

Project Title

Engaging Novice Agricultural Educators in Community Based Service Learning Programs

Brief Description of Project

A major goal of the K-State 2025 visionary plan is engagement. This project will promote engagement with the College of Agriculture, the College of Human Ecology and the School of Leadership studies in an interdisciplinary project to engage rural communities in service learning projects with novice agricultural educators. Last year over half of the states reported a critical shortage in the number of agricultural educators. The causes contributing to the shortage of agricultural educators includes; opening and expanding of programs, retirements, current teachers leaving for other professions, negative attitudes by the media towards education and teachers not promoting their own professions (Thompson, 2013). Novice Agricultural Educators are practicing teachers in their 2nd-5th years of experience teaching in high school agricultural education programs. High School Agricultural Education programs are present in 165 high schools in the state of Kansas, they provide systematic instruction based on career and technical education related to all aspects of the agriculture industry. Agriculture is the number one industry in the state of Kansas and using that as a tool to provide engagement in rural communities with a focus on youth is logical. Currently there is a nationwide shortage of Agricultural Educators, the solution to this lies in recruitment and retention of agricultural educators in the profession. This project seeks to meet the need of retention by helping these novice teachers become aware of the resources available to them at Kansas State University and assisting them in becoming integral parts of their communities by promoting service learning in their agricultural education programs that will benefit the individual communities in which they live and work. This project will work to counteract negative views on education by engaging the teachers and their students in service learning projects and keep these young professionals engaged with resources at Kansas State University to help them be successful and remain an integral part of their communities. In addition, another challenge to retention of novice agricultural education teachers is finances; an agricultural education teacher exit survey from Western Illinois conducted in 2010 stated that 43% of the teachers cited said they could not afford to remain in the profession. Therefore, the personal financial advice they receive will help them be a vital part of the community by helping them plan their financial future so they can afford to teach long term.

Purpose

A novice teacher program funded through private donations from the Kansas Farm Bureau, the Kansas Crop Improvement Association, RiverStar Farms and individual donors exists that works extensively with first year agricultural education teachers in Kansas. This program pairs the novice teachers with a mentor in their local region, coordinates visits of the mentor and novice teachers to each other's agricultural education programs, plans and conducts four meetings throughout the first year of teaching with topics based on needs assessments. Prior to the creation of this program in 2004 the retention rate of 1st year teachers to their 2nd year of teaching was 70%, in the years since, the rates have averaged an 82% retention rate to their second year. Our goal is to expand services to the 2nd to 5th year teachers to further increase the retention rate in the profession by providing increased access to services available at Kansas State University by and increasing the connection and between teachers and their local communities. The long term goal is to provide this opportunity to novice agricultural education

teachers every other year. The current proposal will establish a pilot program that will create a basis for securing private funding in the future.

Methods

This program will focus on providing financial education and service learning exposure to novice agricultural educators in Kansas who are currently in their 2nd to 5th years of teaching. In Kansas there are 190 agricultural educators, 49 (25%) of which are novice teachers in their 2nd to 5th year of teaching. This program's goal is to engage at least 30% of these educators. This two part program will focus on two goals, making the novice teachers more financially competent and secure so that teaching long term is an option for them and connecting the agricultural educators with resources and ideas to complete a service learning project in their communities. The first goal will be accomplished by connecting recent graduates to the faculty and students in the Kansas State University Personal Financial Planning (PFP) Program. The PFP program is a CFP® Board registered program providing students education in comprehensive financial planning. Curriculum consists of courses including investment planning, personal income taxation, retirement planning, estate planning, financial counseling, and insurance planning. The faculty and students of the PFP program will create an informative session that focuses on financial needs and advice for recent graduates who are in the teaching profession. Topics that will be covered include consumer debt management, student loan repayment, saving for short and long term goals, insurance needs and availability, and basic estate planning documents. After the informative session, K-State PFP students will work individually or in small groups with each of the participants to answer questions and provide advice on individual questions and concerns. PFP students currently work in the Powercat Financial Counseling center on campus, providing similar services to current students. This will not only connect recent graduates with sound financial advice, but also give real world scenarios for the PFP students to explore.

The second goal will be accomplished by assisting the educators to develop a community based integrated service learning experience into their curriculum in order to meaningfully engage with the local community. First, an educational component would be provided about service learning, what it is and why it is beneficial to communities by Faculty in the School of Leadership Studies. Prior to the conference, participants will be encouraged to research a need in the community by connecting with influential community members, local government and K-State Research and Extension personnel. Participants will arrive to the conference with an idea. Facilitators will walk the teachers through the planning process as a way of modeling a curriculum that focuses on P.A.R.E., Leadership for Social Change, and Active Citizen Continuum. Valuable resources will be gained from the Kansas Campus compact hosted in the Leadership Institute. For example: a need might be landscaping a park in the community in which drought conditions necessitate, incorporating xeriscaping. We will work with the educator to create a plan to integrate a service learning unit and project into one of their courses, a timeline for implementation and contact information for individuals at K-State who might be able to provide specific information about xeriscaping in their area. The educator would leave the conference with tools to integrate service learning into Agricultural Education curriculum. The teachers will be able to help students move from volunteerism to citizenship through this engaged service learning experience. The service learning projects will happen in the communities by the educator along with students in their agricultural education program. Each educator can provide receipts up to \$100 for

reimbursement of supplies to help support their service learning project in their community. There exists the potential for outstanding projects to grow and faculty members in other departments could develop the projects into individual Engagement Incentive Grants in the future on a larger scale.

A Friday/Saturday workshop would be held at a facility near Salina, Ks to ensure a geographically central location in the state. Potential sites include Weber Conference Center or the K-State Salina Campus. Current K-State Agricultural Education students will assist with the planning of the conference and be invited to participate in the event. Participants will be offered the opportunity to receive graduate credit through Kansas State University if they desire.

Timeline

July 29-31- Create a schedule of events and promotional flyer

- Promote the event at the Kansas Association of Career and Technical Education Conference (K-ACTE) to Agricultural Educators in their 2nd-5th years of teaching during the Novice Teacher program.

September – Secure a host facility

October 1st– Open Registration for the event

November 1st – Close Registration for the Event

November – Secure the Host facility and confirm the number of participants

- Confirm K-State faculty as presenters (Institute of Personal Financial Planning and the School of Leadership Studies), number of participants, time and location

December 5th-6th, 2013 – Host the event in Salina, KS

January – May – Participants conduct their service learning projects in their communities with support from K-State Faculty and students.

Collaborative Partners

Direct collaboration will happen with the Kansas State University Institute of Personal Financial Planning and Dr. Martin Seay. Dr. Seay will create and present an informative session to help the novice teachers ensure longevity in the career by making sound financial decisions early. Students in the PFP program will consult the novice teachers on financial decisions. We will directly collaborate with the School of Leadership Studies and Trisha Gott. Ms. Gott and her students will create and present an informative session on service learning as an educational model. Then, they will assist the educators in creating a plan for integrating service learning into their curriculum addressing the identified community need. In addition, individual participants will be encouraged to communicate with their local K-State Research and Extension Agents to identify a need in the community to develop into a service learning project.

Potential Impact

Ultimately, the retention of agricultural educators in the community by providing them financial planning tools and strengthening their connection and investment in the community will be a primary impact. Strengthening the connection between individual communities and the resources available at Kansas State University will provide a long term relationship allowing for additional collaboration in the future. Perhaps most importantly however, will be the impact of high school students giving back to their communities through the service learning project. Finally, this project will support the K-State 2025 Visionary plan as many college and department strategic plans will include service learning and engagement, both of which are major components of this project.