EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES OF GEORGIA AGRICULTURE TEACHERS

by

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(Under the Direction of Jason Peake)

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to address the oscillating enrollment numbers in secondary agricultural education programs in Georgia. The purpose of this study was to identify the effective strategies and activities utilized by Georgia agriculture teachers in recruiting students into secondary agricultural education programs. A census was conducted of Georgia agriculture teachers (N=280). Georgia agriculture teachers perceive the FFA to be the most helpful in regards to recruitment as well as the most beneficial to the students through participation. The most effective recruitment strategies as reported by Georgia agriculture teachers were FFA chapter events, the curriculum, Ag student - student contact, recruitment events, feeder school contact, publications, parents/teacher/support groups, and agriculture teacher - student contact. Activities specific to each strategy were ranked within each strategy. It is recommended that this information be used as a springboard to develop recruitment strategies and activities for the local program by current teachers and pre-service teachers in Georgia.

INDEX WORDS: Recruitment, Agricultural Education, Strategies, Activities,

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B.S.A., The University of Georgia, 2011

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2012

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August 2012

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this to my beloved family and friends that have provided me with the support and encouragement to accomplish so much. Without their love, this would have been next to impossible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give a special thanks to Dr. Jason Peake, Dr. Nick Fuhrman, and Dr. Jill Rucker for the much needed guidance and support throughout my journey as a student in the Masters of Agricultural Leadership program as well as the thesis process.

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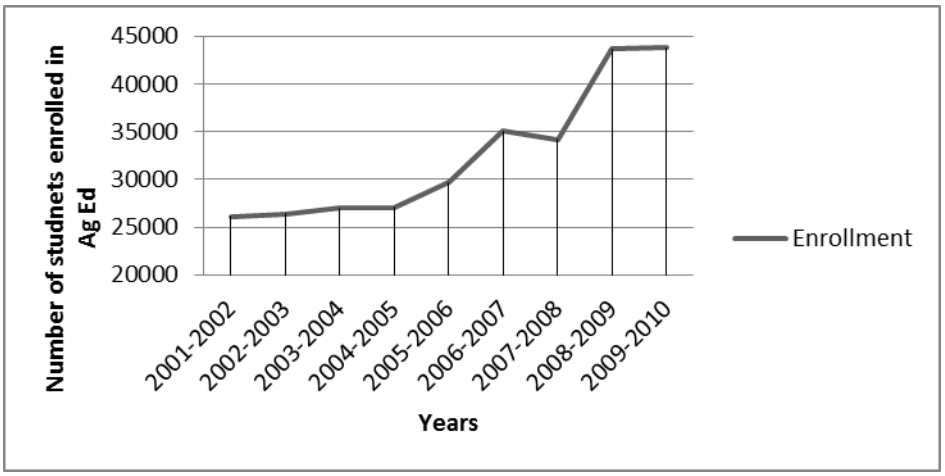
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since the passing of the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917, agricultural education has been a vital and growing part of the public school system in the state of Georgia (Georgia Agricultural Education 2010 Annual Report). Georgia has been increasing the number of agricultural education programs throughout the past 10 years (B. Lastly, personal communication, January 13, 2012) and enrollment in these programs has steadily increased as well (Figure 1). The state now boasts 180 high school (9^{th}-12^{th} grade) agricultural education programs (Georgia Agricultural Education 2010 Annual Report).

Figure 1



Georgia Agricultural Education Enrollment Numbers

According to The National Council for Agricultural Education (2009), there are over 800,000 students enrolled in formal agricultural education programs offered in grades seventh to adult in the 50 states and three U.S. territories. In the past, national studies have found there to

be a fluctuation of enrollment in secondary agricultural education programs over the past decades (Breja & Dyer, 1999). According to the National Research Council (1988), “Agriculture is too important a topic to be taught only to the relatively small percentage of students considering careers in agriculture and pursuing vocational agriculture studies” (p. 1). According to Rayfield and Croom (2007), the 10 x 15 Long-Range Goal for Agricultural Education mandates there will be 10,000 quality agricultural education programs that serve students through the three-circle model: classroom instruction, supervised agricultural experience, and FFA programs by the year 2015. However, these fluctuations in the enrollment of agricultural education programs can determine the success or failure of a program (Speer, 1998). According to Kantrovich (2007) it will be very difficult to meet the goal of having 10,000 quality programs by 2015. The fluctuating numbers indicate the National Research Council’s mandate is at risk of not being met. One strategy for positively influencing these enrollment numbers in the short-term is to better understand current recruitment techniques used by agricultural education teachers. With knowledge of the most effective recruitment strategies, teachers will be better able to market their programs to students not typically enrolling in agricultural education programs or better meet student needs through innovative program implementation techniques.

Problem Statement

The literature base on recruitment in agricultural education within the past five to seven years is limited even with the continued fluctuation seen in enrollment numbers for agricultural education. The lack of research and the continued fluctuation in enrollment numbers led the researcher to form the problem statement for this study. What are the current recruitment strategies and activities Georgia agriculture teachers utilize, and which recruitment strategies and activities do Georgia agriculture teachers perceive to be the most effective?

Subproblems

1. What are the demographic characteristics of Georgia agriculture teachers?
2. What strategies and activities are Georgia agriculture teachers utilizing in their agricultural education program to recruit students?
3. Which strategies and activities do Georgia agriculture teachers perceive to be most effective?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the effective strategies and activities Georgia agriculture teachers utilize in recruiting students into secondary agricultural education programs. The information gathered from the recruitment questionnaire will provide information to Georgia agriculture teachers, the Georgia agricultural education state staff, post-secondary agricultural teacher educators, and pre-service teachers. The findings of this study will assist agricultural education programs by increasing the awareness of secondary agriculture teachers regarding current recruitment strategies being used by Georgia agriculture teachers.

Scope of Study

Georgia Agricultural Education is divided into three regions: North, Central, and South. Each region is made up of two areas, for a total of six areas in the state. The Area Teacher Meetings are mandatory meetings for all current Georgia agriculture teachers in each area. The scope of this study included Georgia agriculture teachers who were in attendance at the Area Teacher Meetings. The study population was comprised of all current high school (9^{th}-12^{th} grade) agriculture teachers in the state of Georgia. A convenience sample was used to collect data from all Georgia agriculture teachers who attended each Area Teacher Meeting.

Hypothesis

Georgia agriculture teachers use a variety of recruitment strategies and activities to increase enrollment in secondary agricultural education programs. Effective strategies and activities used by Georgia agriculture teachers include: feeder school contact, teacher – student contact, and FFA chapter events.

