THEME: Staying Current — Professional Affairs
Earning the Professional Stripes

Leaders in agricultural education discuss in this issue how to stay current with professional affairs from several perspectives: vocational agriculture teachers, state supervisors, teacher educators, and the Executive Director of the National Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association. Rosco Vaughn, this issue's theme editor, selected these leaders whose thoughts indicate an agreement on staying current with professional affairs. When they write about that elusive beast called professionalism, there are also common themes. If pooled, these leaders would agree that a profession is a group of individuals with similar occupa
tional interests, education, experiences, goals, objectives, salaries, etc. Differences would probably surface when specific traits of a professional are discussed. Although the terminology, rhetoric, and semantics would appear vastly different, the bottom line seems to be that profession means quality and demands no less of its members.

This standard-setting and governance element of professionalism is not addressed directly by the authors. From a traditional perspective, the more respected members of the group are those who exercise tremendous control over who enters the profession. Perhaps the best example of classic professions in volvo law and medicine. Both of these professions have rigorous boards and associations that perform regulatory functions. In essence, they "rule here" over the profession to block the entrance of and weed-out incompetents and those not adhering to accepted standards of professional conduct.

Enforcement of Standards

Unfortunately, the governance function has been treated lightly by professions such as education, including agricultural education. In higher education, promotion and tenure standards serve this function, but comparable elements of rigor and control are not in place on the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. It is apparent, however, that the educational reform movement and its "Reports" are demanding such standards for secondary and primary school teachers. Historically, most reformers in education were organizations dedicated to legislative or executive mandate. Although such imposi
tions violate norms associated with a profession, in education the same is happening. The independence and self-regulation of these groups has been severely restricted in the past ten years. Rightfully so, guilt and blame are now being given to all segments of the education profession because the desired quality is simply not there — yet.

In the haste to reform education, however, solutions must be realistic, effective, and capable of being implemented. The earliest solutions proposed this decade involved money, i.e., teacher salaries. America has shown that teachers must be better compensated because salaries of U.S. teachers increased 23% over the past three years (The Columbus Dispatch, November 7, 1986, p. 8A). One suspects that such increases can explain why

51% of the new teachers hired this year are former teachers. My hope is that the returns are committed to quality teaching and not just a higher salary.

Through all of this, a question of the hen and egg variety must be asked: Do we first upgrade the performance of teachers and then pay for it OR do we pay first and later expect the desired performance? A balance between the two extremes seems most logical. One hopes that recent salaries are of the installment variety with subsequent increases given if teacher performance continues to improve. In a similar vein, while money certainly cannot buy much of education's ill, higher salaries will provide a larger pool of talent. As virtually all of the reports have graphically documented, the most academically able students do not become teachers. It is unrealistic to assume that the pay scale is not involved because therefore, many very strong teacher candidates simply could not expect salaries commensurate with the required education and training. But, as financial incentives become more lucrative, America can rightfully expect higher quality performances from its teachers.

In this regard, if education wishes to continue consider
ing itself a profession, it must accept more responsibility for quality control, and that starts with the rank, a major irritant. Certain questions must be posed regarding: How can education as a profes
sion upgrade its performance, regulate itself, and be equitably compensated? The latest reform idea with the most promise is the Holmes Group Proposal. Since this Proposal did not generate the media hype of earlier reports, a brief description is warranted.

The Holmes Group Proposal

Some three years ago, dozens of education from 17 major research universities met informally and the result is a con
sortium with two long range goals: (1) to reform teacher education programs and (2) to reform teaching as a profes
sion. The most radical change involves potential teachers first acquiring an undergraduate degree in a subject matter area and then taking their professional education courses during a master's degree program. In essence, colleges of education would get out of the undergraduate education business.

(Continued on page 4)
Earning the Professional Stripes  (Continued from page 3)
For this plan to succeed, two major ingredients are needed. First, states must agree to certify teachers who will use this new approach. Second, other universities must cooperate. Relative to the second ingredient, Frank Murray wrote in September, 1986 issue of the Phi Delta Kappa (pages 28-32) that the Holmes Group has extended charter membership invitations to 123 universities (see the September issue of the Kappan for other articles on the Proposal). These college of education faculties are now deciding if they wish to participate. At the Ohio State University, for example, the College of Education Faculty Senate voted 11-3 earlier this year to join the Holmes Group and implement its principles by the end of this year  (OSU on Campus, June 26, 1986).
As the Holmes Group concept gains favor, questions should be posed about its impact on agricultural education as a profession. Currently, agricultural education and a few selected areas can be exempt from the Proposal. The Ohio State agriculture education faculty voted to support the Proposal in principle, but decided to use the exemption procedure and do further study of the potential ramifications. Naturally, if all undergraduate instruction in agricultural education is eliminated, the results could be profound to say the least.
A most encouraging dimension of the Holmes Group is that educators can make tough decisions that should enhance teacher quality and result in a more educated and I hope a more respected profession. Because the changes are being proposed from “within,” this lends credence to the notion that a profession must enact standards and govern itself. If the Holmes Group Proposal is fully implemented and rigor, self-examination, and higher quality performance result, educators should rightfully expect appropriate payment of those next installments without delay.

THEME
Staying Current Through Professional Development

The formula for success in Agricultural Education may be summarized best in the Vice President’s part of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) Greenhand Ceremony. In this ceremony, the vice president states that success in a career and in life is primarily the result of knowledge and hard work. Every member of the agricultural education profession has obtained the academic preparation and/or the specialized knowledge required to enter this chosen occupation. The major differences among members of the profession are usually attributed to the second ingredient of the formula for success, namely hard work.

Current leaders in agricultural education have contributed to this issue of The Agricultural Education Magazine and although each represents some specific facet of the profession, the articles contain information that can be applied to the total field of agricultural education. The authors all agree that professionals must stay current and be actively involved in dealing with major issues.

You, as an individual, can make a difference in agricultural education, but you will be willing to make a personal commitment. First, you must participate in professional activities. You become involved by joining your professional organization, by asking questions, attending meetings, voting on issues, running for office, and applying for awards. Be willing to commit your time and even some of your financial resources to agricultural education and to your personal and professional development.

Other professionals have made similar commitments that have allowed our profession to grow and mature since the early 1900s. Seek the advice of your colleagues and the officers of your professional organizations. By reading this issue of The Magazine, you will become familiar with much of the philosophy and advice your leaders have to offer. However, don’t forget to follow-up with letters or personal contacts to obtain answers to questions you raise as you read this issue.

A cooperative attitude, with all members working together, is critical for the continued success of agricultural education in this country. The true professionals among us will ensure that this cooperation occurs and that agricultural education will remain a vital segment of our nation’s educational system.

THEME
Professionalism Among Vocational Agriculture Teachers

Professionalism truly is a word meaning different things to different folks. To some it might be a state of mind, to others the degree of preparation for one’s job, and yet to another, a dedicated effort. I know of professional athletes, doctors, welders, lawyers, fishermen, teachers, astronauts, architects, dieticians, ministers, and for four years now a man in a suit and tie in a Washington, D.C. airport with a billboard, handouts, and a cause. I am sure that he thinks he is a professional. Professionals in their own minds and with a specific purpose. A heart transplanted, a tractor overhauled, eleven three-point shots in a row, a bado landscape design, a person placed on employment, all done by professionals. To some you would say the word is used loosely. Is there a generation gap — does it really matter?

What is professionalism to you? A suit and tie or a sweater, long hair or short, dress or slacks, is someone with a doctorate more professional than someone with a bachelor’s degree? As was said: Ralph Thomas of Oklahoma, is a professional with his hat on or with his hat off. It is a matter of perspective. We do, however, as individuals set certain values to the things that we call professional. We ask that certain levels of achievement or certain standards be met before we let something fall into the professional category. What is professionalism to you?

