Supporting Professional Diversity

The Need for Diversity
Impediments to Diversity
Strategies for Supporting Diversity
A Long Way To Go

How much ethnic and gender diversity in any profession could be? We have made some progress in diversifying our student populations by gender at both the secondary and postsecondary levels, but we have a long way to go in developing a truly diverse corps of agricultural educators at any level. When I attend conferences, especially those for universi-

ty agricultural education faculty, the BIM syndrome (white males in matching suits) is a little too familiar. The corps of agricultural educators at the secondary level is somewhat more diverse in many states than both an ethnic and gender basis, but much greater diversity is needed.

Why should a profession be concerned about how diverse its membership is? The medical profession is clearly dominated by white males. I hear friends complain about the lack of gen-

er and ethnic diversity in physicians. Is the American Medical Association working to increase diversity? Is greater diversity even a stated goal of the AMA on its affiliate groups? For once, a comparison to the medical profession doesn’t make education look second rate! In the business of educating people — all types of people — we cannot be completely effective unless we have a diverse professional corps. Students under our charge, whether high school, college, or adults, must have positive learning experiences under the leadership of a diverse group of educators. Not only will this enhance learning, especially for minority stu-

dents, it will also help to remove gender and ethnic biases and reinforce the idea that all people can work side by side toward a common goal. Diversity in the professions may even be a prerequisite for greater harmony and accepted diversity in society at large.

But how do we bring about greater diversity among agricultural education professionals? How much diversity is enough? Ideally, the ethnic and gender make-up of our profession should parallel the composition of our nation as a whole. Why aren’t half of our secondary agri-

culture teachers or university faculty female? Why isn’t at least 30% of our profession com-

posed of ethnic minorities? Several obvious circumstances explain our lack of progress in diversifying the profession. First, a large majority of secondary agriculture teachers and uni-

versity agricultural education faculty are white males. In general, people tend to surround themselves with the familiar. Thus, most of our educators tend to consciously or unconsciously seek out members of the majority. Secondly, the absence of minority role models in agricultural education is striking. Third, gender and minorities tend to shy away from agriculture as a career field.

Women and ethnic minority applicants should be given full consideration when making hiring decisions. In addition, special con-

sideration may sometimes be warranted, even though such special consideration often creates tension between the majority and minority cul-

tures. But as one author in this issue stated, many minority applicants have not benefited from experiences comparable to those of the majority (white males in our case). Thus, what may be a mistake for a lack of diversity among minority applicants may more accurately be due to a lack of life and educational opportuni-

ty and when given the opportunity, the ability of these applicants may exceed that of other applicants.

So what can be done to increase the percent-

age of minorities in our profession? As several authors in this issue stress, an important key is the individual educator. While many policies and special programs may exist that are designed to attract more minority personnel into education, only through the action and initiative of individual teachers/instructors will these programs make a difference. The same holds true for our professional organizations. AAEE, NVATA, and NASAE can discuss these issues forever, but until individual educators decide to work to improve professional diversity, little progress will be made. The challenge to each of us is to become aware of our own biases, take the initiative to work with minority stu-

dents and faculty, avoid the use of offensive stories and language, and work within our institutions to support diversity. This means continuing to work on minority youth and student programs, as well as in our faculty teams. To be sure, the dearth of diversity within our profession will not be overcome overnight. We must persistently and consciously chip away at this difficult problem until all levels of the agricul-
tural education system are reflective of the publics we serve. To be satisfied with diversity short of this goal is to short-

cut ourselves and our students' valuable life experiences.
Supporting Diversity: A Challenge and Opportunity for the Profession

By EDIE A. MOORE
Dr. Moore is professor of agricultural and extension education at Michigan State University, East Lansing.

I n 1983, I had the opportunity to serve as President of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture (AAATEA), an organization now called the American Association of Agricultural Education. As AAATEA President, I assisted the leadership in the profession and others concerned about agricultural education in establishing the National Council for Agricultural Education. Those I worked with reaffirmed my belief that agricultural educators are some of the most dedicated, hardworking, and committed people that we are going to find in any discipline. However, it was during that time that I began to see the profession lacked innovative, creative, visionary, bold, and dynamic national leadership. Since the Council has been in operation, it has provided some of the missing national leadership in the profession. Unfortunately, it is going to take some time for the Council to address a number of issues related directly to the Council itself. However, I believe the Council has the potential to become a greater national leader than in the past.

As was the case in the 1980s, agricultural education is confronted with a number of issues and challenges. The profession, the Council, and others who are concerned about agricultural education will need to determine priorities carefully. Considering changes in demographics, industry needs, and general societal needs, supporting diversity in agricultural education should be a high priority. The focus of diversity should be on people, programs, and the institutions/systems that are responsible for various programs in the states. The profession, as well as key individuals who are responsible for program delivery, will need to examine carefully the rhetoric bandwagon of giving only “lip service” to diversity with little results. Such rhetoric frustrates many in the majority population because it implies that minorities are getting something the majority population may feel entitled to having. In fact, a variety of data clearly indicates that minorities and women are not receiving their fair share of resources. Such rhetoric also has the potential for frustrating some minorities because it increases their expectations. This publication is designed to assist readers in understanding diversity and to make some suggestions for effectively addressing this issue.

