

**3D Approach to Inclusive Agricultural Connections**

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#### Introduction

According to the 2016-2020 National Research Agenda of AAAE, two current major challenges facing agricultural education are centered around the “need for a critical mass of the next generation of agriculturalists interested in food and agriculture” and to educate individuals not familiar with agriculture and generate an understanding of their connection to food and agriculture systems (Mercier, 2015). Classroom constraints of time, materials, and an ever increasing reliance on technology provide an additional challenge when trying to create meaningful learning opportunities and spaces that could lend themselves to assisting in countering the two aforementioned challenges in agricultural education. Furthermore, as communities grow more multicultural, diverse, and complex, the need for providing students spaces to be challenged by differing opinions and conversations as a way to increase intercultural and interpersonal communication is imperative to the success of the field of agriculture and students.

As educators in these unique and dynamic classroom spaces of agriculture and non-agriculture students, it is imperative to implement content and practices that both challenge agriculture students to connect and make relevant their messages about agriculture while also challenging non-agriculture students to construct an understanding of their role in agriculture and food systems. Understanding that education is a universal and mutually beneficial opportunity and focusing on the major agricultural education challenge of educating individuals not familiar with agriculture, authors of this poster, via leadership development courses, provide opportunities for both agriculture and non-agriculture focused students to engage in peer to peer teaching and learning by implementing classroom practices that challenge agriculture students to think of ways to best connect and communicate issues of agriculture to non-agriculture students while also challenging non-agriculture students to critically analyze common and current event scenarios to understand that agriculture is the common connection across society.

#### How it works

Authors propose a tri-method approach to creating the innovative praxis of *Inclusive Agricultural Connections* that utilizes a “3D approach” to help both agriculture and non-agriculture students to understand universal connections to agriculture. The 3D approach to facilitating *Inclusive Agricultural Connections* includes three steps: 1) Define, 2) dialogue, and 3) demonstrate.

**Step 1, Define**, requires educators to work with students to establish a common vocabulary and understanding around, not just agriculture terms, such as “organic”, “GMO”, and “food insecurity”, but also around words and phrases that are common for students from various cultures. This allows for students to serve as co-authors of a general understanding of terms and assist in providing common language that may debunk information previously perceived as “true” about agriculture issues and cultural stereotypes.

**Step 2, Dialogue**, provides space for students to talk with each other. Instead of having professors lead the dialogue about why or how students can connect to diverse audiences, providing the space for students to utilize their own agency is imperative to supporting the growth of global leaders. The challenge of needing society to understand their connection to

agriculture is two-fold. Providing opportunities for agriculture students to learn how to practice inclusive language when talking to peers who may not understand agriculture is imperative to the success of agricultural development and sustainability. Additionally, providing in-class opportunities to demonstrate how agriculture is connected to daily life increases the understanding of non-agriculture students and opens up the possibility of further dialogue and commitment to agricultural community support.

**Step 3, *Demonstrate***, challenges instructors to present different learning opportunities to empower students and provide them the context to achieve their own goals and actively understand the process of leadership. The practice of active learning is achieved using multiple teaching methodologies, such as utilizing non-agricultural articles (New York Times) to educate students on issues pertaining to agriculture and global societies. Utilizing the self as a learning demonstration, the educator can assist students, regardless of major, learn how to connect everyday occurrences, literature, and media, to agriculture. This empowers students to think more critically about how to engage with diverse communities with diverse understandings, and learn skills of how to use agriculture as a collaboration, rather than a divide.

### **Implications**

Utilizing this praxis will not only increase the diverse dialogue skills of agricultural education students and assist them in understanding how to relate and communicate to diverse populations, but it also allows for non-agricultural students to understand and grow their relationship with agriculture. Although these students may not change majors into the agriculture field, their support as community members and voters is imperative to the progress of agricultural practices.

### **Future plans**

At the end of the Fall 2016 semester, authors of this proposal will conduct a survey among students enrolled in their agricultural education and communication courses that focus on understanding how perception of agriculture's connection to society may have changed or formed throughout the semester. Students enrolled in these courses are both from non-agriculture majors as well as agriculture majors.

### **Costs/resources needed**

Resources needed to support this tri-method approach to increasing intercultural communication and agricultural understanding within classrooms and among students are minimal, however, a great effort and willingness to utilize multiple modes of engaging teaching methods along with content that is not deemed "traditional" to agriculture is imperative to the success of this approach. For example, the utilization of peer to peer dialogue centered around complex problem solving assists in strengthening intercultural communication at various levels. Additionally, utilizing sources deemed "non-agricultural", such as The New York Times or other non-leadership readings, assists in helping all students, regardless of major make major connections of how agriculture is embedded in all aspects of academia and society.

**References**

Mercier, S. (2015). Food and agricultural education in the United States. Washington, DC: AGree. Retrieved from [http://www.foodandagpolicy.org/sites/default/files/AGree\\_Food%20and%20Ag%20Ed%20in%20the%20US.pdf](http://www.foodandagpolicy.org/sites/default/files/AGree_Food%20and%20Ag%20Ed%20in%20the%20US.pdf)