The people involved in Vocational Agriculture Education as I know them are very professional. Read the Vocational Agriculture Teachers Creed if you do not understand what I mean. We are teachers by choice and not by chance. It is more than a job that we are involved with even more than a way of life — but a true responsibility to the person, usually youth interested in education in agriculture. We have not, however, avoided the post secondary, more aged, or non-traditional student who seeks education in agriculture. We are concerned that this education lead to gainful employment and productively as a citizen.

Be they the classroom teacher, the state supervisor, or the teacher, educational professional attitudes abound. There is concern for each other, for the constituent, be thy youth or adult, and there is a feeling of respect and confidence between the factions. Sure there are a few exceptions to the rule, but isn’t professionalism being that total dedicated person? Giving that extra so that someone else does better, gets ahead, is happy and successful?

Believe what you will, but students act, dress, talk, study, and work with similar patterns shown by parents and special instructors. We are those special instructors. Especially effective leadership must continue. I am not trying to make this group seem too strong. Wayne Sprick of Missouri said, “I teach students” and his program is that which is built around student needs not teacher or parent desires. Brad Moffitt of Ohio and

THE COVER
Teacher associations must nurture and reward professional excellence. Association of Teachers of Agriculture of New York President Victoria Woods presents an honorary membership to returning agriculture teacher Richard S. Scott. Nichey Nichols for his many years of professional service.  (Photo by Warren Giles)
Staying Current: Professional Affairs and The Agricultural Education Division

The Agricultural Education Division is one of 12 divisions in the American Vocational Association (AVA). Vice presidents from these divisions, the five regions, plus the past president, president, and president-elect comprise the AVA Board of Directors. This group is the policy making body of the AVA.

The Agricultural Education Division consists of three affiliated professional organizations: National Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association (NVATA), American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture (AATEA) and National Association of Supervisors of Agricultural Education (NASAE). The Policy Committee is the governing body of the Agricultural Education Division. It is comprised of the elected officers of the three affiliates plus the Division vice president and Division secretary who are elected by the membership.

Missions of the Division

The primary missions of the Division are to:

Mission No. 1: Assist the AVA in achieving its goals and objectives as outlined in the annual AVA Program of Work.

Mission No. 2: Provide a mechanism whereby the three affiliated organizations of the Division can communicate with AVA.

Mission No. 3: Assist the National Council for Vocational and Technical Education in Agriculture (Council) in identifying priority issues of the profession, in serving as a sounding board for the verification of priority issues, in assisting to develop strategies for resolving priority issues and in developing and implementing plans to resolve the issues.

Let’s explore how the Division, through its membership, seeks to accomplish these missions.

Mission No. 1: AVA Program of Work

One goal cited in the FY87 AVA Program of Work is to:

"Increase the potential of all education programs and institutions to provide improved and expanded quality vocational education for all participants."

An objective identified to assist in achieving this goal is:

"Encourage vocational educators to continue the pursuit of excellence in vocational education . . . with particular emphasis at the teacher training levels within universities and colleges and within state vocational education departments."

How can the Agricultural Education Division assist AVA to achieve this goal and accomplishing objective?

Industry internships, industry-sponsored short courses and workshops, traveling seminars, independent work and other relevant, in-service activities must become a part of each teacher’s professional development plan. Each year teachers must spend sufficient time to keep themselves technically and professionally current in order to ensure their students are provided relevant instruction part of the in-service education program offered by teacher educators.

Revisitation of the use of proven methods.

There is a strong model in existence for designing and delivering programs of vocational agriculture at the local level. This model includes an "Instructional Agenda" for teaching students both job specific skills and employment related skills associated with careers in agriculture.

Preparation for careers in agriculture is the job skills portion of the vocational agriculture program. Developing attitudes, values, and leadership skills; improving public speaking; teaching students how to think; instilling the work ethic; developing responsibility; and human relations skill development are some of the employment related skills essential for students to enter and advance up the career ladder. Some have said that the "vocational agriculture model" should become the model for educational reform in this country.

To assist students in preparing for both job specific and employment related skills, agricultural educators must place a greater emphasis upon supervised occupational experience (S.O.E); the problem solving approach to teaching and learning; leadership development through the FFA; developing strong relations with the community as a response to meeting local needs; and entrepreneurship development, to name a few. These "learning tools" are applicable today as in the past in the light of studies indicating a need for students to possess skills in decision making and evidence of the ability to assume responsibility.

Teacher Educators

If teacher educators are really serious about the pursuit of excellence in vocational education in agriculture, they must pay particular attention to their pre-service and in-service teacher education programs. Teacher educators can:

• Focus efforts to improve pre-service and in-service programs.

At the pre-service level, strengthen the technical competence of beginning teachers in agricultural business management.

Increase course work in the area of management, marketing, finance, selling, etc., must be incorporated into the pre-service course of study of prospective agricultural educators. Current emphasis on "production-type" courses may have to be reduced to accommodate more work in business management.

Once technical competence in business management has been attained, the teacher educator’s responsibility and challenge to equip prospective teachers with the ability to teach it (business management) with enthusiasm and interest.

By FLOYD MCCORMICK

(De McCormick is Vice President of the Agricultural Education Division of AVA and Head of the Department of Agricultural Education, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona 85721.)

Division membership consists of teachers, teacher educators, and state supervisors. Therefore, let's review "what and how" each group of agricultural educators can do to "continue the pursuit of excellence.

Teachers

Teachers of agriculture at secondary, postsecondary, and adult levels can:

• Focus efforts to improve programs at the local level.

How?

1. Get community into the programs.

From all indications, federal support for vocational education will diminish further in the years ahead. If this happens, community support will be essential to survival. Community support emanates from quality, relevant programs.

2. Modernize the instructional content of the curriculum.

The image that vocational agriculture programs train only farmers still persists. Too often, programs of instruction deal only with a narrow segment of production agriculture.

Over the years, graduates of vocational agriculture programs have told us they need and want more agricultural management instruction, more instruction on business management, and more competence in using sound business management tools.

It is evident there is a paramount need to stress the agriculture-business dimension of agriculture (marketing, managing, financing, selling, serving) if the instructional content of the vocational curriculum is to meet contemporary needs of students.

Teaching methods must utilize computers and employ real-life situation and case studies.

3. Update teacher competence.

Vocational education in agriculture must be taught by technically and occupationally competent teachers. It is essential that teachers be "industry current" relative to agricultural competencies taught to their students.

In-service education must focus upon the updating of teacher competence.

Would it be effective to teach production agriculture competencies at the in-service level? Is this not plausible in the light that most business management concepts and principles must be taught at the pre-service level.

Industry internships, business-oriented workshops, etc., must be a viable part of the in-service education program offered by teacher educators.

State Supervisors

State supervision can:

• Focus efforts to champion the vocational education in agriculture programs in their states.

How?

1. Get serious about implementing program standards.

Program standards do not guarantee programs of excellence in and of themselves. Yet, the perception of quality is evident.

For quality programs of vocational agriculture to exist, there must be minimum requirements (standards) which must be met. These must be provided by vocational agriculture teachers by the local school:

• Extended contract for year-round instruction.
• Time for on-one-on one on-site instructional visits.
• Reporting system of achievements.
• Manageable student-teacher ratio (6:1).
• Follow-up data on program completion.
• Travel resources on-site instruction.

To a great extent, it will be the responsibility of state supervision to assist the local teacher in realizing these minimum standards.

