

**Organizational Socialization: Becoming An Agricultural Teacher Educator in the
Professoriate**

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Introduction

A doctoral program can be an intimidating experience for many graduate students (Gardner & Barnes, 2007). The experience can be met with feelings of personal inadequacies during a graduate program and while entering the professoriate (Austin, 2002). Throughout higher education literature, the idea of organizational socialization has been used to assist doctoral students with the transition to graduate school and the profession (Austin, 2002; Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Weidman & Stein, 2003). Organizational socialization can be explained as, “the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 211). Thus, as doctoral students begin their socialization/preparatory experience for a faculty line, their time in graduate school is crucial for their exposure to the skills, knowledge, and social norms needed for success in the professoriate (Austin, 2002). To aid in the socialization of teacher education doctoral students at the University of Florida, teacher education faculty designed a series of doctoral seminars to better prepare students for the professoriate. Graduate seminars can be beneficial and important to the graduate school experience (Morgan, 2019). Graduate seminars, more than regularly scheduled courses, encourage dialogue among faculty and students. Typically, seminars allow for open dialogue and encourage conversation regarding the academic world, the practicing world, new ideas, and skill development. Thus, graduate seminars provide a safe space to enhance the intellectual atmosphere of the department or workgroup (Morgan, 2019). This innovative idea aligns with Research Priority 3 of the *National Research Agenda* (Stripling & Ricketts, 2016).

How it Works

There are seven doctoral students and seven faculty members of agricultural education at University of Florida who participate in a two-hour, weekly, seminar discussion. The first hour of the seminar discussion aims to develop doctoral students philosophically, historically, and theoretically. The guiding topic of the seminar rotates each semester, and examples of topics include the history and philosophy of agricultural teacher education, the teacher career cycle and professional development, models of agricultural teacher education, and others. Therefore, to set the frame for each weekly discussion, supporting works of seminal literature are read by participants prior to the weekly meeting. The doctoral students are encouraged to prepare questions they may have which stem from the weekly readings to guide the round-table style discussion. For this model to work effectively, this open forum is a safe learning environment for ideas to be exchanged. One graduate credit hour is offered optionally to participating doctoral students provided they submit additional written assignments.

A primary goal of the agricultural education doctoral program is to develop teacher educators bound for faculty positions in agricultural education. Thus, the second hour of the weekly seminar focuses on programmatic planning for the department. By including doctoral students on programmatic discussion and decision-making, they are developed methodologically, programmatically, and contextually. Examples of programmatic discussion topics include: (a) undergraduate course offerings and sequencing; (b) student teaching intern placement and

supervision; (c) teacher professional development planning and facilitation, extension outreach; and (d) team research opportunities.

Results to Date

Results to date include a more open dialogue within the agricultural teacher education specialty, as well as developed relationships between all doctoral students and faculty members. The potential barriers between doctoral students and faculty, as noted in Austin (2002), dissolve overtime due to the equitable positions created through the seminar. Further, the seminar provides doctoral students examples of faculty culture through discussions to which they would not normally be exposed. This type of organizational socialization will be useful as students continue to their own faculty roles (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). The discussions and interactions with faculty, as well as the theme of each seminar, also provide doctoral students with numerous rich sources on which they can draw to form and develop their own philosophical views. Participating doctoral students report having a more in-depth understanding of the current state of the agricultural education profession, both statewide and nationally. The students also note comfort with research, discussion, as well as with faculty and one another, which has stemmed from the conversations within the seminar.

Tangible results include research collaborations resulting in two papers submitted to national conferences, two papers submitted to journal, and one research poster submission. These research collaborations extend beyond normal advisee/advisor relationships, as well as across research interests. Two doctoral students have opted in for the available graduate credit hour through participation in this seminar. Lastly, the body of literature discussed within the seminar has created a large library of documents, articles, and books that students can utilize for their qualifying exams in addition to future research.

Future Plans

The graduate seminar will continue in the future with plans already in the works for at least the next two semesters. New topics will be added to the discussion rotation with a seminar planned around current literature within the field as the most recent addition. However, no more than a maximum of six topics will be included in the seminar semester rotation to ensure all doctoral students will experience each topic by graduation regardless of their individual start date.

Resources Needed/Costs

The primary resource needed for this seminar is time. There are no direct costs associated with this. Planning a two-hour block of time is not only challenging for a group of 14 doctoral students and faculty, but it is also a hefty time commitment. A second resource is a meeting space, with the technology and equipment to support video conferencing for those unable to be physically present.

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