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Paul R. Vaughn

. . . It would seem more beneficial for prospective teachers to join the National Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association as student members than the Collegiate FFA.

Richard I. Carter

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THE ORGANIZATION FOR PRESERVICE STUDENTS IN  
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION NEED NOT  
BE COLLEGIATE FFA

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Preservice students enrolled in agricultural education should be served by a collegiate organization or organizations but not necessarily the Collegiate FFA. Rationale for utilizing agricultural education clubs or societies as a collegiate organization is, in view of the author, more valid and sounder than that of utilizing Collegiate FFA chapters. This article is an attempt to present rationale for this view and hopefully will encourage further discussion of the issue.

Before discussing rationale for this view, the author would like to preface his remarks by making one point "perfectly clear." Let it be emphatically stated that the author is not against the Collegiate FFA and is certainly not trying to pass judgment on any agricultural teacher education department which has a Collegiate FFA chapter. As an undergraduate student in agricultural education the author served as president of a Collegiate FFA chapter and gained much from that experience.

Rationale for having agricultural education clubs or societies rather than Collegiate FFA chapters will be established by proposing and discussing several questions pertinent to the issue. The questions to be discussed are as follows: (1) What

purposes do student organizations serve in preservice agricultural education programs?; (2) What does membership in the Collegiate FFA really mean?; (3) What can be achieved through membership in the Collegiate FFA that cannot be achieved in Ag. Ed. Clubs?; and (4) Are there advantages for preservice student organizations being organized as Ag. Ed. Clubs or societies rather than Collegiate FFA chapters?

1. *What purposes do student organizations serve in preservice agricultural teacher education programs?* The purposes or functions of organizations for agricultural education students need to be established before discussing the merits or drawbacks of any particular type of organization. The purposes of preservice organizations affiliated with agricultural education in institutions across the nation are similar regardless of whether the organization is called Ag. Ed. Club or Collegiate FFA. As stated in the National Constitution and Bylaws of the Future Farmers of America (1977), Collegiate FFA chapters "shall be primarily designed for training their members in the knowledge and skill of advising and maintaining local chapters." Similarly, the University of Missouri Collegiate FFA Chapter's goals and purposes were stated in the *1976-77 Activities Bulletin* (1976) as follows:

To familiarize prospective teachers of vocational agriculture with the FFA, its aims and activities, and with their requirements and duties as an advisor in an FFA chapter. . . . To promote respect for the vocation of the teacher of agriculture. To provide recreation, education, and entertainment for students in agricultural education.

Agricultural education clubs have similar functions with primary emphasis placed upon preparing students for vocational agriculture teaching careers. Douglas Pooch (1977), Ag. Ed. Club President at Iowa State University, identified the aims and purposes of the club to the members as follows:

The Ag. Ed. Club's activities are aimed at developing your personality, leadership skills, and professional interests. Some activities are aimed at helping you understand the problems of teaching agriculture. Other activities are designed to give you practice in parliamentary procedure and in planning and conducting meetings. All activities provide fellowship between club members and faculty of the agricultural education department.

The similarities of purpose among collegiate organizations in agricultural education seem evident. All of the organizations are designed to serve an intracurricular function within the pre-service program--that of helping prepare future teachers of vocational agriculture. The organizations are student-centered with hands-on learning experiences being a vital part of the organizations. Emphasis is also placed on the social aspect of "getting to know" fellow students and staff in agricultural education.

2. *What does membership in the Collegiate FFA really mean?* Collegiate membership, as described in Article V, Section D of the National Constitution and Bylaws (1977), "may include students enrolled in agricultural courses and former active members of chartered local chapters who are enrolled in a two- or four-year institution having a Collegiate chapter." As pointed out earlier, the primary emphasis in collegiate chapters has been placed on preparing future vocational agriculture teachers. What is gained by extending membership to students enrolled in agricultural courses other than just agricultural education majors? In regard to former active FFA members, membership in the FFA Alumni Association would seem more appropriate to students who want to maintain contact with the FFA but are not interested in pursuing a career in teaching vocational agriculture. Collegiate chapters would be in direct competition with alumni associations for members who have been active FFA members.

