which would aid the panel in answering any of these questions should write to: Dr. Charles Benbrook, Executive Director, Board on Agriculture, National Research Council, 2101 Constitution Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20418.

The Challenge

The process of change is beneficial. It challenges people to be creative and stimulates productivity. The creation of the Council on Vocational Technical Education in Agriculture, and the National Study on Agricultural Education are steps toward developing the goals and objectives for vocational agriculture education. But, unless agricultural education professionals and others share ideas, concerns, and recommendations, decisionmakers will have inadequate information and, thus, will be unable to make proper decisions concerning the agricultural community of today, tomorrow, and the 21st century.

Action-oriented involvement is a prerequisite in the achievement of excellence. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all professionals — local, state, and national — to contribute their best to the Council, the National Study, and other activities. It is through these contributions that agricultural educators will be helped in their quest for excellence.

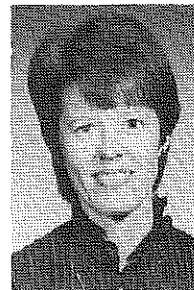
THEME

The Agricultural Community and Excellence

Excellence in education is often defined by the people directly involved with the educational process, such as teachers, administrators, or educational researchers. Interpretations of excellence are influenced by close associations with the teaching profession. How might educational excellence be characterized by those outside the profession? Representing diverse occupational backgrounds, advisory committee members offer a multitude of viewpoints regarding the excellence movement. Although committee members are not involved in the daily teaching process, they are interested in and support vocational agriculture programs. The perceptions of the agricultural community provide an important link in creating a more comprehensive definition of educational excellence.

National Trends in Education

Advisory committee members have varying opinions when asked to identify current trends in education and the main issues of the excellence movement. "Back to the basics, teacher accountability and competence, increased emphasis on math and science, student achievement, computer literacy, and use of classroom time" describe prevailing concerns about educational excellence. Committee



By JAN L. HENDERSON

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members believe that the educational system is being held responsible for the United States' possible loss of technological superiority in the world market. The excellence movement is an expected reaction to this fear as the public associates education with the advancement of scientific technology.

Adding more volume to the school curriculum without considering the content of additional courses is a concern of advisory committee members. Students need to be able to use their education upon graduation from high school, either in the work force or in further schooling. Quality education is the issue rather than quantity. While advisory

committee members advocate basic skills education, they fear vocational education may be overlooked when dispensing funds and allocating classroom time. Although advisory committee members may have an interest in national educational matters, they have a more immediate and personal concern for their local school programs.

Defining Excellence

How do advisory committee members define excellence for a specific educational program, such as vocational agriculture? When relating the thought of excellence to vocational agriculture, members generate an array of images. Excellence to them means meeting the needs of the students and the community, preparing students for future jobs, competent/dedicated teachers, not limiting instruction to on-farm occupations, emphasizing the relationship between agriculture and math and science courses, and balancing the three components of the vocational agriculture program, i.e., classroom/laboratory instruction, SOE, and FFA.

Standardized tests cannot adequately measure excellence; nor can excellence be determined solely by quantitative means, such as the number of FFA awards received by a local chapter. Several criteria must be used to evaluate excellence in vocational agriculture programs. Depending upon a single measure will distort the true meaning of quality programs. Test scores, student involvement and achievement in the FFA, the scope of individual SOE programs, and level of skill performance are all indications of excellence.

Excellence in vocational agriculture also may be characterized by the product that is produced: a trained agricultural worker. If one of the objectives of vocational agriculture programs is to equip students for gainful employment in the agriculture industry, then the occupational success of program completers should be one criterion of excellence. Advisory committee members help to produce a qualified product by identifying the occupational competencies needed by young people preparing for agricultural careers. The agricultural community can provide relevant input and a new dimension during the program planning process.

The Future of Vo Ag

By its very nature, the issue of excellence promotes discussion on the future of formal education in the United States. Advisory committee members believe vocational agriculture programs face a variety of challenges as the 21st century approaches. Increased specialization of agricultural industries and rapidly changing technology are cited as major concerns affecting vocational agriculture. Improving the image of agriculture and accentuating the breadth of agricultural careers are initial steps when moving towards the future. Financial concerns will continue to impact vocational agriculture programs. Price supports, interest rates for new businesses, and funding for public education will be variables affecting the future of vocational agriculture.

Failure to broaden the scope of vocational agriculture will be a grave mistake. While the percentage of older adults in the United States continues to increase, the traditional target audience for vocational agriculture programs

is diminishing. Adopting a more extensive agenda and developing innovative approaches for new clientele are critical activities for the continued existence of vocational agriculture. Advisory committee members contend that by focusing exclusively on the secondary program, and excluding all other interests, vocational agriculture is advocating self-destruction. Responding to the needs of a diverse population will be a continual challenge for the leaders of vocational agriculture.

Promoting Excellence

Realizing there is a gap between the ideal and current practice, advisory committee members volunteer advice on ways to promote excellence in vocational agriculture programs. Several members suggest eliminating outdated curriculum and equipment, upgrading course content to include math and science components, and fostering a more intense involvement of the agriculture industry. Members believe that legislative decisions will increasingly have an impact on vocational agriculture programs. Political support by the agricultural community may help to upgrade teacher salaries and contracts, and to highlight the importance of vocational agriculture within the school curriculum. Members note that the promotion and continuation of excellence in vocational agriculture will ultimately depend upon the ability of the leadership to accurately assess the local, state, and national political situation.