2. Build an articulated system of agricultural education.

One only needs to study the wide range of curriculum offered in programs across the country to realize there is a broadening of the scope of vocational education in agriculture. With fewer and fewer people engaged directly in agriculture, there is an imper-
2. Should the U.S. Department of Agriculture take a more active role to support formal education in agriculture, or should support remain primarily with the U.S. Department of Education?
3. Should federal money be utilized to support local programs of vocational agriculture, or should these programs be supported by local and state funds only?
4. In the light of a declining farm population, should vocational agriculture programs at the secondary level shift their major instructional emphasis to "agricultural literacy," or should these programs be both "preparatory" and "general" in nature?
5. Should federal funds be available to local schools that offer vocational agriculture programs whose primary purpose is to teach "agricultural literacy?"
6. Should basic principles of agriculture or basic principles of science and math be stressed in vocational agriculture programs at the secondary level?
7. Should the name be changed from "vocational agriculture" to "agricultural science?"
8. Should the "preparation component" of vocational agriculture be shifted to the postsecondary level as the primary delivery system?

Summary
An attempt has been made to illustrate how professional affairs of members of the Agricultural Education profession can be affected by the actions of the Agricultural Education Division. Nothing will change without membership involvement, and then only with an involved membership that is dedicated and committed to the "pur- pose" of technical and vocational education in agriculture at all levels of delivery.

THEME
Professional Affairs and the Beginning Teacher

I owe it to myself to help vocational agriculture education move forward at the regional, state, and national levels.

Professional meetings and conferences bring me ideas and information. They are put to the test before they are passed to me.

Committee projects and other activities enable me to contribute professionally.

When other obligations command my attention, the officers, directors, and staff of the NAVTA keep working in my interest.

We live in a society of large scale group activity. As vocational agriculture educators, we can promote our interests and discharge our responsibilities through effective organization.

The individual teacher has an opportunity to be heard in small groups. However, in a country of more than 200 million people only the exceptional individuals will be heard on the national level. For most, successful participation means involvement through organized group action.

Through a professional organization, the individual members may extend their views beyond their normal outreach. A professional organization provides a forum for persons of similar backgrounds and common interests so they can meet to discuss both old and new ideas.

Individuals who engage in association activities are more often more aware of the issues and problems confronting their profession. The individual member plays a vital role in establishing policies and goals of the profession, supplying the public with appropriate and correct information, making policy makers aware of the need for funds to improve and expand programs, securing appropriate legislation, and working for more desirable status for the profession.

Individual members, through a professional organization, can most effectively engage in the collection, development, interpretation, and dissemination of the information relative to vocational agriculture education. Through self-study, research, professional conferences and conventions, the member gains insight into the issues and problems confronting the profession.

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The National Association of Vocational Agricultural Teachers (NVATA) is an affiliation of 50 state vocational agricultural teacher associations. The membership includes secondary, postsecondary and adult teachers of vocational agriculture, state supervisors of vocational education, university preparation students of vocational agricultural education, and teacher educators in universities preparing students to teach vocational agriculture, and student teachers. More than 10,000 secondary and postsecondary schools teach vocational agriculture classes below the baccalaureate degree. Nearly 9,000 vocational agriculture educators are members of the NVATA. For administrative purposes, the NVATA is divided into six regions, each served by a vice president. Business is conducted by a Board of Directors comprised of the president, president-elect, and the vice presidents. All are classroom teachers of vocational agriculture education. The NVATA maintains a national office in Alexandria, Virginia, operated by a full-time executive director and staff.

Communications is the strength of a professional organization. NVATA communications are initiated and maintained through the national office, to the regional vice presidents, to the SVATA or State Association officers, and to the individual members via newsletters. Bulletins, newsletters not only communicate similar information, but also give directions or procedures and implementation. SVATA's communicate directly with individual members. The communications system enables members to become involved and participate in professional activities. Beginning teachers are encouraged to participate in the annual state/regional/national conferences, professional improvement workshops, and awards programs.

Practically every state conducts an annual conference. Some states have joint vocational agriculture meetings. Others conduct conferences for vocational agriculture education with that state's extension or vocational education business meetings as part of the conference. Beginning teacher involvement is recommended. The NVATA conducts a regional leadership conference annually. Although all members are encouraged to participate, travel is often a limiting factor. Members should make a special effort to attend whenever the conference is held, and when the annual state conference is held in a neighboring state. The NVATA also conducts an annual national conference. Since the program includes the annual business meeting, normally SVATA officers attend as official delegates. The meetings are open and members are encouraged to attend whenever feasible. The major advantage to attending meetings such as these is that they provide an opportunity for involvement, personal growth, and professional improvement.

Programs and Activities

The NVATA coordinates several programs which offer professional improvement opportunities for members. The "Partners for Professional Improvement" program focuses upon public relations in the local state level. The "Career Marketing" and "Livestock Marketing" seminars are workshops on "future" marketing. "Mechanical Technical Update" workshops provide the members, the latest information, in the areas of modern agriculture machines and equipment. The "Computers in Agriculture" workshop incorporates the use of computers in the classroom and reviews programs available for local use. These programs are sponsored by agriculture/agribusiness industries and are conducted by the representatives. Participation is limited. Enrollment is available only to NVATA members through state associations. SVATA and NVATA have access to program information. They use their newsletters to announce programs.

Many NVATA "Awards and Recognition" programs are available. Although some award opportunities are available to experienced teachers, several... "Thirty Minute Club," "Ideas Unlimited," "Outstanding Young Member," "Outstanding Vocational Agriculture Teacher," are available to those for whom there are a few years of teaching. These programs vary in expense. The "Thirty Minute Club" award provides a recognition certificate; the "Ideas Unlimited" program recognizes regions; the "Outstanding Young Member" and "Outstanding Vocational Agriculture Program" provide statewide recognition with an opportunity for regional recognition. Each regional winner receives an expense-paid trip to the annual NVATA National Convention. Each of these programs is coordinated by the NVATA, but administered through the SVATA. State and national officers can provide information.

Summary

The NVATA is recognized as a leader for vocational agricultural education. It strives to provide professional leadership and services to members. The NVATA has been, is, and will continue to be an effective, viable voice for vocational agriculture. The individual member is represented by the NVATA delegates at the national convention. It is the delegators who establish priorities for the NVATA. In this manner, the individual member is involved in determining priorities and setting goals for the profession. How the individual member assumes that obligation and discharges those responsibilities will largely determine the future growth and success of the NVATA in the decade ahead. It is vitally important that every vocational agriculture educator be involved.

By PAUL VAUGHN
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Professional Affairs and the New Teacher Educator

On several occasions, I have heard a distinguished teacher educator say (in a rather gruff voice), "Teacher education is the only profession I know in which we can rehabilitate our young." In regard to professional affairs, I think he is correct. We expect our new teacher educators to be actively involved in professional activities while at the same time, we make it very difficult for them to participate in such activities.

Much of this is due to the fact that those with leadership roles in a professional organization are reluctant to assign anyone they have not met (or know very little about) to a committee or other professional responsibility. Thus, new teacher educators are left out in the cold. I am more accurately, they are left with a blank space on their vita. When they submit their materials to a peer review committee for promotion and/or tenure, the committee severely mastics their unfortunate individuals for their lack of professional activities (or, as our distinguished teacher educator claims, digests them).

Another problem for the new teacher educator is the Catch 22 situation that exists where one cannot travel to a professional meeting unless one has some type of responsibility. The catch is you can't get a responsibility unless you agree to go. Although this is also a problem for experienced teacher educators, it is the usual new teacher educator that is left behind.