Our country is over 200 years old, and there has been some progress in the area of race relations and diversity. However, the evidence reveals that we have not been very responsive to the educational needs of these important societal groups. Without a doubt, it would be a challenge for the profession to serve more minorities, females, and students with learning disabilities. However, I view this issue as an opportunity for the profession to demonstrate that it has the commitment, willingness, and leadership to be more responsive to these students.

My agricultural literacy experiences with elementary and academic secondary teachers over the last three years have proven to me that our profession could very well be leading the charge with respect to educational reform in the United States. Have we forgotten that some of the earlier leaders in education in the U.S. were agricultural education faculty in the nation’s premier land-grant colleges? A case in point, the contributions of Dr. Walter French, the first professor of agricultural education at Michigan State University, were commended very well by Noll (1966) when he stated:

"French, almost alone, was responsible for establishing a Department of Education on the Michigan State campus. Before he arrived, education was an orphan, a field which no one on the faculty valued as his or her interest. When he left it was a well-organized, well-established department in its own right, and French was recognized on the campus as a strong leader and a great teacher."

The profession has the responsibility of assisting higher education systems and other entities in meeting employment demands in the food and agricultural sciences. Since the profession is only serving a small percentage of available students, any attempt to meet future employment demands should be examined in the context of diversity. In looking at higher education data, it appears that land-grant colleges of agriculture and natural resources have not graduated enough students over the last several years to meet employment demands. In light of this situation, Coulier, Goecker, and Stanton (1990) stated:

"Unless enrollment trends reverse quickly, enrollment will have to increase in order to meet higher education programs' demands for additional students. Those students are needed for the agricultural sciences and natural resources such as food science, home economics, agricultural education, and veterinary medicine.

If agricultural education perceives itself to be a part of the food, agriculture, and natural resources system, it will need to decide what role it has to play in assisting the industry in meeting the needs for highly competent workers. In order to meet future employment needs, the agricultural education profession and land-grant colleges of agriculture will have to take a serious look at the whole issue of diversity. The diversity issue will have to be addressed in the context of people, programs, and the institutions that are involved. Moreover, in order to be more responsive to diversity, the discipline and the nation’s land-grant academy will have to develop more innovative, creative, visionary, dynamic, and bold leadership to reap the benefits of this opportunity.

As theme editor, I have asked a select group who are knowledgeable and have experiences in addressing the issue of diversity to submit articles for this publication. I feel confident that these articles will provide an excellent foundation for achieving notable results in our attempts to support diversity in agricultural education.

References

About the Cover . . .

This diverse group is from the Michigan State University community. Seated from left to right are Shireen Assom, Assistant Researcher; Agricultural Extension for Sustainable Productivity (ABLE) Project; Alexander Torrez, Admissions Office; Dr. James R. Hamilton, Consultant to the Provost; and Angela Moore, President of the Students Against Drinking and Driving (SADD) at Michigan State High School. Standing left to right are Dave Bledenbrand, 1993-94 President of the Michigan FFA Association, and Saddie A. Moore, Professor; Department of Agricultural and Extension Education; Amy Brandt, 1993-94 FFA State Vice President for Region V; and Dr. Melvin Tadros, Professor, Animal Science Department. (Photo courtesy of Bruce A. Fox, Michigan State University.)
Reflections on the Need for Diversity: Desegregation vs. Integration

Since the 1960s, most racial and gender barriers have been eliminated by legislation, executive orders, and judicial actions. This overpressure quickly desegregated agricultural education by removing most legal barriers to participation. However, 35 years after the first mandates, the profession’s quest for diversity is being severely hampered by repeated failures to distinguish between desegregation and integration. Thus, the integration of females and minorities into the fabric of a desegregated agricultural education is proving to be slow and difficult. Demographic trends suggest that effective integration cannot wait much longer.

Current Trends

Females constitute almost half of the U.S. population. By the year 2000, ethnic minorities will comprise a third of all public school students (Pine & Hilliard, 1990). Currently, Hispanics and Asian-Pacific Islanders are the two fastest growing minority groups in the U.S. This growth means that California will be the first state where ethnic minorities constitute the majority. Florida and Texas will soon follow with minority majorities. Also, U.S. public schools are becoming more segregated as housing and other desegregation approaches are being abandoned (Manzo, 1995). Further, although the number of African American male students from high school has increased significantly since the 1970s, the number that graduate from college is decreasing.

