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*Diversity and Inclusion in
Agricultural Education Programs*

Diversity Matters

by John C. Ewing

As I read the articles for this issue of the Agricultural Education Magazine, I reflected on my years as an agricultural educator and what it means to be an inclusive teacher and program. All through my time as an agricultural educator I have been focused on providing opportunities to students through agricultural education. However, I am not sure I fully understood what that meant, especially early in my career. I knew that it meant providing opportunities for students to take part in the 3-circle model of agricultural education, and I knew that it meant that the students should be exposed to many different content areas in agriculture to share the many career paths that are available to them. While all of this was important, and some would even say noble, I may have been “missing the boat” on providing the student that did come to the agricultural education program a full learning opportunity.

What I mean by a “full learning opportunity” is that I never really focused my attention on “soft skill” training, and even more importantly working with others that are different than you. Sure, the students in the program took part in public speaking events and learned to be part of officer teams.

However, the students were never really challenged to think beyond the surrounding communities, or maybe a best case scenario of the state when it came to thinking, and learning, how to work with those that were different from themselves. I could easily say that I taught in a fairly homogeneous school; however, I now reflect on missed opportunities to recruit students with different talents than those that typically came to our agricultural education department.

The content that was taught was typical for a high school agriculture program and exposed students to what they needed from a content standpoint, but I now see the need (maybe now more than ever) to include specific courses, training, and specific conversations into our daily routines about inclusion in our programs. The articles in this issue hit on some “uncomfortable” topics, but the only way to make them more comfortable, as one author indicates, and help us all be better educators, is by talking and “living these experiences” together.

Several of the authors in this issue share personal experience related to promoting diversity in agriculture and agricultural education programs. Others provide strategies to connecting with all

students in your agricultural education program and providing opportunities. Yet, another author shares how to start your own Jr. MANRRS chapter to help your students connect with others in agriculture and benefit themselves, as well as the industry as a whole. Each of the articles brings unique perspectives to diversity and how we can develop our own competence in working in diverse situations with diverse individuals. Enjoy the issue and I do hope that each of us are challenged to think about how we currently view diversity in our programs, and how we can grow our programs, our industry, and our communities by providing diverse opportunities to our students.



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CONTENTS

Diversity and Inclusion in Agricultural Education Programs

Editor Comments:

Diversity Matters.....2
by John C. Ewing

Theme Editor Comments:

Preparing Preservice Teachers for Identity and Inclusion of Their
Students 4
by M. Susie Whittington

Let’s Create Cinderella Stories..... 6
by Stacy Vincent

Theme Articles:

Inclusivity for All Students in Ag Education: It’s Personal..... 7
by Kristopher M. Elliott

Diversifying Our Notion of Diversity: Tending to
LGBTQ Agriculturists in Our Classroom 9
by Grant Lee Ermis

Central State University School of Agricultural Education and
Food Science Focuses on Diversity in Agricultural
Education.....11
by Jon Henry

Advocating for Diversity through Peer Panels..... 13
by Kaitlyn Murray and Allison Pullin

Now is the Time! Effective Strategies to Connecting
with African American Students..... 16
by Elijah Parham and Stacy K. Vincent

Learning to Sail: Being Adaptable to Weather
the Changing Dynamics of Education..... 19
by Erica Thieman

Starting a New Jr. MANRRS Chapter.....21
by Quentin Tyler

The History of Woven Traditions.....23
by Marla M. Marsh and Monica M. Marsh

Article:

Active Teaching-Learning Strategies to Enhance
Student Learning.....25
by Rama Radhakrishna and John Ewing

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Preparing Preservice Teachers for Identity and Inclusion of Their Students

by M. Susie Whittington

Agricultural science teachers need to be prepared to assist students in becoming comfortable with each one's emerging individually unique identity and inclusion.

In the spring of 2009, I was sitting in the back of a large classroom at Butler Tech Career Center near Cincinnati, OH with a large class of preservice teachers who were preparing to student teach the next term. The 90-minute, highly engaging, class session was being taught by Monica Marsh, Assistant Principal, at Butler Tech. Ms. Marsh was masterfully leading

I simultaneously felt my heart beating while I was feverishly thinking, "Every preservice teacher needs to experience this".

the preservice teachers through an introspection of the culture from which each preservice teacher had been born and raised; the emphasis was placed on understanding that the culture from which each of us comes, influences the learning environments we create.

As I listened to the preservice teachers close the creative introspection activity by reporting-out

if they chose to do so, the findings of their self-introspection and its meaning for them was emotional for them (and me). I simultaneously felt my heart beating while I was feverishly thinking, "Every preservice teacher needs to experience this".

I learned that Ms. Marsh and her twin sister, Marla Marsh, a principal at an elementary school near Cincinnati, were preparing to teach the Woven Traditions Cultural Competency curriculum to 30 Butler Tech teachers. I came back to campus still touched by my newly acquired verbiage, cultural competency, and deeply pondering the possibilities. I asked my Interim Department Chair, Dr.

L. H. Newcomb, if the department would support me enrolling in Ms. Monica and Ms. Marla Marsh's next 80-hour teacher inservice education to learn more about what the sisters were calling, "our journey toward cultural proficiency". There was no hesitation in his, "yes".

From January to March, 2010, I drove two hours from Columbus to Cincinnati every Thursday for class from 4:00-7:00, and every Saturday for class from 8:00-4:00, to challenge my perceptions of

my culture and my culture's influence on my learning environments. More importantly, I deeply reflected on the emotional agreement/dissonance my students experience when our cultures mesh/collide as we come together to create an inclusive learning environment. As I drove the two hours each way, twice each week, for three months, I was drafting in my head an OSU course... and becoming more and more committed to paying forward to our preservice teachers at The Ohio State University, Monica's and Marla's positively disruptive cultural introspections and challenges.

I pilot tested the course with nine students during the fall term, 2010. Although the original target audience for the course was preservice teachers, somewhere around weeks three and four, as I read the students' anonymous journal entries, listened to their heartfelt discussions, and fielded their insightful inquiries, I knew the content of this course was necessary for every student, not just preservice teachers. I realized this course was about individually deeply diving into the culture from which I come, and from that deep

More importantly, I deeply reflected on the emotional agreement/dissonance my students experience when our cultures mesh/collide as we come together to create an inclusive learning environment.

Through this seven-year journey with students, I am more aware than ever that many of our secondary agricultural science students are struggling with aspects of self-identity and inclusion.

dive, fully embracing the impact of how the culture from which I come informs the way I act, interact, and react toward everyone in my living, learning, and working environments.

Today, I have been teaching this content as a university general education course, Toward Cultural Proficiency for 7 years; it is a requirement for our preservice teachers. Its purposefully-constructed simplicity is powerful. Students' anonymous journal entries and anonymous reflective essays speak to their struggle with self-identity, their fear of being their unique selves in a world of pre-set cultural norms, and, unfortunately, their embarrassment, as opposed to embracement, of the unique culture from which they come. In addition, students anonymously reveal their lack of awareness for where to find the support they need for expressing feelings and opinions that cultural norms have forced them to suppress their entire lives.

Through this seven-year journey with students, I am more aware

The needs of our secondary students are demanding that our preservice teacher program role model holistic wellness behaviors such as sensitive listening, purposeful observing, and reflective inquiring as well as being supportive, suppressing judgement, relaxing skepticism, and caring.

than ever that many of our secondary agricultural science students are struggling with aspects of self-identity

and inclusion. Through this seven-year journey with students, I am more aware than ever that our agricultural students in the poorest rural areas of our state and our agriculture students in the largest metropolitan areas of our state are no different from each other in this struggle; they need their agriculture teacher to understand.

As teacher educators, assisting in equipping our preservice teachers with a skill set that incorporates sensitivity toward self-identity and inclusion continues to be more and more important in our preservice teacher education curriculum. The needs of our secondary students are demanding that our preservice teacher program role model holistic wellness behaviors such as sensitive listening, purposeful observing, and reflective inquiring as well as being supportive, suppressing judgement, relaxing skepticism, and caring.

Our authors in this edition of *The Agricultural Education Magazine* offer the same challenges

to our readers that I experienced in 2009 as I engaged in Monica Marsh's masterfully taught, culturally introspective class session. My hope is that we accept the authors' challenges. I hope we begin/continue seeking the knowledge and skill development necessary for equipping ourselves and our preservice teachers with an inclusive mindset that sensitively and respectfully embraces our students' needs.