As direct links with the agricultural community, advisory committee members see themselves playing several roles in encouraging excellence in vocational agriculture programs. Members directly support vocational agriculture by serving on committees, acting as resource persons for classroom/laboratory instruction, or reviewing and evaluating the local program. Indirect support is accomplished by monitoring the relevancy of the vocational agriculture program in relation to current trends in the

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Excellence in vocational agriculture is defined in part by the perceptions of the agricultural community. (Jan Henderson, The Ohio State University.)

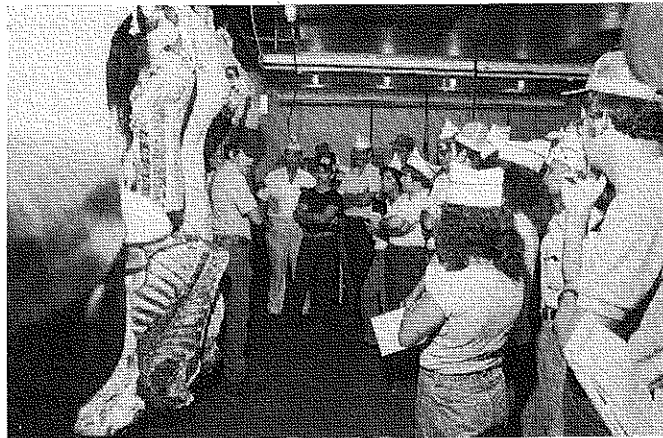
The Agricultural Community and Excellence

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agriculture industry. In addition to these conventional roles, advisory committee members can help identify the agricultural needs of nontraditional target groups, such as senior citizens and unemployed youth. By viewing the traditional program from a different perspective, members of the agricultural community may be able to expand the mission of vocational agriculture.

Summary

When determining educational excellence for vocational agriculture, all concerned groups must be included. As representatives of the agriculture industry, advisory committee members provide an important perspective in describing excellence. If their views are overlooked, an incomplete portrait of vocational agriculture is created. Listening to the opinions and concerns of the agricultural



As representatives of various agricultural industries, advisory committee members provide a unique perspective on the educational excellence movement. (Jimmy Cheek & Max McGhee, University of Florida.)

community can help the vocational agriculture instructor maintain the proper focus when defining excellence for his or her program.

THEME

Teacher Education and The Excellence Movement

It seems teachers sit around conference tables, in teachers' lounges, or on bales of hay and discuss the latest movement to reform and improve education. Perhaps teacher educators do likewise. We talk of educational excellence as if it is something someone is going to do to us or for us. Rather we ought to be talking about our contributions to such a movement, in an attempt to have a hand in shaping the reform to take advantage of what will surely be a shortlived comet of public awareness and political sensitivity to what we know as an ever-present, ongoing need for educational development. In fact, it is probably characteristic, and certainly shameful, that the movement to inject excellence into education has happened to us rather than happening because of us. It is not logical for educational improvement to occur in spite of teacher educators. We ought to be the catalysts, not the analysts.

Germplasm of the Next Reform

Perhaps in the next decade, or the next century, teacher education will be the germplasm of the next great opportunity to reform and advance the teaching profession. Now is the time to begin to prepare for such opportunity. In the meantime, the current movement has arrived. It no longer is a groundswell among the clientele. One only needs to browse any newspaper or professional journal to realize state legislators and members of local, county and state school boards are enacting laws and policies to imple-



By DAVID E. COX

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ment foundational reform in the name of educational excellence. However, the process involved in enacting laws and preparing policies seems simple when compared to the tougher task of deciding upon the components of educational excellence, agreeing to those components, and implementing real programs which deliver "excellent" results. Policymakers are now, or soon will be, finished with their agenda. How shall those of us responsible for delivery proceed?

Excellence All Around Us

It is not the role of this brief article to attempt to answer the question of "what is excellence in education?", although it is a most profound and intriguing basic question. Each reader can describe one or more indicators of "excellent" vocational agriculture. Many, if not most, of

the criteria used to identify excellence would be teacher-centered. The last few years have seen more than 30 national studies conducted and reported which highlighted problems in education. Although the reports varied and, interestingly enough, their recommendations also varied, the central object of criticism has been the public secondary school. As one reviews those reports, a second focal point emerges — the secondary school teacher. Such analysis appears logical for the teacher is central to instructional programs.

We can look forward to the findings and recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences study of vocational agriculture to provide insight and foresight in the delivery of relevant, high-quality vocational education in agriculture. It is reasonable to expect this new study will, like those before, emphasize the role of the teacher associated with the "excellent" program. We know there are many characteristics of the master teacher, some observable and predictable, others not. We must perpetuate those observable and predictable pedagogical behaviors by instilling them in prospective teachers of vocational agriculture. In fact, we must equip our majors with sufficient pedagogical competencies that they are comfortable with their science of teaching and can more rapidly develop their art of teaching. It is clear that the trail to excellent education is paved by master teachers, and master teachers originate at, or very near, the foundation of teacher education.

Pro or Con?

In keeping with the theme of this issue, the reader will note the title of this article is "Teacher Education in Agriculture and the Educational Excellence Movement" and not "Teacher Education in Agriculture vs. The Educational Excellence Movement." There is, of course, a difference.