Collectively, these trends present golden opportunities, yet formidable challenges. For example, major changes over the past 25 years have done little to change the perceptions of what agricultural education is still for white males. The profession often counters this perception with philosophical arguments that the race and gender of a teacher, professor, and supervisor do not influence who participates in agricultural education. However, 1992-93 FFA membership data provide a hint that perception may equal reality as it relates to secondary school students.

Females constituted a fourth of the 417,000 FFA members in 1992-93. Minority group percentages were: Hispanic-5.34%, African American-5.26%, Native American-4.52%, and Asian American-46% (National FFA, 1993). From access perspective, females constituted half of the student body in schools with FFA chapters, but only 27% of the FFA membership. The percentages for ethnic minorities were in closer harmony. In schools with FFA chapters, minorities constituted 18% of the student body and 12% of the FFA membership (Personal interview with Bernie Stuller, FFA Chief Operating Officer, February 3, 1994). These gender and ethnicity discrepancies illustrate that changes are needed to strive for ideal diversity balance.

"However, 35 years after the first mandates, the profession’s quest for diversity is being severely hampered by repeated failures to distinguish between desegregation and integration."--

Diversity aside, the above data do not highlight the enormous potential to increase the number of students about the food and agricultural sciences. The profession now reaches only the tip of a gigantic iceberg. Even with the enrollment and FFA membership increases of the past few years, the profession serves only about 600,000 of America’s 42 million public school students. Consequently, the profession must prepare more teachers who can deliver contemporary instruction for increasing numbers of rural nonfarm, suburban, and urban students.

History As A Guide

History refutes the premise that minorities are not interested in the food and agricultural sciences. At the 1937 Southern Region Conference of State Supervisors and Negro Teacher Trainers, Elam (1938) reported that enrollees in Negro agricultural schools had increased from 1,025 during 1917-18 to 41,217 during 1935-36. Also, when the Black Farmers of America (NFA) adopted its constitution in 1936, there were 313 chapters and over 9,000 members (see Table 1). These numbers had increased to 1,000 chapters and 52,000 members when the NFA and the white FFA merged in 1965. By comparison, African Americans constituted approximately 4.5% of the FFA’s 1992-93 membership. History also indicates that before the NFA-FFA merger, there were many African American teachers, supervisors, and professors. For example, a decade after the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917, the number of African American teachers, supervisors, and teachers increased rapidly. An influx of federal funds into segregated states meant at least one Negro instant teacher (supervisor) and a staff of teacher trainers for the 1890 institutions. By American teachers, supervisors, and professors. For example, a decade after the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917, the number of African American teachers increased rapidly. An influx of federal funds into segregated states meant at least one Negro instant teacher (supervisor) and a staff of teacher trainers for the 1890 institutions. By preparing Negro teachers at land-grant institutions has graduated many minority teachers. Thus, few teachers of any race now worry minority students in agriculture classes and college preparatory courses. This scenario validates calls for the minority teacher pipelines to be replenished. In response, stringent accountability systems are increasingly linking a university’s state and federal funds to that institution’s capacity to graduate minority students in proportion to the state’s population. From a progress perspective, writings in several publications confirm that gender equity has received much attention. Further, most in the profession agree that progress has occurred. On the secondary level, countless female students enroll in courses. FFA officer teams reflect gender equity progress. Females are increasingly being graduated and hired as teachers. Also, several universities have at least one female professor. However, many horizons remain.

In terms of measurable progress, agricultural education has had the least success with ethnic diversity. This is not surprising. From 1964-1966, virtually no articles were published in Table 1: New Farmers of America (NFA) Membership Throughout the Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># of Chapters*</th>
<th>Active Membership*</th>
<th>State Associations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>9,433</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>25,781</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>1,008</td>
<td>36,942</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>1,039</td>
<td>51,205</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>58,132</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>53,000</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data from NFA Convention Proceedings and Guide for the NFA.; ** - Maryland FFA Association had merged with the FFA; na - Data not available.

Table 2: Full-time and Prorated Negro Teachers of Agriculture in 1942*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total # Teachers</th>
<th>Total # Prorated Teachers</th>
<th># Also Principals</th>
<th># Teaching Non-Ag Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*From W.N. Elam, Federal Agent for Agricultural Education, Special Groups (1944, p.25).

2004-2014, there were 936 Negro teachers (see Table 2). Ironically, federally mandated desegregation and resultant state compliance efforts in the 1960s and 1970s triggered the rapid disappearance of African American teachers, super-

ors, and professors (Bowen & Moore, forthcoming).

The above declines are often linked to (1) desegregation, (2) fewer African American farmers, and (3) minorities equating agriculture with slavery and low paying jobs. Bell, Powers, and Rogers (1987) believed that desegregation eroded the infrastructure to sustain African Americans in agricultural education. Some say discriminatory post-desegregation certification practices also reduced the number of teachers. Others cite retirements without replacements and the African American teacher being assigned to junior high schools as other deterrents to participation.