Dr. Whittington is a Professor of teacher education in the Department of Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership and is The Ohio State University Director of the Second-year Transformational Experience Program

Let's Create Cinderella Stories

by Stacy Vincent

As a professor at the University of Kentucky, it is custom that I have a fondness toward basketball. This is not a problem as the sport has always been one that I enjoyed playing and watching. For me, March is one of the favorite times of the year as the tournament begins and we all get the opportunity to watch something magical occur, a Cinderella win! This year was no different as everyone was glued to the TV cheering for Loyola-Chicago, a true underdog, play their way directly to the Final Four.

We as Agricultural Educators can make Cinderella stories come true! Never do we need to sit on the sidelines and cross our fingers hoping that one day an underdog will get a win because we serve as the coach, referee, and are able to determine who takes the last shot.

Now let's pull away from the metaphors and get straight to the point. Every day we have students enter our doors that do not represent the norm. In that same classroom. We have students whose "normal" life is obscenely different than that of me and you. We even have students who hold secrets that they don't feel comfortable telling anyone – secrets that could be harmful to others or themselves. Finally, we have students, who for unfortunate reasons, cannot feel welcome in our schools because of their upbringing, heritage, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and/or sexuality.

I am humbled to be theme co-editor of this edition of The Agricultural Education Magazine. Underserved populations are who I have devoted to assist through my career of research, teaching and outreach. Being underserved does not deserve sympathy, but it helps if empathy is received. Understanding what makes the individual "underserved" allows you to be a better educator – one that can create a Cinderella story.

But understanding is only the beginning. As educators, we must extend beyond the scope of understanding and attempt to walk a day in their shoes. Fortunately, our students' Supervised Agricultural Experience opens a door for critical conversation to occur that can assist us in comprehending the why and the how in their lives.

In a recent study, conducted here at the University of Kentucky, we discovered, through a variety of social distance scales, that seniors in agricultural education are not willing to accept students in their school, classes, FFA chapter, FFA competitive team nor serve on the officer team if the student doesn't reflect the same ethnicity and sexuality. This is startling and we have all the power to develop a program that embraces diversity and create an inclusive, safe-space program that does nothing but creates Cinderella wins that everybody will stand behind and support.

What if you don't even know where to begin? I receive calls and emails all the time requesting help. The teacher will go on with the lack of preparation in their teacher education program and that the culture is simply different than anything they have surrounded themselves with. For starters, this topic is not one that a teacher education program can as-

sist you with in a single class; this is a total belief and mindset change. Are you ready for something that powerful? This process takes deep reflection in how our past defines our attitudes and knowledge, which controls our ability to identify our own privilege. Can you do that without being defensive? To change our premeditated thoughts to help the underserved means humbling yourself to listen beyond the words, but by a walk of life. Are you comfortable immersing yourself into the uncomfortable?

My colleague, Dr. Susie Whittington, and I have asked numerous friends who we admire and respect to share pearls of wisdom or thoughts of reflection from their perspective in the classroom. They each represent a Cinderella story, a true classic of how someone can still be successful in our classroom even when they don't quite reflect the dominant culture within agricultural education.

I will grant you that I am biased and hyperbolic, but this edition of The Agricultural Education Magazine is one of the most important editions ever printed. To pass on reading these articles would be criminal. Each contain heavy, detailed information. After each, I would encourage you to reflect, take a few notes, engage in conversation with colleagues, formulate ideas for developing an inclusive classroom, and set the stage to empower those who need us the most!



Dr. Stacy K. Vincent, Associate Professor of Agricultural Education, University of Kentucky.

The Agricultural Education Magazine

Inclusivity for All Students in Ag Education: It's Personal

by Kristopher M. Elliott,

I'll be honest. I struggled a bit with how to approach this topic in print. This is often a difficult subject for many, and it can be challenging to distill the most important pieces of the conversation while still meeting the publishing requirements and word count limits that exist in publications like this one. As such, I apologize in advance for the

We pride ourselves as being the educators who often go above and beyond for our students.

somewhat informal or non-traditional approach, but in my experience, removing the formalization of these difficult topics can help us make sense of things more readily.

So, I begin with a question. As an agricultural educator, do you believe every student deserves the right to thrive, feel welcome, safe, and treated in an equitable way in our programs, particularly by you, the educator? Do you believe you have the greatest influence on these factors in your classroom?

I hope you enthusiastically answered yes to both of these questions. The overarching philosophy in how we treat our students is often thought to be universal in our profession. We pride ourselves as being the educators who often go above and beyond for our students. But when we examine what true inclusion looks like, we can

easily forget or write off several important aspects of diversity.

In this article, I choose to focus on youth who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, or Queer (LGBTQ). This group is one of the easiest to overlook, both consciously and unconsciously. In fact, you may be telling yourself "I don't have any of these students in my program," but the data suggest otherwise. Low estimates range from 4-7% (True Colors, 2018) of youth identifying as LGBTQ, and consider the fact that this number may be artificially low, as many young people feel unsafe answering questions on their sexuality, even anonymously.

In reality, you likely have a number of students in your program, your classes, and certainly in your school who identify as LGBTQ. Some of you may accept this, but could feel uncomfortable on what to do to create a safe, inclusive environment for LGBTQ students. Others of you may be apprehensive about how other teachers, parents, and community members might react if you become known as an LGBTQ ally. But I would refer you back to your answer to the question posed earlier... do you believe every student deserves the right to thrive, feel welcome, safe, and treated in an equitable

way...and my guess is you didn't react with a conditional yes.

Difficult topics are easier to address when we focus less on the overall issue and approach it from the perspective of other people. I recently had the opportunity to see the film, "Love, Simon" which examines a high school student struggling with a terrifying secret, he is gay. He goes to school, pretends to like girls, and does everything in his power to keep his secret and just fit in. Eventually a classmate discovers Simon's secret and makes an announcement about him on social media, basically outing him overnight to the whole school; even his sister finds out this way.

As someone who personally struggled with my own sexuality for a long time, I can relate to the turmoil Simon went through, fearful of his friends finding out, the crushing feeling of not being able to breathe when people you care about find out from someone other than you. It's a feeling of helplessness and despair. It's no wonder LGBTQ youth have one of the highest rates of suicide in the nation, particularly in rural areas where they feel like they have fewer resources, others like them, or places to seek help. In a perfect world, they would be able to reach

In reality, you likely have a number of students in your program, your classes, and certainly in your school who identify as LGBTQ.

out to any of their teachers for help and support, but sadly this often is not the case in many of our schools. Teachers are an important resource for LGBTQ youth because many youth are terrified of telling their parents. This fear is not irrational, as many parents mandate damaging conversion therapy or create a situation where the child feels their only option is to leave the home. In fact, LGBTQ youth account for up to 40% of homeless youth (True Colors, 2018).

Wouldn't it be amazing if agricultural educators, we who pride ourselves on the positive impact we have on students' lives could be the place that all students, including LGBTQ students, could turn when they are facing uncertainty and turmoil in their lives? I think most of us, including myself, could use some more information, support, and training on how to be more inclusive of LGBTQ students.

As such, I call upon our teacher education institutions to include more diversity, equity, and inclusion curriculum and discussions in their programs. I equally call upon our professional organizations, both national and state, to offer more speakers and workshops on the subject. To do this, we all, collectively, need to ask, push, and persistently pursue the goal of true inclusion for all of our students. And although we focus on students here, it is important to mention that we collectively need to be more inclusive of our LGBTQ colleagues in agricultural education. Some of us are further along in our journeys than oth-

ers. I choose to no longer hide my identity, but I also understand the fear and frustration of my LGBTQ brothers and sisters who still feel they have to hide who they are in our profession. Whether students or colleagues, we need to treat each other with universal respect and kindness.

Whether students or colleagues, we need to treat each other with universal respect and kindness.

I hope if you are still reading this you at have at least made the commitment to challenge yourself to learn more about this important subject. The accompanying article, *Diversifying Our Notion of Diversity: Tending to LGBTQ Agriculturists in Our Classrooms* by Grant Ermis, begins to address more of the facts around LGBTQ youth and five things you can do to be more inclusive in your agricultural education programming; including the work being done by the Cultivating Change Foundation. I am confident you will find some additional strategies to help ensure our profession broadens our definition of inclusivity.