As teacher educators, we cannot afford to be associated with any efforts "against" excellence. On the contrary, we must not only be "for" excellence, we must teach our students how to implement excellence. What is our role in this movement? What impact will the movement have upon public schools and vocational agriculture programs? What effects will be felt by teachers in the field? What will be the impact upon preservice programs? Inservice education? Graduate education? As teacher educators, we must be cognizant of factors affecting the entire profession for teachers and supervisors alike are, for the most part, products of teacher education programs.

The Teacher's Perspective

It appears that the answers to the above, as well as to other questions, may be found in placing ourselves in the role of a teacher of vocational agriculture. Not back in the role as it was when we were vocational agriculture teachers, but ahead in the role of tomorrow's teacher. For programs of teacher education to adequately respond to impending changes in schools, the approach must be to prepare those teachers to perform pedagogical competencies which are requisite to conduct excellent programs of vocational agriculture into the 1990s.

Teacher educators must not forget the reasons we are needed. Without local programs and teachers of vocational agriculture, teacher educators in agriculture would

be extinct. Therefore, if we spend any time gazing into the crystal ball and attempting to prognosticate impacts of excellence on teacher education in agriculture, we must do so from the perspective of the local teacher.

Impact on Local Programs

What are some of the manifestations of the excellence movement affecting the teacher of vocational agriculture?

1. *Increased Requirements on Basic Skills in High School.* Such increases leave less time in a student's class schedule for electives such as vocational agriculture. Competition for students emerges between teachers, and lowered enrollments results in increased pressure on an already high cost instructional program. The next step may well be program elimination.

2. *Emphasis on Academic Courses.* Over-emphasis of academic courses and their weighted grades demeans vocational education as well as the vocational education teacher. The teacher's image and the program image may suffer both externally and internally, thus affecting the actual and perceived worth of both.

3. *Increased Teacher Evaluations.* Possibly a positive impact of teacher evaluation may come about. However, increased pressures are applied to the teacher of vocational agriculture who is evaluated more often, both formally and informally.

4. *Increased Requirements for Teacher Certification.* Increased requirements in both certification and recertification impact directly upon local teachers of vocational agriculture as well as enrollment in teacher education. Relevant preservice and available, accessible inservice education will be more critical.

5. *Incorporation of Basic Skills.* Vocational agriculture teachers will be required to teach in ways which reinforce the application of basic skills to agricultural subject matter. Reading, computation, and written expression will be required by public school administrators. Teachers must be equipped to apply the basic skills in vocational agriculture.

Certainly the five points highlighted above are not the only changes facing teachers of vocational agriculture. The list is not meant to be exhaustive, only illustrative. Those issues which confront teachers are the same issues which should confront teacher educators. Little occurs in a secondary school which does not affect the program and teacher of vocational agriculture. In fact, the effects of local school responses to the excellence movement impact vocational agriculture programs directly.

It appears many responses by school administration, boards, state departments of education, and legislatures are aimed at contriving to improve the image of education by displaying test scores, increased time and/or course requirements, higher standards, and the like as window dressing to create a stronger sense of accountability and public support.

Impact on Teacher Education

Beyond those factors which affect teachers of vocational agriculture, certain results of the movement will be specific to institutions of higher education. A few examples are shown on the following page.

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Teacher Education and the Excellence Movement

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Changes in Colleges of Education. Changes in both structure and content within the nation's colleges of education will affect agricultural education to some degree. Obviously, those programs administered in a college of education will be affected by reorganization, increased requirements and the like. Even those programs housed in the colleges of agriculture will experience spill over impacts.

Increased Requirements for Teacher Certification. By increasing the requirements for admission and retention into teacher education programs and resultant increases in requirements for teacher certification, the time available in the curriculum for technical agriculture course work is affected. In addition, many states and institutions require education majors to pass standardized tests for admission to teacher education and/or licensure or certification for teaching. Increased lengths of student teaching time will affect the block approach, early experience programs, and placement on student teachers.

Emphasis on Research and Publication. Institutions of higher education expect faculty members, including those of us in Agricultural Education, to conduct scholarly activities and share those with colleagues via written publications. The worth of these activities is great, while the content and direction of many of our scholarly activities probably needs to be examined. Such activities impact the time which teacher educators devote to the preparation of teachers of vocational agriculture.

Service to Secondary Schools. Some states have initiated programs which mandate cooperative ventures between public school teachers and university faculty members in the areas of curriculum development, instruction, and evaluation. Faculty members are required, in some instances, to teach high school classes for a predetermined number of days. In other cases, they will be required to assist public school teachers in methods, materials and evaluation.

Teacher Education's Response

The action which teacher education in agriculture should take in our continuing drive to excel has already been spelled out. Leaders in our profession are calling for us to agree upon our purpose (philosophy), content, and research. In only the past five years, teacher education in agriculture has been told we must "advance the work of our profession" (Brown, 1980), "apply ourselves to the problems which confront us" (McCracken, 1983), and research that which is "useful to the most important aspect of agricultural education — the local vocational agriculture program" (Vaughn, 1983).

Teacher education in agriculture needs to focus its attention away from studying teacher, student, or school characteristics and study and apply research into the teaching-learning process as it takes place in the laboratory and classroom. We must equip prospective teachers of vocational agriculture with those behaviors which will allow them to direct the learning process and bring about quantity and quality changes in student behavior.