As such can be done? One obvious thing we can do is continue to encourage our professional leaders to consciously include neophytes when making committee or professional assignments. However, most of the responsibility rests with the leadership in the profession. That burden must be accepted by the new teacher educator. The following is a short list of suggestions for new teacher educators to review as they become professionally active.

Becoming Active

1. Recognize that you are going to have to spend money out of your own pocket. Although I am a firm believer in any opportunity for financial assistance for participation in professional activities, I am also convinced that there are few departments today which can afford to pay 100 percent of the costs for every faculty member in professional activities. I am not just talking about payment of dues (we know that will come from your own pocket); I am also talking about travel to and from state, regional, and national events. You should recognize that many people in the agricultural education profession (most notably teachers and state supervisors) have, for years, paid their way to professional activities. Do not assume that all teacher educators get a free ride when it comes to participation in professional activities. We have been fortunate, as a group, to have many of our expenses paid, but I know of no teacher educator who is active professionally who has not paid a number of his/her own expenses on different occasions.

If you wish to become an active participant in professional affairs, this may be the hardest obstacle to overcome. No one needs to tell me (or my wife) the financial strain that professional activities place on the family budget of a beginning teacher educator. However, this is part of being a professional, and professional expenses should be one item that you include every year in your personal or family budget. Even though it happens at a time when you can least afford it, you will find that involvement in professional activities will pay great dividends later in your career.

(Continued on page 12)
2. Don't wait to be asked. If you sit back and wait for professional responsibilities to be assigned to you, you may have a long wait. If you wish to serve on a particular committee or have a specific activity, be sure to let the individual in charge of appointments know of your interest. It does not mean that you will automatically be appointed, but in many instances this is what happens. I can assure you that no one will be offended if you volunteer your services — especially, if you indicate that you are willing to serve in any capacity. One of the most difficult tasks for a chair or president is identifying people who are willing to conduct or assist with a particular activity, and most individuals welcome this assistance.

I know of several young teacher educators who were appointed at the method utilized to determine membership on a number of AAVA Agricultural Education Committees. They found the major criteria for selection was expressed interest in serving on the committee! They were eager to participate because they felt they might only experienced people could be appointed. Once they attended a meeting and expressed their interest, the leadership was more than happy to appoint them to the committee. Most of these individuals went on to chair these committees and become heavily involved in other professional activities.

3. Be willing to do some of the more unpleasant assignments. The desire to do a good job in teaching, research, and service, coupled with a limited number of resources (usually time), often misguides beginning teacher educators. When it comes to professional activities, there is a temptation to look only at activities which do not require a tremendous amount of work. I can assure you that most important activities are usually the ones which require the most work.

Volunteering to assist with activities which are tedious, time-consuming, and sometimes unpleasant is the quickest way to get involved in professional activities. Needless to say, there are the activities that are of interest to few people; however, you might find the activities really aren't as unpleasant as you thought. Doing a good job on activities which other people tend to avoid is always noted (and appreciated) by leaders in the organization. Do a good job, and you can be sure you will be asked to participate in other activities which you may find more rewarding and less time-consuming.

4. Take your assignment/responsibility seriously. Complete any assignment/responsibility you have on time.

New teacher educators are often asked to organize and conduct FFA judging activities that require enormous time to coordinate. (Photo courtesy of Joe Ramaker.)

Regardless of what others on the committee/program do, needless to say, it should also be done to the best of your ability. This will mean that you may have burned the midnight oil on more than one occasion to find the whole story and make it complete.

5. Recognize the real value of being professionally active. I am afraid that up to this point, I have emphasized the monetary or intrinsic value of participating in professional activities. In reality, there are two kinds of professional development: (1) that which improves one's ability to function in a professional field, and (2) that which improves one's chance for promotion, tenure, and merit raises. The former, which is many times extrinsic in nature, represents the true value of being an active professional and should be the major driving force behind your participation.

Along the same line, don't expect to be rewarded for everything that you do. Because of the number of people in the profession, it is possible that you can be extremely active in professional affairs and never receive an award or be elected to a position. If that should happen to you, please do not feel that you have not gained something from your professional activities.

In addition to gaining information which will keep you on the cutting edge of the profession, you will have gained something that many people never acquire — the respect of your colleagues. And that, at some point, may be the biggest dividend of all.

### Coming in December . . .

### Staying Current in Horticulture

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**THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MAGAZINE**

**NOVEMBER, 1986**

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**THEME: Professionalism Among State Supervisors**

**What is a professional? What is professionalism within a given field?**

There have been numerous definitions of professionalism, articles, and reports written on these topics. However, I believe that the first thing one should do as an individual is to assume the responsibilities of an individual and actively participate in the professional activities of your profession.

Numerous changes have taken place in agriculture, education, club activities since I attended my first Vocation Agriculture Education Annual Conference as a beginning teacher. My high school Vocational Agriculture instructor, Mr. Justin Graves of the assistance.

by Dewey Stewart

(Dr. Stewart is President of NAACE and Chief Consultant, Education, State Department of Public Instruction, 229 State House, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204.)

**Traits of a Professional**

The following are some traits and characteristics of a professional. How do you rate? 1) Do you have the burning desire to serve others? 2) Do you take full responsibility for your decisions and actions? 3) Do you continuously seek self-improvement? 4) Do you feel that you are working for a boss? 5) Do you contribute to your profession? 6) Are you proud of your profession? 7) Are you honest and dependable in meeting your obligations? 8) Do you do what is necessary to get the job done? 9) Do you support all of the professional organizations within your profession? 10) Are you sensitive to problems and opportunities of others and your peers? 11) Do you avoid gossip and rumors? 12) Do you listen and learn? 13) Do you plan for future results? 14) Are you sometimes reactive but often proactive? If you will take the necessary time to thoroughly think through the ramifications of each of the above questions and to answer each truthfully, you will be provided with an indication of how you rate as a professional.

**Effective Supervisors**

In addition to the traits and characteristics of professionals, supervisors have some additional specialties that are effective. The following are some traits of supervisors that are effective: 1) Keep top management informed. 2) Be flexible; practice the art of the possible and sometimes the impossible. 3) Look for opportunities and not problems. 4) Know when to deal with the cause of a problem and when to ignore it. 5) Know what to do if the problem has or has not been solved. 6) Provide inspiration: have enthusiasm for tasks and ideas. 7) Know how to brainstorm a list of solutions. 8) Know how to make a cost/benefit analysis of solutions. 9) Take calculated risks: do not be satisfied with the status quo. 10) Know the difference between actual
Professionalism Among State Supervisors

(Continued from page 13)

alternatives and personal alternatives, and which are
more important. [13] Assume responsibility; know staff
strengths and weaknesses and your own. [12] Sometimes
suggest; sometimes specify: allow ideas to develop. [13]
Give credit; release power; accept others' ideas; give
recognition. [14] Know how to listen well: question,
restate, articulate, listen. [15] Have professional
knowledge, an experimental background, imagination.
[16] Understand the creative process; the flow of ideas is not
continuous. [17] Respect individual differences. [18] Have
insight; see beyond the obvious. [19] Know how to lead
subordinates in implementing a solution. [20] Understand
the process and value of setting deadlines in implementing
solutions. There is the possibility that there is no super-
visor who possesses all the characteristics listed above.
Perhaps all supervisors could improve by being aware of
the skills they already have, and the skills they need to
develop. One difference between a good supervisor and a
good athlete is the mastery of time and knowing how to
effectively multiply one's hands with less resources be-
ing available.

