

Agriscience Teacher Education Symposium

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Introduction

Students majoring in Agricultural Education and Communication, with a specialization in Agricultural Education, are enrolled in coursework that integrates the many facets of agricultural education and their future career as an agriscience teacher and FFA Advisor. The Agriscience Teacher Education Symposium was designed to supplement department coursework, as well as to provide an opportunity for the 50+ students who are located on the main campus in Gainesville, Florida, as well as a distance program in Plant City, Florida a chance to interact and network as future colleagues. The symposium was originally designed to elaborate on course topics and areas, and has developed into an event with a major overlying theme. By enhancing the skillset, as well as the beliefs and attitudes of students that they have the necessary background and experiences to be an agricultural educator, we are one step closer to helping them find success in the classroom. Teaching efficacy has been found to play a huge role in the retention of a teacher in education (Stripling, C., Ricketts, J.C., Roberts, T.G., & Harlin, J.F., 2008). In alignment with Standards 1 and 2 of the National Standards for Teacher Education in Agriculture, the symposium works to develop experience-based knowledge, as well as a balanced teacher preparation program that includes “general education, technical content, and pedagogical and professional studies” (American Association for Agricultural Education, 2001, pgs. 1-4)

Steps

For the first symposium in 2017, funding was requested through an instructional improvement grant in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs). Although the funding was not secured for the first year, plans went forward for the event, and the venue changed from an FFA Leadership Training Center (LTC) to the University of Florida Plant City Center. In the second year, the symposium successfully obtained funding to meet the goals of the program. Below outlines the steps that were followed:

1. February-March 2018: Identify potential funding that best fits programmatic needs, and work with peer AEC faculty to complete the funding request.
2. After developing topics and program focus for the symposium, submit application for a CALs Instructional Enhancement Improvement Grant by the March 2018 deadline.
3. AEC faculty worked together to include the program on their prospective fall course agendas for Fall 2018, after learning in April 2018 that funding was successfully secured through a CALs Instructional Improvement Grant.
4. With funding in place, the symposium was then scheduled at the FFA LTC.
5. After securing a date, the agenda was further developed by AEC faculty to include program visits, speakers and hands-on activities.

6. The next step, was ordering symposium materials, including folders and pens.
7. All purchase orders were submitted by June 2018 for costs associated with event activities and materials.
8. July-August 2018: Programs and guest presenters were organized and confirmed. Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association representatives and Dr. Grady Roberts were confirmed as workshop presenters.
9. September 2018: Participation was confirmed for all students, so that final rooming and dietary needs could be submitted to the LTC Staff.
10. September-October 2018: Workshop supply materials were communicated and confirmed with symposium partners and LTC staff.
11. October 2018: Workshop and agenda details were communicated with all AEC faculty & students.

Results to Date

The 2017 symposium hosted over 55 undergraduate AEC majors and faculty from Gainesville and Plant City. Six speakers presented on topics relating to ESE/ESOL, Growth Mindset, using the Agricultural Education Tracker (AET) program, the Florida FFA, Florida FFA Alumni, and a Veterinary Assisting Program overview.

The 2018 symposium was constructed to include program visits, as well as hands-on service learning opportunities to enhance both the technical skills of students, as well as the Florida FFA LTC facilities. 51 AEC undergraduate and graduate students, as well as AEC faculty participated in the symposium activities, which included visits to a central Florida Agriscience Program, a Technical College and a review of six of the programs, a research poster presentation, and workshops focused on building technical skills in woodworking and landscape design/installation.

Future Plans

In the future, the symposium may include a broader range of program visits, as well as other focus areas that will help develop technical content knowledge and pedagogy. Funding sources may change, but this program has been successful and should remain an annual event.

Cost/Resources Needed

- Meals (1 Breakfast, 2 Lunches, 1 Dinner), 1 night lodging & Conference facilities for up to 65 people: \$4, 225.00
- Pens/Folders: \$262.50
- Gas for faculty, graduate assistants, and staff: \$250.00

Total & CALS Instructional Improvement Award Budget: **\$4,787.50**

References

- American Association for Agricultural Education. (2001). National standards for teacher education in agriculture. Retrieved from:
<http://aaaeonline.org/Resources/Documents/National%20Standards%20for%20Teacher%20Education.pdf>
- Stripling, C., Ricketts, J.C., Roberts, T.G., & Harlin, J.F. (2008). Preservice Agricultural Education Teachers' Sense of Teaching Self-Efficacy. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 49(4), 120-135.