

Member, Officer, and Advisor Perceptions of FFA
Organizational Goals and Activities

Bob R. Stewart
Professor

Clifton L. Smith
Associate Professor

Mark W. Ehlert
Research Assistant

J. Rick Mihalevich
Research Assistant

*University of Missouri-
Columbia*

Teachers of vocational agriculture are challenged from time to time to provide students with the necessary skills and attitudes for job attainment and retention in agricultural occupations. To meet the challenge requires structuring programs and activities to develop the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective skills of each individual in the vocational agriculture program.

The Future Farmers of America (FFA) organization is recognized as the major vehicle for the development of leadership abilities and appropriate affective skills within the vocational agriculture program. Rosenfield (1983, p. 273) suggested that, "Perhaps the most outstanding contribution of vocational agriculture is the leadership training it provides through an allied student organization, the Future Farmers of America (FFA)." Snyder (1979) noted that the FFA is more than a leadership development organization, and when used as an intracurricular activity, it can serve as a "teaching tool." However, to effectively utilize the FFA in agricultural education, it is necessary to analyze the needs of students, plan appropriate activities, and evaluate relevant outcomes as the basis for improving the design and delivery of these programs (Stewart, 1982).

Swanson (1979), in a study of FFA chapters, found that the degree to which FFA programs and activities were effective in meeting the objectives of the organization were related to the leadership style of chapter advisors. Advisors who emphasized initiating structure were found to have more effective chapters than advisors whose leadership styles emphasized interpersonal relations. Ricketts and Newcomb (1983) found that students who had been members in the FFA possessed more leadership and personal development abilities than nonmembers. Therefore, it was recommended that "students should be encouraged to participate in as many activities as possible" (Ricketts & Newcomb, 1983, p. 5). Townsend and Carter (1983) studied factors affecting participation in local FFA chapter activities. They found that those factors related to increasing member participation involved increasing member control.

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The research cited suggested that the participation and involvement of advisors, officers, and members is important in planning and conducting FFA chapter programs of activities. In addition it was suggested that involvement is important to having a dynamic and effective organization. Because the FFA is an integral component of the vocational agriculture program, it is important that all members of the organization be involved in and benefit from the FFA experiences. This becomes a shared responsibility of advisors and members to insure that appropriate goals and activities are successfully completed by the chapter. Therefore, the focus of this study was to provide information about the extent to which the FFA is perceived to be meeting chapter goals and the perceived quality of chapter activities.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study were to describe and compare the degree of goal attainment expressed by advisors, officers, and members of Missouri FFA chapters and to describe and compare officer and member ratings of the quality of activities generally conducted in FFA chapters.

Mean ratings for goal attainment and quality of activities were used to describe participant responses. The following null hypotheses were formulated for purposes of the study:

- Ho1: There are no significant differences among the perceptions of goal attainment of FFA chapter advisors, FFA chapter officers, and other FFA members.
- Ho2: There is no significant difference between the ratings of the quality of FFA activities as perceived by officers and other FFA members.

Method

The study was ex post facto in nature and focused on the status in the FFA as the independent variable (whether an advisor, an officer, or a general member). The data were collected as part of a study of all vocational student organizations (VSO's) in the state of Missouri (Smith & Stewart, 1982). A random sample of 63 local FFA chapters (26% of the total) was selected to participate in the study. A total of 44 chapters returned completed questionnaires (70% of the sample). This resulted in 52 chapter advisors, 212 current or past chapter officers, and 219 general members providing data for the study.

The research instrument was developed by researchers at the University of Missouri-Columbia in conjunction with a 10 member panel of experts. All participants were asked to respond to 38 statements

associated with goal attainment by indicating their degree of agreement on a four point scale where four was strongly agree and one was strongly disagree. The chapter officers and members were asked to rate a list of 24 chapter activities by choosing an evaluative statement on a four point scale with four as worthwhile and one as useless. A zero was used to indicate that the chapter or individual did not participate in an activity.