Regardless of the causes, once African American teachers vanished, their strong community leadership roles were not sustained by white teachers. This situation severely impacted land-grant institutions that graduated most
Understanding Impediments to Agriculture Education

Two years ago, for the first time in the history of the University of California, Davis, incoming minority freshmen students outnumbered white students. As these enrollment figures illustrate, changes in the demographics of the application pool and in college admissions policies are bringing about a greater diversity in freshmen classes (Davis, 1991). John Naisbit in his book Megatrends predicted the population diversity in states such as California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona were examples of future population trends across the nation (Naisbit, 1982). Yet, in the United States the agricultural education profession continues to exhibit a severe shortage of teachers and students from diverse populations. A study by the National FFA Organization (1993) revealed that 26.5% of the FFA membership was female, and only 11.5% were non-white. As U.S. agricultural educators plan for the future with an increasingly diverse population and prepare to serve a global economy, there is a great need to recruit and retain members of diverse populations in teaching programs. However, often members of minority populations are impeded from entering agricultural education because of embedded biases of teachers and white students.

What Are Embedded Biases?
Embedded biases can be subtle and blatant and are unconscious. They are expressed when teachers and/or students have preconceived ideas about a specific race or gender that limits the acceptance or success of that group in specific programs or careers. People with embedded biases can subtly or blatantly treat people as less than equal. One example of embedded bias came from a California survey where a man reported to an open-ended question of how to improve a program with the following statement: "I am not sexist, but I don’t think women should be allowed into the program." Obviously, and sadly, this man was unaware of his embedded bias toward women. It is important to note that any time people are excluded because of gender or ethnicity, and for no other reason, they are facing discrimination.

Embedded Biases That Impede Access Into Agricultural Education
Results from a national agricultural education diversity survey sent to college agricultural education departments revealed that many agriculture teacher educators did not perceive recruitment, retention, and support of students from diverse populations as a concern in agricultural education. In addition, female students were not perceived by some teacher educators as minorities. When agricultural educators identify minority populations, they need to look at the profession as a whole, not just their student populations. Minorities and women are most certainly underrepresented in the agricultural education profession across the nation. Anyone can observe the disparity at any agricultural education meeting, at any level of the profession. The failure on the part of people in the field of agricultural education to ever notice that women and minorities are poorly represented is an indication of just how deeply embedded and how unconscious the bias is.

"Yet, in the United States, the agricultural education profession continues to exhibit a severe shortage of teachers and students from diverse populations... often members of minority populations are impeded from entering agricultural education because of embedded biases of teachers and white students."
Many agricultural educators seem to be unaware of their embedded biases against women working in agricultural education, for example, educators who discourage female students from undertaking projects that require physical qualities such as strength. Educators who refer to particular groups using terms of unequal weight, such as men and girls rather than men and women, are expressing this bias, as is the tendency when assigning managerial tasks to males and clerical tasks to females. An educator (at any level in agricultural education) who talks of his wife, shows slides of male workers, or circulates demeaning handouts of women or ethnic minorities during a class, lecture, or meeting is showing a total insensitivity to the women in the audience, as well as exhibiting his own bias.

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Probably the most common bias toward women in agricultural education is the expectation that they want to, or are capable of, teaching only horticulture. This is not true. Many women, given the opportunity, excel in the areas of animal science, agronomy, and agricultural mechanics. However, the effort of trying to overcome this deeply embedded bias reduces the number of women who try to break the stereotype.

A lack of patience by agriculture teacher educators and students toward people with different languages, dialects, or thinking processes has often been encountered. Language bias is commonly exhibited when speech patterns are sometimes perceived as less intelligent (Green, 1989). This is a problem. Language educators have long been aware of the importance of understanding different speech patterns and adjusting their teaching to these different patterns. The problem is that many educators have been insensitive to this fact.

Some embedded biases can be identified by the vocabulary agriculture teachers use in their classrooms. Since usage and style change over time, care must be taken to keep abreast of changes that affect language use. For example, in the 1960s the term Negro changed to Black, and today the term is changing again to African American. Many American students of Mexican ancestry prefer to be called Chicano or Latino instead of Hispanic, and today most Asian students are often called Orientals (David, 1991).

Embedded bias can become very blatant during the enrollment process. While departments of agricultural education are likely to recruit all qualified students, regardless of gender or ethnicity, this statement is not necessarily followed when it is time to hire new teachers or faculty members. People tend to recruit and hire others like themselves, and the agricultural profession is not exempt from this practice. A white male will tend to hire another white male, even when more qualified women or minority applicants are seeking the position. Realizations against hiring people from diverse populations have included:

1. Women are not physically strong enough for the job.
2. Teachers already in the field will not accept a woman or minority.
3. Women will marry and leave the profession or job.
4. Minorities are lazy and will not get the needed work done.
5. There is no need to increase participation of diverse populations.
6. Men resent the competition or distraction of women in the workplace.