To the question, "Is There Professionalism Among State
Supervisors?" my answer is a very empathetic Yes. Of
course, I would be the first to agree that my perception is
a very biased one. However, let me explain one small activi-
ty of the National Association of Supervisors of Agricul-
tural Education (NASA), which is the professional organi-
zation for State Supervisors of Vocational Agricultural
Education across the nation. NASA will be conducting its
Second Annual Workshop in Kansas City, Missouri on
November 10-12, 1986 which is three days prior to the
National Future Farmers of America Convention. This
workshop will necessitate all 83 program participants, plus
the rest of the professional membership, having to arrive in
Kansas City by train or plane and spending two or three
extra nights lodging plus meals in order to attend this
workshop. The question arises as to why would these
ladies and gentlemen sacrifice this amount of time and
money to attend one workshop. The reason is that they are
professionals, and their professional commitment to
achieve the goals of their profession overrides other con-
siderations.

Workshop Agenda

The agenda for the workshop consists of such topics as:
1) What is the Role of Supervisors of Vocational Agricul-
tural Education in the Society at large? and 2) What
Adjustments in our Vocational Agricultural Education Programs are Needed to Meet the Employment

See the Professional Organizations in Action . . .
Attend the AVA, NVATA, NASAE, and AATEA Meetings in
Dallas, Texas, December 5—9, 1986.

PERSPECTIVES

Staying Current: Professional Affairs and the AVA

Each of us develops different concepts of who is a pro-
essional, how professionals are developed, or how we
measure professionalism. We all perceive in our minds
who we believe to be professional or how a professional
might be developed.

I contend that a professional cannot be categorized using
criteria because each of us is different in so many
aspects. Measurement is difficult.

We all have also listened to many describe what they
believe a professional organization should be or whom it
represents and how individuals can make input into their
professional organization.

The American Vocational Association is different from
any other professional organization with its sup-
porters and its critics. All professional organizations reflect
the desires of either a few continuing leaders or the inputs
of its total membership, and this depends on the structure
and character of their membership and the makeup of the cur-
rent officers of the organizations. Professional organiza-
tions were founded or are conceived by individuals with
commom goals who band together to achieve those goals
which the individual cannot achieve alone.

The American Vocational Association was officially
organized 60 years ago to support Vocational Education in
all areas known to have and has enlarged as new areas have
emerged over that sixty-year history. The Agricultural
Education Division, along with Home Economics and
Trade and Industrial Education, were the leaders in the
organization and the development of the AVA.

It was believed then, and I believe today, that the joining
together of more vocational educators with common in-
terests and the exchange of ideas and experiences would
assist area school systems in making better decisions,
both at the federal and state level. The organization has
attempted to represent agricultural education and those
students for the good of all youth and to the extent
adults have become employable through educational pro-
grains carried on throughout our nation. I firmly believe
that is still the basic reason for the AVA and all other
Vocational Education Divisions and individuals.

The value of professional organizations such as the AVA
is more critical today than ever before. Our early govern-
mental leaders believed it was their responsibility to direct
educational and other national programs for the common
good of the people and to aid and educate the nation in general. I con-
tend today, due to philosophical changes in our social
system, that the ability of government to develop long-
time programs in education, energy, and other national
goals has declined. It becomes the responsibility of profes-
sional organizations to now develop, support and encour-
ge our governmental leaders to adopt long-time goals
in all areas and specifically Vocational Education if we
are to continue our leadership which we helped pioneer
in earlier years.

Structure Allows Input

In order for the AVA to become a more effective organiza-
tion, we need a current structure which allows individual members the opportunity to give direc-
tion to the organization. Efforts have already begun in the
changing of the AVA delegate assembly meeting time to
the middle of the annual convention rather than at
the close for the 1988 Dallas Convention.

The AVA Past President's Study Group recommended,
and the Board of Directors has appointed a committee to
fully study the current AVA By-Laws structure. The Com-
mitee will report in December, 1986 and there recomenda-
tions are to be voted on at the 1987 Convention.

The AVA must, in my opinion, develop within its struc-
ture methods for individual members, at state and affiliate
division levels, a greater opportunity to address national
issues and concerns before arriving at the annual meeting
for enactment. Currently, too few individuals have an
opportunity to make input for they may not, or cannot,
attend the National Convention. The bulk of the AVA
membership is still the classroom teacher and many feel
they do not have the opportunity to make long-term deci-
sions affecting their personal vocational departments
where they are employed. This group is of distance causes
vocational teachers to become disillusioned with any
organization which they might wish to support with their
membership dues.

The AVA leadership must develop guidelines and policy
statements concerning Vocational Education which cause
the organization to be ready to address national and state
Vocational Education concerns at the meeting and not be a
reactive organization which must address issues after they
surface. Failure to alter this position will only result in
more membership loss.

Previous and current AVA Boards are working very
hard to correct this perception and turn the AVA into a
broad-based membership-driven organization that has
established positions developed and will be aggressive pro-
ponents of Vocational Education instead of seeming to be
reactive to issues affecting Vocational Education. The

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Staying Current: Professional Affairs and the AVA

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Board of Directors, the current Executive Director, and the staff fully believe this philosophy more today than in the past history of the organization.

Strong Divisions Needed

The Agricultural Education Division has historically been the strongest component of the AVA through its affiliated groups of NADEE, NAAEA, and AATEA. I fully expect the Division to continue that strong leadership and assist in the future directions which the AVA needs to address. Each of the Divisions has individual interests with which they are deeply concerned. Yet, all of the Divisions can agree on many issues in common. The AVA needs to support the common issues in Vocational Education which we agree upon and yet allow for individual differences which each Division supports. The leadership of the Divisions needs to understand the AVA cannot address or solve each Division’s concerns individually without affecting all to the same degree. Here the Divisional leadership must address these pertinent issues through their own structure and methods in a cooperative manner with the AVA.

Greater emphasis must be encouraged to all within the AVA to develop the understanding with membership as to the structure of the total organization. I learned as a classroom teacher through many years how, as a local teacher, I was part of a huge national organization that can affect national and state policies. Most classroom teachers do not understand the operating structure of the organization to which they pay dues to support.

As a classroom agriculture teacher in Illinois, I became aware that if teachers want to get support for my concerns at the section level involving 20 other agriculture teachers. Our resolution, or position, if supported and encouraged, could move through the state to the Region NVATA, through the National NVATA, through the Agricultural Education Division, and through the AVA which recognized as the state of the entire membership to recognize my idea or concern. The structure exists, but is not known by thousands of members and this must be corrected in order to assist the local member to bring about effective direction for his/her organization.

I believe classroom teachers are interested in improving their leadership and their instructional abilities. Greater participation and leadership by classroom teachers is quite possible if the organization encourages them. Those of us in current leadership roles must truly believe that this participation is important to the strength of the organization. If the opportunity to participate is walked off from the classroom teachers through barriers such as financial ability, time, lack of training, then we will not achieve leadership development and we will probably have disillusioned teachers who may not return to buy our services a second time.

Leadership Development

For many years, business and industry have effectively used leadership development programs to improve their managerial and sales personnel. Farmland Industries over twenty years ago established its own leadership school in Kansas City to improve the capabilities of all types of employees as well as newly elected Board of Directors members. We, in our profession, need also to provide this form of development for our members and officers. Some AVA divisional affiliates have already developed cooperative programs with related business and industries which are presented annually at regional and state association meetings.

It is my belief that the use of the AVA regional structure is the most effective system for developing the leadership skills of state association officers. It is imperative that these programs not be organized as sessions where individuals talk about leadership; rather, they must involve the participants in an active role. Leadership qualities are not developed as well or as quickly by observation as they are through participation and evaluation.

