

**Managing Our Advantages In
Agricultural Education**

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Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you. It is an honor as well as a challenge to appear before my peers, friends and fellow faculty members such as are before me at this recognition breakfast. Last winter when David Williams invited me to present this speech, I delayed my response in order to give it careful consideration because I wanted to think about what message I could deliver which would be meaningful to you. I consider this to be a special event, and I want to add to its tradition of excellence. Since the time I said yes, I've been very glad that I did, yet, it's been like a pebble in my shoe--it has caused me to be a little uncomfortable at times. In a few short minutes, I'll be able to enjoy the feeling of removing the pebble, but I hope I'll have transferred a different type of pebble to you, mainly a challenge to "Manage Your Advantages" in your agricultural education department back home.

I realize my topic doesn't necessarily fit the mold of previous speakers or, for that matter, the topics usually discussed at regional or national meetings. I'm making the assumption that in this presentation the speaker has the freedom to speak out on issues that he/she believes to be of importance to the profession.

A few years ago, I got a hint from you on your interest for this topic when I assisted in the organization of special sessions at AVA conventions primarily for department/section chairpersons on the administration and management of agricultural education programs. Even though the sessions were designed for persons in an administrative capacity, there was great interest from all teacher educators and a good attendance during the three years in which the sessions were held.

May I first provide a few experiences that I've had outside your profession to enable you to grasp the origin of some of my remarks and feelings. First, in the 1967-71 period, I chaired another undergraduate curriculum and taught courses in agricultural education. Second, I've had the good fortune to serve on several review teams for programs at other universities where one has the opportunity to query faculty and administrators in and outside of agricultural education and at all levels. Third, my experience in the international arena has provided some insight and fourth, my present role in agricultural administration provides another perspective of programs. By listing these experiences, I'm inferring that it's helpful to see ourselves as others do outside the profession. Sometimes it may make us feel uncomfortable, yet, there are times of praise, also.

Let me first paint a scenario for you. Do you remember back when you made the decision to pursue your studies to be a teacher educator in agriculture? For some of us, that was a long time ago; for me it was just after I had finished my third year of teaching vocational agriculture, yet it took fifteen years to make it. Probably you had been a vocational agriculture teacher or extension director and possibly you

had completed a master's degree. Your vision of becoming a teacher educator probably included such great things as:

1. Being a professor at a university.
2. Having less teaching preparations per day.
3. An opportunity to multiply your influence and knowledge.
4. Enter a job that had a good retirement program.
5. Work with older students and no discipline problems.
6. Have less night work.
7. Not changing clothes as often each day as you did as a vocational agriculture teacher.

Those were your expectations, and when you were offered your first position as a teacher educator, you were so proud, thankful and excited about the possibilities of your new university position. Let me ask you, are you still as excited and proud of your work today? If yes, great; if no, what has gone wrong? Were your expectations too high or aren't you able to fulfill your expectations and share your belief in agricultural education?

Let me call your attention to some basic premises that we need to keep in mind as we think further on this topic. They include:

1. Change is inevitable. We either resist, adjust or develop change.
2. Technology is all about us. Agricultural education has the need and should accept the challenge of keeping up-to-date on technological advances that affect teaching in agriculture.
3. Universities as well as agriculture are in a state of transition, and we can be sure that agricultural education is affected by both.
4. The basic needs of people are the same today as yesterday, and we can expect those same human needs to prevail in the future.

Before we can project too far into this topic, we must examine those basic characteristics of agricultural education programs. May I list some from my point of view:

1. Small in size:
Staff--2 to 12.
Classes--5 to 25.
Enrollment--Medium when compared to other curricula.
Budgets--One of the smallest in colleges of agriculture.
2. Appointments:
Vary by university.
- All in agriculture
- All in education
- Joint arrangement
Few with agricultural experiment station appointments.
Few with extension appointments.
Limited budgeted time for research.

3. People Oriented:
Inservice education common to most programs.
Research focuses on people problems and program development.
Many people who hold prominent positions in colleges of agriculture (faculty and administration) have had their undergraduate education in agricultural education.
4. Terminology:
Focused primarily on school orientation.
Awards--Use the term "Outstanding Teacher Educator" not a "Fellow in Agronomy."
Problem solving.
Articulation.
Competency-based education.
5. Programs:
Origin from Smith-Hughes Act.
Undergraduate programs provide a general education in agriculture, graduates know a little about a lot of things.
Graduates have many options.
Our mission is primarily to educate persons for agricultural education positions, teaching and extension.
Graduate programs may be self-centered.
Limited involvement in international work. Of course, this is not unique to agricultural education.

The next phase of my remarks is very dangerous for me to make, yet I think it is important for us to be aware of how we are viewed by those outside our profession. We know that various things affect our image, but to list a few, they include enrollment, student credit hours generated, journal articles accepted, journal articles cited, contribution to college and university activities and terminology such as the word education at some times with some people. Permit me to list what I think and hear is the image of agricultural education in a university setting. My sampling may not be large enough to provide valid data, so if it doesn't fit your situation, please excuse me.

