

**Can you Boot, Scoot, and Boogie? Agricultural Literacy Achieved Through A 5K**

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### **Introduction/Need for Innovation**

According to the National Agricultural Education Supply and Demand Study Executive Summary, there were 769.5 agricultural education teaching positions that were left unfilled in 2016 (Smith, Lawver, & Foster, 2017). Of the positions that were occupied, 325 teachers were alternatively certified or non-licensed. In the US there are 101 teacher preparation programs, which graduated only 569 total educators in 2016 who entered School-Based Agricultural Education, leaving a deficit of 200.5 licensed agriculture teachers for our nation (Smith, Lawver, & Foster, 2017). This profound shortage equates to fewer students being empowered to become informed consumers and advocates for the agriculture industry upon entering the workforce. These statistics follow in light of the American Farm Bureau's claim that Americans are at least three generations removed from the farm, with less than 2% of the population actively involved in farming (American Farm Bureau Federation, n.d.).

Agricultural literacy for the US population is essential to maintaining the validity of our industry amidst false accusations, food security concerns, and a disconnect from the production process. One teacher preparation program in Kentucky has developed an event that engages the local community via an annual 5K race that incorporates facts about the agriculture industry as guide points along the race course. In addition, proceeds from the race are placed in an endowed scholarship fund that will provide financial support to pre-service agricultural educators to promote more licensed graduates entering the profession. This idea aligns with Research Priority 5 of the 2016-2020 American Association for Agricultural Education Research Agenda: Efficient and Effective Agricultural Education Programs and Research priority 3 Sufficient Scientific and Professional Workforce That Addresses the Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### **How it Works/Program Phases/Results to Date**

The Boot, Scoot, and Boogie 5K is an annual race held at the University of Kentucky research farm that attracts serious competitors as well as those interested in a family friendly run/walk. Student volunteers from the Agricultural Education Society host and facilitate the event, setting up the course and distributing prizes. Participants get the chance to interact with the members of the Agricultural Education program who will benefit from the funds raised from registration fees. All profits from the day are placed in an endowed scholarship account to be awarded to students in the program. Recreational activities enhance the race day, with food, music from a DJ, and warm-up exercises from a local fitness coach. Most importantly, participants are provided with educational resources from agricultural interest groups, such as the Beef Council, and are immersed in the importance of agriculture in Kentucky and the US via educational materials posted around the course.

Phase One (One Year Before): the Office of Academic Advancement was contacted to obtain more information about establishing an endowed scholarship for the Agricultural Education department. The department must raise \$25,000 to open the scholarship account.

Phase Two (One Year Before): a university faculty member of the department attended the Kentucky Race Director Symposium to gather resources and organize an officially recognized competitive 5K.

Phase Three (Six Months Before): the date, location, and other logistics of the event are solidified and announced; a goal of \$25,000 for the startup of the scholarship is set.

Phase Four (Three Months Before): undergraduate members of the Agricultural Education Society at the University of Kentucky coordinate and recruit sponsorships (monetary and in kind) from industry groups, community supporters and businesses.

Phase Five (Two Months Before): promotional materials (fliers, postcards, bulletins advertised around the community, and social media posts) are created and distributed.

Phase Six (One Month Before): students in the Curriculum Design course in the Agricultural Education program research and compile agricultural facts and statistics; these are printed on large signs to be posted around the race course to educate participants as they run. Donated awards are collected and recognition medals for class winners are purchased.

Phase Seven (Day Of): volunteers from the Agricultural Education program set up race day equipment, organize awards, and facilitate the event.

The event will host its third annual race in April 2018. In 2017, over 100 participants registered and ran the course, with sponsorships amounting to \$2,000. Currently, the Boot, Scoot, and Boogie 5K has grossed \$7140 towards the scholarship goal. Participation for the fundraising event has been exponentially growing with every year of promotion and success, with a projected participant count of 300 and expected sponsorships of over \$3,000 for 2018.

### **Future Plans/Advice to Others**

Considering the success of the fundraiser thus far, the Boot, Scoot, and Boogie 5K will continue to be promoted and hosted by the Agricultural Education Society at the University of Kentucky with the goal of increasing sponsorships and participants. The end goal is to raise \$100,000 for the endowed scholarship fund to increase enrollment and retention of pre-service agricultural educators in order to decrease the teacher shortage. When planning this event, the coordinator should plan the event according to the optimal weather time of the area, during a peak running season (i.e. mid-April is appropriate for Kentucky). In addition, garnering the support of your local and state running communities through relationship with running groups and exercise clubs will increase participation in the fundraiser. This will also allow the coordinator access to the running community network and the ability to more widely publicize the event.

### **Costs/Resources Needed**

A race of this scale requires detailed planning and adequate resources. The location of the event was provided free of charge by the University on the research farm. Labor is needed throughout the process, from recruiting sponsors to facilitating the event; student volunteers provide the support needed to complete the fundraiser. The costs of the fundraiser are covered by sponsors, who have three tiers of donation possibilities: Bronze (\$100), Gold (\$500), and Platinum (\$1000+). Sponsorships fund promotional materials, awards and medals for race participants, and agricultural literacy materials, such as signs and fliers. Sponsorship in the form of raffle items and donations of products or services from businesses (i.e. sound equipment, tents, refreshments and food, promotional giveaway items, etc.)

## References

Smith, A. R., Lawver, R. G., & Foster, D. D. (2017). *National Agricultural Education Supply and Demand Study, 2016 Executive Summary*. Retrieved from:  
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