We can address all aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion without changing our own values or beliefs, so long as we all agree that we should treat each other with kindness and respect. If this is still a difficult topic for you to process or you still feel you don't quite agree or understand the struggles many of your students and colleagues are going through, I would encourage you to see the

movie "Love, Simon." Talk to an LGBTQ colleague, or challenge yourself to learn more through podcasts, books, or the resources available through organizations like the Cultivating Change Foundation <http://www.cultivatingchangefoundation.org/>. These approaches can help contextualize the importance of us addressing this topic, it's always more urgent when its personal. Let's work together to ensure the amazing benefits of agricultural education are accessible and inclusive to all of our students.

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*Kristopher M. Elliott, Ph.D.
Oregon State University.*

Diversifying Our Notion of Diversity: Tending to LGBTQ Agriculturists in Our Classrooms

by Grant Lee Ermis

“‘Diversity’ is being invited to the party; ‘Inclusion’ is being asked to dance.” ~ Verna Myers

“Diversity” is a word that often evokes many different thoughts. In its best form we understand diversity to hybridize cultures and constituent structures for the most productive outcome. Commonly, when we think about diversity training in our schools, or what the demographic breakdown of our school looks like we arrive at race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Which wages our thoughts on the flow of political rhetoric that would increase the divide between the what is said and what actually happens. We may fall subject to the whim of our school administration who say we cannot hold FFA events after school because some poverty stricken students may not have the transportation, time, or means. Yet, we still persist, as ag educators always do, to find a way to be more inclusive, and mold our programs to be a substantial force in our schools and communities.

Even so, when the topic of diversity arises, there are those who resign themselves to whatever ‘anyone who has time for that kind of thing’ would do to work themselves into a void, or say ‘I have other things to manage.’ As a matter of fact, a majority of your peers will likely have turned this page already seeking something that is more pertinent to their daily needs. I argue that diversity can serve those broader needs when you focus on its base of recruit-

ment; consideration, compassion, and inclusion of all students who surround your programs. For those of you who remain, we call on you to expand your mind on a young definition of diversity to generate the hybrid vigor that makes our programs thrive.

In 2007, Ann Gibson Horne wrote that poverty is the hidden diversity factor we must all understand; as it impacts our students in ways unforeseen by those of us who have been so privileged not to experience such economic hardship. She was accurate on the premise of hidden diversity factors playing a crucial role in our dealings with students and shed light on the fact that our students have lived experiences much different than their agriculture teacher. The causes for consideration here are that we become complacent about those lived experiences in favor of our own, and that her definition of diversity merely scrapes the surface of the diversity we should embody in daily interactions.

In the most recent decades we have seen many demographic shifts in our schools. They are easy to examine because they are external, they have signs, and they are measured. We can see the percentage of teachers in our classrooms at large are increasingly white and female (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014), which is also reflective of our agricultural educators (Smith, Lawver, & Foster, 2018). We can see shifting demographics of the students in our schools by how many of them are on free or reduced lunch. We see

the proportions of black and hispanic students to white and asian students, and we can compare their progress through test scores and grades.

Our school/district administrators take this surface level data into consideration when they construct bell schedules, course catalogues, and enrollment numbers. As school based agriculture educators we either begrudgingly comply, or have positioned ourselves strategically within the school to take minimal impact and envision growth through the struggle. However, for those of us who are adept in data analysis, we can see the drastic inequities resulting from a single focus on quantitative measures. As Horne (2007) wrote, there are hidden classifications of diversity that go unrecognized simply because they may not be apparent to the eye or they don’t have ready measures for decisive consideration.

One of these hidden classes is the LGBTQ population. In the broader culture of education and society, we have no metrics to tell exactly how many make up this subculture of our society, which trickles down into our classrooms. Most researching organizations conservatively estimate 7-8% of our student population in the United States are members of the LGBTQ community. Increasingly these days, it’s not easy enough just to look at one of our students and tell that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. To get an idea, one would have to turn to social media and close friends

or family to even venture a guess without the individual offering the information. This can be problematic for the average agriculture teacher because we teach in areas that historically blind the inclusion of such populations, or their numbers are so small that we become complacent about their potential marginalization, but there are savants among us who know their students so well this information is second hand.

Consider the scope of the population for a moment; the National FFA Organization alone is comprised of over 653,000 FFA members throughout the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (National FFA Organization, 2018). When we consider the potential implications of population estimates there could be enough LGBTQ FFA members in our midst to nearly pack a session of the National FFA Convention inside Lucas Oil Stadium. Further, over 800,000 high school students take courses in agricultural education annually, which expands the scope of our hidden demographics in our daily environments.

Even so, there is a gap in our understanding and dealings with this population of students. There are higher rates of suicide among LGBTQ students than their heterosexual counterparts, commonly linked to prolonged issues of bullying. And in postsecondary agricultural education no research has been published addressing these gaps in our understanding.

We find ourselves at a crossroad in time to work proactively with our LGBTQ students, and agricultural education is well positioned to pave a way toward

acknowledging these hidden figures of diverse student populations. Mark Poeschl, CEO of the National FFA Organization, recognized that, “diversity and inclusion are critically important to the future of FFA and the future of agriculture and natural resources” while attending the 2017 Cultivating Change Summit. He focused his support on the acceptance of LGBTQ individuals in our agricultural programs so they might advance into productive careers in and around agriculture.

The importance is present, and efforts to affect change are mounting. While we have progress to make in terms of research and holistic consideration of LGBTQ influence, impact, and productivity within and beyond our programs, there are tools to help us now. The Cultivating Change Foundation is the only organization grown from former FFA members and other agriculturists to help provide tools for the interested agricultural educator. Attending the national Cultivating Change Summit in Des Moines, IA this next summer might be a start for those of you with the time and resources, but in the meantime we close with some resources to use until you get to the Cultivating Change Summit:

1. Intervene whenever you see/hear hate or bullying by a student or teacher. Give them a chance, say, “that [behavior/language] is not appropriate/tolerated here.”

2. Stop hurtful words or terms like “that’s so gay” in their tracks by taking one moment to state what is listed above, or use this opportunity to perfect your upset/disappointed teacher face. Consistent action wins over all.

For repeat offenders, follow your school policies.

3. Let students know they are safe in our programs and classrooms and create a culture of respect and kindness by taking a genuine interest in all students’ experiences outside of the classroom. Announce commendable student examples when they need to be recognized for being an example of high standards and expectations.

4. Acknowledge differences and diversity as a strength. We know how differences on our officer teams and CDE teams make up the sum of the whole, so take a moment to recognize all differences in all teams, groups, and classes.

5. Seek training, guidance, and assistance so we can be more inclusive of all of our students. The Cultivating Change Foundation is a good place to start. www.cultivatingchange.org

Regardless of the path you take to make a positive impact in the lives of your students, you are the best school faculty member positioned to make a difference in the lives of your agriculture students now. Leverage your resources and influence to be a role model all of your students are proud to work with. If you think you’re already there, poll your students. Do they agree? In research, we call this member checking, and it can be quite useful to make sure you’re on track with those communities you work with. Above all else, you are the most influential change agent agriculture students work with on a daily basis; make your impact known.

Continued on page 24

The Agricultural Education Magazine

Central State University School of Agricultural Education and Food Science focuses on Diversity in Agricultural Education

by Jon Henry

Central State University was established in 1887 in Wilberforce, Ohio and is one of Ohio's fourteen four year publicly funded post-secondary institutions. In 2014 Central State was designated as an 1890 Land Grant Institution in the Federal Farm Bill and in FY 2016 the Ohio State Legislature allocated State Funding for the establishment of a School of Agricultural Education and Food Science at Central State University. In August 2017 the School of Agricultural Education and Food Science was approved to offer a B.S in Agricultural Education for the purpose of training and licensing agriscience educators in Ohio. There are 612 school districts in Ohio and approximately 350 agricultural education programs. There is a demand in Ohio's urban

communities and cities to educate youth in areas of food, environment, and leadership. The movement has allowed for the development of an agricultural education program at East Technical High School in downtown Cleveland, Ohio, an agriscience program established at Cincinnati's James N. Gamble Montessori Academy and the launch of the Global Impact STEM Academy in downtown Springfield, Ohio which focuses on agriculture and related biosciences.