Tomorrow's teacher of vocational agriculture must be equipped to focus upon student variables and behaviors which can be modified by instructional techniques, processes, or program structures. As teacher educators, it is our responsibility to prepare teachers of vocational agriculture who can manipulate teaching-learning variables such as time-on-task, deductive and inductive teaching, evaluation of student progress, application of theory to practice, problem solving, etc., to induce learning in students. In short, we must provide the teachers of vocational agriculture with the professional expertise so they can prepare their students to use agricultural competencies in various applications and to be able to solve problems. Teachers will need to innovate. They will surely need to be taught how to do so. Are we prepared to teach such competencies?

Summary

The foregoing will hopefully stimulate thought and discussion with respect to the impact of the educational excellence movement on teacher education in agriculture. Our profession has always stood for excellence. Vocational agriculture is one of the greatest ventures in American public education. We must continue those sound educational practices which made us strong and strive for excellence in teacher education in agriculture. Lloyd Blanton (1985; 9) summarized it best:

"The future rests on the same concepts which established the profession: delivery of improved technology to communities through individuals prepared to assess the impact of an innovation and to efficiently and effectively use it upon adoption."

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BOOK REVIEWERS NEEDED

Persons interested in reviewing books and related materials should contact Dr. Joy Cantrell, Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, Armsby Building, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802. For your work, the reviewer will keep a copy of the book that is reviewed.

ARTICLE

Falling in Step with the Excellence Movement



By L. De Vere Burton

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America is embroiled once again in the oft debated controversy over what constitutes quality education. Feelings of educators are running high as criticism of the public schools assaults us on all fronts. The conservative element of education holds the upper hand as the call for "new basics" is heard throughout the land. Many states have reacted with radical and sweeping changes in high school graduation requirements, and vocational programs are losing enrollments at alarming rates as vocational students are forced back into the academic classrooms.

What can be done to reverse this trend? Critics of vocational education accuse us of failing to deliver our product. Our students do not enter the agricultural labor force in high numbers. We are not teaching to satisfy traditional objectives. Does this mean that all vocational agriculture programs should be directed once again to address the philosophical beliefs upon which vocational agriculture was founded? No! The problem runs deeper than that. In many cases it is necessary to change the philosophical beliefs to reflect what is happening in modern agriculture. A revised set of basic principles is needed to bring new direction to vocational education. We must become accountable by educating to fulfill sound objectives. As we make this adjustment we will fall into step with the current trend in education to return to the basics.

Philosophical and Traditional Beliefs

An old cliché which has frequently been circulated in the rural sector of America states that you can take a person out of the country . . . but you can't take the country out of the person.

Most people tenaciously cling to established ways of doing things, with little conscious regard for the rationale and values upon which traditional programs were conceived and brought into being. One such program is vocational agriculture. The agricultural industry in America has changed a great deal since the Smith-Hughes Congressional Committee studied vocational education in 1914. The subsequent passage of vocational education legislation in 1917 (Smith-Hughes Act) was based in part on the following premises:

- Vocational education is required to —
- 1) conserve and develop our natural resources
 - 2) provide a supplement to apprenticeship
 - 3) prevent waste of human labor
 - 4) increase wage earning power
 - 5) meet the increasing demand for trained workers
 - 6) offset the increased cost of living (Kahler, 1985, class notes).

Phipps (1966) describes programs established through federal legislation as vocational education for farming. He

points out that the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 was not the beginning of agricultural education, but rather a change in direction:

"The best known type of agricultural education in the public schools is vocational education for farming. Other types of agricultural education, however, have been present in the programs of the public schools since the beginning of public education. The first courses taught were academic, non-vocational courses. Thirty states had instigated agriculture courses in their public schools prior to 1917 when the Smith-Hughes Act was passed. The Smith-Hughes Act provided funds to promote vocational education in agriculture for present and prospective farmers" (Phipps, 1966, p. 3).

The Smith-Hughes Act and subsequent legislation promoted the proliferation of vocational agriculture. Federal dollars were matched by local and state funds, eventually swallowing up those programs which were established preliminary to federal funding.

A key question which must be addressed is: Are the philosophical beliefs upon which vocational agriculture was structured relevant today?

Philosophical Beliefs

The Smith-Hughes Act promoted vocational education in agriculture for present and prospective farmers. Few people would argue the fact that agricultural employment conditions have changed since 1917. Sweeping changes have occurred. Less than three percent of today's labor force are farmers, yet over 20 percent of U.S. workers continue to work in agriculturally related careers such as agricultural credit, service, processing, and marketing. Some adjustment has occurred in vocational agriculture programs, such as new cooperative classes which emphasize experience programs in local businesses. Many of these activities have invigorated local programs, but some fundamental issues arise here:

1) Many local vocational agriculture instructors have refused to adopt any adjustments. They continue to teach as though every student will go back to the family farm.

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Falling in Step with the Excellence Movement

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2) Should high school programs be vocational or pre-vocational? Very few high school students are prepared to make "life commitments" to a vocation at age 14, and it would be wrong to expect them to do so. We should use job placement activities as "exploratory tools" in teaching the work ethic and promoting career awareness.

3) The career emphasis should be reserved. Rather than promoting agriculture as the career, we should educate youth in skills which will help them compete in an urban world. Today's problem is not putting farmers on the soil, but removing the unadjusted from welfare rolls.

Vocational education is required to conserve and develop our natural resources. Conservation and orderly development of natural resources is more important today than it was in 1914. As our available resource is depleted through soil erosion and lack of adequate resource management, it is incumbent on new generations to improve management and conserve for the future.

Vocational education is required to provide a supplement to apprenticeship. While it is true that some young people leave school during their teen years, no rational argument is created for mandating technical education per se. Most high school dropouts are not mature enough to make a prudent decision about their educational needs, so how can they possibly demonstrate wisdom in career selection?