The dependent variables were perceptions of the degree of goal attainment and ratings of the quality of chapter activities. Clusters of related goal statements were derived by using factor analysis on the responses of students and advisors to the 38 statements related to the goals and objectives of the FFA. Clusters of related activities were derived by using factor analysis on student responses to the 24 statements related to the common activities of the FFA. The factor analysis procedure used was a principle components model with varimax rotation (Harman, 1978).

The named goal attainment (GA) clusters, the number of items in the cluster, the estimate of the cluster reliability, and examples of items with high factor loadings were:

1. Character development, 11 items (.89); demonstrate respect for others, identify the responsibilities of a good citizen, become more dependable.
2. Recognition and social development, 8 items (.88); provides leadership training opportunities, makes me feel proud to be an FFA member, recognition through awards.
3. Communication skills/interpersonal relations, 7 items (.85); improve my ability to follow directions, improve my ability to give directions; profit from constructive criticism.
4. Occupational experience development, 7 items (.86); increase my desire to work in agriculture, develop skills for a career in agriculture, develop contracts with persons working in agriculture.
5. Conduct of meetings, 4 items (.80); use parliamentary procedure, plan and conduct a meeting, speak effectively in front of a group.

The named quality of activities (QA) clusters, the number of items in the cluster, the estimate of the cluster reliability, and example items with high factor loadings were:

1. Chapter and community activities, 8 items (.83); chapter fund-raising projects, parent and member banquet, supervised occupational experience program.
2. Traditional FFA chapter activities, 5 items (.74); chapter farmer installation ceremonies, greenhand installation ceremonies, FFA contests (non-judging).

3. Non-local activities, 6 items (.84); Washington leadership conference, state FFA leadership camp, national FFA convention.

4. Recreational activities, 4 items (.76); county fair, state fair, FFA district fair.

Analysis of Data

Total scores on the GA and QA clusters were calculated for each respondent. A mean cluster score and a mean item response within the cluster were calculated for each group compared.

Data were analyzed using a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) statistical procedure. The partial correlation coefficients among cluster scores ranged from .43 to .74 and indicated that the dependent variables were related (Kerlinger, 1973). Therefore, the use of the multivariate analysis technique was appropriate. Univariate analysis (ANOVA) tests were conducted for each dependent variable when the MANOVA's indicated significant multivariate differences. Fisher's LSD test was incorporated for testing differences among the least squares means for significant univariate comparisons. An alpha level of .05 was used as the criterion for rejecting the null hypotheses.

Findings

Goal Attainment

All groups (advisors, officers, and members) reported that their chapters were meeting organizational goals. The mean ratings for goal attainment clusters were greater than the neutral point of 2.5 in all cases (Table 1). However, the degree of goal attainment reported by the three groups varied as illustrated in Figure 1. The MANOVA yielded a Hotelling-Lawley Trace value of .225 and an estimated F value of 10.71 ($df = 10, 850$ $p < .0001$). The univariate ANOVA's resulted in significant F values among the groups for all five of the goal attainment clusters (Table 2). The LSD tests showed that the mean ratings of chapter officers and chapter advisors were not significantly different, while the mean ratings of members were significantly less than the mean ratings reported by the other groups for the five clusters.

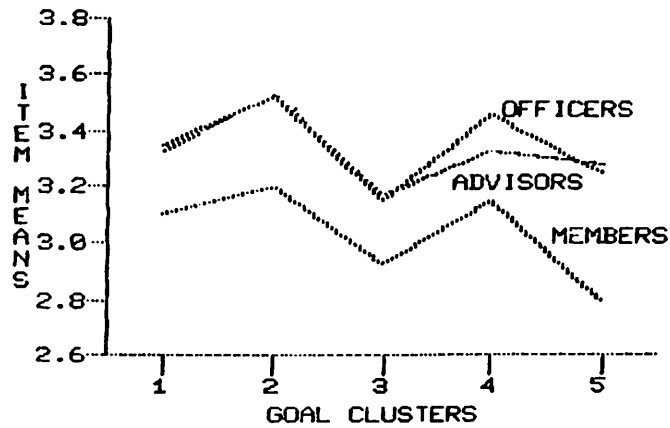
The greatest difference among groups occurred for the cluster concerned with conduct of meetings. Members reported the lowest mean rating of 2.80 while officers and advisors reported ratings of 3.25 and 3.28 respectively. The smallest differences were observed for the character development cluster (members = 3.10, officers = 3.35, advisors = 3.32) and the communication skills/interpersonal relations cluster (members = 2.93, officers = 3.15, advisors = 3.17).

