

DON'T DISCOURAGE PROSPECTIVE AGRICULTURE TEACHERS

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The short supply of vocational agriculture teachers has been and is a major problem throughout the United States. A major source of supply each year is the new crop of teachers that has been trained in Departments of Agricultural Education. However, as pointed out in the introductory statement of this article, this supply has not been sufficient.

Some of us in teacher education have felt that part of this shortage was due to too stringent requirements on the part of state departments of public instruction and the training institutions. The student who had an interest in a particular subject matter field or the student who decided late in his college career that he wanted to be a teacher of vocational agriculture was lost to the profession due to these strict requirements. Some changes needed to be made.

Until recently a degree in Agricultural Education at the University of Delaware had to include approximately 44 semester hours of General Education, 21 semester hours of Professional Education, and 54 semester hours of Technical Agriculture (42 of which were in specific courses) to meet the graduation requirements of the College of Agricultural Sciences and the certification requirements of the State Department of Public Instruction. The total number of semester hours required for a degree in the College is 134. Under this program there were only 15 semester hours of unrestricted electives.

These requirements have been recently changed by reducing the General Education hours to 40, the Professional Education to 18, and the Technical Agriculture to 30 (must include 3 subject-matter areas). This increased the number of unrestricted semester hours from 15 to 46.

We did this to encourage more students to major in Agricultural Education and to more adequately meet the need for training specialists in subject-matter areas and prepare persons to do a better job of teaching for the off-farm agricultural occupations. In doing this we had to also change our philosophy of advisement. There is now more emphasis on the student working with his advisor to choose the courses that will prepare him for his vocational objective rather than have the courses dictated to him. We believe it is now possible to train both a generalist and specialist by wise use of the 30 hours of required Technical Agriculture and the 46 hours of unrestricted electives. The student can now take courses in several subject matter fields and still have enough "electives" left to concentrate in a specialty area.

It is in the use of these electives that our new philosophy of advisement comes into play. If the student, in consultation with the advisor, decides he would like to prepare himself for a specialized teaching position in Ornamental Horticulture, he can do so by taking most of his electives in that field. The same would be true if he wanted to prepare himself with a strong background in Business and Marketing, with the idea that he could fill a specialized position in training young people interested in off-farm agricultural occupations in distribution and sales. In this case, he would take most of his electives in the Agricultural Business Management curriculum. Another specialty area might be Agricultural Mechanics. Here, he would take most of his elective hours in Agricultural Engineering. The same could be said for several other specialities.

Now, let's suppose upon graduation there aren't any positions open requiring the specialized training that a particular young man possesses, but there is an opening in a rural area requiring the broad training in agriculture that has been so necessary in the past. Does this "specialist" also have the broad training necessary for the job? We believe so - if he and his advisor have made a wise choice of courses in the 30 hour block of Technical Agriculture. Also, this block of 30 hours gives the "specialist" a better understanding and appreciation of the broad field of agriculture.

Due to the difficulty in providing teachers for specialized programs we have also adopted new certification regulations for persons who have previously earned their Bachelor's degree. In addition to the B.S. degree the individual must earn a minimum of 12 semester hour credits in professional education and the work for his B.S. degree must have included a minimum of 12 semester hour credits of technical agriculture in the speciality area for which the candidate is being employed. If he does not have the necessary 12 semester hour credits in the specialty area he may substitute two years of successful employment in an occupation directly related to the specialty area.

We have found these programs considerably more attractive to persons considering entering the teaching profession than the rigid requirements previously employed.

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#### DR. JAMES ALBRACHT JOINS THE KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY STAFF

Dr. James A. Albracht joined the Kansas State University staff in Agricultural Education as In-Service Teacher Educator, July 1, 1966 replacing Professor Lawrence Hall who retired on that day. Dr. Albracht taught Vocational Agriculture in Nebraska from 1948-1962. He was also on the University of Nebraska staff in 1963. Dr. Albracht studied and received his Doctor's degree at the University of Michigan in 1966. His primary responsibilities are with beginning teachers, adult education and graduate work.