Providing high level technical education in high school may even contribute to the tendency of many of these students to leave school early, thinking that their skills will support a "lifelong" career. The stark reality is that without a high school diploma, they are seriously restricted in most career settings. A modest wage may look tempting to a teenager, but his/her earning power usually declines due to limited advancement opportunities.

The wiser approach would appear to be establishment of vocational/technical education at postsecondary schools requiring a high school diploma or GED for entry. Such entry requirements would accelerate the maturity of those who leave high school without a diploma, and allow for more career exploratory activities in high school vocational programs.

In neither case should vocational education supplement apprenticeship. They should displace it by educating for the future.

Vocational education is required to prevent waste of human labor. Good work habits will always be important to society. Promotion of the work ethic is still a valid principle undergirding vocational education, and it is one thing we do well.

Vocational education is required to increase wage earning power. This mandate to vocational educators really says that we must keep our programs relevant to the needs of society. This philosophy is sound today and will remain so. Needs assessment and program evaluation are useful tools at every level of education.

Vocational education is required to meet the increasing demand for trained workers. The world we live in will continue to develop new technologies in every field of endeavor. Vocational education in agriculture is becoming very technical as agricultural and industrial research identifies more efficient ways to produce food and fiber. As the cost of providing high tech skills accelerates, vocational education at the postsecondary level may need to develop stronger linkages with agriculture industry. Such alliances would help retain relevance in technical skills development, and provide higher outputs of skilled technicians.

Vocational education is required to offset the increased cost of living. The relative cost of farm commodities to consumers in the 1980s indicates that this principle is valid. Agricultural education is at least partially responsible for the tremendous increase in agricultural productivity we have experienced in America. In that sense, the availability of goods at competitive prices is a continuing challenge.

Conclusions

Many of the philosophical beliefs affecting vocational agriculture today are deeply engrained in the system and will be very difficult to change. Adjustment will require the following conditions:

- 1) Inappropriate philosophies must be identified.
- 2) Alternative philosophy must be formulated.
- 3) Individuals must assume leadership roles in promoting and orchestrating the adjustment.
- 4) Evaluation of philosophical beliefs with respect to changing vocational needs must be continuous.

As vocational educators make the adjustment effort, there is reason for new optimism in the profession. Gene Bottoms (1984) described the immediate future this way:

"It is my belief that some sense of reason and reality is beginning to emerge across the nation concerning the secondary schools. And with this new reality, there is a window of opportunity to reform, to improve, to make more effective the quality of vocational education in America" (Bottoms, 1984, p. 9).

References

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ARTICLE

Excellence: Our Best Tradition

BY CLAYTON COFFEY

(Mr. Coffey, a vocational agriculture instructor for 10 years, is a graduate student at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale and resides at 505 West Baird, Carbondale, Illinois 62901.)

America holds the torch high for the worth distinctions of working people. United States agriculture continues to be the envy of the world. Accordingly, the vocation of agriculture is a worthy calling. The passionate plea for excellence searches for people ready and willing to set high goals. High goals and the ability to reach them will secure excellence. Why can vocational agriculture answer the plea for excellence? Because vocational agriculture offers students relevance, skill, and renewal.

Vocational agriculture is relevant to student life. Many proponents of classical basics would advocate one track for all and ignore the need for employment. Agriculture students elect to enter vocational agriculture because they want to know more about their chosen occupation. They have a need to learn about the pursuit that they want to become their life's work. Vocational agriculture course content comes from the business of agriculture. That is exactly what makes the course literally come alive for students. The students want to "know" something, not just "know about" a lot of things. Agriculture teachers are guides to the future for students who want something real from education.

Relevant Skill Development

Reality demands skill. Skill is what we provide the beginning agricultural professional. High school students should be ready to put the "3 Rs" to work, and then add other basic skills to their craft. Agriculture teachers pursue excellence by teaching. Agriculture teachers teach people. Agriculture teachers teach people the skills and knowledge of agriculture. The agriculture teacher is close by the student, helping the beginner succeed by carefully planned steps. As a master of the craft, the agriculture teacher guides planned practice until the unsure apprentice becomes a skilled master. Young people need to know that they can, indeed, do something right and worthy of distinction. In a word, students want to have PRIDE; pride in what they do; pride in what they are. Nothing separates

us from the huddled masses like knowing that we can do the job right. It is the sense of not knowing what can be done, that holds so many down.

Vocational agriculture renews a lost spirit in students who may see few ways to succeed in their immediate life. Students lost in the shuffle need a place to discover success and self worth. Before we can have great merit, we first must believe we have merit. Vocational agriculture will not be all things to all people, but for those wanting to work in agriculture, we can help. Vocational agriculture offers an abundance of opportunities to learn worthy skills, and gain real recognition for a job well done. The program, at all levels, allows students a window on the world through the FFA.

Summary

The constant push to set goals, and working to achieve goals is a powerful lesson in educating for excellence. Vocational agriculture does not stop with one set of short term goals. Each accomplishment is followed by a renewal of goals and objectives. If agriculture students see further, it is because they stand on the shoulders of their achievements.

Vocational agriculture is one response to the search for excellence. It is a relevant curriculum for students wanting performance skills. Vocational agriculture shows it is dynamic by continually renewing the goals of both students and teachers. Programs of vocational agriculture are truly worthy of distinction, and they educate for excellence. Excellence must be our best tradition.