The primary limitations to continuing an expansion of "Ag in the City" is a shortage of qualified and credentialed agriscience educators with an interest and passion for educating Ohio's youth about where their food comes and careers related to agriculture, food and the environment. The 2017 Agricultural Education Supply and

Demand Study showed a national shortage of credentialed agricultural educators and a lack of diversity. In the 2017 study, there were 740 license eligible agricultural educators who completed teacher education programs nationwide, 69% were female, and 86% white, non-Hispanic. Although it is not included in the report, it is likely these 740 students were students who attended a rural high school and participated in an agricultural education program while in high school. I believe this would be valuable data to collect in the 2018 study. A survey conducted by the National Teach Ag Campaign of Agricultural Educators indicated more than 85% of the agricultural educators surveyed obtained their interest in Agricultural education from being enrolled in a high school agricultural education program. This survey reflects a need to recruit a more diverse population of students to pursue a degree in Agricultural Education. These students are in our urban high schools, two year technical schools, and community colleges. They are not enrolled in agricultural education programs or members of the National FFA Organization.

Since its establishment the School of Agricultural Education and Food Science at Central State University has adopted a purpose to prepare diverse agricultural educators by providing diverse experiences to students with diverse backgrounds. Central State is one of the nation's Historically Black Colleges / University with a his-



May -June 2018

11

tory of attracting a large percentage of students from surrounding urban areas such as Dayton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Chicago, Detroit, and Indianapolis. I have served as Director of the School of Agricultural Education and Food Science since August 2016. I have spent the last eighteen months building curriculum, developing partnerships, and recruiting students into agricultural programs at Central State University. I have learned quickly that students who come from the surrounding urban areas have a passion for agriculture.

The students have a passion to be part of a solution to improve the issues that face their communities, including food insecurity, food distribution, and health of community members. One of the first students I met at Central State is a freshman studying Sustainable Agriculture from Berkeley, California. When asked how she became interested in Agriculture, her response was a story of working with her dad growing tomatoes in buckets in their yard because they could not buy fresh fruits and vegetables since the grocery store in the community had closed. Another student shared a story of diabetes in her family, which created a need to pay close attention to how diet impacts the disease. She conducted research on what is in the food she eats and where does it come from. She now wants to pursue a degree in agriculture to learn where food comes from, and how it is produced, out of a need for her family to control diabetes through diet and nutrition. What I haven't heard is a student growing up on a grain farm and showing

livestock at county and state fairs, as the source of their agricultural interest, which would be the story I would hear so often as an agricultural education teacher in a rural high school and would be similar to the story I would have given as an eighteen-year-old college freshman. In traditional Agricultural business and Production agricultural programs, much of the focus of agricultural educators has been on the development of SAE projects which range from production of commercial agricultural projects, raising a livestock project for the county fair, working in a production greenhouse or nursery to name a few. In addition, students are engaged in the participation of Career Development Events, such as General Livestock Judging, Equine Management and the evaluation of a Dairy Cow for her ability to produce the largest volume of milk. These are valuable skills that provide a perspective of agriculture to our youth living in rural America with an interest in agricultural production, however, very little curriculum in traditional agricultural education focuses on Global Issues of Food Production and Food Distribution Systems, Global Economy, Health, Nutrition, Water Quality, Research, or the effects of human activity on our environment. These are the topics urban youth have an interest in learning about, because they are relevant topics in the neighborhoods and communities in which they live.

At Central State University, in the School of Agricultural Education and Food Science, our purpose is to bridge the gap between urban and rural, global, and national agricultural perspectives,

by diversifying the curriculum to train a new generation of agricultural educators who have a desire to mentor youth by increasing awareness of global issues and creating pathways of opportunities for more students to be engaged in an agricultural related career. Former Ohio Representative Jim Buchy is one of the greatest advocates for advancing agricultural education in the city school districts. He often says "Every generation gets further removed from the soil". At Central State University, in the School of Agricultural Education and Food Science, we plan to recruit and train future agricultural educators who can return to the classrooms, labs, fields, and gardens across Ohio to give students the opportunity to be involved in agricultural education, get their hands dirty, and "Find New Ways To Grow".



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Advocating for Diversity through Peer Panels

by Kaitlyn Murray and Allison Pullin

“We should see ourselves as stewards not of specific pieces of knowledge but rather of the productive and generative spaces that allow for finding knowledge” (Patel, 2015, p. 79).

April 10th, 2014: Advocates for Diversity in Agriculture and Natural Resources (a vignette):

It is a short walk to the front door of the Agricultural Administration building. I pull open the heavy glass doors and am greeted by fluorescent lights. To my left

As members of social minority groups, we felt there was a need to address the challenges, barriers, and feelings of isolation that can arise from working in traditionally homogeneous environments, as alluded to in the opening vignette.

hangs a bulletin board. It's littered with pastel posters for last week's Annual Easter Egg Hunt hosted by Poultry Science Club. A glossy advertisement for an upcoming event is hung prominently with a large photo of an attractive white man and woman holding hands. The title proclaims: “We are the future of farming.” In my mind I roll my eyes, picturing instead my girlfriend and me on the poster. My hand unconsciously moves to pull the sleeve of my dress to cover my tattoos. I continue down

the hall, watched by the black and white photos of former department chairs: an uninterrupted series of (presumably) old, straight, white men. I avoid their gaze and walk towards the noise of many voices overlapping in conversation.

As soon as I enter the room, I realize that it is nearly full. The air is thick with humidity; the heat is on despite the warmth of the night. There are rows of tables and chairs oriented towards one end of the room, where five chairs sit empty, expectantly facing the audience. People spill over into the aisle ways and even more stand

in the back, hovering by a table laden with food and information sheets. Immediately, I recognize my physiology professor sitting in the front row. An administrator whose name

I can't quite remember is chatting animatedly with a student with freshly done box braids. The sounds of midland Appalachia mingle with Cantonese. As I sit, I exhale the breath I hadn't fully realized I'd been holding.

Introduction

Advocates for Diversity in Agriculture and Natural Resources (ADANR) was a student-created initiative at The Ohio State University in 2013-2014. We, the co-authors of this piece and the co-founders of this initiative, sought

to create a productive space for dialogue in order to 1) highlight existing identities and diversity of experiences of peers within the college, 2) increase visibility and community among diverse students, and 3) foster an environment that both appreciates and advocates for diversity. As members of social minority groups, we felt there was a need to address the challenges, barriers, and feelings of isolation that can arise from working in traditionally homogeneous environments, as alluded to in the opening vignette. Five years after the creation of ADANR, we offer this retrospective examination of how extracurricular programs can help make space in agricultural education for all.

The Program

On April 10, 2014, ADANR hosted a discussion panel about religious identities in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES). Five CFAES undergraduate students representing five unique religions first defined their religion, then answered questions about how their religious identity influenced their perspectives and practices in food consumption, agriculture, and the environment, and finally explained how their identity shaped their experience within the college. A CFAES faculty member and a representative from the university's Multicultural Center co-facilitated the panel by asking questions of the panelists and then opening up dialogue with the au-

This program was one of the only spaces at the time in CFAES specifically designed for students to discuss their and others' identities in the context of both the college experience and the industry.

dience. Sixty-six CFAES students, faculty, staff, and administrators packed a room that had only 40 seats.

Benefits

This program was one of the only spaces at the time in CFAES specifically designed for students to discuss their and others' identities in the context of both the college experience and the industry. Programming like ADANR has the potential to provide insight into the experiences of diverse

In fact, the most powerful learning opportunities come when we acknowledge that it is a process of learning, and we are only experts in our own experience.

individuals in the community, as one attendee reflected in a post-event survey: "I learned how oppressed diversity actually was in the college, and that it should be celebrated instead of hindered." Students "realized there wasn't a sense of community for people different than the typical (white Christian) students," and that they "need to do more research and talk to more people to try to understand

their beliefs rather than keeping societal stereotypes in place in my mind." In addition to learning about others, one attendee reflected: "I learned about myself. I'm so

confused with my spirituality and tonight's event really helped me sort things out with myself." Panel programs allow students a space to listen and reflect on identities that aren't always foregrounded in our work as agriculturalists.

Steps for Supporting Effective Student-Based Diversity Programming

Support student ideas and understand what the audience wants. Listen to the needs and interests of

students to identify key areas of emphasis for the programming. You do not need to be an expert in every type of identity or diversity-related theme. In fact, the most powerful learning opportunities come when we acknowledge

that it is a process of learning, and we are only experts in our own experience. Provide support by connecting students with the appropriate resources and help them establish a sense of legitimacy throughout planning and implementation.