Like the state affiliate group leaders, state association officials need to learn what their responsibilities are. We have already learned that many remitters of dues to the AVA office from the state associations have been newly elected officers who were never assisted or instructed as to their duties.

Summary

We must continue to develop and conduct programs that will aid the local members to fully understand how their professional organization is structured and how to use that system to achieve individual and collective goals.

Isolation of one’s self from a professional organization due to indifference or misunderstanding will never benefit a local teacher in any endeavor to improve a situation.

State and nationally elected officers must never cease in their efforts to represent the membership in their actions or thoughts, for officers are expected to carry out the duties of a professional organization’s members.

The Agricultural Education Magazine

November, 1986

The emphasis on professionalism is readily apparent from the content of early to present day articles in The Agricultural Education Magazine. Although the emphasis has been a continuing one, the definition of a professional has been modified to reflect changes in the agricultural education profession, public schools in general, and society at large. Examples of such changes include a general reduction of the work week across society, a marked increase in the cost of agricultural education in reduced numbers who no longer allocate budget nor provide comprehensive first year teacher supervision, increased emphasis on academics, and development of the attitude of “working to live” rather than “living to work.”

Agricultural instructors teach in the current educational/social environment. Hence professionalism must be defined in the context of these realities. Toward that end, this article defines professionalism in the context of five areas and suggests some priority activities to develop professionalism as part of the preserves and inservice teacher education program.

Areas of Professionalism

The areas of professionalism addressed in this article are: a quality local program, service to the profession, communication and ethics, service to the community, and family and self.

A Quality Local Program

First and foremost, a professional teacher conducts a quality local program of vocational agriculture whereby students learn relevant knowledge, attitudes and skills. Such a program has the support of students, administrators, the board of education, and the community which means it will survive in times when hard choices are made. First-year teachers need to focus their primary efforts on the local program.

A quality vocational agriculture program requires a balance of classroom and laboratory instruction, FFA, and supervised occupational experiences (SOE). The "what" may vary depending upon student differences — especially for handicapped students, but the "if" should be affirmative for all enrolled students.

Effective classroom/laboratory instruction includes knowledge of curriculum and the selection and use of quality instructional materials. Effective security, inventory, and budgeting for supplies, tools, and equipment are also needed, as is actively sought inservice to keep up-to-date technically.

The FFA as an intracurricular youth organization requires advisor guidance and member decisions. Officers and committee chairpersons to implement a program of work planned primarily by students are essentials for a successful chapter. Also, given the wide and increasing range of FFA activities, contests, and awards, selection based on member interests and needs is important for a balanced program. It is not uncommon to see FFA expanded at the expense of SOE and technical units of instruction.

Two national seminars on SOE in 1982 and 1984 reflect widespread concern in the profession about reduced student participation in SOE. Some of the reasons for the lower participation are lack of administrative support for travel and visitation time, and fewer teachers on summer employment. Continuation of SOE which "makes vocational agriculture vocational" is a major current challenge to our professionalism.

Public relations is integral to the vocational agriculture program. Stated simply, it involves having a quality program and informing the public about it.

It is in the classroom that the war on ignorance is won with teachers serving as the "educational infantry." It needs to be remembered that other staff are "support troops" whose mission is to support the infantry. Thus, a quality local program is the basic core of professionalism.

Commitment and Ethics

Teacher commitment and ethical behavior are a second area of professionalism. The NVATA Creed states, "I am a teacher of agriculture by choice, not by chance." Commitment also involves development of a carefully thought out philosophy of agricultural education so that it is clear what
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one is "committed to." That is, the priorities and decisions we make should be able to be predicted based on our philosophy.

Ethical behavior is reflected in our treatment of students, fellow teachers, and others with whom we interact. Serving as a model for youth is an important responsibility since values are taught primarily by example. The lower limits of ethics are defined by educational and civil law. It is the grey areas within the de jure boundaries where ethics need to follow the golden rule.

Service to the Profession

Teacher abilities and interests vary widely as do the service and leadership tasks needed to maintain and advance the agricultural education profession. The tasks range from serving as a big brother/sister to a beginning teacher in an adjacent school, to holding national office in the NVATA. It is important to learn about the purpose, structure, and program of work of our professional organizations as a basis for making a contribution based on individual teacher ability, interest, and time available.

Service to the profession (including ourselves) begins with membership in state and national professional organizations. "If we aren't involved, how can we do a better job for the students we serve?" If you believe your job is important, but different purpose. Such, and do not, substitute for professional organizations in agriculture and vocational education.

The priority activities are those conducted at the county and subdistrict level. Any organization is only as strong as its grassroots. Interaction with other agricultural teachers with similar interests and growing a school and sharing ideas that can be superimposed on programs is important. Regional, state, and national meetings allow you to contribute and make your voice heard. For example, many state and national contests are possible only because of teacher volunteers. The same is true for many in-service activities. The work is light enough when everyone carries part of the load.

Service to the Community

Professionals also contribute to the community in which they live. However, caution is needed to avoid overcommitment in order to retain balance in other areas. The same qualities that make a successful vocational agriculture teacher also make the community a better place. The word "No" will not be part of your vocabulary. In no way diminishes the satisfaction, good contacts, and public relations that result from local community service. Rather, it is a matter of balance with the other areas of professional activity which are also important. One approach is to use PAA activities to both contribute to your community and provide an educational experience for students. A danger to avoid is over involvement in the local community at the expense of interaction with the profession so as to become isolated from other teachers who can enhance your professional growth.

Family and Self

The professional teacher consciously schedules time for family and self. Family relationships take time to nurture and develop. Time for self is a common need for all. High divorce and burn-out rates for teachers of agriculture attest to the results of placing low priority on this area — as it is very easy to do. Scheduling and using specific time for family and self are an important part of professionalism.

Developing Professionalism Through the Teacher Education Program

Teacher education program activities that can contribute to the development of professionalism include:

1. Modeling of professionalism by teacher educators. This means a quality program and activities in the other four areas described earlier in this article.

2. Strengthening 100 percent student membership in professional organizations at the state and national level. In New York State, this means only total student dues of $12.

3. Including The Agricultural Education Magazine as a required course text. The current cost of a 10 month subscription is only $4.00 per person, less than most paper texts. Use The Magazine in coursework to demonstrate its values and assure that it is read.

4. Teaching a unit on professional role and development. Include exercises and activities that allow students to develop an understanding of the role and purpose, structure, and interrelationship of the profession. Opportunities to observe practicing teachers, with and without an active role in the profession, can be used to introduce this topic. This provides the level of realism to show it not only should, but can be done. Also, work on developing a long-term plan for your teacher education program. For example, looking at the five areas, one could decide to do one community service activity the first year without specifying the activity. This provides planning and facilitates setting priorities.

5. Taking time to explain the contribution of professional organizations to decisions. This can be done at the local level. Funding levels for vocational education and how teachers are impacted by such decisions.

6. Selecting supervising teachers who model professionalism. All teachers are not necessarily professional despite having a quality local program. We need more professional teachers.

7. Having student representatives to the State Agriculture Teachers Association. In New York, an elected student is a member of the Executive Council which has proven to be a productive arrangement.

8. Having students in professional meetings/activities as part of the teacher education program. Also, include the professional role in areas where possible.

9. Involve students in writing letters to legislators on current issues. The student representative can facilitate this process.

10. Last, but not least, demonstrate through the student agricultural education organization the value of professional interaction. Take time to discuss what is intended and why it is important.

The foregoing teacher education activities listed are not inclusive and represent ideas contributed by others. This illustrates the importance of professional interaction to professionalism.