Objectives

The study particularly sought to:

- Determine the demographics of Georgia agriculture teachers
- Determine the current recruitment strategies and activities utilized by Georgia agriculture teachers in the secondary agricultural education program.
- Determine the most effective recruitment strategies and activities as perceived by Georgia agriculture teachers in the secondary agricultural education program.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are important to understanding the content of discussion of the study:

Agriculture Teacher: an individual, who instructs one or more agricultural education courses in a Georgia high school (9^{th}-12^{th} grade), but does not include Young Farmer teachers.

Agricultural Education Program: an education program in a high school (9^{th} – 12^{th} grade) that expands the knowledge of students in the area of agriculture.

Feeder School: a pre-secondary school that provides students to the high school (9^{th} and 12^{th} grade) where the agricultural education program is located.

Georgia Agricultural Education State Staff: state staff includes: Agricultural Education Program Manager, Georgia FFA Association Executive Secretary, 2 Recruitment & Retention Coordinators, 3 Region Directors, and 15 Area Teachers within the state of Georgia.

Limitations of Study

1. This study was limited to agriculture teachers in the state of Georgia attending the Area Teacher Meetings.
2. This study should not be generalized to states beyond Georgia.
3. The information that was gathered was self-reported by individual agriculture teachers in the state of Georgia.

Basic Assumptions of Study

1. Participants were honest and forthcoming in their responses to the questionnaire.

Significance of Study

The results of this study will provide information to Georgia agricultural education state staff, Georgia agriculture teachers, post-secondary agricultural education educators, and pre-service agriculture teachers. The results will outline effective, recruitment strategies and activities used as perceived by Georgia agriculture teachers. The information gathered will be useful in the training of pre-service agriculture teachers by post-secondary agricultural teacher educators.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews previous research relevant to this study as well as the history of agricultural education. The existing literature in student recruitment and enrollment into agricultural education programs primarily focuses on the barriers of enrollment, factors influencing students to enroll into agricultural education programs, and reasons for enrollment patterns (Knight, 1987; Riesenberg & Lierman, 1990; Hoover & Scanlon, 1991a; Hoover & Scanlon, 1991b; Marshall, Herring, & Briers, 1992; Dyer, Breja, & Ball, 2003). A limited amount of research has been conducted on the solutions to recruitment barriers as well as recruitment strategies and activities used by agriculture teachers (Myers, Breja, & Dyer, 2004; Myers, Dyer, & Breja, 2003).

The review of literature is divided into the following sections: (1) what is Agricultural Education; (2) the three components of Agricultural Education; (3) history of Agricultural Education; (4) reasons for enrollment patterns; (5) the factors that influence and motivate student enrollment; (6) the barriers to enrollment in agricultural education programs; (7) minorities in agricultural education programs; (8) and recruitment strategies and activities used by agriculture teachers to recruit students into the agricultural education program.

What is Agricultural Education?

Agricultural education unites the areas of agriculture and education to create a discipline that teaches students about the diverse fields of agriculture such as: agriculture, food,

and natural resources while focusing on the educational processes. According to Phipps, Osborne, Dyer, and Ball (2008, p. 3),

> Agricultural education may be defined as systematic instruction in agriculture and natural resources at the elementary, middle school, secondary, postsecondary, or adult levels for the purpose of (1) preparing people for entry or advancement in agricultural occupations and professions, (2) job creation and entrepreneurship, and (3) agricultural literacy.

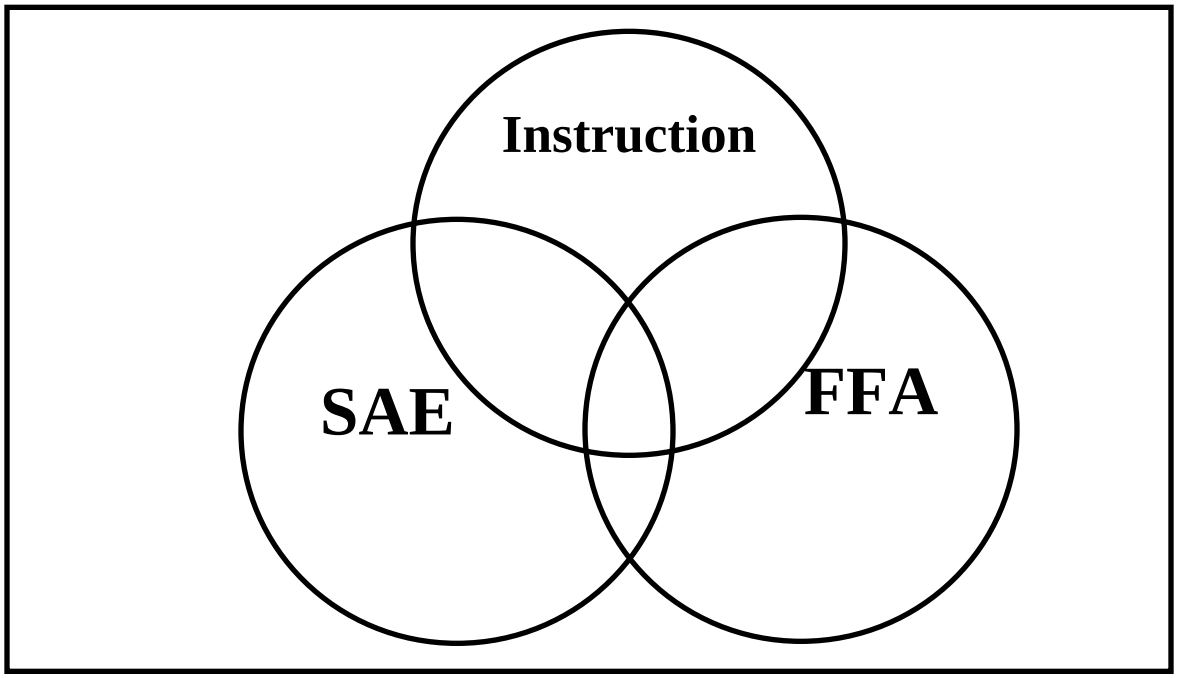
According to the National FFA Organization (2012) the Agricultural Education Mission states, "Agricultural Education prepares students for successful careers and lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources systems." Through the various Agricultural Education subjects/courses offered agricultural educators teach a wide variety of skills and concepts relating to the diverse field of agriculture.

