

The Development of a Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher Recruitment Event for Secondary-Level Students

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Family and consumer sciences (FCS) education in Kentucky is experiencing the effects of a statewide teacher shortage. This article describes research conducted in Kentucky with FCS teachers and students to determine the future status of FCS education in the state that informed the development of Kentucky FCS University, a FCS teacher recruitment event established to introduce secondary-level students to careers in FCS education.

Background

There is a great need for family and consumer sciences (FCS) teachers across the nation (Werhan, 2013; Godbey & Johnson, 2011; Werhan & Way, 2006). Due to less-than-optimal teacher retention, retirements, low-enrollment numbers in teacher preparation programs, as well as the closing of several teacher preparation programs at the postsecondary level, there is much concern about the future of FCS education in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Governor Steve Beshear signed Senate Bill 1 on March 26, 2009, legislation that catalyzed several initiatives impacting college and career readiness for students across the Commonwealth (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2015). Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Kentucky has a vital role in Kentucky's College and Career Readiness Model as FCS teachers are preparing students that are both college and career-ready. Students enrolled in FCS classes are earning career-ready academic and technical certificates upon successful completion of the Kentucky Occupational Skills Standards Assessment and Industry Certifications. Certifications include the Child Development Associate, Commonwealth Child Care Credential, Kentucky Early Care and Education Orientation Certificate, ServSafe Food Manager Certification, Pro-Start, and a complete list of pre-professional assessments and certificates offered through the American Association of FCS. Students from FCS classrooms are learning real-world, relevant, and rigorous skills that are completely transferrable to their future careers and families.

Many FCS teachers are reaching the age of retirement, and vacated positions may be filled with uncertified teachers for a time, and these positions may eventually be closed. Research suggests that the number of colleges and universities offering CTE teacher training programs declined by about 10 percent between 1991 and 2001 (Gordon, 2008). If fewer universities are offering CTE teacher programs, fewer students will have the opportunity to earn a degree in FCS education, which will continue the decline of future teachers (Godbey & Johnson, 2011).

In many states, the supply of FCS teachers does not meet the need or demand, according to a national study (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2015). A national survey of secondary FCS programs from 2010–2012 academic years indicates that 3,427,601 students were enrolled in FCS classes and were taught by 27,894 FCS teachers. These numbers represent a decline in enrollment and teachers (Werhan, 2013). In Kentucky alone, and there are not enough new FCS professionals to fill the positions available with districts are adding positions and many teachers

approaching retirement. This paper describes research conducted to determine the outlook for FCS educators in Kentucky based on responses provided in surveys of teachers and students. It also reports secondary-level students' interest in majoring in FCS education following their attendance at a recruitment event.

Research Objectives

1. Determine current FCS teachers' number of years in education.
2. Examine student interest in FCS education.
3. Identify student college/university preference.
4. Determine perspective students' entrance year into postsecondary institution.

Methodology

Subjects

The participants for this study were certified FCS teachers who were listed as currently teaching in Kentucky, and students from across the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Teachers' names and addresses were obtained from the state certification files at the Kentucky Department of Education (KDOE). Permission and approval was granted by the Division Director of College and Career Readiness at KDOE to begin initial contact with participants by sending them an email inviting them to take part in this study, as well as distribution of hard copy surveys to high school students at the Kentucky Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) Leadership Camp in June 2014. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the entire process.

Surveys

The program, Survey Monkey, was used to form a questionnaire and collect the data from teachers and students. The teachers' survey included questions that determined the number of years of service and identified the postsecondary institution where certification was earned. The students' survey focused on their level of interest in majoring in FCS education, the postsecondary institution of their choice, and their graduation year. Each question was designed to address the research objectives.

The KDOE, Office of CTE, Career Pathways Branch, conducted online and paper surveys to gather the data. A hard copy version of the teachers' survey was first used in June 2014, then the electronic version was provided during a seven-day window during the month of August 2014.

Teacher and student surveys were sent to every FCS teacher in the state via the current FCS teacher contact list of 308 teachers. Eighty teachers responded and 811 students participated in the online survey during a one-week timespan between Wednesday, August 13, 2014, and Tuesday, August 19, 2014.

Seventy-seven students completed the hardcopy survey at FCCLA Kentucky Leadership Camp (June 9-11, 2014) in Hardinsburg, Kentucky. State and Regional FCCLA officers were eligible to attend this camp. In addition to students in leadership positions, each school was allowed to bring up to two additional freshmen to participate in the Kentucky FCCLA Freshmen Academy. Therefore, the population of students in both studies ranged from freshmen to seniors. In addition to the student and teacher surveys, the annual FCS Teacher Information Sheet was utilized to gather years of service and postsecondary institution where teacher certification was awarded. This information was gathered at the Kentucky Association of CTE (KACTE) Summer Program during the FCS Updates session.

After reviewing the completed surveys, the first step was to sort through the surveys to ensure that all respondents completed the survey. While sorting, any incomplete or invalid surveys were dismissed. In addition to the surveys, Kentucky FCS teachers in attendance at the 2014 FCS Updates Session at the Kentucky Association of CTE (KACTE) completed information sheets that provided important data.