Minority and female students are often subjected to blatant discrimination when they are passed over for employment. A reason for hiring white women and minorities in agricultural education programs is generally due to required hiring quotas and restrictions, rather than a futuristic vision to broaden cultural diversity.

What Impedes Student Participation in Agricultural Education?

Many agriculture teacher educators identified recruitment of members of diverse populations in their programs as a program problem. Unfortunately, many students of diverse populations have reported that even when a diversity program is created into a program, they are often treated as uninvolved outsiders; they have described numerous forms of subtle bias that they encountered (Simpson, 1987; Woolbright, 1989; Green, 1989). Although educators are generally unaware of their biases, expression of embedded biases cause women and minority students to feel a sense of alienation and can hinder their personal, academic, and professional development (Davis, 1991).

Many white male teachers tend to use only white male models and examples when teaching. Students who are working toward careers in agriculture want to envision themselves in that career. When all class information is presented with white male standards, people from diverse populations are robbed of their vision and may feel excluded and alienated. Educators who use case studies, examples, and anecdotes composed only of white males most likely don't realize that they are ignoring over half of the population. The worst example of blatant embedded bias is the use of racist or sexist jokes during class, professional meetings, and events. When this type of discrimination occurs, people from diverse populations feel embarrassed and insulted.

People from diverse populations do not want to be seen as different, singled out, or separate. It is difficult to be only the minority or woman. Students need to feel that they are included in the activities and workings of the department. To ensure an acceptable comfort level and minimize alienation, members of diverse populations require a critical mass of people as a support group. If most women and minority students in a department are involved with clubs "of their own kind" rather than their FFA, they may be sending a message that they do not feel a part of the agricultural education group.

Another impediment contributing to the underrepresentation of minorities in agricultural education is a bias on their part against agriculture. Many minority populations perceive farming as degrading and agricultural careers synonymous with hard fieldwork, low status, and low pay. At the present time, there are very few role models in agricultural education to change this perception. This problem represents a "Catch 22" situation: in order to increase the enrollment in agriculture, minority students need to be provided with examples of successful minorities in prosperous agricultural occupations. However, women and minority role models cannot be established unless members of diverse populations are actively recruited and supported by the agricultural industry.

How Teachers Can Remove Their Embedded Biases

Educators in the field of agriculture, through careful thought, work, and practice, can become aware of their own biases and the biases of their students, and they can work to reduce them. The first step in removing embedded biases is to become aware of the biases.

Self-examination may be necessary in order to identify embedded biases. Educators can start by asking their students about the cultural climate in their classes. Care should be taken to talk with members of different populations privately, in a location where they do not feel threatened by discussing their true feelings.

Teachers should also take the time to become aware of their feelings and goals of minority and female students in their classes. They should correct any language patterns or case examples that exclude or demean any member of their classes. Each student should be treated as an individual and shown respect for his or her values, achievements, and potential. The teacher's concern and praise and attention to white male students. Consequently, teachers need to remember to offer outreach programs and develop relationships with minority and female students as well. Examples and information that include people from diverse populations should be used during lessons. Whenever possible, gender neutral texts and handouts should be used and/or generated.

The issues of impediment of diverse populations into agricultural education should be discussed during sectional, regional, and state meetings. Invite people from the state Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action programs to share information about diverse populations with teachers during these meet- ings. Teachers can be encouraged to become more informed about the history and cultures of women and minority students in their community and state.

People of diverse populations cannot excel in agricultural education and overcome embedded biases if they are not given the opportunity to do so. There is a need to open doors and minds to the recruitment, retention, and hiring of people of diverse populations. One token woman or minority student in a classroom does not necessarily represent a critical mass, nor does it represent our increasingly diverse population. But the gender and racial/ethnic composition of the agricultural industry is changing. Agricultural educators need to make greater strides toward acknowledg- ing their own biases toward people of diverse populations and move forward to accept the changes and challenges of the future.

References

Mentoring Diverse Populations: An Ongoing Process

Any discussion about mentoring diverse populations in agriculture must begin by recognizing the myriad opportunities that exist in agriculture, particularly for students. By mentoring, we mean providing guidance, encouragement, and support to help students develop their skills and achieve their goals. This can take many forms, such as providing academic advising, helping with job searches, or offering career advice.

Minority students in agriculture are often underrepresented in the field, and they face unique challenges and obstacles. They may feel isolated, unsure of their place in the field, and unsure of how to navigate the complex web of resources and opportunities available to them. By mentoring these students, we can help them overcome these challenges and achieve their goals.

One of the most important aspects of mentoring is providing a role model. By having a mentor who is also a minority, students can see that they too can succeed in agriculture. This is important because it helps to break down stereotypes and challenges students to think beyond their own experiences.

In addition to providing a role model, mentors can also provide a variety of other support. For example, they can help students with career planning, such as choosing the right courses or finding internships. They can also provide emotional support, helping students to manage stress and anxiety.