1. Departments of agricultural education are looked upon as fulfilling an important mission, yet it's very specific, mainly to educate persons for high school teaching.

2. Most agricultural educators do not possess depth of knowledge in a technical agriculture discipline (we need to work on this dimension).

3. Departments of agricultural education are not looked upon as ones that provide service courses for other curricula; they are mostly self-serving and consequently do not generate large numbers of student clock hours of instruction.

4. Some agricultural educators are not effective teachers themselves, yet they are in a profession to teach others to teach.

5. Most agricultural educators are very capable and effective academic advisors and have great empathy for students.

6. Research is very much oriented toward problems of the profession using a questionnaire technique of gathering data with very limited provision for replication. It seems as though we have all obtained our doctorate degrees using this technique, so if it was good enough for me, it's okay for the graduate students we advise. In other words, it's

self-perpetuating. I presented a paper on this topic to this group in December 1978 in which I shared my biases and concerns, so I'll not labor on it any longer, but I can say it's a very important issue.

7. Vocational agriculture programs in many high schools are not quality programs, and many times the teaching is rather poor which reflects upon teacher educators.

8. Agricultural education provides an educational program for undergraduate and graduates whereby they are very employable; at least this has been true until just recently.

9. Several agencies, including extension and those involved in international education, have not truly endorsed the contribution that can be made by agricultural educators.

10. Agricultural education is one of the oldest departments in colleges of agriculture and many have been bounced back and forth between other colleges and have come under all types of organizational structures. I'm telling you, from my associations and contacts with agriculture administrators, colleges of agriculture want agricultural education as a vital part of their college.

It's human nature for us to want to be recognized, accepted, needed and successful and to have an image that others respect, so if some of these negative images, in fact, do prevail, how can they be changed?

In his very famous speech, Dr. Martin Luther King shared that he had been to the mountain top and elaborated on his intense dream for the future of the black people of this country. I haven't been to the mountain top, but I, too, have a dream, only mine is for our profession. We have before us each day and each moment great opportunities and possibilities.

In his management model titled "The Management Process in 3-D," Alec Mackenzie centers the management functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling around three basic elements, namely ideas, things (resources) and people. It is in this context that I want to elaborate on Managing Our Advantages in Agricultural Education.

Before we address the three elements, we must first set a reference point in which we couch our ideas, resources and people. In other words, what is the mission of agricultural education in a university setting? To me, it is rather straight forward. I think our mission may be stated as "Teaching others to teach in agriculture." Teaching may be interpreted as formal classroom presentations or, in informal situations, using a multiplicity of delivery techniques. The mission takes on new direction when we change administrators at all levels but faculty remain the same. You may change the wording, but you don't change the mission without faculty endorsement.

Senator Hoke Smith of Georgia may be credited with the first mission statement for agricultural education when he served as chairman of the Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education. The report, dated June 1, 1914, which later became the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, provided the specifics for the training of teachers of agriculture. Just as a side remark, I have often thought that because Senator Hoke Smith, in cooperation with Hughes and Lever, served as the chief author of both pieces of federal legislation, he could have enhanced both extension education and agriculture teacher education. If they would have just stipulated that land-grant universities would be charged with

the responsibility of providing the technical agriculture subject matter update for vocational agriculture teachers and that departments of agricultural education at the land grant universities would be charged with the training of teachers and extension personnel in pedagogy, i.e., the art, science or profession of teaching, it would have benefited everyone.

If one accepts my definition of our mission, then this means that agricultural education departments and faculty can and should have the expertise and be involved in any area of agriculture whereby there is a need to teach others to teach and present agricultural information. I interpret this to mean our traditional agriculture teacher and extension education programs as well as our role in international education and service programs for faculty in our colleges of agriculture. It is in these latter two roles that we have not been accepted or utilized for which I know there are several reasons. I believe that time will indicate that the 70's were years of expansion of agricultural education programs whereby the mission was broadened. It appears that the 80's will be the decade of getting by and holding on with limited resources and declining enrollments. This situation will not be all bad because it will cause us to introduce new delivery systems as a result of innovations in technology.

Now to some specifics on Managing Our Advantages in Agricultural Education. Let's discuss the three elements in descending order of importance, at least from my point of view.

Resources

Agricultural education programs are fortunate in that usually they have at least two sources for current expense, namely the college and the state department of education. To me, this can be an advantage but also a disadvantage in that we answer to two different administrators. However, it does mean that department heads can fish from both sides of the river and still stay in the main stream of providing education in agriculture.

For those departments that have faculty and current expense budgeted through their agricultural experiment station, they are fortunate and need to manage this resource with the greatest amount of care and finesse which is sometimes called adroit maneuvering. In these austere times with limited resources, I'm afraid agricultural education research does not carry the highest priority and, thus, is very vulnerable for reductions in allocations if not eliminated altogether. I've been very pleased that in recent years, there has been a committee in the North Central Region that is a part of the agricultural experiment station structure. A goal for which we should strive is to have each experiment station region have a committee for agricultural education. I can't impress upon you too much that this is a very important activity and that it affects our image within colleges of agriculture.

