

**A Review of the Current Landscape of Agricultural Education, Communications, and
Leadership**

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Introduction/Need for Innovation

The disciplines of agricultural education, communications, and leadership (AECL) have been taught in higher education settings for decades (Tucker et al., 2003; Fritz et al., 2003; Pennington & Weeks, 2006; Irani & Doerfert, 2013). Agricultural education (AE) is defined as “education teaches students about agriculture, food and natural resources. Through these subjects, agricultural educators teach students a wide variety of skills, including science, math, communications, leadership, management, and technology” (NAAE, n.d., p. 1). “Academic programs in agricultural journalism have given way to “comprehensive” agricultural communications (AC) programs that cover strategic communications, new and social media, public relations and marketing in addition to writing, editing and production of mass media” (Irani & Doerfert, 2013, p. 3). Agricultural Leadership (AL) is described as a discipline to “prepare future leaders to tackle societal issues related to food and the agricultural sciences,” (Weeks & Weeks, 2020, p. 37). These three disciplines build the core of social sciences research across colleges of agriculture. This project seeks to discover the current state of ACEL discipline and provide an overview of the degree programs being offered throughout the U.S. Researchers also hope to show the changes within programs in all three discipline areas, as the last update to a reference list compiled in 2010 (Kleinjan, 2018).

How it Works

This study examines the current state of AECL through a cross-sectional survey that collects information from a predetermined target population within an approximate time (Fraenkel et al., 2023). The target population included 110 colleges and departments of agriculture ($N = 110$) throughout the U.S., with a response rate of ($N = 49$). The population was surveyed through a subject-completed, written-response questionnaire (Fraenkel et al., 2023). Participants reported representing universities in 27 different U.S. states. Participants were asked short-answer, multiple choice, and checklist-style questions specific to their university to garner a comprehensive list and organize the information.

Results to Date

As shown in Table 1, AE programs hold the most degree offerings within the AECL discipline, with 40 departments offering degrees in AE. Institutions were asked to report the types of degrees they offered, ranging from undergraduate and graduate degrees. AC programs reported 25 departments offering programs in this area, followed by AL, with 23 departments offering degrees. Extension Education (EE) reported 13 departments offering degrees and six departments offering additional degrees (such as International Extension Education). However, it is essential to note that this is an ongoing effort in coordination with the American Association

for Agricultural Education (AAAE) to update their program roster, which was last updated in 2018.

Table 1

Overview of the Current States of AECL Discipline (N = 49)

Variable	Agricultural Education Degree	Agricultural Communications Degree	Agricultural Leadership Degree	Extension Education Degree	Other Degrees Offered
Departments with Offerings	40	25	23	13	6
Bachelor's Degree	42	21	14	7	0
Master's degree	51	15	15	11	0
Ph.D.	16	3	5	5	1
Ed.D.	2	0	0	0	0
Other	27	14	21	7	5

Future Plans

With this being an ongoing study, researchers will provide an overview of current offerings during the AAAE Annual Conference. They will display a QR Code on the poster to encourage those who have not yet participated in our national survey to participate. When this work was done in 2018, 42 states and Puerto Rico were represented by program offerings in AECL. Currently, our data only represents 27 states. However, it is critical for the future use of this document that we continue to obtain responses to the survey so that the resources provided by AAAE can be accurately updated and represent as many programs throughout the U.S. as possible. It is crucial to note that this data cannot be accurately obtained through websites and online searches due to researchers' finding inaccurate information regarding program offerings on multiple college and university websites.

Costs/Resources Needed

There are no associated costs with conducting this project. However, it is critical to its success that all programs throughout the country that offer degree programs (including minors) in agricultural education, communications, leadership, extension education, or other related program areas complete this survey so that the AAAE has an up-to-date resource document for use by faculty, staff, students, stakeholders, and other entities.

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