Ultimately, mentoring is about helping students to build their own future. By providing guidance and support, we can help them to achieve their goals and succeed in agriculture. This is important not only for the individuals involved, but also for the future of the entire agriculture sector.
Supporting Diversity: An Unfinished Agenda

In recent years, agricultural education has made remarkable progress in responding to a variety of changes and opportunities. The National Council for Agricultural Education, the profession, foundations, the private sector, and other organizations have assisted in achieving tremendous results in the last six years. However, if the agricultural education academy is going to reach its potential, it will need to give greater attention to supporting diversity. The focus of this diversity should be on people, programs, and the institutions/systems that are responsible for program delivery.

A general review of the data regarding these components would suggest that the discipline is just beginning to carry out the mission as stated by the Council (1991). We could easily rejoice in our accomplishments over the last several years, maintain the status quo, and make some minor adjustments in a number of areas. Some in the profession may say that the accomplishments in the last few years have been revolutionary. At best, I would suggest that the changes have been evolutionary in nature. As a founding member of the Council, I believe we are in the early stages of achieving one of the most important goals of the Council. This goal, of course, is to give the leadership that will help us move forward in the right direction. The purpose of this paper is to go over some of the key issues and potential solutions that will help achieve our vision. Diversity should be an integral part of the educational process.
1. Develop an in-depth knowledge and appreciation for diversity;
2. Assist personnel in developing a knowledge and appreciation for diversity;
3. Acknowledge efforts that are already providing meaningful diversity results;
4. Revise mission to include diversity as an integral part of the institution/system;
5. Make diversity an integral part of establishing priority needs and goals;
6. Establish future employment needs and give priority to hiring underrepresented groups such as minorities, handicapped persons, and women;
7. Set timetables for achieving priority goals with a goal to do five-year period;
8. Establish a system for monitoring goals, evaluating and reporting progress;
9. Provide effective leadership for diversity by remaining well-informed, openly demonstrating a serious commitment to this thrust, leading by example, and focusing on results rather than process;
10. If meaningful results are not achieved, be innovative and bold enough to modify strategies in order to achieve the results.

Future Challenges
This decade will test our commitment to diversity as it has never been tested before. The task ahead is awesome; the challenges are many, and yet the opportunities are unlimited. Do we who are concerned about agricultural education possess the willingness, capacity, and vision to respond effectively to the needs of a society that is already more diverse than it is at any other time in our history? The data would suggest that diversity in agricultural education should be viewed as a high priority for the profession, land-grant colleges of agriculture, and other connecting entities. Dan Moores, Vice President Programs, W.K. Kellogg Foundation (1993) stated:

"We believe the differences between people should be celebrated and discrimination, however subtle, should be deplored. In both cases, explicit attention must be given to issues of diversity. Yet, we also need to be concerned that it is not only talent, but also who is left to follow up the unique capacities each person possesses."

In all of our efforts to address diversity effectively, Dan Moore (1993) also commented:

"No one person or group of people, no matter how privileged or credentialized, should be evaluated with finding the solutions. In deciding how to proceed, government, private businesses, and public institutions should heed the diverse voices of the people they serve..."

The personal experiences and related information in this article have been mentioned to demonstrate the type of commitment and leadership that will be needed in the academy to effectively address the diversity issues. I feel confident that the academy has the potential to address this issue effectively. To do so requires unprece- dedented changes in how we view ourselves, other people, programs, and the institutions/systems that are responsible for program delivery. Clearly, time, events, and more importantly, accurate data will provide the evidence about whether our discipline is capable of addressing this unfinished agenda — diversity in agricultural education.

References

Mentoring Diverse... (continued from page 11)

natural resource industries reflect the growing diversity in the United States and the global society that already exists.

References.

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THEME ARTICLE

Professorial Roles in Supporting Diversity in Teaching, Research, and University Service

A s organizations, public and private, began to acknowledge the changing demographics in the United States, diversity became the buzzword of choice. Finding a committee within an organization whose charge is to improve diversity efforts is common. What is diversity and why the increasing concern about it? The simplest definition of diversity is: different. With people, diversity refers to differences with respect to age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, race, gender, physical appearance, educational experiences, family experiences, religious affiliation, and political affiliation. In short, diversity is an issue because the media constantly reminds us that the demographic characteristics of the country’s population are changing drastically. In the near future, it is projected that current ethnic minorities (e.g. African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanics) will become a numerical majority. In 1992, nearly 32 million Americans were over age 65. By 2020, that number is expected to grow to about 55 million. In addition, people who share the same “differences” have organized into groups and gained attention from political leaders because of their collective voting power. On the surface, the focus on diversity appears to be out of concern for fellow humans. A closer look may reveal a concern for economic gains and survival as a country. Organizations, public or private, can no longer continue to conduct business as usual if they wish to exist in the future.