Professionalism involves balanced effort in the five areas of a quality local program, commitment and ethics, service to the profession, to the community, and family and self. Activities in the teacher education program to develop professionalism are suggested.

THEME

The Supervisor's Role in Promoting Professionalism Among Vocational Agriculture Teachers

BY JOSEPH WILKIN

The supervisor should encourage the vocational agriculture teacher to be a professional member of the local agricultural community. We need to ensure that vocational teachers cooperate and work with their administration, counselors, and other teachers in the system. Teachers should support each other and refrain from criticizing other teachers in the system. As the song goes, "If you slit your gill, you will lose a little ground." Just remember that vocational agriculture teachers are not immune to the same criticisms of the school system and it is good to know and have the support from your fellow teachers.

Supervisors must involve vocational agriculture teachers in planning and being a part of Professional Improvement Meetings, District Leadership Meetings, State Conferences, and other activities.

The supervisor should value the input of vocational agriculture teachers and agricultural educators in planning meetings and conferences. It is our responsibility to play a major role in providing a track to receive input from many sources to improve vocational agriculture programs.

The supervisor can promote professionalism among vocational agriculture teachers to schools and explain a Code of Ethics for vocational agriculture teachers.

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An experienced teacher who has tenure in the professional group may be the most effective person to explain the code. The Code of Ethics should be written and occasionally reviewed by representatives of the teachers, educators, and supervisors.

A Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics should include the following relationships:

A. Relationships With FFA Members

1. Stay behind the scenes, allowing the FFA members to be in front at banquets, special programs, etc. See that each event is well-planned.
2. Never use alcoholic beverages of any kind when you are associated with students.
3. Be honest, sincere, and conscientious in your relationships with students as well as with adults.
4. Conduct yourself in a manner that will set a favorable pattern for your students.
5. Stay with FFA members during the night when away at fairs, shows, and contests; do not farm them out. (Girls should have an adult woman as chaperon.)
6. Assist FFA members with personal problems as well as with school affairs.
7. Build reliable young adults as well as sound agricultural programs.
8. Properly inform FFA members about the FFA Code of Ethics.
9. Remit FFA dues before the deadline.
10. Be responsible for your FFA members abiding by all rules when participating in FFA activities and awards programs.

B. Relationships With Your School

1. Keep busy with the responsibilities of your job.
2. Leave your itinerary with the superintendent or principal, and your spouse when working in the community.
3. Exhibit interest in the overall school programs.
4. Attend teachers' meetings and other school meetings.
5. Express your appreciation to other faculty members when they render assistance.
6. Dress appropriately for each occasion; if other men on the faculty wear suits, do likewise; if other women on the faculty wear dresses, do likewise. Have some clothing ready for field trips.
7. Be well-groomed; it costs little — only effort.
8. Refrain from overworking joint programs with other teachers.
9. Seek constructive criticism from local school officials as a means of improving your program of work.
10. Conduct the type of program that establishes you as an educator in agriculture.

C. Relationships With Other Vocational Agriculture Teachers

1. Express appreciation to other teachers and students from other chapters for their successes.
2. Be a good listener and learn from the experiences of others.
3. Always contact the vocational instructor at another department when buying projects or visiting FFA members' projects.
4. Do not voice criticism of other vocational agriculture instructors in a way that it might be gossip.
5. Consult experienced teachers near you when confronted with major problems.
6. Do not bid for other positions.
7. Never apply for a position where a vocational agriculture teacher is already employed.
8. Be a team player — give and take with your fellow teachers.
9. Give information to a co-worker to the best of your ability when asked.
10. When a new teacher asks questions that seem irrelevant, answer as accurately as possible.
11. Send letters of appreciation to other chapters having members who have rendered outstanding service.
12. Invite all agriculture teachers in a county to FFA banquets and local FFA events.
13. Attend all Professional Improvement meetings.

D. Relationships With the State Department

1. Be prompt and accurate with all reports; be on time for all appointments within and outside the community.
2. Work on a full-time basis with the exception of vacation or professional improvement time.
3. Do not use allis when you have failed to follow through on a detail.
4. Contact the State Department regarding transfers or interviews.
5. Notify the State Department when you are contacted by a superintendent or the board of education regarding a position at their school.
6. Never pass a resume to the back to the State Department.
7. "Stand on your own two feet."
8. If you notice criticism, pass the information on to persons in charge.
9. Be familiar with the Policy Bulletin for operation of Vocational Agriculture.
10. Contribute and discuss problems with your District Supervisor.
11. Be professional in your thoughts and actions.

E. Other Relationships

1. Be a recognized agricultural leader in your community.
2. Earn and maintain the respect of students and adults.
3. Be familiar with your community.
4. Be a member of the Chamber of Commerce and a civic club if these organizations are active in your community.
5. Cooperate with other agricultural agencies.
6. Do not minimize the efforts of other agencies.
7. Be discrete regarding your salary and money received from other sources.

Student supervision during FFA judging contests is one of many professional duties of vocational agriculture teachers. (Photo courtesy of Joe Rauselker.)

An awards ceremony should be conducted in a professional manner. (Photo by Ronco Vaughn.)

Graduate School, A Time For Decision

There is no better way of staying current in Agricultural Education than improving your educational background. Many times, teachers of agriculture seek to minimize their technical inadequacies through in-service sessions or a re-certification course. Although classes of these types help to fill a specialized need, they are limited in helping to broaden your expertise in the total field of education. Fawnore (1980), provides three basic aims for graduate study:

1. To train graduate students in the conduct of research, thereby stimulating critical and creative thinking on questions of fundamental importance, and, by so doing, to throw light on the problems of contemporary society.
2. To provide such training at the graduate level will meet the perceived needs of the community whether short-term or long-term.

By Bradford J. Jeffreys and Larry W. Watson

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3. To contribute to the general pool of scholarship and discovery.
   These aims leave little doubt or uncertainty about the graduate school experience either to those who have been there, or are there currently. We could hypothesize that in
   individuals who have attended graduate school would only
   agree on one thing. The decision to attend graduate school and
   earn a master's or doctoral degree is by the farthest decision to make when reflecting on
   one's educational aspirations. The reason for apprehension could be attributed to the pressure of the negative and positive fac-
   tors that you would have to consider prior to attending. It
   is our intention to not only elaborate on the related literature, but to reflect on the major factors we had to con-
   tend with prior to undertaking the venture of attending graduate school.

Selecting an Institution

For many teachers of agriculture, selecting an institution is a simple process. To the many, the choice is too close to a major
   university or community college and find it easier to drive
   back and forth to complete their degree as a part-time stu-
   dent. Commuting is a widely practiced concept and one
   that is increasing in popularity for graduate students who are
   also holding down a full-time teaching job. However, for the teacher who is still in graduate school full-
   time and possibly receive some type of financial incentive, commuting
   may not be a viable option for you. This may be the perfect time to use your
   contacts on how to find or locate a program and how that program relates to your needs, objectives, and
   goals should be considered foremost before all else. If
   you desire a strong background in educational research, seek
   out and attend an institution which advocates
   such a program. If you prefer to strengthen your technical
   skills in an agricultural field, seek a program at a major
   university that is well versed in your area of interest. The
   ability to access your educational needs is an important facet of looking for a program to attend.

When evaluating a particular institution's reputation in
   Agricultural, Vocational, or Technical Education, there
   are numerous guides and handbooks available which detail
   the institutions and their respective programs. However, there is yet to be published a comprehensive
   study which highlights the top 20 or 30 university programs
   that are currently recognized or compared to the famous "Carter Report" (American Council on Educa-
   tion) of the 1970s. Due to lack of such a study, prospective graduate students often rely on traditions or tradi-
   tional approach of investigating with questionnaires with students and faculty of the institution along with the cur-
   rent staff to determine which program may best fit their needs.