The Three Components of Agricultural Education

The agricultural education program is made up of three parts forming The Three-Circle Model. Students in an agricultural education program will receive instruction through three different components, including: (1) Classroom/Laboratory, (2) Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), and (3) FFA (National FFA Organization, 2012). The Three-Circle Model of Agricultural Education is often compared to a three legged stool. Just as each leg is vital for the stool to stand, so are the three components of Agricultural Education (Benson, A. 2006). Agricultural education is based on these three components and no one component should be ostracized or promoted more than another component. Agricultural Education Instructors are encouraged to overlap the three components as much as possible. According to the National Teach Ag Campaign (Par 3), " The successful integration of each of these three components results in a strong program that produces well rounded individuals who are prepared to be

leaders in agriculture, business, and industry." The National Teach Ag Campaign is led by the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) and is an initiative of the National Council for Agricultural Education. The Three-Circle Model can be found in Figure 2 and shows how the three components should overlap.

Figure 2



The Three-Circle Model of Agricultural Education (Source: National FFA Organization, 2012)

Classroom/Laboratory Instruction. According to the National FFA Organization instruction in the classroom and lab is the location where contextual learning takes place for the student (2012). Time must be allotted for classroom and lab instruction, because it provides students with the opportunity to learn, study, and discuss problem specific areas of agriculture and natural resources (Phipps et al., 2008). The groundwork is laid during instruction for students to later relate what was learned to real life. According to Phipps et al. (2008),

"Agricultural instruction sets the stage for understanding, application, and problem solving in the school-based laboratory and on farms, at nurseries, and in other settings" (p.6).

SAE. Once enrolled in the agricultural education program students are expected to plan and implement their own personalized SAE. The SAE program is an extension of the classroom where the student is exposed to work-based learning. According to Phipps et al. (2008,), "Supervised agricultural experience programs provide opportunities for students to apply the knowledge and skills learned at school to real-life situations" (p. 6). The SAE program is a hands-on agriculture program created by the student (Official FFA Student Handbook, 2006, p. 6) and provides the student with the opportunity to individualize their study of agriculture (Phipps et al., 2008). SAEs can be based upon anything that relates to the traditional and non-traditional agriculture industry. The student's SAE is conducted under the supervision and instruction of the agriculture teacher allowing the student to apply, both knowledge and skills gained from classroom and lab instruction to the real world (Phipps et al., 2008).

FFA. Upon entering an agricultural education course a student is eligible to join the National FFA Organization. According to Phipps et al. (2008), "The National FFA Organization is an educational, nonprofit, nonpolitical youth organization for students enrolled in school-based agricultural education programs" (p.6). Because the FFA is an intra-curricular component, students enrolled in agricultural education courses are exposed to the benefits and structure of the organization. The FFA Mission states, "FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education" (The Official FFA Student Handbook, 2006, p. 2). Agriculture teachers encourage students to enroll in the local chapter in order to participate in the chapter's programs and activities, compete in career development events (CDEs), apply for scholarships through the

local and national FFA, and to have fun (Phipps et al., 2008; The Official FFA Student Handbook, 2006).

History of Agricultural Education

According to Phipps et al. (2008, p. 23), "Agricultural education as an instructional program in the public schools pre-dates a long list of federal legislative acts that shaped and funded U.S. public education during the 20th century". The review of the history of agricultural education, for the purposes of this manuscript, looks solely at key legislation. Legislation dealing with agricultural education could be broken down into the following times: pre-inception, inception, and post-inception.

The history of agricultural education is marked by several pieces of legislation that has affected the formation and development of the agricultural education program today. Agricultural education officially began in 1917 with the signing of the Smith-Hughes Act; however, agricultural education can be traced back to the mid-1800s with the formation of the Land Grant institutions. In 1862, the Morrill Act or the Land Grant Act was introduced by Senator Justin Morrill to Congress allowing financial assistance by selling donated land to provide colleges which would benefit agriculture and mechanical arts (National Archives and Record Administration, 1995,). Looking back at the establishment of the land-grant institution Herren and Edwards (2002, p. 88) suggested, "Moreover, as a result of the efforts of land-grant institutions, American agriculture and related life sciences have developed into one of the great marvels of the modern world." The Hatch Act of 1887 provided each state with funds to establish experiment stations in conjunction with the Land Grant institutions. The research conducted at the experiment stations were scientific in nature, but reflected the problems that growers and producers were facing in the agriculture industry (Phipps et al., 2008). The passage

of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 brought about the Cooperative Extension System (Phipps et al., 2008). The Smith-Lever Act completed the Land Grant System by fulfilling, "a tripartite mission of teaching, researching, and service" (Phipps et al., 2008, p. 28).

The National Vocational Education Act, more commonly known as the Smith-Hughes Act, was introduced by Senator Hoke Smith and Representative Dudley M. Hughes and is responsible for establishing funding for agricultural education. According to Phipps et al. (2008, p. 28),

> The Smith-Hughes Act was designed to promote and further develop vocational education programs which otherwise might not have been provided in state educational systems. This Act provided funds for vocational education programs in agriculture, trades and industries, and homemaking. The Act provided funds for cooperating with states in paying the salaries and transportation costs of teachers, supervisors, directors of agricultural subjects, and agricultural teacher educators. Educational programs supported with funds authorized by the Smith-Hughes Act were restricted to those that (1) prepared students for useful employment, (2) were less than college grade, and (3) were designed for people over 14 years old who were working or preparing to work on the farm or in the farm home.

The passage of this Act closed the distance between the Land Grant System and the individuals in the rural communities across the country including rural students seeking agriculturally-related careers.

Two other pieces of legislation, the Vocational Education Act of 1963 and the Carl D. Perkins Acts of 1984 and 1990, held heavy influence on the nature and transformation of agricultural education. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 provided funding to strengthen

and improve vocational education as well as expand opportunities within vocational education (Phipps et al. 2008). The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 "reaffirmed a federal commitment to vocational education and its importance to the nation's future" by providing funding while focusing on improving the labor force skill and job preparedness (Phipps et al., 2008). The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990 provided the largest amount of funding ever for vocational education and focused heavily on the integration of academic courses and vocational education (Phipps et al., 2008).

The research highlights the federal legislation of the 20th century that has molded the agricultural education system. The three key pieces of legislation that paved the way for the development of agricultural education are the Morrill Act of 1862, the Hatch Act of 1887, and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. One piece of legislation, the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, is recognized for the inception of agricultural education. Various pieces of legislation have helped transform agricultural education over the years, but none have done so like the Vocational Education Act of 1963, Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984, and The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990. It is necessary to understand the history of agricultural education in the context of this study because

What Influences Enrollment Patterns?

