

Female Agricultural Educator Satisfaction with the Arizona Agriculture Teachers Association Mentoring Program

Dr. Miraj Wallace (TAMU), Dr. Jack Elliot (TAMU), Dr. Courtney Meyers (TTU), Dr. Chanda Elbert (TAMU), Dr. Scott Burris (TTU)

Introduction and Theoretical Framework



The Arizona Agriculture Teachers Association (AATA) New Teacher Mentoring Program was designed to support agricultural educators transitioning into the profession.



First year teachers suffer the greatest loss in self-efficacy during their first 10 weeks of instruction (Wolf, 2011).



Strong mentor teachers can help their mentees be successful by providing advice and giving emotional support to their mentee during their first year (Paulsen et al., 2015; Ricketts et al., 2006).



Purpose and Objective



The purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore female agricultural educators' experiences in the AATA Mentoring Program.



Which factors influence female agricultural educator satisfaction with the AATA Mentoring Program?

Table 1

Mentee Satisfaction Level with AATA New Teacher Mentoring Program Features (n = 23)			
Factor	M	SD	
Years of teaching experience of assigned mentor	4.00	1.02	
Topics offered in New Teacher Induction workshop series	3.95	1.03	
New Teacher Induction workshop series	3.89	1.15	
Age of mentor	3.86	0.99	
Gender of mentor	3.80	1.06	
Attitude/personality of mentor	3.78	1.20	
Mentor program proximity	3.70	1.19	
Number of times contacted by mentor	3.26	1.25	
Effectiveness of mentorship meetings	3.24	1.60	
Electronic communication	3.13	1.22	
Number of social gatherings to build mentoring relationships	3.11	1.37	
In person communication with mentor	3.09	1.31	
Traveling to mentorship meetings	2.62	1.50	
Ability to select your mentor	2.57	1.16	

Methods



Both qualitative in-depth interviews and a questionnaire were utilized.



Purposeful sample of 12 female agricultural educators were interviewed via Zoom in the late fall of 2020 and early spring of 2021.



Participants were asked to identify the factors that had the greatest impact on their experience in the AATA mentoring program. These identified factors were used to inform the questionnaire.



The questionnaire was disseminated via Qualtrics to all female agricultural educators in Arizona in the Spring of 2021 (N = 58). Thirty individuals responded (51.72% response rate).

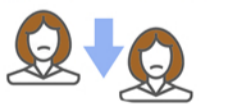
Table 2

Mentor Satisfaction Level with AATA New Teacher Mentoring Program Features (n = 17)			
Factor	M	SD	
Confidence in supporting traditionally certified mentees	4.19	0.83	
Electronic communication	4.12	0.78	
Confidence in supporting industry certified mentees	4.00	1.00	
Gender of past mentees	4.00	0.94	
Attitude/personality of mentees	3.94	0.90	
Number of times you contacted your mentee	3.94	0.75	
Effectiveness of mentorship meetings	3.93	0.92	
Mentor support you received from AATA	3.88	0.86	
Mentee program proximity	3.82	1.13	
Mentee contact reminders from AATA	3.79	0.80	
Traveling to mentorship meetings	3.73	0.91	
In person communication	3.71	1.12	
Number of social gatherings to build mentoring relationships	3.47	0.99	
Monetary compensation	3.25	0.71	
Mentor training you received	3.15	1.28	

Results



Interview participants noted that the commitment level from their assigned mentor or mentee had the greatest impact on their experience.



Commitment levels were generally viewed to be low by both mentors and mentees.



Mentees regularly sought advice from others outside their assigned mentor.



Mentees were unsure of what they needed as a first-year teacher and how to communicate that with their mentor.



A gap in self-efficacy between traditional and industry certified teachers.



Eleven of the participants said they believed the gender of the mentor could impact the mentoring relationship.



Questionnaire respondents who identified as mentees indicated that "Years of teaching experience of assigned mentor" had the highest satisfaction level; "Ability to select your mentor" received the lowest satisfaction score.



Questionnaire respondents who identified as mentors revealed the highest satisfaction with "Confidence in supporting traditionally certified mentees" and the lowest satisfaction with "Mentor training you received."

Conclusions and Recommendations



Strong professional relationships via mentoring can alleviate job dissatisfaction factors.



Conduct social gatherings through AATA to improve commitment levels and build self-efficacy.



Conduct a needs assessment of mentor training needs.



Conduct mentee "exit interviews" to keep aware of specific challenges new teachers face.



Expand mentoring program beyond the first year via online or in person workshop series.



Match mentors with mentees based on professional goals, type of program, personal interests, and proximity.