Table 1

*Mean Item Response for Goal Attainment and
Quality of Activities Scales*

Goal attainment					
Goal clusters	Number of items	Cluster mean/item response mean			
		Member	Officer	Advisor	Overall
1. Character development	11	$\frac{34.05}{3.10}$	$\frac{36.85}{3.35}$	$\frac{36.50}{3.32}$	$\frac{35.55}{3.23}$
2. Recognition and social development	8	$\frac{25.59}{3.20}$	$\frac{28.14}{3.52}$	$\frac{28.22}{3.53}$	$\frac{26.99}{3.37}$
3. Communication skills/ interpersonal relations	7	$\frac{20.52}{2.93}$	$\frac{22.02}{3.15}$	$\frac{22.16}{3.17}$	$\frac{21.36}{3.05}$
4. Occupational experience development	7	$\frac{22.08}{3.15}$	$\frac{24.20}{3.46}$	$\frac{23.32}{3.33}$	$\frac{23.14}{3.31}$
5. Conduct of meetings	4	$\frac{11.18}{2.80}$	$\frac{13.01}{3.25}$	$\frac{13.13}{3.28}$	$\frac{12.19}{3.05}$
Total	37	$\frac{113.42}{3.06}$	$\frac{124.23}{3.36}$	$\frac{123.33}{3.33}$	$\frac{119.23}{3.22}$
Quality of activities					
Activity clusters	Number of items	Cluster mean/item response mean			
		Member	Officer	Overall	
1. Chapter and community	8	$\frac{24.96}{3.12}$	$\frac{27.52}{3.44}$	$\frac{26.24}{3.28}$	
2. Traditional FFA chapter activities	5	$\frac{14.45}{2.89}$	$\frac{15.85}{3.17}$	$\frac{15.15}{3.03}$	
3. Non-local activities	6	$\frac{16.98}{2.83}$	$\frac{18.42}{3.07}$	$\frac{17.70}{2.95}$	
4. Recreational activities	4	$\frac{12.48}{3.12}$	$\frac{12.84}{3.21}$	$\frac{12.64}{3.16}$	
Total	23	$\frac{68.87}{2.99}$	$\frac{74.63}{3.24}$	$\frac{71.73}{3.11}$	

Figure 1. Advisor, Officer, and Member Means by Goal Clusters

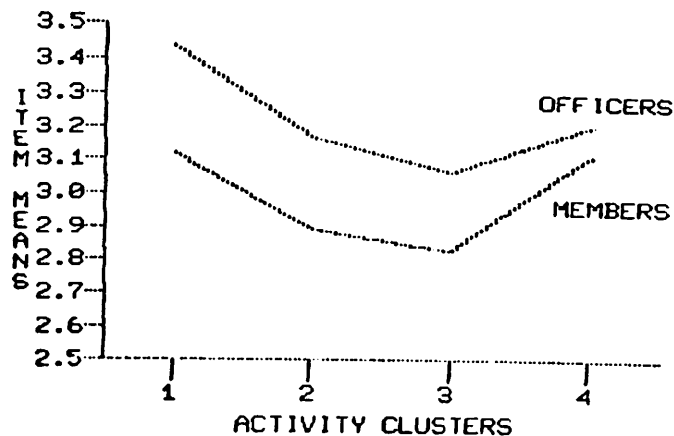


Quality of Activities

The quality of activity clusters was rated favorably by general members and officers (Table 1). Again, all mean ratings were above the arithmetic neutral point of 2.5, as illustrated in Figure 2. The MANOVA yielded a Hotelling-Lawley Trace value of .135 and an estimated F value of 14.35 ($df = 4, 426$, $p < .0001$). Officers' ratings of activities were significantly higher than other members' for all activity clusters as noted by the univariate ANOVA results presented in Table 2.