Some of the things you may want to look at in selecting a school would be the following:

1. What type of students enroll?

   What are the academic abilities, achievements, skills, geographic representation, and level of professional
   success of the graduates of the completion of the pro-
   gram?

   What are the program's resources?

   What kind of financial support does the school offer?

   How complete and current is the University Library?

   What type of support services and computer facilities
   are available?

   What does the program have to offer in terms of cur-
   riculum and instruction?

1. What is the program's philosophy or does it have one?

   How are the classes I have to take determined?

   How do I pay for the classes or payment in tuition?

   What placement services are available?

   Is a personal computer required or encouraged?

   If all possible, make an on-site visit to the school. It
   is one of the better methods the authors found in
   becoming acquainted with not only the faculty, the department, and
   the campus, but the community as well. Opportunities to
   talk with undergraduates, townpeople, and other pro-
   fessors or others out of your major area of study should be looked
   upon as time well spent. Their perspectives on issues are
   valuable pieces of information you should consider.

Adjustment to Academic Life

You, as a new graduate student, will often have many
   frustrations to deal with upon returning to the classroom as a student. Will you be able to
   write a dissertation or thesis? Am I too old to
   classmate my contributions to classroom discus-
   sions? The list can be extensive. You also asked
   yourselves at one time or another and will probably
   be asked of future graduate students as well.

There is no question that a graduate school is simply a question of your attitude and frame of mind. If you think
   you can, you will. A positive outlook on your daily coursework and academic endeavors may affect all aspects of
   your academic career. The key here is to be consistent in your thinking and attitude.

The time and practice you can still study will be one you
   find out sooner than you want. You will again have to
   establish a study pattern and learn how to listen in class. The
   opportunity of writing a research paper may be over you as they are disciplined in their study habits
   and behavior. You, as a new or returning student, are not.

Writing is a serious proposition in graduate courses.
   Again, as a teacher of agriculture, there may be an area where you have not had an extensive amount of experi-
   ence. Graduate study will more than likely afford you an opportunity to improve your writing skills. The point you ever thought they would eventually
   reach.

The factor of a graduate student's chronological age is a particularly interesting one. By 1992, half of all college
   students will be over 25 and 30% will be over 55 (Hodgkin-
   son, cited in Jacobson, 1986, p. 28). These statistics should
   illustrate that an increasing number of college age
   population is getting older. Hodgkinson cited in Jacobson, 1986,
   p. 1) also alludes to the fact that, "Colleges and univer-
   sities have to help their students to succeed in
   educating more and more older students, or the institu-
   tions may not long survive." Agricultural teachers should consider themselves prime candidates for graduate school regardless of age or sex.

Teachers of agriculture can be proud of their accom-
   plishments as practitioners in the field of education. Their
   contribution to the education of advisors, counselors, project
   supervisors, and technical experts are valued and looked
   upon commodity in today's graduate classroom. Many
   graduates return to find classroom discussions revolving
   around their vast work experiences.

Economic Considerations

Foremost in the minds of most individual contemplating
   graduate school are two questions: "What will it cost?"
   and "Should I invest in the education or in stocks or bonds?"
   to most money-saving probability is indirect, if at all. If you are considering residency, you must be concerned
   with direct costs such as tuition, fees, books, and room
   and board. However, you will also need to consider in-
   direct costs such as loss of salary, loss of one or two years
   of retirement, and perhaps, insurance. If you are currently
   engaged in agriculture commodity or business, in addition, if you are married, will your spouse be able to obtain employment or
   need to give up a good paying job? There are few easy
   answers. Each individual must weigh these costs, and
   others, commensurate with her or his situation and objec-
   tives. It is often hopeful to consult sources like Peterson's
   Guide to Graduate Study, a Ph.D. Guide, Agricultural and
   Related Health Sciences. This guide gives detailed information on financial sources, the application process, and a directory of available financial aid that can be accessed in most libraries. In addition, The Agricultural Education Magazine gives an annual listing of assistantships and graduate fellowships.

With all this emphasis on costs, one may well ask: "Is
   education still a viable and realistic vehicle for social and economic mobility?" (Roberts, 1983) writing in The
   Clearing House, strongly contends that education is still a good investment and states; "... the educated person is
   better equipped to protect himself or herself from the economic opportunities (and responsibilities) associated with technological change." Johns (1983) presents charts showing that higher salaries are more closely correlated with educational level. He conclud-
   ed: "Actually, the odds are much better for one to
   become economically successful if he or she has more edu-
   cation than less." Recent advances in technology are
   designed to bring the "Over-educated American Concept."

When assessing the benefits of advanced education, one
   must also consider what economists call "externalities." Many economists argue that the prospect of improving
   the intellectual environment of the home and being able to
   transfer knowledge to future generations, Johns (1983) points out, is a major gain of transfer of learning.
   Learning may be much more significant than is commonly realized.

Family Concerns

Beyond the financial burdens of college, one must not
   overlook the potential impact of graduate school on the
   family. McLaughlin (1985) identified the following addi-
   tional concerns for married graduate students: commu-
   nication problems, sexual dissatisfaction, lack of leisure
   time, role conflict, and restricted social life. Further, he
   noted that these problems are equally for everyone.

Because of the dual role played by women, he reported that
   married women students alone were more often noted to
   be more difficult for married women than men and that single
   women were the most successful graduate students.

Although most researchers report that the presence of children and family members can play a positive role, writers have found the additional support of the family unit to be of paramount importance to academic success. The critics who would argue that the family unit can have one member go it alone can have profound negative repercussions. Many students who have left their families behind report feeling immense guilt and the stress of being alone and worrying about their family as "Greater than the academic pressure." Our advice is take a day with you.

Moving can be a family adventure but requires careful planning. Some areas which have been of greatest concern to us have had limited experience in agriculture, playmates for children, health and insurance needs, employment for spouses, transportation to classes, church activities, storage of extra furniture and upkeep of prop-
   erty back home, day-care services, income-tax concerns, and
   automobile repair. Of course, just the logistics of moving can cause additional stress within the family and needs to be well planned.

Once you arrive on campus, additional adjustments will be
   needed. Most of your classes will be in the evening and when in residence, the family unit will still be present. It is understandable that your spouse and/or family may feel necessary to order less for the stresses on the fami-
   ly. Rimmert, Lamont, and McClin (1984) made the following general suggestions for graduate students: attend time management workshops, schedule some leisure activi-
   ties, maintain social interaction with peers, and participate in professional development activities. With all these precautions, attending graduate school may not be as difficult as it seems. It is important to remember that you are not alone. Although one hears much about competition for grades, in reality graduate students do help each other and have the same common bond of professionalism characteristic of voca-
   tional agriculture teachers.

References


   tion, pp. 1, 28.


Future Professionals in Agricultural Education

Students who are involved in all phases of a judging contest will be better prepared to fulfill forthcoming professional responsibilities. (Photo courtesy of Joe Raunikar.)

Student teaching and other experiences allow students to hone professional education skills discussed in prior courses. According to the two student teachers shown above, placing student teachers in pairs allows more opportunity for technical skill development, professional interaction, and overall growth and maturity. (Photo courtesy of Jasper S. Lee.)

Study tours to France and other countries will enable faculty and students to understand and appreciate agriculture from a global perspective. (Photo courtesy of Chris Townsend.)

Participants in the Jacobsen College Student Turf Seminar will be better prepared for careers related to horticulture and landscaping. (Photo courtesy of Jacobsen News Service.)