ARTICLES ON FILE FOR TWO YEARS

The Editor inherited several file drawers of articles submitted to THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MAGAZINE. Most of these articles are well written and contain excellent content for the time period in which they were prepared. However, they cannot be used with dated content. To relieve the situation, all articles submitted will be kept under consideration for two years. Articles not used during a two year time frame will be discarded unless the author(s) have made prior arrangements with the Editor. Authors who wish to have articles returned that are dated 1983 or earlier should contact the Editor before May 1, 1986.

Unique FFA Alumni Approach in Maryland

Are your state leaders members of an FFA alumni affiliate? Do you have problems with alumni affiliates that enroll members who later drop out? Do you have problems collecting annual dues from alumni? Are prominent agriculturists reluctant to join your local alumni affiliate because they serve agriculture in a statewide capacity? Do you have a local affiliate that has as its main purpose the support of statewide FFA activities?

Maryland's solution to the above problems has been the formation of an organization called the Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate. According to Robert Cox, National FFA Alumni Administrative Director, the Maryland organization is the first of its kind in the United States. The approach attracted charter members of prominent statewide business, industry and education leaders.

The unique aspects of the organization are:

1. Membership is reserved for persons on regional, state or national levels. It is not the purpose of the organization to compete in any way with local affiliates.
2. Those who wish to join the statewide affiliate must also be life-members of the national alumni association.
3. The dues structure is based on a one-time life membership fee for affiliate dues as well as national.
4. Activities of the organization are financed from the interest accrued from the dues.
5. Annual and special meetings are held in conjunction with FFA state leadership events.

The major thrust of this affiliate is to support regional and state FFA activities. The details of structure and operation are spelled out in the following constitution and by-laws of the organization.



By ELMER L. COOPER AND DAVID A. MILLER

(Editor's Note: Dr. Cooper is a Teacher Educator in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, The University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742; and Mr. Miller is Section Chief, Maryland State Department of Education, Baltimore, Maryland 21201.)

Constitution of the Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate

Article I. Name and Purposes

Section A. The name of the organization shall be the Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate.

Section B. The purposes of this organization shall be:

1. To provide a Future Farmers of America support organization for individuals who are involved in Maryland agriculture on a regional or statewide basis.
2. To support and promote the FFA organization, FFA activities, and vocational agriculture at local, state, and national levels.
3. To cooperate with FFA chapters, the Maryland Association of FFA, the National Future Farmers of America, the Maryland FFA Foundation, state and national FFA alumni associations and other organizations that support vocational agriculture.
4. To provide a tie between members and agricultural education personnel.
5. To promote greater knowledge of the agricultural industry and support education in agriculture.
6. To promote and maintain an appreciation of the American free enterprise system.

Article II. Organization

Section A. The Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate is a chartered affiliate of the

Maryland FFA Alumni Association and the National FFA Alumni Association.

Section B. The Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate accepts in full the provisions of the constitutions and by-laws of the Maryland and National FFA Alumni Associations.

Section C. The area to be served by the Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate shall generally be the state of Maryland.

Section D. This is a non-profit organization.

Article III. Membership

Section A. Membership shall be open to former active, collegiate, and honorary FFA or NFA members, present and former professional vocational agricultural educators, parents of FFA members, and others interested in the FFA.

Section B. Persons become life-time members once they have paid National FFA Alumni Association life membership dues and Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate dues.

Article IV. Emblem

Section A. The gold FFA emblem with the word "Alumni" below it shall serve as the emblem of the Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate.

Article V. Executive Body

Section A. The executive body of the Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate shall be the Executive Committee consisting of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Past President. The State FFA Advisor shall be an ex-officio non-voting member.

Section B. All officers of the Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate must be members of the organization and shall serve annual terms.

Section C. Duties of the officers shall be consistent with those usually pertaining to the respective offices.

Article VI. Amendments

Section A. The constitution of the Maryland FFA Life-Member Affiliate may be amended or changed at any regular meeting by a two-thirds vote of the active members present providing such change is not in conflict with the constitutions or by-laws of the State or National FFA Alumni Associations. Any such proposed changes must be mailed to the membership postmarked at least twenty (20) days prior to the vote.

Section B. Proposed amendments to the constitution of the Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate may be submitted by any active member in writing and shall be placed before the membership for voting if received by the secretary sixty (60) days prior to the annual meeting. Otherwise the proposal shall be submitted to the Executive Committee who may in turn

mail such proposals to the membership for future consideration.

Section C. Voting may be by mail ballot. Ballots shall be submitted to the membership at least thirty (30) days prior to the vote-counting date.

Section D. Affirmation by two-thirds of those voting shall be necessary to adopt an amendment.

Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate By-Laws

Article I. General

Section A. These By-Laws shall be considered a part of the Constitution of the Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate.

Article II. Location of Principal Office

Section A. The principal office of the Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate shall be located at the mailing address of the secretary.

Article III. Procedure for Selection of Officers

Section A. The officers of the Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate shall be elected by a majority vote at the annual meeting. Each member in good standing shall be entitled to one vote.

Section B. Whenever a vacancy occurs on the Executive Committee other than from expiration of the term of office, the Executive Committee shall appoint a person to fill the unexpired term of office.

Article IV. Duties of the Executive Committee

Section A. It shall be the duty of the Executive Committee to direct the operation of the organization in accordance with its constitutional purposes. Such duties include planning programs and activities which are appropriate for the organization and managing financial affairs as directed by the organization.