Enrollment in agricultural education programs offered in grades seventh through adult in all 50 states and three U.S. territories exceeded 800,000 students as of 2009 (The National Council for Agricultural Education, 2009). According to Breja and Dyer (1999), secondary agricultural programs have experienced a fluctuation in enrollment over the past several decades. Various reasons may to be to blame for the oscillating enrollment patterns in secondary agricultural programs throughout history, including: transitions from the traditional Vo-Ag I, II,

III, and IV to semester length courses (Marshall, Herring, & Briers, 1992) and the Excellence in Education movement causing higher education standards to increase (Riesenberg & Lierman, 1990).

The Excellence in Education movement stemmed from the governmental report, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform. According to the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983, p. 14),

> We define 'excellence' to mean several related things. At the level of the individual learner, it means performing on the boundary of individual ability in ways that test and push back personal limits, in school and the workplace. Excellence characterized a school or college that sets high expectations and goals for all learners, then tries in every way possible to help students reach them. Excellence characterizes a society that has adopted these policies, for it will then be prepared through the education and skill of its people to respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing world. Our Nation's people and its schools and colleges must be committed to achieving excellence in all these senses.

This report called for college admission requirements to be raised and standardized tests to be administered at critical points in the educational system (Willie, 1985). The focus on higher graduation requirement and college admission requirements, for a time, negatively affected the enrollment in agricultural education programs.

A continuation of the increase in graduation requirements and college admission requirements, college bound students had very little opportunity to move beyond the core academic courses causing negative impact on enrollment in elective courses (Phipps et al., 2008). The realization of the need to provide a more balanced and diverse curriculum led to the formation of block scheduling. According to Phipps et al. (2008, p. 19),

> Course scheduling patterns have tremendous impact on enrollments in agricultural education programs, both in terms of numbers and academic diversity of students. Undoubtedly, block scheduling provides greater opportunity for all students to enroll in agricultural education courses, whether they are planning to pursue job placement or postsecondary education upon graduation or simply want to learn more about agriculture and natural resources

Agricultural education must mesh well with the overall trends and priorities within individual schools as well as the overall educational agenda in order to be successful (Phipps et al., 2008). All of these influential factors and more would suggest that changes in educational structure and requirements will cause an undulation in enrollment numbers whether for the better or worse. The success of the agricultural education program will depend on its ability to adapt in an ever-changing system; this includes using relevant and innovative student recruitment strategies to ensure that enrollment patterns continue to increases.

Barriers to Enrollment in Agricultural Education Programs

The majority of the current research base in recruitment has focused on the barriers to enrollment in agricultural education programs. Knight (1987) identified five key factors that contribute to declining numbers in agricultural education enrollment. These factors include the heavy emphasis on the production side of agriculture, increased academic requirements for graduation conflict with the offered agricultural courses, the perception of a college degree equals a “successful life”, therefore, demoting agricultural careers that do not require degrees, the perception vocational classes are for academically challenged students versus the academically talented students, and the stereotypical student who comprises an agricultural education program is primarily a white, farm boy (Knight, 1987). Riesenberg & Lierman (1990)

reported four of the most limiting factors affecting enrollment in Idaho's agricultural education programs, as perceived by administration and instructors: "scheduling conflicts, change in students' interests and attitudes toward agriculture, competition with other elective courses and academically oriented students guided away from secondary agriculture" (Riesenberg & Lierman, 1987, p. 10). Other barriers facing agricultural education programs, according to Hoover and Scanlon (1991a), are the negative images surrounding agriculture, the elevated requirements for high school graduation, the "anti-vocational" bias, the perceived value of class for the future, and the role of significant others.

Throughout the early literature there are several reoccurring factors that have been identified as problematic for enrollment into agricultural education programs. The factors identified throughout the literature base includes: the future value of the class or future plans (Gilbertson, Rathbun, & Sabol, 1975; Pruckno & Miller, 1985; Brandy, 1986; Scanlon & Yoder, 1989; Hoover & Scanlon, 1991), influence of significant others (Flores, 1989; Scanlon & Yoder, 1989; Hoover & Scanlon, 1991a), enrollment in vocational classes conflict with obtaining a college degree (Knight 1987; Hoover & Scanlon, 1991a) and scheduling difficulties (Riesenberg & Lierman, 1990; Hoover & Scanlon, 1991a; Hoover & Scanlon, 1991b).

More recent research, conducted by Dyer and Breja, identified the barriers associated with successful recruitment of students into agricultural education programs. Even though there is a 10 to 20 year span between Dyer and Breja's study and earlier research, several of the factors identified early on are still barriers in enrollment of students in agricultural education programs. The top ten problems secondary agriculture teachers experience are "scheduling difficulties, finding time to recruit, student involvement in other activities, access to students, competition from other programs, lack of guidance counselor support, increased graduation requirements,

image of agriculture, lack of interest in agriculture, and block scheduling" (Dyer & Breja, 2003, p75).

What Factors Influence or Motivate Student's Decision to Enroll or Not?

Agricultural education programs have several enrollment barriers that must be overcome; however, there are other enrollment factors that must be considered. These factors include the student's perceptions about agricultural education, the future value of agricultural education, the role of significant others, and the image of agricultural education all influence a student's perception about agricultural courses (Hoover &Scanlon, 1991b). The perceived value and image of the agricultural education program as well as the agricultural industry serve as strong influencing factors for student enrollment into agricultural education programs. Significant others including: parents, school counselors, friends, and teachers, all can greatly influence a student to enroll in an agricultural education program or vice versa (Marshall et al., 1992; Hoover & Scanlon, 1991b). According to Reis and Kahler (1997), parents, agricultural teachers, friends, and former agricultural education students are the most influential people when it comes to students enrolling in an agricultural education program.

Motivational factors that potentially lead to student enrollment, identified by students in Iowa, included personal interest in agriculture or agricultural education, a farming background, and activities associated with agricultural education (Reis & Kahler, 1997.) Similar findings were noted in a study conducted in Texas. Students were asked about their reasons for enrolling in agriscience and responses included: class characteristics, identity enhancement, agricultural interest, instrumental/practical reasons, significant others, and circumstantial reasons (Marshall et al., 1992).

Minorities in Agricultural Education

Other studies have examined the reasons for enrollment in agricultural education programs among minorities as well as barriers minorities face. Sutphin and Newsom-Stewart (1995, p. 54) recognized, "Sociocultural factors, including gender and ethnicity, have also been shown to affect student attitudes, beliefs, and enrollment in agricultural courses is needed to facilitate recruitment and inform guidance counseling and curriculum development". Research has shown that minority students, African-American and Hispanic, had a misconception about agricultural courses and the agricultural industry, as a whole and had negative opinions about the traditional components of agriculture (Jones & Bowen, 1998; Talbert & Larke, 1995). Jones and Bowen (1998, p. 26) discovered, "many students viewed agriculture as only farming with limited career options".