Too many times, we may let money be the driving force for program development and/or expansion. Also, we often place so much emphasis on the urgent that we fail to do the important. At all times, it is important to keep the focus on our mission. As an example, I remember the years of 1977 and 1978 when our department was working on the "Standards Project." It was an excellent project with very limited resources (\$60,000), and I feel the results were beneficial to our profession if we will just use them, yet I know that it took its toll upon our staff because their efforts had to be diverted to the project. While faculty were working on the urgency of the project, what was happening to the

Important things such as teaching, research and advising of students or to the faculty in their personal and professional activities?

Ideas

There is no substitute for creativity and innovativeness to spark programs. In these days of downsizing, merging, deletion and/or revitalizing of programs, those departments and faculty that have the good ideas will continue to survive and even grow. If there is pressure within your institution as a result of limited resources, then we need to be reminded of the title of the book by Robert Schuller, the evangelist from Garden Grove, California, in which he states Tough Times Never Last, Tough People Do. He also urges us to be possibility thinkers.

In order to get ahead, we have to implement creative ideas and take some risks, but as we do, we need to remember that the further out on the limb we go, the deeper our roots must be. I'm afraid that at times we give lip service to acceptance of change, yet don't do much about it. It's like the little girl that fell out of bed. She was crying, and her mother went to her side to see what was wrong. The girl's response was, "I guess I just stayed too close to where I got in." Are we guilty of this? I must admit, I'm reminded of this at nearly every convention I attend when I see the agenda or programs for various meetings. I suggest you look at past convention programs and check for yourselves how similar they are to previous years. When we do incorporate new ideas, they often become permanent additions. The management idea here is to inject new ideas into our programs. It challenges faculty, and the results build enthusiasm for your program.

People

Management, as defined by Mackenzie, is achieving objectives through others; administration is managing the details of executive affairs; and leadership is influencing people to accomplish desired objectives. Notice they all involve people. Surely agricultural education is working with people, thus, this should be our highest priority.

First, let me gain the attention of your department/section chairpersons. From my point of view, you possess a position of major importance in the university setting. Every good departmental administrator thinks success, plans for success, tries to limit negative thinking, associates with positive thinking people and emphasizes accomplishment. I firmly believe that as the department chairperson is, so is the department. You take the pressure from the academic deans to be accountable for your faculty, quality of your program and prudent use of resources. You also take the pressure from your faculty to represent them, obtain resources for them and lead them in conducting an effective and innovative program. It's your responsibility to see that your department possesses a positive image and that it receives proper recognition. Many times you stand alone because you know a certain decision is best for your total program while faculty and/or deans who challenge you do not fully understand the situation. You may not know it, but too many times the image of the department is the same as that of the department chairperson. The story of the young boy and his father who were walking in a snow storm seems appropriate here. The little boy said, "Daddy, watch where you step, I'm following behind you." This is true of your department chairpersons; your faculty are following behind you. However, I think it is better if they're walking beside you.

Happiness within your faculty is of major importance. We know that money ranks third in the areas of job satisfaction. Credit and recognition of the work performed are rated highest by faculty, yet department executive officers see this as one of the lower ranking areas to provide for job satisfaction. Somewhere we need to bring these closer together. And now some words for the faculty.

At the beginning of this presentation, I painted a scenario for you and asked if you are excited and proud of your position in agricultural education. In this profession, there are not many steps in the career ladder. Since there are more strivers than top positions, it is inevitable that most careers will level out somewhere short of being a department executive officer. How can you as faculty members determine your personal comfort level? Janet Near, associate professor of management at Indiana University, presented some suggestions in her report to the Research Institute of America. She suggests:

1. People should define what success means to them. Separate fantasy from reality and get a firm grip on what is actually possible.
2. Examine your priorities. Many people are rejecting the bigger is better philosophy and focusing on a higher quality of life instead.
3. Enhance your job. The key is to take more control over your work. Stretch and add a new dimension.

In the latest issue of our AATEA newsletter, I was pleased to note that so many of you had been recognized for your outstanding teaching and/or advising at the college or university level. This is commendable. May we, too, recognize you.

Let me close by quickly summarizing and listing a few key points that pertain to Managing Our Advantages in Agricultural Education.

1. Be proud of our mission to be teachers of teachers but make it our highest priority so that agricultural education professors will be known for their teaching ability.
2. Strengthen and broaden our research programs to include more than survey techniques of gathering data and audiences other than our own.
3. Consider adding new dimensions to your program that will stimulate faculty and at the same time provide recognition for your department. These may include: (a) utilization of new technology; and (b) including an international project.
4. Department chairpersons should provide for your faculty in such a way that they can and will be productive and be accountable for your department.
5. Faculty should inject those creative ideas and functions as a team within your department. Your image shows.

Yes, I too have a dream. May agricultural education departments deserve and command the respect and recognition due them in our universities across the USA. Let us all work toward that goal to fulfill not only my dream but yours as well.

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