Help students create an actionable project plan. Encourage them to take time to outline their

vision and challenges. Create a plan of action to address the challenge, providing the rationale behind the plan and the goals and benefits of carrying out the plan in order to justify programming to stakeholders and collaborators.

Network and involve stakeholders broadly. Work with students to involve various levels of the school system into the program to create a sense of community ownership and participation. Participants, facilitators, and content can all come directly from the school and local community. Our program worked with the CFAES Diversity Catalyst Team, student leaders from across prominent student organizations, and the campus-wide office Multicultural Center. Numerous faculty members offered extra credit to students who attended the event and publicized it in their classrooms. This encouraged a reach beyond the expected audience (i.e. avoid preaching to the choir) to involve the entire school.

Marketing. The panel was marketed as a professional development opportunity to learn more about the agricultural industry, and the first half of the panel highlighted practical implications of religion and spiritual identities on agricultural and environmental issues, such as producing and marketing Kosher foods and Pope Francis's Encyclical on the Environment. This was strategically designed to reach people who would not be motivated to go to a 'diversity' themed event.

Selecting, supporting, and caring for panelists. The panel-

ists selected for this program represented a broad range of identities beyond their religions. They came from different genders, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and agricultural experience levels. They brought these different intersections of identity into their answers, broadening the scope of our discussion beyond religion. Recruit panelists who are members of your community (whether that is your class, your FFA chapter, or your school) to avoid the idea that diversity is something that only exists outside of your group. Acknowledge from the outset the bravery, vulnerability, and energy it takes to speak one's truth in an environment that may not always feel welcoming to them. We prepared panelists for that vulnerability and emotional labor in a pre-panel meeting, where panelists met the facilitators and each other to build trust, go over questions, and talk about self-care after the panel. Serving on a panel can be a transformative experience, as one panelist reflected: "the most rewarding part was being able to finally speak out about this stuff in a place where it would be heard and respected."

Measuring success. Consider how to help students communicate the benefits of the program. Use sign-in sheet to quantify demographics and contact information for post-event evaluations and to market future programming.

Continuing impact. Numerous identities can be highlighted through this type of programming, including religious affiliation, race/ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, community type (i.e. rural vs urban), dietary preferences

(i.e. vegetarian vs vegan vs omnivore), and more. Agriculture is uniquely tied to culture and can be viewed through any of these lenses. Ensure sustainability through institutionalizing the program and defining community networks that can contribute to the programming.

There is a need for programming that supports and empowers diverse students of agriculture to share their stories, creates community among students, and fosters an environment that both appreciates and advocates for diversity in the community. ADANR provided one such model for fostering dialogue across difference, because in the words of a former panelist, "it's something the college so desperately needs; a means to promote and educate the student body about the diverse population hiding within it. I think it will provide the students with far more practical and world knowledge than any classroom could give them. I would think these dialogues would greatly connect the student body and allow everyone to feel a lot more comfortable in our own skin. It would promote understanding between differences, which would ultimately improve teamwork, collaboration and leadership as a whole for the student environment."

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Now is the Time!

Effective Strategies to Connecting with African American Students

by *Elijah Parham and Stacy K. Vincent*

“You’ll probably be in jail before you graduate.” “Those classes are for the advanced students, why don’t you just try these instead?” “What’s up with your hair?” “You won’t go far in life the way you are.” “Oh, you have him this year? Good luck.” These are all quotes from teachers I received during my time as an African American student. Quotes like these along with belittling experiences molded me into a student with limited self-worth, motivation or even purpose in school. From these experiences and quotes, I devised a plan to drop out of school at the age of 16 - enter the workforce and try my own path in life. It wasn’t until a special person, my agriculture teacher, took a different stab at these quotes and dawned new thoughts and feelings. “You are so smart.” “What are you listening to? ...I’ll have to give that a try!” “You will go to college.” “I like what you did with your hair!” “I knew you could do it!” “I know you can do it. Just keep going.” These are all quotes from my High School Agricultural Education teacher, the first teacher that truly made me feel “understood and accepted” for who I am. These weren’t just empty compliments, rather understandings and encouragements from her perspective. This teacher had a special knack for connecting to students from

various cultural backgrounds and many of her practices I utilized in my classroom when working with underserved youth.

When reflecting on the strategies of my high school agriculture teachers, the experiences that helped mold my teaching strategies, and the methods I have learned from my diverse educational backgrounds, I have devised 5 approaches, that as an African American, I believe assisted in the establishment of cultural respect and connectivity between teacher and African American students. It should be noted that these approaches have no quantifiable data to support such claims, but from a practical approach they served me as a beneficial tool to establishing the means to connect no matter their cultural backgrounds. The 5 approaches are as follow:

1. Awareness of differences
2. Positive Recognition of Differences
3. Immersion into the Uncomfortable
4. Acceptance through Empathy
5. Self-Reflection and Action

Awareness of Differences

The first step in change, is awareness. Without awareness of cultural differences and backgrounds, you cannot expect a connection to occur. I came from an impoverished communi-

ty in an African American home, raised by a single mother. The simple acknowledgement that cultures are different, and not one is superior, is a step toward cultural awareness. The African American Culture goes beyond what is portrayed in popular media. Our culture consists of, but not limited to music, food, clothing, speech, and faith. As a high school student, I perceived that everyone in my Agriculture courses had boots except for me and I remember getting my very first pair. I received a pair of hand-me-down boots and was completely ecstatic. I recall the night before going to school, I slept in my outfit out of pure excitement for what the other agriculture students would think. Upon arrival to the agriculture classroom, my excitement and confidence quickly faded. The other agriculture students began to talk about my shoes and make fun of them because they were not what they considered to be “real boots”. Discouraged, I took my boots home and never wore them to another agriculture event. This is a prime example of a lack of awareness of differences among cultures. If just one person had approached me with a positive question or statement about my boots, the situation could’ve been neutralized and I would have felt

It may be outside of our comfort zones but becoming comfortable with the uncomfortable can help to better connect us with students from differing cultural backgrounds.

accepted. Students single one another out daily for their differences. It is up to us, as educators, to set the precedence of appreciating and recognizing these differences. Awareness can happen in a multitude of ways and does not require an educator to know all the ins and outs of every culture. Attempting to learn outside our familiarity is certainly a good step, but awareness can start from asking questions and providing encouraging acknowledgement.

Positive Recognition of Differences

My agriculture teacher was the first person to verbally recognize me as an African American in a positive way which created empowerment. Before going to an agricultural event, I remember my teacher giving my classmates an ethical lecture. She told us we were going to a place where we wouldn't see many people who resemble us, we may get funny looks and people may be uncomfortable with these differences. She then proceeded to tell us that these differences aren't a bad thing, but instead makes us who we are and encouraged us to always embrace that. This short conversation with my teacher made me realize she was aware of my differences and recognized the effects of that difference. I gained respect in her as I knew she could already identify how differences could create uncomfortable situations and her lecture eased that uncomfortableness. Bringing positive recognition creates respect and trust, while ignoring differences only sustains distance.

Immersion into the Uncomfortable

After creating self-awareness of cultural differences and recognizing them, it becomes an important step to immerse oneself in the other culture. It may be outside of our comfort zones but becoming comfortable with the uncomfortable can help to better connect us with students from differing cultural backgrounds. There are numerous approaches to immersion, with some being a little more challenging than others. Simple actions, such as when my teacher complimented my haircut and interest in my music selection are each a form of immersion that show general interest in the things that define our students' culture. It may seem easier to avoid these differences or other things related to race to prevent possible negative outcomes such as saying the wrong thing or crossing a line we don't know exists. Truth is, we might not know the perfect thing to say, but that's ok because chances are our students won't either! The important thing is to communicate interest and care. By stepping out to better understand our students, we show that they are worthy of taking the time to understand. As agricultural educators, we have a variety of opportunities to immerse into our students' culture that many educators do not. Through our students supervised agricultural experience programs, we gain the opportunity to step into the homes of young African Americans and look into their parents' eyes and let them know the positive work you support in their children. For many White teachers, you may be the first person of a dominant race to step into the

Empathy is a crucial component to building connections with students who come from different cultural backgrounds.

home and bring positive comments about African American youth. It will go miles in regard to impact.