Stuphin and Newsom-Stewart (1995) found five conceptual domains that reflected the reasons for student's enrolling in agricultural education. These domains included: "preparatory for job and higher education, developmental skills, academic enhancement, response to social pressure, and participation in activity centered learning"; however, no major differences were noted for gender or ethnicity (Sutphin & Newsom-Stewart, 1995, p. 54). Talbert and Larke (1995) discovered that minority students were less likely to enroll in an agricultural course for agricultural reasons and more than likely will feel their enrollment in the course was out of their control. In Jones and Bowen's study, teachers identified some strategies that might be used successfully to recruit African-American students into the agricultural education program. These strategies include: "have African American students already enrolled get other students interested; communicate with parents to let them know what the agricultural sciences offer; recruit at the junior high level; provide enjoyable activities; determine what students are

interested in and show them how it ties into agriculture; and show students the achievements of other African Americans in the agricultural sciences".

The term "minority" within the agricultural education program often refers to minorities as it relates to one's ethnicity, however it can be observed through the lens of gender as well. Differences between male and female students are significant when it comes to studying agriculture (Sutphin & Newsom-Stewart, 1995). In their research, Sutphin and Newsom-Stewart (1995) reported males were more likely to enroll in agricultural courses in response to social pressures more than females. Females, more than males, were more likely to enroll in agricultural courses in order to develop life skills and team building skills (Sutphin & Newsom-Stewart, 1995).

Recruitment Strategies

Because of the fluctuating enrollment numbers of agricultural programs across the country, the recruitment of students is an essential part of stabilizing this oscillation. Within the literature base of enrollment in agricultural education programs there is a very limited discussion devoted to recruitment strategies. According to teachers from 24 different states, FFA and the activities held injunction with the FFA are the most effective and frequently used recruitment strategies (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991a). The least effective and least used of the recruitment strategies was the use of the media, including: news-papers, radio, and television (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991a).

In a more recent study, Myers, et al. (2003), identified seven effective recruitment strategies along with activities that contribute to the effectiveness of each of the seven strategies. The most frequently used recruitment strategies as identified by agriculture teachers were contact with feeder schools, individual contact between the agricultural teacher and current students with

prospective students, FFA, various promotional publications, a strong agriscience based curriculum, utilizing support groups of the agricultural education program and the FFA chapter, and recruitment events (Myers, et al., 2003). The two most effective strategies were feeder school contact and agricultural teacher – student contact. According to Myers, et al. (2003), the single most used effective practice given by the respondents was student word of mouth. On the other hand, recruitment events were considered the least effective; however, "respondents expressed attitudes that events that focused solely on recruitment could be very effective" (Myers, et al., 2003, p.101).

Summary

According to Herren and Edwards (2002, p. 95), "The concept of the land-grant model was an evolutionary process that developed out of the need for a maturing nation to educate its citizens to cope and excel in a world that was changing faster that it had ever changed before". The formation of the land-grant system has brought about the agricultural education program recognized today by the the American people. The preparation of students, through classroom instruction, SAEs, and the FFA, for successful careers and lifetime of informed choices concerning agriculture is the backbone of the agricultural education program.

The existing literature base of student recruitment into agricultural education programs predominantly focuses on reasons for enrollment patterns, barriers of enrollment, and influencing factors of enrollment. Very little research exists on recruitment strategies used by agricultural teachers and solutions to recruitment barriers (Myers, et al., 2004; Myers, et al., 2003). There has not been much research in the area of recruitment into agricultural education programs in the last five to seven years. This manuscript seeks to bridge the gap in literature on recruitment strategies.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the strategies and activities Georgia agriculture teachers utilize in recruiting students into secondary agricultural education programs (9-12th grade) and which strategies and activities do Georgia agriculture teachers perceive to be the most effective. The information gathered from the recruitment questionnaire will provide data to the Georgia agriculture teachers, Georgia agricultural education state staff, post-secondary teacher educators, and pre-service teachers. The results will provide a framework of the perceived most effective recruitment strategies and activities utilized by Georgia agriculture teachers which can assist current and future agriculture teachers in the state of Georgia when planning a recruitment event in their local agricultural education program.

Variables To Measure

The variables described in this study are:

- The demographics of Georgia agriculture teachers.
- The current recruitment strategies and activities utilized by Georgia agriculture teachers in the secondary agricultural education program.
- The most effective recruitment strategies and activities as perceived by Georgia agriculture teachers in the secondary agricultural education program.

Research Design

This study is descriptive in nature and utilizes survey research methods as described by Dillman (2000). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) describe survey research as, "acquiring information about one or more groups of people – perhaps about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences – by asking them questions and tabulating their answers" (p.183). This is a simple design and allows the researcher to pose a series of questions to the participants, summarize the responses with statistical means, and draw inferences about the population from the sample population (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

Using a Questionnaire

In contrast to survey research, a survey or questionnaire is merely the data collection instrument used to carry out survey research (Glasow, 2005). The different types of methods for surveys including mail, internet, telephone, and face-to-face, and all come with their own associated benefits and risks (Dillman, 2000). The survey method chosen for this study was a "group administration of self-administered surveys" (Dillman, 2000, p. 253). Like other methods, the group administered questionnaire has its benefits and risks. The benefits associated with group administration are quite considerable:

> In this case it is possible not only to draw a sample ahead of time, but also to motivate or even require individuals to assemble in one place to complete the questionnaire. The cost savings for this type of administration are often enormous, and in many cases (e.g., school classes) nonresponse is negligible and not associated in any way with the content of the questionnaire. (Dillman, 2000, p. 253)

Risks associated with group administrated surveys are participants might feel that completing a survey in a group resembles a test, administration of a survey in a group may exert independent

influences on the participants' responses, or questionnaires completed quickly by participants in the chance they can leave sooner (Dillman, 2000).

Dillman (2000) suggested a general protocol for group administration of questionnaires that included five steps: introduction, special instructions, distribution, retrieval, and debriefing (Dillman, 2000). In the attempt to follow Dillman's general protocol for group administrated questionnaires, the researcher used the protocol as the guiding force in the Area Teacher Meetings. The group administrated questionnaire for Georgia agriculture teachers at the Area Teacher Meetings followed the general protocol set forth by Dillman (2000, p. 255):

- Introduction – expression of appreciation, brief description of completing the questionnaire, and a summary of the steps.
- Special Instructions – These scripted special instructions were used.