Section B. The Executive Committee may appoint such committees as necessary to further the work of the Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate.

Article V. Meetings

Section A. The annual meeting and other necessary meetings of the Maryland FFA Alumni

Life-Member Affiliate shall be held at such a time and place as may be prescribed by the Executive Committee or by organizational vote. Annual meetings may be held at the time and place of the State Convention of the Maryland Association of FFA.

Section B. All meetings of the organization shall be announced to the membership by way of mail communication postmarked at least twenty (20) days before the meeting date.

Article VI. Records and Finances

Section A. The fiscal year of the Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate shall commence on the first day of July each year and shall end on the thirtieth of June.

Section B. Books and records of the Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate may be inspected by any member or his/her agent or attorney at any reasonable time.

Section C. The financial books and accounts shall be audited annually by a committee appointed by the President. The treasurer, or anyone authorized to handle and account for funds, should be bonded in sufficient amount to protect the association.

Section D. The secretary shall maintain minutes of all meetings of the organization and Executive Committee and pass them on to the successor for safe keeping.

Section E. The treasurer shall maintain accurate financial accounts, submit the records for annual audit and pass current and past financial records on to the successor for safe keeping.

Article VII. Reports

Section A. The Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate should submit an annual report within thirty (30) days of the end of the fiscal year to the Maryland FFA Alumni Association and to the membership of the Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate.

Article VIII. Dues and Membership

Section A. National Dues

Dues for life membership in the National FFA Alumni Association is a one-time payment of \$100 and thus eliminates the need for renewing membership. A prorated life membership plan of \$25 for five years is available.

Life members receive a special membership

card, a handsome life member certificate, a lifetime subscription to THE NATIONAL FUTURE FARMER magazine, and full membership benefits including the "FFA Alumni Newsletter" and full voting privileges for life. Life members have the option of buying a special diamond lapel pin available only to life members.

Life member dues are placed in a special fund and only the interest is used to service the life member. Upon the death of a life member, a \$100 Memorial Scholarship in the name of the life member can be designated for use by an FFA Chapter or Association to support the education in agriculture of an FFA member.

Section B. Maryland FFA Alumni Life-Member Affiliate Dues

Dues for this organization shall be \$50.00 This shall be a one-time life membership payment. It is the intent of this organization to use interest earned from these dues and other funds as earned to operate this affiliate. Dues will be held in an interest bearing account.

A life membership card shall be provided by the organization.

Section C. Maryland FFA Alumni Association Dues

Under the current structure, the National FFA Alumni Association pays state association dues for its life-members.

In summary, this affiliate has eliminated some major problems normally associated with local FFA alumni groups. It attracts statewide leaders in agriculture, business, industry and education. It eliminates the need for membership renewals by way of the life-membership feature. Further, the organization permits statewide leaders to support FFA without showing local preference.

Finally, the organization provides a mechanism for unique alumni support at the state level through an alumni affiliate. The constitution and by-laws of the organization spell out the details of organization and operation.

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BOOK REVIEWS

MINNESOTA FFA FROM THE BEGINNING, A PICTORIAL CHRONOLOGY, written by W.J. Kortesmaki, Apollo Books, Inc., Winona, Minnesota, 1983, \$9.95.

MINNESOTA FFA FROM THE BEGINNING is a chronology of the activities of the Minnesota Association of the Future Farmers of America since its inception in 1929 and concluding with the National FFA Convention in 1982. The compilation and validation of the book's information was accomplished by its author, W.J. Kortesmaki. Mr. Kortesmaki was Minnesota's FFA Executive Secretary from 1947 until his retirement in August of 1977.

The primary purpose of this publication is to fill the historical story of the Minnesota FFA. The initial chapters focus upon the FFA's origin and subsequent growth, its activities, and the individuals who have helped to write the story. This information is simply divided into sections entitled "The Early Years", "The Twenties", etc. . . . up

until "The Eighties." Within these pages, the state president, state star farmer/ag-businessperson, outstanding advisors, and other individuals who influenced the FFA record are sited in their respective year of affiliation. Thousands of names are noted and remembered for their contributions to the association. These chapters are also highlighted with photo after photo of the event or noticeable person being remembered.

These chapters are then followed by a "State and National Appendix." The true purpose and strength of the book is evident in these sections of the book, since all official records of the Minnesota FFA are summarized here. The following listings (from their initiation to the present) are made: adult board of directors, agricultural proficiency awards, miscellaneous awards and citations, state band and choir directors, state contest winners, district advisors, state fair results, state degree winners, state officers, triple crown

awards, national proficiency awards, American farmer degrees, national band and choir members, national judging contest results, and Star Farmer/Ag-businessman of America recipients.

The author is to be commended for his dedication to preserving the heritage of the Minnesota Association of the FFA. We are all guilty of assuming that the past will remain forever in our hearts and minds, but we all know that this seldom occurs with accuracy. Kort's publication, however, allows us to keep these good intentions alive. We are fortunate to have this accounting as a useful reference in studying the history of the Minnesota FFA. This book should be placed on the bookshelf of every vo-ag classroom in Minnesota and in the personal library of many an FFA enthusiast.

Louise Worm
University of Minnesota
St. Paul, MN

UPDATING TEACHERS FOR TOMORROW'S TECHNOLOGY: A STRATEGY FOR ACTION presents an overall strategy for meeting the technological updating needs of secondary and postsecondary vocational/technical teachers. The document is designed for use by those faced with providing technological update: local school and district administrators; professional development leaders; business-industry representatives; and State and Federal department of education personnel.