Acceptance through Empathy

Empathy is a crucial component to building connections with students who come from different cultural backgrounds. Empathy is not to get confused with sympathy though. Sympathy is feeling compassion, sorrow, or pity for the experiences and hardships that another person encounters, while empathy is putting yourself in the shoes of another. With diverse backgrounds, students come with a large array of experiences and challenges and caring about people means caring about the situations they've been through and may still be in. While there is no way for us to fully understand what every student goes through, we can still work to empathize with them. For example, I grew up in an impoverished area with a single mother and three siblings. Being the oldest male, I've faced an ample amount of challenges. My agriculture teacher had no idea what it was like to be in those situations, but was still able to empathize with my struggles, academically and behaviorally.

Coming from various cultural backgrounds and experiences means we will interact with individuals who think differently from us and have different norms. When it comes to our students, something completely normal to them

can seem abnormal to us or other students in the class. It is how we deal with these perceived abnormalities that will set the tone for our class and the experiences of that student within it. Following the boots example, a student may walk in to class wearing an outfit that looks completely ridiculous and not fit the norms of the other students in class. While it may be difficult to understand why someone would wear something like that, you don't always have to have complete understanding for acceptance to occur, but through empathy you can accept them. Put yourself in the student's shoes, or in this case crazy outfit. To you this outfit is normal and a part of who you are, and anyone who accepts you will accept you just as you are. At the end of the day we all just want to be accepted for who we are.

Self-Reflection and Action

It is no coincidence that self-reflection remains a key component of many teaching methods. No one is perfect, and everyone at some point wishes for a time machine to fix situations after they have happened. With that being said, it's a natural occurrence to hurt and be hurt. Even the most well-meaning teachers can mishandle a situation. In these instances, it's what you do afterwards that matters. Self-Reflection is the last approach listed, but it can be utilized throughout all steps toward becoming more culturally aware educators. We must be able to not only look back on our mistakes and assess better ways to handle them, but also start with reflection by admitting

our biases and sharing them when trying to understand others. Once we have done so, it is easier to put every thoughtful consideration and approach into action. This is not a one-time process, but a continual one. It takes time and experience and even then, there is no set finish line. Each day we will encounter new individuals and new students that challenge us to grow and become more accepting. In these moments, it is crucial for us to act. The time now!

Looking back on my experiences as a student within agricultural education, there are many routes my life could have taken. Had it not been for a caring teacher who approached me with these factors, I would not be the agriculture educator I am today. The above approaches were the factors that I can look back and say destroyed cultural boundaries between a great teacher and a great student. The removal of the cultural boundaries helped my teacher understand and accept me and really see my potential. With the ever-growing diversity in America, teachers will increasingly have more and more diversity in their classrooms. The option of avoiding and ignoring these differences will eventually vanish. Now is the time to act. Now is the time to try. Now is the time to be the one that makes a difference. Now is the time for you to decide what you will do.



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Learning to Sail: Being Adaptable to Weather the Changing Dynamics of Education

by Erica B. Thieman

“The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The realist adjusts the sail.”

~William A. Ward

It is no secret that the American public education system has undergone a great change of tide. Administrators have changed in who they are and also more deeply in their techniques and management methods used, largely gone are the days when school administrators are almost exclusively highly-seasoned teachers who make a late-career track change. Teachers have also changed in a variety of ways including increased feminization of certain fields that were formerly exclusively male, such as agricultural education which saw females compose 69% of the 2017 graduating class from teacher preparation programs.

Parents have changed greatly with more blended families being seen, which has changed the dynamics in the home. Marriage equality providing for more lesbian and gay couples to be open in public as families and we are now two generations deep on a trend for both parents to work outside of the home, greatly impacting parenting influences and approaches.

Students have changed in many ways; today’s students have grown up in a world that is vastly different from the one that most of their teachers did. It was a shock

to my system recently to realize that the high school seniors this year were born in the year 2000. In the year 2000, email was really catching on, I had my first email as a senior graduating high school through Hotmail. Very few students had cell phones, to the point most schools had not yet developed policies related to student technology in the classroom. The internet was yet in its toddler stage, Google just two years old but hadn’t quite caught on yet and you had to “Ask Jeeves” if you were seeking the answer to a question.

Being born in 1982, I am on the cusp of the Millennial generation and my cohort was the very first at my elementary school to take our typing classes using a computer as opposed to a typewriter. The rapid changes in society and technology from racial and ethnic makeup to constant accompaniment from a smart phone has changed how people, both young and old interact. Popular cultural shifts occur more rapidly with increased access to the larger world via internet.

As a high school agricultural educator, I found myself teaching in two very different contexts, one was a remote, rural region in the Ozarks and the other a thriving suburb of Kansas City. In both contexts, I was able to effectively recruit and maintain engagement and enrollment from a wide variety of students. There was no specific “type” to the agriculture students and FFA members that I taught and advised. I was very proud of this fact as it led me to having a highly diverse group of students and FFA members which created very unique leadership and classroom learning opportunities

that arise only from the combination and collaboration of people from differing backgrounds. Over time I have learned to do the following:

Learn How to Adjust Your Sails

These changes in demographics and rapid shifts in popular culture create a strong need for FFA Advisors and agricultural educators to be responsive and adaptive to the students they have in their classrooms. The ability to adjust one’s sails in the face of the winds of change is essential to maintain a course of steady enrollment and high engagement from FFA members and agriculture students. Without this ability of being adaptable and adjusting the sails, teachers and advisors face the very real reality of ending up off course with low enrollment and engagement from students.

- Using a student-driven approach in the classroom, laboratory, SAE, and FFA Chapter. This allows all of these contexts to be dynamic and flexible to change with the changing demographics and needs of students, in addition to the community needs. Without a student-driven approach, you no longer have a student-led organization as it becomes teacher-led where the teacher does everything. This stunts the leadership growth and development of your students.
- Remember that just because a particular path or approach worked for you as a student,

doesn't mean it is the most effective for today.

- Make sure the activities and public face of the agriculture program and FFA Chapter are appropriate for engaging a wide variety of students, not just one single "type."

Lean on Your First and Second Mates

Trusting your FFA Chapter officers and student leaders to lead is essential. If you do not trust them and allow them spaces to practice their skills (with appropriate safety nets in place) they will have a very difficult time developing the skills they are seeking and that you need them to develop to help in the operation of the Chapter. At an organizational leadership level, people are most invested when they have a job that contributes to the overall wellbeing of the group. You will quickly see disengagement if you remove power and autonomy from your students and FFA officers.

- Ensure everyone has a job(s) and that these responsibilities are very clearly outlined.
- Make sure you are functioning appropriately as the Captain of the vessel. The Captain is in charge of setting the course and keeping the crew together, providing necessary corrections and supervision. The FFA Advisor should be a true advisor to the officer team who is running the student-led organization, providing their wisdom and experience as needed to the leaders of the organization. Taking an entirely hands-off approach will likely have

negative results just the same as being a micro-manager will.

- Spend Time in the Captain's Chair. Make sure you are taking time to analyze and reassess the effectiveness on priority of Chapter and classroom activities on a regular basis. Setting aside time for evaluation and reflection to adjust the course on a systemic, scheduled basis can help to head off the necessity of major course corrections through continual smaller efforts to ensure your group is headed in the right direction by the best path.
- Schedule an end-of-year review with your upperclassmen and/or FFA officer team. Do your best to provide an open dialogue where they can voice their honest opinions without fear of hurting your feelings or repercussions.
- Seek outside opinions and perspectives on your program and FFA Chapter to determine where your strengths and weaknesses in respect to recruitment and retention. Do the demographics of the FFA Chapter and agriculture program reflect those of the school and community? If they do, great job! If not, you are not maximizing involvement and engagement at the student and community levels.

Seek Counsel of Specialists in Charting Your Course

There is no shame in reaching out for advice from people who have specialized skills in recruitment and retention of a diverse group of students. If you identify that you may not be

maximizing your chapter's potential in recruitment and retention, seek out other FFA advisors and teachers who consistently show up with diverse groups of students. Talk with your state agricultural education staff to find out who they view as having particular skill and expertise in recruitment and retention, do not be surprised if this person is younger than you! Sometimes young teachers can really do a bang-up job of recruiting in comparison with older teachers because they are closer in age and more culturally in-touch with the students. They can offer suggestions for strategies that helped to get them into agricultural education and kept them around along with sharing how they have been successful in recruiting and retaining their own students. Above all, spend time really listening to students and be willing to change your approach based on what you hear. Listen to the ones you have in class. Listen to the ones you do not have in class. Listen to the ones who you want to have in your classes.