  "This is not a test with right and wrong answers. Please think of it as being a questionnaire sent to your apartment or home and fill it out just like you would if we sent it there." (Dillman, 2000, p. 255)

  "As soon as you have answered the last question, please be sure that you put the questionnaire immediately into the envelope, seal it, and wait for additional instruction." (Dillman. 2000, p. 255)
- Distribution - Participants were given a cover letter, questionnaire, and unsealed envelope.
- Retrieval – Questionnaires were turned in when participants are finished.
- Debriefing – Appreciation expressed for participants' completion of the questionnaire and participants were asked if they had any questions.

Questionnaire

The data collection method for this study was a questionnaire distributed to the Georgia agriculture teachers who were in attendance at the Georgia Area Teacher Meetings in April 2012. This questionnaire was developed by Dr. Bryan Myers, Dr. Jim Dyer, and Lisa Breja for a national study (Myers et al., 2003). Because this study was limited to the state of Georgia, the questionnaire was modified to fit Georgia agriculture teachers. The questionnaire was broken into two sections: Section I Attitudes Toward Recruitment and Section II Background and Characteristics. The questionnaire was used to determine three main objectives, including: demographics of Georgia agricultural education teachers, the current activities and strategies Georgia agriculture teachers utilize in recruiting students into the secondary agricultural education program, and the most effective activities and strategies utilized by Georgia agriculture teachers in recruiting students.

Validity

Validity of an instrument is "the extent to which the instrument measures what it is actually intended to measure" (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005, p. 92). For this study, the researcher formed a panel of experts that consisted of Georgia Agricultural Education State Staff, Area Teachers, and University of Georgia – Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications Departmental Faculty in order to ensure the validity of the instrument. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), "Face validity is the extent to which, on the surface, an instrument looks like it's measuring a particular characteristic", whereas, "Content validity is the extent to which a measurement instrument is a representative sample of the content area (domain) being measured" (p. 92). The face and content validity of the instrument were determined by using a panel of experts. The questionnaire was revised based upon the recommendations of the panel of experts.

Population

The population of this study consisted of current high school (9^{th}-12^{th} grade) agricultural education teachers in the state of Georgia. The population framework was compiled from the Georgia Agricultural Education 2010 Annual Report of all of the Georgia high school (9^{th}-12^{th}) agricultural education teachers. This framework contained 280 high school (9^{th}-12^{th}) agriculture teachers for a total population of 280.

Sampling

The sampling technique utilized in this study was a convenience sample. The scope of this study included Georgia high school (9^{th}-12^{th}) agriculture teachers who were in attendance at the Area Teacher Meetings in April 2012. The state of Georgia is broken into three regions: North, Central, and South. Each region is made up of two areas for a total of six areas in the state. The Area Teacher Meeting for each area is a mandatory meeting for all current Georgia agriculture teachers in that area and the attendance rate is approximately 98% thus allowing the researcher to conduct a census.

Data Collection

The survey method chosen by the researcher was a "group administration of self-administered surveys" (Dillman, 2000, p. 253). The questionnaire was administered to Georgia agriculture teachers at the Area Teacher Meetings in April 2012. Of the 280 Georgia agriculture teachers surveyed, 131 responded producing a 47% response rate.

Data Analysis

The researcher utilized Microsoft Excel to complete the statistical analysis of the data collected. The mean, standard deviation, and mode were used to show how Georgia agriculture

teachers ranked questionnaire statements. Frequencies and percentages were used to summarize responses to demographic characteristics of participants.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study had three objectives including determining the demographics of Georgia agriculture teachers; determining the current recruitment strategies and activities utilized by Georgia agriculture teachers; and determining the most effective recruitment strategies and activities as perceived by Georgia agriculture teachers. The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings of this study. The findings are divided into the following sections: (1) Objective One, (2) Objective Two, and (3) Objective Three; each section contains the study's objective and the finding that relates to that objective.

Objective One

Objective One: Determine the demographics of Georgia agriculture teachers.

As indicated in Table 1, 69.4 % (n=86) of the teachers were male and 29.8% (n=37) were females. Approximately 50% of the teachers surveyed reported having 10 years or less experience in the classroom as an agriculture teacher. The teachers surveyed reported the majority, 59.7% (n=77) are in a single teacher department and 40.3% (n=52) were in a multiple teacher department.

Table 1
Selected Teacher Demographics

Demographic Characteristics	f	%
Gender		
Male	86	69.4
Female	37	29.8
Teaching Experience		
Less than 5 years	33	25.8
6 to 10 years	32	25.0
11 to 15 years	18	14.1
16 to 20 years	19	14.8
21 to 25 years	9	7.0
26 to 30 years	10	7.8
More than 30 years	7	6.0
Department Type		
Single teacher department	77	59.7
Multiple teacher department	52	40.3

Objective Two

Objective Two: Determine the current recruitment strategies and activities utilized by Georgia agriculture teacher in the secondary agricultural education program.

Georgia agriculture teachers were asked to rank 14 recruitment strategies that were most helpful in recruiting students into their program using the following scale: Most Helpful (1); Least Helpful (14). As reported in Table 2, Georgia agriculture teachers view FFA activities to be the most helpful in recruitment and the Young Farmer program as the least helpful in recruiting students into the agricultural education program. The top five helpful recruitment strategies as perceived by Georgia agriculture teachers include FFA activities, personal visits to students, contact with students currently enrolled in the program, contact with chapter FFA officers, and social media.

Table 2
Recruitment Strategies Found Most Helpful by Georgia Agriculture Teachers

Item	n	Mean	SD
FFA activities	96	2.60	2.20
Personal visits to students	91	3.26	2.71
Contact with students currently enrolled in the program	92	4.60	3.09
Contact with chapter FFA officers	94	5.09	2.78
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	78	6.69	4.15
SAE activities	88	7.05	3.56
Texting	77	7.77	3.34
Letter to parents	82	7.98	3.31
Letter to students	80	8.06	3.05
Phone calls	79	8.11	2.69
Brochures	78	8.42	3.82
Alumni program	76	9.96	3.12
Contact with state FFA officers	77	10.01	2.88
Young Farmer program	71	11.37	3.21

Note. Scale 1 = Most Helpful; 14 Least Helpful

Teachers were asked to rank the three components of agricultural education with respect to their helpfulness in recruitment. Ranking used the scale: Most Helpful (1), Somewhat Helpful (2), and Least Helpful (3). As Table 3 illustrates Georgia agriculture teachers perceive FFA to be the most helpful with regards to recruitment.