Concerned with the design and implementation of technological update programs, the strategy offered consists of nine characteristics:

- *Structure for Action
- *Roles and Responsibilities
- *Policy
- *Resources
- *Incentives and Rewards
- *High-potential Techniques
- *Alternative Technique Configurations
- *Incorporation of Update in Programs
- *Continuing and Self-renewing Activities

Development of the characteristics stemmed from a panel of experts' recommendations. The panel, representing business, industry, and education, also formulated recommendations for Federal, State, and local policymakers.

You may order UPDATING TEACHERS FOR TOMORROW'S TECHNOLOGY: A STRATEGY FOR ACTION (RD242 — \$4.95), 71 pages, from the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, Publications Office, Box N, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210-1090; 800/848-4815 (toll free outside Ohio) or 614/486-3655. A companion publication, UPDATING TEACHERS FOR TOMORROW'S TECHNOLOGY: PROGRAMS & PRACTICES (RD241 — \$5.75), 66 pages, is also available. Development of these publications was sponsored by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education.

The Hobart School of Welding Technology recently announced a new series of training courses designed to develop skills and techniques using

continuous wire (semiautomatic) processes. In addition to the popular two week Basic Gas Metal Arc Welding which covers short circuiting transfer on carbon steel plate, three new courses are available:

1. Gas Metal Arc Welding Spray introduces welding skills using spray, globular and pulse transfers on carbon steel (one week course).
2. Gas Metal Arc Welding Aluminum presents welding skills on aluminum plate (one week course).
3. Flux Cored Arc Welding using small and large diameter wires on carbon steels with and without gas shielding (two week course).

Gas Metal Arc Welding Pipe completes the expanded family of courses. These courses provide maximum effectiveness through 80% laboratory work developing skills and welding techniques. For further information as to starting dates, tuition and course content, write to: Registrar at the Hobart School of Welding Technology, Trade Square East, Troy, Ohio 45373 or call 513/339-6000 extension 4124 or 4609.

1986 Themes

How to stay current with technical agriculture is the focus for the remaining 1986 themes. Please contact the theme editors if you have an article or materials to contribute.

ISSUE AND THEME	DATE DUE	THEME EDITOR
FEBRUARY Staying Current: Agricultural Mechanics	At Press	Dr. Roger D. Perritt S.F. Austin State University Dept. of Agricultural Ed. Nacogdoches, TX 75962
MARCH Staying Current: Agribusiness and Farm Management	At Press	Dr. Edgar A. Persons Dept. of Vo. & Tech. Ed. University of Minnesota 320 Vo Tech Building St. Paul, MN 55108
APRIL Staying Current: Crop & Food Production	At Press	Dr. Doug Bishop Dept. of Agricultural & Industrial Education Montana State University Bozeman, MT 59717
MAY Staying Current: Forestry and Natural Resources	Jan. 10, 1986	Dr. Danny L. Cheatham Agricultural & Extension Education Department P.O. Drawer AV. Mississippi State, MS 39762
JUNE Staying Current: Animal Agriculture	Feb. 14, 1986	Dr. Ray Herren Oregon State University Extension Hall 125 Corvallis, OR 97331
JULY Staying Current: Classroom and Laboratory Management	March 14, 1986	Dr. Gary Moore Ag. Ed. Department Louisiana State University Baton Rouge, LA 70803
AUGUST Staying Current: High Technology	April 11, 1986	Mr. Robert A. Seefeldt National FFA Center P.O. Box 15160 Alexandria, VA 22309
SEPTEMBER Staying Current: High Technology	May 16, 1986	Dr. Fred Reneau Agricultural Education Southern Illinois University Carbondale, IL 62901
OCTOBER Staying Current: Small Animals and Specialty Crops	June 13, 1986	Dr. James A. Knight, Jr. The Ohio State University 208 Agricultural Admin. Bldg. 2120 Fyffe Road Columbus, OH 43210-1099
NOVEMBER Staying Current: Professional Affairs	July 11, 1986	Mr. Rosco Vaughn Vocational Ag. Education State Department of Education Box 3501 New Mexico State University Las Cruces, NM 88003
DECEMBER Staying Current: Horticulture	August 15, 1986	Mr. Carroll Shry Vocational Agriculture Teacher 11622 Cragerstown Road Woodsboro, MD 21798

Stories in Pictures

Vo-Ag and FFA Stories Must Be Told



The 1985 FFA TV special provided an opportunity for agricultural education and FFA to catch opinion leaders' attention. Here U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole receives a broken plate from Maryland and Virginia state officers. Broken plates were distributed on Capitol Hill to promote the TV special's Washington, DC airing.



Public Service Announcements produced the past two years featuring Eddie Albert have attempted to broaden the public's perception of agriculture. Millions of dollars of space and air time have been contributed to the FFA for placement of the PSAs.



The 1985 National FFA TV Special featuring Eddie Albert was filmed to create awareness of agriculture's "brain drain." Over 5 million people viewed the special which was aired in over 124 television markets.

(Photographs courtesy of
Coleman Harris of the National FFA Center.)



The advent of the Ag Ed Network, the National FFA Computers in Agriculture programs, and FFA's new Agriculture Education Computer Services (AECS), all will assist agricultural education in taking advantage of the opportunity of educating agriculture on the value of the computer and information management in agriculture.