The greatest differences were found for chapter and community activities (members = 3.23, officers = 3.44) while the lowest overall ratings were observed for non-local activities, such as state and national conferences (members = 2.83, officers = 3.07). The smallest difference in ratings of the quality of activities was observed for the recreational activities cluster, including such events as barnwarmings and fairs (members = 3.12, officers = 3.21).

Figure 2. *Officer and Member Means by Activity Clusters*



Conclusions

1. FFA advisors, officers, and other members in Missouri all perceived that the goals of the FFA were being met in their chapters. However, the FFA officers' perceptions of goal attainment were similar to the advisors' perceptions, and both groups' perceptions were consistently higher than other FFA members' perceptions of goal attainment. Therefore, it was concluded that while the perceptions of all groups were positive, those members elected to provide leadership exhibited a more positive view of the accomplishment of the goals of the FFA chapter.

2. FFA officers and members in Missouri rated the quality of the FFA activity clusters positively. However, the quality of every activity cluster was rated higher by FFA officers than by other FFA members. Therefore, it was concluded that while all members viewed the activities favorably, the officers were more positive in their rating of the quality of the FFA chapter activities.

Implications

The findings of this study were supportive of the role of the FFA in the vocational agriculture curriculum. In a recent article discussing the strengths of vocational agriculture, it was stated that, "To the extent that FFA activities and the occupational experience are academically central--not peripheral--to the program, they signi-

Table 2

Univariate Analyses of Variance on Members', Officers', and Advisors' Ratings of Goal Attainment and Quality of Activity Clusters

Goal attainment clusters	df	MS model	MS error	F value
1. Character development	2,480	449.66	23.07	19.49*
2. Recognition and social development	2,480	394.43	13.91	28.35*
3. Communication skills/ interpersonal relations	2,480	140.71	12.11	11.62*
4. Occupational experience development	2,480	242.55	11.84	20.48*
5. Conduct of meetings	2,480	205.49	4.98	41.30*

Quality of activity clusters	df	MS model	MS error	F value
1. Chapter and community activities	1,429	734.29	14.06	52.21*
2. Traditional chapter activities	1,429	212.53	7.73	27.49*
3. Non-local activities	1,429	226.62	8.43	26.89*
4. Recreational activities	1,429	18.45	4.32	4.27*

*Significant at $p < .05$.

ificantly expand actual time on task" (Rosenfield, 1983, p. 272). This would indicate that the goals of the FFA should be relevant for all members.

However, the findings also indicated that the benefits of FFA membership were perceived to be differentially distributed, with officers realizing greater achievement. This may be warranted in the goal attainment area of conduct of meetings. However, the finding that officers benefit more in the areas of character development, recognition, and social development, or the development of supervised occupational experience programs raises additional questions and should be the focus of related studies. Data are needed to examine advisor, officer, member relationships and to ascertain factors related to the selection process of chapter officers.

The findings of this study lend support to the position stated by Carter, "The challenge facing agricultural educators in determining how to achieve member-centered organizations . . . Advisors, officers, and members have important roles in developing a truly member-centered organization" (Carter, 1983, p. 4). In striving for excellence in agricultural education, advisors need to be aware of perceived differences in chapter effectiveness between chapter officers and other chapter members. It could be hypothesized that increasing the level of participation and involvement of members who are not chapter officers would increase their perceptions of the quality of chapter activities and chapter effectiveness. Therefore, the challenge is to design strategies and methods to enhance the leadership development of all FFA members.

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