Table 3
Components of the Agricultural Education Program Ranked by Their Helpfulness in Recruitment by Georgia Agriculture Teachers

Item	n	Mean	SD
FFA	131	1.28	0.52
Classroom instruction	131	1.98	0.70
SAE	131	2.59	0.63

Note. Scale: 1 = Most Helpful; 2 = Somewhat Helpful; 3 = Least Helpful

Teachers were asked to rank the components of agricultural education based on their benefit to the students through participation using the following scale: Most Beneficial (1), Somewhat Beneficial (2), and Least Beneficial (3). As reported in Table 4, Georgia agriculture teachers perceive FFA to be the most beneficial for students to participate in.

Table 4
Components of the Agricultural Education Program Ranked According to the Perceived Benefits to the Students by Georgia Agricultural Teachers

Item	n	Mean	SD
FFA	131	1.48	0.66
Classroom instruction	131	1.89	0.80
SAE	131	2.40	0.72

Note. Scale: 1 = Most Helpful; 2 = Somewhat Helpful; 3 = Least Helpful

Objective Three

Objective Three: Determine the most effective recruitment strategies and activities as perceived by Georgia agriculture teachers.

As indicated in Table 5, there are eight strategies identified by Georgia agriculture teachers as well as activities that fall under each recruitment strategy. The eight most effective recruitment strategies as reported by Georgia agriculture teachers are FFA chapter events, the curriculum, Ag student-student contact, recruitment events, feeder school contact, publications, parents/teacher/support groups, and agriculture teacher-student contact. The top five activities utilized as reported by teachers are socials with food, FFA meetings with food, FFA trips, 100% membership drives, and CDE's.

Table 5

Effective Recruitment Strategies and Activities Used by Georgia Agriculture Teachers

Rank	Strategy	Activity
1	FFA chapter events	Socials with food FFA meetings with food FFA trips including state convention, national convention, Georgia National Fair, Sunbelt Ag Expo, etc. 100% membership drive CDE's FFA activities T-shirts FFA camps Officer/member presentations FFA week
2	Curriculum	Fieldtrips Quality/Successful program Livestock program Leadership and FFA component Hands on learning Contest/games
3	Ag student – student contact	Peer advising Word of mouth
4	Recruitment events	High school orientation Career day Booths at open house Recruitment nights Beginning of the school year social with food
5	Feeder school contact	Visit to the middle school Middle school agriculture day Working with the middle school chapter
6	Publications	Bulletin boards Brochures Newspaper articles Videos/slide shows Announcements around school via posters, flyers, intercom, etc.
7	Parents/Teachers/Support groups	Alumni program support Parental involvement Family members and friends were former members
8	Agriculture teacher- student contact	Teacher encouragement

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

After the review of the literature, it was concluded the existing literature base of student recruitment into agricultural education programs primarily concentrated on the reasons for enrollment patterns, barriers of enrollment, and influencing factors of enrollment. The amount of research that exists on recruitment strategies and solutions to recruitment barriers is relatively small. Within the past five to seven years there has been very little research in the area of recruitment into the agricultural education program. This manuscript sought to close the gap in the literature on recruitment strategies and offer suggestions for enhancing student enrollment numbers.

To best bridge the gap, this study had three objectives: (1) determine the demographics of Georgia agriculture teachers, (2) determine the current recruitment strategies and activities utilized by Georgia agriculture teachers in the secondary agricultural education program, and (3) determine the most effective recruitment strategies and activities as perceived by Georgia agriculture teachers in the secondary agricultural education program. Therefore, to draw conclusions beyond that of the study's objectives goes beyond the scope of this study.

The most helpful recruitment strategies were ranked by Georgia agriculture teachers on a scale of Most Helpful (1) to Least Helpful (14). Georgia agriculture teachers identified the most helpful strategies for recruitment as (1) FFA activities, (2) personal visits to students, (3) contact with students currently enrolled in the program (4) contact with chapter FFA officers, (5) social

media, (6) SAE activities, (7) texting, (8) letter to parents, (9) letter to students, (10) phone calls, (11) brochures, (12) alumni program, (13) contact with state FFA officers, and (14) Young Farmer program. The three components of agricultural education were ranked by their helpfulness in recruitment as perceived by Georgia agriculture teachers on the following scale: Most Helpful (1), Somewhat Helpful (2), and Least Helpful (3). Georgia agriculture teachers ranked the three components of agricultural education as (1) FFA, (2) Classroom Instruction, and (3) SAE. The number one strategy, FFA activities, as identified by Georgia agriculture teachers as well as the number one component, FFA, supports existing literature. According to Hoover and Scanlon (1991a), teachers from 24 states identified FFA and the activities held injunction with the FFA as the most effective and frequently used recruitment strategy. Further research should be conducted to find out if students already enrolled in an agricultural education program would agree that FFA and the activities held injunction with FFA was helpful in recruiting them into the program. In addition, understanding the specific components of FFA that have the greatest influence on student and retention is also warranted in a future study.

According to this study, Georgia agriculture teachers identified eight effective recruitment strategies as well as activities that fall under each strategy. The most effective strategies as perceived by Georgia agriculture teachers are (1) FFA chapter events, (2) curriculum, (3) Ag student – student contact, (4) recruitment events, (5) feeder school contact, (6) publications, (7) parents/teachers/support groups, and (8) agriculture teacher – student contact. The findings reported in this study differ greatly from the study which this study intended to replicate. Myers, et al. reported seven effective recruitment strategies and activities used by agriculture teachers including: (1) feeder school contact, (2) agricultural teacher – student contact, (3) FFA chapter events, (4) publications, (5) curriculum, (6)

parents/teachers/support groups, and (7) recruitment events. The conflicting findings suggest that this study should be duplicated in other states further research should be conducted in the area of recruitment strategies from the perception of the agriculture educator as well as the agricultural education student.

Georgia agricultural teachers time and again ranked FFA and the activities associated with FFA as the most helpful in regards to recruitment as well as the most effective recruitment strategy. Agricultural Education on the national level as well as the state level stresses the importance of all three components: classroom/laboratory, supervised agricultural experience (SAE), and FFA. It is also stressed that no component be singled out and highlighted more than the other components. For this reason, the researcher finds the results from this study of some concern. Georgia being the 3rd largest membership state in the nation is very active in FFA (National FFA Organization, 2012). The researcher suggest that further research be conducted to find out if there is a link between state FFA membership levels and the importance placed on FFA in regards to recruitment. For example: Would the top five membership states, California, Texas, Georgia, Missouri, and Oklahoma (National FFA Organization, 2012) place more importance on FFA as a recruitment tool than the lowest membership level states? Further research must be conducted to see if there is any connection as suggested.