Results

Table 1 data were provided through the FCS Teacher Information Sheet that 183 teachers (or 59 % of 308 of FCS teachers teaching in Kentucky) completed during the KACTE Summer Program FCS Updates Session. The 38 teachers who indicated they had 20 years or more of service represents 21% of teachers in attendance at this session. The number of teachers with this amount of service would increase if the remaining 41% of teachers who were not at the meeting had completed the information sheet. Twenty-seven years is the minimum number of years of service required to be eligible for retirement is in Kentucky.

Table 1

FCS Educators with 20 or More Years of Service in Kentucky (2014)

Years in Education	Number of FCS Educators of 183 Who Completed Surveys
27+	17
25-26	2
23-24	5
21-22	10
20	4
Total	38

Recalling that the data in Table 1 is based on survey responses from 183 teachers, there will be at least 38 vacancies from teachers across the Commonwealth within the next seven years because this number of FCS teachers is eligible for retirement. Currently, seventeen teachers could retire, and seventeen programs would be in need of certified FCS teachers.

Students responded to the hard copy survey given at Kentucky FCCLA Leadership Camp in June of 2014. There were 113 of students in attendance, and 77 of those delegates (68%) completed the provided survey. The majority of students who completed surveys at the camp were juniors (38%) and seniors (27%). Twenty-three percent of survey respondents were sophomores, 9% were freshmen, and 3% were in middle school.

Of the 77 respondents, 47% were interested in pursuing a degree in FCS education. An additional 9% have some interest in becoming an FCS teacher. In addition to the 77 students that were surveyed at camp, 811 students completed the survey online during classroom instruction in a one-week window. Twenty-six percent of these students indicated that they had an interest in pursuing FCS education, and another 36% of students indicated that there was a possibility that they would consider a career in FCS education.

Project Details

Results from the survey research led to the development of a recruitment event called Kentucky FCS University (KYFCSU) for juniors and seniors who had a strong interest in pursuing a career in FCS Education. KYFCSU consisted of a one and one-half day interactive program that provided important information regarding college admission, program requirements, and the daily roles and responsibilities of a FCS teacher and FCCLA adviser. The goal of the program was to create a bridge for students to successfully transition from high school to the postsecondary institution of choice, and eventually obtain FCS teacher certification.

KYFCSU was held on November 8-9, 2015, in Frankfort, Kentucky. The agenda included teambuilding activities, informational concurrent sessions, and several general sessions for event registrants. Sunday evening, students were given an introduction and overview of the event, learned more about KYFCS career pathways and the profession as a whole. One special event was included for Sunday evening which included tickets to a real-life escape adventure where students and teachers had to solve puzzles, crack codes, find hidden items, and work collectively to escape the room under one hour. Students were randomly assigned to teams and theme rooms to build relationships with other KYFCSU participants.

The next day, teacher educators from each university in Kentucky that offers FCS education were invited to participate by sharing vital information for prospective students. Each presentation was unique and showcased exciting features of each university and program. Following the university presentations, a panel of state staff, former teachers, current teachers, and a current college student conducted roundtable sessions for small-group discussions and questions. Each roundtable focused on different topics due to the variety of experiences of each roundtable facilitator. Concurrent sessions held in the afternoon included teambuilding activities, games and an FCCLA *Advising 101* session. The FCCLA session focused on the roles and responsibilities of serving as a chapter adviser. At the conclusion of the event, a graduation ceremony was held to recognize participants complete with certificates, and photo opportunities.

As a follow-up, 19 seniors were recognized during the opening session of the 2016 Kentucky FCCLA Leadership Conference who had committed to majoring in FCS education. These same seniors and their advisers participated in a pinning and signing ceremony during a special reception.

Project Outcomes

Sixty students were registered for the event and 58 of those students completed the program. Fifty-one students completed the closing evaluation. One evaluation question asked, "As of today, are you committed to FCS education?" Nineteen answered yes, 16 students selected maybe, and 16 students shared that they were not interested in pursuing a career in FCS education. Twenty teachers completed the survey, and 100% of teachers reported that they would bring students back to a similar event in the future.

Conclusion

The original vision of the project was to describe the outlook of FCS education in Kentucky, determine the number of students interested in majoring in FCS education, and build a bridge for students to successfully transition from high school to a postsecondary institution. The KYFCSU was developed to introduce secondary-level students to the profession. Program evaluations from KYFCSU provided vital information to guide future work, projects, and events. This event demonstrated the importance of relationship-building and intentionality in recruiting efforts for FCS education in Kentucky.

Students who have committed to FCS education in Kentucky will be recognized at the 2016 Kentucky FCCLA State Leadership Meeting during the opening general session and will have the opportunity to participate in a special invitation-only reception. Future programs would include more session topics related to professional organizations, duties FCS educators are involved in other than teaching, Kentucky Occupational Skills Standards Assessments, and information regarding salaries and rank changes. Another long term goal would be to create resources to encourage students to major in FCS education in Kentucky.

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