In universities, much of the concern for diversity centers on making sure educational programs are: (1) reaching or accessible to people who in the past have not received equal attention, (2) assuring that curricula include diverse perspectives, (3) providing students with opportunities to develop skills and experiences in working with people of diverse backgrounds, and (4) supporting the diversity of the university’s work force. Most universities have plans and ongoing activities to strengthen diversity efforts. These plans and activities, however, are virtually useless without the active involvement of a key player in the university, the professor. Professors’ roles in university teaching, research, and service are the three major functions of universities, especially those institutions established by the Morrill Act of 1862 and 1890. The remainder of this article describes ways that professors contribute or can contribute to university diversity plans. Why the focus on the professor? While universities, colleges within universities, and departments within colleges may have formal documents explaining their diversity plans, actual implementation of them (especially those that have long-standing positive effects) will be achieved largely in increments by individual professors through individual actions.

Regardless of the course or type of teaching environment (e.g., formal or informal), there are general strategies that all educators can use as guides to improve diversity efforts. Six common strategies include the following:

Become aware of stereotypes you have based on past experiences, each person brings to any situation previous experiences that influence his or her feelings, behaviors, and thoughts. Carefully examine yourself and assess whether or not you have biases that could affect your behavior or hinder diversity efforts.

Treat all contacts with respect and as individuals. While people share commonalities with an ethnic or racial group, they are still individuals who are different from their respective groups.

Don’t use language that excludes or denigrates any group. Use both “he” and “she” in group discussions. Avoid making assumptions about students’ experiences. For example, a statement such as, “You remember when you went to the movies on —}
Diversifying the Agricultural Sciences: Roles for Leaders

O ne of the most pervasive problems of the agricultural sciences is the insufficient diversity of the educational opportunities for minority students. Agricultural sciences education is in a critical condition. To address and help rectify this situation, USDA, through its Office of Higher Education Programs (HEP), has a comprehensive five-year agenda to promote the recruitment, retention, and training of minority college and university students in both food and agricultural sciences at all degree levels. One goal is to increase the ethnic and cultural diversity of the food and agricultural sciences profession workforce by promoting the educational achievements of minority Americans. One mechanism chosen for accomplishing this goal is to strengthen institutions serving groups underrepresented in the food and agricultural sciences.

Through the CSRS Office of Higher Education Programs, USDA supports and encourages efforts designed to provide the educational infrastructure necessary to develop high-technology, knowledge-based food and agricultural systems. These efforts include providing institutional leadership and financial support aimed at:

- Strengthening college and university degree programs for minorities in the food and agricultural sciences;
- Improving the pedagogical skills of college and university faculty to maximize student learning in multicultural classrooms;
- Producing minority graduates needed to fulfill the Nation's requirements for food and agricultural scientific and professional expertise;
- Stabilizing private sector initiatives and coalition building between the public and private sectors.

The goals are addressed by a comprehensive set of programs at USDA. The 1990 Institution Capacity Building Research and Teaching Grants Program is central to the effort to strengthen food and agricultural sciences at the historically black land-grant institutions. The Research Apprenticeship Program (RAP) for high school students, the 1990 USDA Scholar Program, and the newly initiated Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program all work to recruit minority youth to pursue careers in the food and agricultural sciences. The Summer Teacher Enhancement Program conducted collaboratively by federal laboratories is one example of this type of program to build capacity between the federal government, state and local governments, and schools.

USDA strongly advocates capitalizing on the full intellectual resource base of the Nation by incorporating every segment of the population into the scientific and technical work force in the food and agricultural sciences. To diversify the human resources pool in the agricultural and food sciences, USDA urges systematic reform of the education system at all levels, targeting groups historically underrepresented and underserved in mathematics and science education. While at all levels of education should be addressed, some levels are key decision points for many students. We should pay special attention to:

- assisting teachers of minority students, particularly middle schools, to understand the nature of science - specifically food and agricultural sciences - and introduce these to young people in ways that are both interesting and pedagogically sound;
- mentoring students by means of research opportunities at the high school and college levels; and
- ensuring 2-year college students are targetable, given that many high school students want to attend college and that 2-year college students attend 2-year colleges only.

Efforts at the federal level can only suggest directions the leadership in agricultural education might take to be effective in incorporating minorities into the agricultural sciences. Leaders in reform efforts can contribute to the effort in myriad ways. Some of the initiatives I feel the leadership can and should undertake are the following:

- Ensure that intervention efforts to improve the retention of minorities comes early as possible in the education continuum.
- Provide strong financial incentives and support for individuals from underrepresented minority groups to study the food and agricultural sciences.
- Focus on increasing the participation of minority student and teachers (including teachers in training) in science education reform. To achieve this we must help strengthen minority institutions' research and teaching capabilities, especially in the food and agricultural sciences, through
Supporting Diversity at the Local Level: A Perspective From Teachers

The Council acknowledged that the vast majority of the students had little or no contact with racial or ethnic minorities beyond the bounds of the stereotypical television and movies. Their goal, then, was to help diminish the ignorance in which prejudice can flourish and grow by sharing information about the cultural heritage of various minority groups and their unique contributions to society.