Recommendations for Research

Overall, the recommendations are founded on the findings and conclusions of this study and are as follows:

1. Research should be conducted in the area of recruitment strategies from the perceptions of both the agriculture teacher and the agricultural education student.

2. Research should be conducted to find out if the perception of students enrolled in an agricultural education program agree with the perceptions of agriculture teachers about FFA and the activities held injunction with FFA in relation with recruitment.
3. Research should be conducted to find out if there is a link between FFA membership levels and the importance placed on FFA in regards to recruitment.
4. This study should be duplicated in other states.

Practical Uses

The results from this study have practical uses for Georgia agriculture teachers, Georgia agricultural education state staff, post-secondary agricultural teacher educators, and pre-service teachers. The findings of this study will assist agricultural education programs by increasing the awareness of secondary agriculture teachers regarding current recruitment strategies being used by Georgia agriculture teachers. Current and future Georgia agriculture teachers can utilize the recruitment strategies and activities reported in this study to plan recruitment events in their local program. These strategies and activities will serve as a springboard for teachers to develop recruitment events customized for their local program. These findings will provide Georgia agricultural education state staff with recruitment information for the state. Post-secondary agricultural teacher educators can use these findings to teach pre-service teachers about recruitment in the state of Georgia. Pre-service teachers can use these effective strategies identified by Georgia agriculture teachers to help develop recruitment plans for their future program.

Recommendations for Practice

1. Teachers should use these findings as a springboard to developed customized recruitment strategies and activities for their own program.

2. An effort should be made to educate pre-service teachers on the effective strategies identified by Georgia agriculture teachers.
3. An effort should be made to spotlight the benefits of all three components of agricultural education.

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Recruitment Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions based on **your experience** with the school you are currently located.

I. Recruitment Strategies, Activities, and Barriers

1. List the five most effective recruiting activities used in your chapter.

    1.

    2.

    3.

    4.

    5.

2. List the top three barriers you face in your own school/system when it comes to recruiting students in your program:

    1.

    2.

    3.

3. Rank the following components of a program with **respect to their helpfulness in recruitment**. (**1 = Most, 2=Somewhat, and 3 = Least**) We know all three components are important when talking about Agricultural Education, but we want to know which is most helpful with recruitment.

    _____ Classroom instruction

    _____ FFA

    _____ SAE

4. In a quality agricultural program, students benefit most from participation in which of the following(Please rank: **1 = Most, 2=Somewhat, and 3 = Least**): We know all three components are just as important when talking about Agricultural Education, but we want to know which is most beneficial.

    _____ Classroom instruction

_____ FFA

_____ SAE

5. Which strategies for recruitment do you find most helpful? (Rank all that apply: **1 = Most Helpful… 14 = Least Helpful**)

_____ Brochures

_____ Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

_____ Personal visits to students

_____ Letters to students

_____ Letters to parents

_____ Phone calls

_____ Texting

_____ Alumni program

_____ Young Farmer program

_____ Contact with chapter FFA officers

_____ Contact with state FFA officers

_____ Contact with students currently enrolled in the program

_____ FFA activities

_____ SAE activities

_____ Other (please list) _____

II. Attitudes Toward Recruitment

Using the scale below, please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the appropriate number as follows:

1 = **S**trongly **D**isagree
2 = **D**isagree
3 = **U**ncertain
4 = **A**gree
5 = **S**trongly **A**gree

		SD	D	U	A	SA
1.	All agricultural programs should have an active recruitment plan.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	All students can benefit from enrollment in agricultural courses.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Agricultural teachers are accountable to local school systems for recruitment.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Administrators value student recruitment by agricultural teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Most students have a positive image of agricultural education.	1	2	3	4	5

		SD	D	U	A	SA
6.	Administrators should require agricultural teachers to recruit.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The future of agricultural education is dependent upon recruiting students.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Gender diversity is important to the success of agricultural programs.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Recruitment efforts should be focused on high quality students.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Most parents have a positive image of agricultural education.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Ethnic diversity is important to the success of agricultural programs.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Students of higher academic quality should be targeted in recruitment programs.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Most administrators have a positive image of agricultural education.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Teachers with active recruitment programs should be paid higher salaries.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Recruitment is easier in programs that are more scientific in nature.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Only students with farm backgrounds should be recruited into agricultural programs.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Most guidance counselors have a positive image of agricultural education.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Agricultural classes are better suited to male students.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Most students should take some course work in agriculture.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Students of lower academic ability should be targeted in recruitment programs.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Agricultural teachers do an adequate job of recruiting ethnically diverse student populations.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	Agricultural teachers do an adequate job of recruiting diverse gender student populations.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Agricultural teachers should be accountable for recruitment of students into their agricultural programs.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	Agricultural teachers receive adequate training in recruitment techniques from teacher certification programs.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Agricultural teachers receive adequate support from state staff members on recruitment activities.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	Teachers in subjects other than agricultural have a positive image of agricultural education.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	Only students pursuing careers in agriculture should enroll in agricultural courses.	1	2	3	4	5

III. Background and Characteristics

1. Please circle the term that **best** describes you:

Middle school teacher High school teacher Young Farmer teacher

1.a. If you circled high school, please indicate which applies to you:

Single teacher department Multiple teacher department

2. Please circle the region in which you work:

North Region Central Region South Region

3. Please circle the area in which you work:

Area 1 Area 2 Area 3 Area 4 Area 5 Area 6

4. Please indicate the background of students enrolled in your agricultural programs (by approximate percentage).

_____ % African American

_____ % Asian American

_____ % Caucasian

_____ % Hispanic

_____ % Other

5. Please indicate the approximate percentage of male and female students in your program.

Male: _____ % Female: _____%

6. Please indicate the approximate percentage of students in your program by the school's class rank:

_____ % in top one-third of graduating class

_____ % in middle one-third of graduating class

_____ % in bottom one-third of graduating class

7. What is the geographic location of your school (Check one):

_____ Large metropolitan (over 100,000)

_____ Suburb of city of over 100,000

_____ Medium urban (10,000 - 99,999)

_____ Small town (less than 10,000)

_____ Rural, but not farm

8. Ethnic background of the student population (Check <u>One</u>):

_____ African American

_____ Asian American

_____ Caucasian

_____ Hispanic

_____ Other (Specify)

9. What is your approximate school size (Check One):

_____ 2000 and above

_____ 1000 – 1999

_____ 500 – 999

_____ 0 – 499

10. Gender (Check One):

_____ Male _____ Female

11. Total years of service _____

12. Do you **actively** recruit students into your agricultural program? (Check one):

_____ Yes _____ No

Thank you for your time!

Please return the complete questionnaire to your Area Coordinator before you leave!