"A wise old owl sat on an oak. The more she saw the less she spoke. The less she spoke the more she heard."



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Starting a New Jr. MANRRS Chapter

by *Quentin Tyler*

Americans are more racially and ethnically diverse than in the past, and the U.S. is projected to be even more diverse in the coming decades (Cohn & Caumont, 2016). In particular, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2014), more than 13 percent of people in the United States are between the ages of 10 and 19. These adolescents are increasingly diverse and reflect the changing demographics of the U.S. population. In order to be the next generation of diverse leaders, these youth will need consistent and meaningful involvement from professional mentors, engagement and input on curricular and co-curricular decisions from industry and post-secondary institutions, and positive interactions from collegiate students of higher education institutions to reach their full potential. The Jr. MANRRS program is an excellent avenue for youth to connect with the respective areas as they observe, connect, and engage with national organizations that focus on agriculture, natural resources, and related science.

What is Jr. MANRRS?

The National Society for Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) has a vessel for youth engagement and development through its Pre-College Initiative Program, Jr. MANRRS. With the changing demographics of our country at the forefront of all discussions and program content delivery, The Jr. MANRRS Program

will lead the world in enhancing the pre-college students' academic, professional, and leadership skills in order to maximize their success in life. The Jr. MANRRS Program is open to all people. The program is designed to stimulate interest in science, technology, engineering, agricultural, and mathematics fields. The goal is to encourage students in grades 7–12 to attend college and pursue agriculture, natural resources, and environmental sciences degrees.

In particular, the Jr. MANRRS program provides several benefits such as: encouraging students to have a positive attitude towards academic excellence, providing consistent mentoring by representatives of higher education institutions, and industries in agriculture, natural resources, and related sciences. The Jr. MANRRS program allows interaction and mentorship with collegiate members of the National Society of MANRRS along with the professional members through attendance at one of the five fall regional clusters hosted across the country by the National Society of MANRRS. In mentoring and attending workshops, clusters, and institutes, students are stimulated and gain enthusiasm about science, technology, engineering, agriculture, and mathematics through hands on learning experience.

Benefits Everyone

For higher education institutions looking to start a Jr. MANRRS Program, the benefits include increasing the number of

underserved and underrepresented students attending and graduating from college. Moreover, Jr. MANRRS students are introduced to college faculty and staff through interactions at local collegiate MANRRS Chapters, at one of the five fall regional conferences sponsored by the National Society of MANRRS, or through one of the four leadership institutes that have been hosted at the University of Kentucky (7 years), University of Maryland Eastern Shore (5 years), St. Louis (2 years) or Auburn University (1). The institutes range from 1-3 days of hands-on learning, college tours, contests, workshops, and an opportunity fair.

Students are surrounded by like-minded peers, have an increased cultural competency from the myriad of speakers, and gain the experience of a student on a college campus. Through the interactions with colleges and universities, students are introduced to majors and career paths within the college at a young age and have the opportunity to ask questions, learn about scholarships, college admission requirements, and deadlines. Further, faculty, staff, and students that host, interact, and engage with Jr. MANRRS Chapters gain experience in dealing with youth from a variety of backgrounds and increase their cultural competence and ability to navigate with those that have cultural differences.

Additionally, Jr. MANRRS Chapters have shown success in creating partnerships with Nation-

al Organizations such as FFA, 4H-Youth Development, and AFA. Across states there have been many models of collaboration. In the state of Kentucky, JR. MANRRS has partnered with 4-H and Youth Development Agents to create thirteen 4-H/JR. MANRRS Chapters across the state with Cooperative Extension Service County Offices serving as the hub for local chapters. Additionally, the 4-H Agents serve as advisors and have created programming based on a recently formed JR. MANRRS National Curriculum, Creating the Next Generation of Diverse Leaders. The 4-H agents in Kentucky credit the Jr. MANRRS program with a way of being intentional in outreach to diverse youth in the state of Kentucky, while creating a platform where conversations can be held to speak of the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the respective communities, county extension offices, and industry of agriculture and natural resources.

Additionally, there has been collaborations with the National FFA Organization and Jr. MANRRS. One example has been the establishment of a JR.MANRRS/FFA chapter at Locust Trace High School in Lexington, Kentucky. At Locust Trace, the collegiate advisor from University of Kentucky works diligently with the school's administration and FFA Advisors to collectively provide outreach, engagement, and membership opportunities within the agriculture and natural resources industry. Additionally, students at the Jr.MANRRS/FFA Chapter are provided an opportunity to have rich conversations on the impact that diversity, equity,

and inclusion is currently having in our multicultural world.

Another example of collaboration has been with the Fayette County Public School System and Jr. MANRRS. Nine boys at a local high school were identified and supported through a federal NSF grant written by University of Kentucky faculty, staff, and University of Kentucky Collegiate MANRRS Advisors. Through the fall and spring semester, nine boys at Carter G. Woodson High School Academy were identified and transported three times a week to the University of Kentucky campus to engage with faculty in research and the collegiate MANRRS chapter in mentoring. In the spring semester, a JR. MANRRS Chapter was formed at the local high school, and the nine boys presented their research and were recognized at the Annual National MANRRS Career Fair and Training Conference.

How to Start a Jr. MANRRS Chapter

There are two ways in which one can start a Jr. MANRRS chapter. The first option would be to simply submit a petition for a new chapter to the National Professional Secretary of MANRRS at nationalsecretary@manrrs.org. In return, the respective JR. MANRRS chapter will receive a document requesting the name of the chapter advisor, chapter officers, contact information of the chapter, hosting address, full chapter name, and chapter type (Jr. MANRRS). The second option would be to contact one of National MANRRS 65 collegiate chapters across 38 states to inquire

about being a Jr. MANRRS chapter located under the umbrella of the collegiate chapter. This option would provide greater synergy for the Jr. MANRRS Chapter and also a connection to the host institutions. All Collegiate MANRRS advisors and chapters can be located at www.manrrs.org. Additionally, students can start the process of becoming an independent JR. MANRRS member by visiting <http://www.manrrs.org/jr-manrrs-membership>.

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The History of Woven Traditions

by Marla M. Marsh and Monica M. Marsh

“Necessity is the mother of invention” (Jonathan Swift) is an English-language proverb. It means, roughly, that the primary driving force for most new inventions is a need. That is our story. It was out of necessity that publisher William Shoecraft (Did You Know Publishing, Inc.), and twin sisters and educators Marla Marsh and Monica Marsh came together to meet a growing need in the sphere of diversity, inclusion, and equity.

In the Spring of 2004, Marla Marsh, then principal of Mayfield Elementary, Middletown (Ohio) City Schools and members of her Equity Leadership team decided to compile culturally relevant lessons for facilitators to use with learners. These lessons were to highlight at least two cultures within one lesson of study. However, those lessons couldn't be found, so Marla decided to team up with her twin sister, Monica, to develop these lessons. Monica, at that time, was an assistant principal with Butler County Career Development Schools (Hamilton, Ohio). This collaborative effort between Mayfield's Equity Team and Butler County Career Development Schools made a gift to Butler County, by sharing these lessons with each school within the county.

The purpose of this project (which is what we considered this work at that time) was not to celebrate diversity (One see-

ing the difference, understanding that others are different from the “standard”) but to move beyond diversity, to help others to appreciate the difference that difference makes. In our work, the focus has never been on any individual of the Woven Traditions team, but to focus and highlight the principles of Equity and Cultural Proficiency. (One sees the difference, responds positively, engages and adapts.)

William, Marla and Monica devised a way to bring cultural competency to the masses in the educational realm. However, during their journey together, which is fourteen years to date, the work has continued to evolve. The work is shared with not just educators, but all interested individuals in varying fields of business/industry. The curriculum is known as Woven Traditions and has been a driving force in the development of a course, *Toward Cultural Proficiency*, at The Ohio State University. This course brings into focus the changing demographics of diversity in America and how diversity, culture, race, and privilege affect our everyday actions and decision-making. Activities are designed to allow students to practice perspective-seeking and perspective-taking skills which are paramount to cultivating respectful cross-cultural and cross-racial relationships. This course will enhance the competence of the learner and, provide awareness and sensitivity toward their actions, interactions and reactions in their living, learning, and working environments.