Each month a specific racial or ethnic group was highlighted. During Native American Awareness Month, for example, Mandella Lowry Sunshine spoke about the Lumbro culture and beliefs and shared some of the traditional folklore of her tribe. In December, when Jews in America were the focus, Mark Powers, President of the Council for Jews for Judaism, explained to students the basic tenets of his faith, as well as the historical base for Jewish religious observations. Most of the students had never before seen a person wearing a yarmulke. They were, as were in all the awareness assemblies, the Council sponsored, inquisitive and interested in all our guest had to say. There was, with little exception, a naivete in their wide-eyed curiosity and sometimes amusingly simplistic questions, but they were ignorant from lack of exposure, not unwillingness to learn.

Another recent innovation has helped to bring the diversity of the outside world to our provincial and racially homogenous student body. For the past two years, Greenwood High School has subscribed to The Whittle Education Network, which daily broadcasts "Channel One," an up-to-date, upbeat news program hosted by teens for teens. Students watch Channel One News in homeroom for fifteen minutes each day. Although in several states Whittle Communications has met with resistance, legal and theoretical, to their pro-
While it is necessary to create and nurture a school-wide climate of acceptance and awareness, it is essential that diversity also be an integrated part of the curriculum in individual classrooms. Recipes from a selected country.

How hard is it to address diversity with agriculture students? Perhaps author Dolphi West’s best answer that captures the essence of the challenge:

"Where do we begin to overcome the barriers of race? By becoming friends with the stranger sitting next to you." (West, 1993, pg. 52)

Where do agriculture students sit next to strangers? At the National FFA Convention, which is held in Kansas City, Missouri, each November. At the convention over 30,000 FFA members, advisors, parents, and guests from across the nation and the world gather to conduct FFA business, compete in contests, and make new friends. Like many advisors, I have required the Greenwood FFA members attending the conference to go back and address the students of every state. In fact, they are expected to address students from at least ten different states. These students often begin to correct the miscues in the last week, one excited young member learned about the Mardi Gras from a Cajun pen pal she had met in Kansas City. Not wanting our members to have this same experience, I attended the National FFA Convention to miss the opportunity.

As educators, we would hope they would, in this is necessary to accepting not only of the differences that distinguish us but also the similarities that bind us.

Conclusion

Diversity awareness at Greenwood has met with two-fold success. First, faculty and students have begun to think beyond their traditional comfort zones. Second, diversity awareness programs have been well received. Even though Greenwood High School has made small strides toward diversity awareness, these efforts cannot be viewed with a once and done mentality. Rather, appreciation for diverse cultures should be ever present in the schoolwide initiatives and the individual classroom alike.

References


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informal and perhaps effective ways to support diversity in university environments is by involving a person who is from a different culture or ethnic group on your team. This mentoring relationship gives professors and students a chance to learn firsthand about others in an informal way.

Warnings and Roadblocks

Supporting diversity efforts in university environments will be easier for some than others. Factors that affect how successful efforts are include personalities, sincerity of the faculty, support from administrators, the tone set by administrators to foster individual efforts, and university reward structures. For some, the inability to say "no" may lead to overload and a lack of time to concentrate fully on accomplishing assigned responsibilities. Thus, what began as a sincere attempt to contribute to diversity efforts often results in failure. This problem is being solved somewhat by universities that incorporate diversity into the responsibilities of all faculty and administrators. When diversity efforts begin to be included in yearly performance evaluations, there will be an increase in individual diversity efforts.

A special warning for professors and other educators is that work in nonformal settings don’t become disconnected if your first attempt to work with diverse populations gets off to a rough start. Some audiences may have been treated unfairly in the past or perceive that they have been treated unfairly by your institution. Therefore, initial bad attempts to provide educational programs or collaborative projects by persons outside their community may be met with anger or unfriendly gestures. However, such initial rejection cannot be used as an excuse for not promoting the university’s diversity goals. Focus on positive programs and activities that can be developed once the roadblocks are removed. Be persistent and sincere about your efforts. The effectiveness of any diversity plan is highly dependent on the positive interaction that occurs between and among different people involved in educational programs — the individual faculty member, the students, and clientele.

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Stories in Pictures

Major corporations like McDonald's are supportive of diversity. Theda Rudd (left), operator of McDonald's in Okemos and East Lansing, is shown presenting an award to Adrienne Moore, Co-President of the Okemos High School student council. (Photo by J.D. Small)

Miguel Guerra, agriculture teacher at Righetti High School, Santa Maria, California, instructing students on the land laboratory.

Students learn about plant care in a horticulture class with Mike Morales, Kingsbury High School, California.