Students who join Collegiate FFA are required to pay National FFA dues as prescribed in Article III, Section C of the National Constitution and Bylaws (1977). For their dues, students receive *The National Future Farmer* and other update materials. There are no national activities, award programs or any other programs designed for collegiate members. Essentially, membership in Collegiate FFA means being affiliated with a national organization in a nonparticipating manner.

3. *What can be achieved through membership in Collegiate FFA that cannot be achieved in Ag. Ed. Clubs?* As pointed out earlier, membership in Collegiate FFA would provide an affiliation with the FFA organization. Also, collegiate membership would tend to help nurture and build professionalism in prospective teachers by being associated with the National FFA organization. However, it would seem more beneficial for prospective teachers to join the National Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association (NVATA) as student members than the Collegiate FFA. Student membership in NVATA would provide a direct link with the teaching profession rather than an indirect link to the profession as collegiate membership would. Through NVATA and more importantly, state vocational agriculture teachers' associations, agricultural education students can become involved and informed from the instructor's viewpoint of not only FFA activities but other professional concerns as well.

The Ag. Ed. Club at Iowa State has members who serve as club representatives on several boards and committees of the Iowa Vocational Agriculture Teacher's Association (IVATA). Student representatives report to the total membership on items discussed at meetings. This informs students of what is happening in vocational agriculture and helps make them feel a part of the teaching profession.

Collegiate FFA chapters utilize the opening and closing ceremonies which acquaint those students who have not been active FFA members with the ceremonies. Unfortunately, the ceremonies do not reflect the goals or purposes of students who are enrolled in agricultural education. In other words, the ceremonies are not appropriate for collegiate students and would be beneficial only from the standpoint of familiarizing students with the ceremonies. If the ceremonies are not conducted with dignity and pride at collegiate meetings, they might turn off some students to both collegiate meetings and to using the ceremonies within their FFA chapters once they become advisors.

Some proponents of collegiate chapters contend that Collegiate FFA is the only opportunity students have to become familiar with the FFA activities and particularly FFA materials. The type of organization is not important in this regard. As teacher educators, we cannot depend on any collegiate organization to provide instruction in working with the FFA as an intracurricular activity. Collegiate organizations can be used to supplement, enhance, and apply our preservice instruction but should not be looked upon as a substitute for this instruction. The FFA is used as a tool for extending those concepts taught in vocational agriculture. Similarly, collegiate organizations for agricultural education students should be used as a tool for extending and enhancing agricultural education classes.

4. *Are there advantages for preservice student organizations being organized as Ag. Ed. Clubs rather than Collegiate FFA chapters?* In some institutions, Collegiate FFA might turn off students because they consider FFA to be a high school organization. Most collegiate chapters emphasize the importance of conducting college-level activities, but activities such as the opening and closing ceremonies remind students of the high school program. Student groups organized as Ag. Ed. Clubs do not have this problem and are directly identifiable with the students the programs and activities are designed--that being students enrolled in agricultural education. Most importantly, the Ag. Ed. Club does not identify with a particular part of the program as Collegiate FFA would. The Ag. Ed. Club identifies with the profession which the students are preparing to enter. In other words, agricultural education students are preparing to become vocational instructors of which one responsibility is to serve as the FFA chapter advisor.

In summary, it seems evident that both Collegiate FFA chapters and Ag. Ed. Clubs have merits. The way the student organization is structured at the present time is probably the best for that particular institution. However, if participation in Collegiate FFA is low or if the organization is experiencing other problems, then perhaps a change would be beneficial.

### *References Cited*

- Agricultural Divisional Student Council. *1976-77 Activities Bulletin*. (Unpublished multilith bulletin), Agricultural Divisional Student Council, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1976.
- Future Farmers of America. *Official Manual*. National FFA Supply Service, Alexandria, Virginia, 1977.
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## AG DIVISION RESEARCH MEETING

The fifth annual Agricultural Education Research Meeting is scheduled for December 1, 1978, in Dallas, Texas. The meeting will be held in conjunction with the Convention of the American Vocational Association. Information about the meeting is available from:

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