Throughout this incredible journey, and an increase in team members, Woven Traditions continues to thrive, now having served 14 school districts (Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Dayton Public Schools, Middletown City Schools, Mt. Healthy School District, Winton Woods School District, Warren County Educational Service Center – serving Carlisle School District, Franklin City Schools, Kings Local Schools, Lebanon City Schools, Little Miami School District, Mason City Schools, Springboro City Schools and Waynesville Local Schools), in several cases being in multiple schools within a district, and is the **SOLE SOURCE PROVIDER** for Cincinnati Public Schools.

The creation of Woven Traditions was for providing educators with a tool that would assist them in giving learners a grounded understanding of our past, through culturally engaging experiences. We feel that Woven Traditions gives us an opportunity for learners to be engaged in learning about various cultures, races, the similarities between them and how they all intermingle.

Over the years, thanks to the team members noted below, Woven Traditions has evolved to not just being applicable in the classroom, it has moved to the boardroom and beyond, to touch the lives of persons in all professions. This training is designed to assist professionals to expand their skills in working with diverse audiences/populations. The overarching goals for the Woven Traditions

Cultural Competency professional development are: to assist participants to become aware of their own personal and organizational cultures, examine how our personal and organizational cultures affect our ability to work across difference, in both negative and positive ways, and build skills to increase competencies as we work with others who are different from us. Through face-to-face training, field support and trainer coaching, we work directly with schools and businesses to help employees create more synergy and efficiency in the work place. Our team: John Bryant, Ed. D. – Consultant, Emeritus, Bertand G. “Frank” Haynes, Ph. D., Rita Kolp, M. Ed., Marla Marsh, M. Ed., Monica Marsh, M. Ed., Winona Oliver, Ed. D., Audley Smith, Ed. D., Natasha Taylor, M. Ed. and M. Susie Whittington, Ph. D.



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Diversifying our Notion of Diversity continued from page 10

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Active Teaching-Learning Strategies to Enhance Student Learning

by Rama Radhakrishna and John Ewing

Teachers are challenged to make students critically think and provide experiences that help students to learn and understand the concepts they are teaching. In addition, teachers must help students to apply concepts learned in the class to real life situations by providing examples, sharing experiences, and involving students in active learning strategies.

Active learning is a strategy that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing” (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Active learning happens when students are given the opportunity to take a more interactive relationship with the subject matter or concepts discussed in class, encouraging them to generate rather than simply to receive knowledge (Walker, 2003). Simply put, active learning is anything that students do in a classroom, including exchange of ideas, observing other students, carrying out hands-on activities, and actively participating in the discussions. Research on active learning suggests that students learn more material, retain the information longer, and enjoy the classroom more.

In this article, we share three active teaching-learning strategies that are simple to use in classrooms that are small to medium in size (15 to 40 enrollees). The three strategies are: TPS (Think, Pair and Share), RECAP (R-Read/Recall class materials; EC Engage in conversations, group activities; , A-Apply what you read and learned in class via exams, assignments, projects and presentations and P-Progress/Performance as determined by course grade), and Structured Feedback (SF). We have used these three strategies in different courses, both at the graduate and undergraduate level. In the following paragraphs, we discuss each of the three strategies.

The first is TPS (Think, Pair and Share) strategy. TPS is an Active Learning strategy that can be used in any classroom format which gives students time to think on a topic, turn to their neighbor for a short discussion and share the results of the discussion to the rest of the class. TPS involves three steps (see Template). Step 1 (THINK) – in this step, students are asked to define a concept. For example. Then they are asked to think about its meaning and write down its use in context of the content beign taught. In Step 2 (PAIR) – students are asked to discuss with the individual sitting next

to him or her about the terms and concepts in step1. The rationale in step 2 is to not only understand the concepts from each student’s point

Simply put, active learning is anything that students do in a classroom, including exchange of ideas, observing other students, carrying out hands-on activities, and actively participating in the discussions.

of view but also learn from each other. Step 3 (SHARE) involved sharing of the experience of learning the concept with the rest of the class. The rationale in step 3 is to understand the term or concept from a variety of perspectives. A total of 15 minutes are needed to complete the three steps. Overall, TPS can be a good active learning strategy to understand concepts before they are taught, get to know students and where they are relative to the concepts.

TPS is not only a very good active learning strategy, but also serves as a feedback mechanism for both students and the instructor. If properly implemented, it saves instructor time, keeps students prepared, helps students to get more involved in class discussion and participation, and provides for cumulative assessment of student progress. For instructors, TPS can help make adjustments to their teaching style, emphasis on

TPS Strategy Template

Course Name/Number
Section/Semester/Year

Think, Pair, and Share (TPS) is an active learning strategy used to enhance student learning. Today, we use this strategy to understand the concept _____ (Insert the title of topic or concept to be discussed). Each of these three steps should not take more than 5 minutes each.

STEP I – THINK

In this step, think about the term _____ (Insert the title of topic or concept to be discussed) in the context of _____ (insert subject here). As you think through this topic and process, make notes of what you thought of the _____ (Insert the title of topic or concept to be discussed)

STEP II –PAIR

Talk to the student sitting next to you about the topic _____ (STEP I). Discuss with the student your thought process in understanding the concept. The dialogue between the two of you should help better understand the concept _____ and its use or application to _____ (broader topic)

STEP III – SHARE

Share your experiences of learning this concept with the rest of the class. The rationale for sharing is to engage in dialogue with other students and enhance your learning of the concept/topic discussed in class.

content to be taught and selection of appropriate reading materials.

The second strategy is RECAP (R-Read/Recall class materials; EC-Engage in conversations, group activities; , A-Apply what you read and learned in class via exams, assignments, projects and presentations and P-Progress/Performance as determined by course grade), where students, selected at random, summarize previous week's class session. The instructor prepares the RECAP sheets (see RECAP Template) for each class and distributes them in the previous class session so that students can come prepared for next class session. Students selected at random will present to the class and submit written responses to the questions on the RECAP sheet. This approach has helped students to be current and be prepared as course content becomes

more complex.

From the instructor perspective, RECAP strategy is very helpful in organizing and tracking where students are in the class so that adjustments can be made during the course of the semester. RECAP strategy also helps students not only to come prepared for each class session, but also helps their presentation skills. Further, RECAP provides a good cumulative summary of what has been discussed or presented in previous classes and saves instructor time in class preparation.

The third Strategy is Structured Feedback (SF). Structured Feedback is a mid-semester learning/assessment tool designed to provide feedback to students and for the instructor to make adjustments to teaching during the course of the semester. In

Structured Feedback, students respond to their level of confidence in learning (or not learning) the content/topics presented in class. Each student in class is provided with a Structured Feedback form to indicate their perceived level of confidence on the topics/concepts discussed in class. The instructor gathers the Structured Feedback responses from each student and summarizes the responses to determine which topics or concepts students are confident and comfortable with and which topics or concepts students had difficulty understanding or need emphasis or reinforcement.

From the instructor perspective, this strategy has helped to re-examine and re-evaluate time spent on a topic and corresponding evaluations. Further, the use of this strategy helped refine teaching skills, provided mecha-

nisms to deliver feedback to students on a regular basis, and gave confidence that the students are learning as evidenced by performance and participation. From the students' perspective, students realize that they are responsible for content if they missed class. Structured Feedback is a valuable tool for both teacher and students in terms of reinforcing key concepts; in preparing or reviewing for exams; in changing teaching style or strategy; and making mid-semester adjustments.

The Structured Feedback strategy may not be applicable as de-

finied in the setting of a large class because of its inherent time/effort requirements. However, creative use of instructional technology may address this limitation. Also, providing timely and frequent feedback to students is critically important for this strategy to be successfully implemented and to be of value to students and the instructor.

In summary, these three strategies have been beneficial to both the students and the instructor. The use of these strategies depends on class level, subject matter taught, class size, learning outcomes, and instructor time.

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RECAP Strategy Template

Course Name/Number
Section/Semester/Year

Use this worksheet to guide your efforts as you work through this week's class. The list of questions helps you to **RECAP** this week's learning objectives. You may want to refer to the lesson plan or syllabus. The instructor will select a student at random to summarize the contents in the next class period. **You are required to submit this work sheet and come prepared to make a summary presentation in the next class session (Date).**

1. Define the term evaluation in your own words.
2. What is formative evaluation? Illustrate with an example
3. What is summative evaluation, Illustrate with an example?
4. What is the main difference between research and evaluation?
5. Define stakeholders for an evaluation.



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