

Examining the Significance of the Refined FFA Mission Statement

Poster Abstract

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In the 1980's many forces challenged American agriculture and education. Educators, farmers, individuals in agribusinesses and public institutions recognized the need to adjust goals and policies that directly effected agricultural education. Changes in agriculture spawned changes in agricultural education programs. Agricultural education was at a crossroads and was faced with these challenges as agriculture continued to change rapidly.

The publication entitled, Understanding Agriculture New Directions for Education, 1988, addressed many challenges that agricultural education was facing and developed principles, conclusions and recommendations that provided guidelines to address challenges. One principal conclusion and recommendation for agricultural education and the FFA organization focused on reform efforts within vocational agriculture programs that rely on strong programmatic leadership at the state and national levels. Major leadership challenges included program evaluation, teacher education, curriculum development, assuring adequate resources at the local level, and creating more flexible legislative and budgetary framework.

Additionally, in 1989, The National Summit on Agriculture Education participants suggested that bold, innovative thinking must be encouraged in the changing field of agricultural education. The mission of agricultural education was to provide a total dynamic educational system, aspiring to excellence and serving the needs of all people. , Goals were set, concerning updating and providing mission statements, serving all groups, expanding the whole person concept of education, developing educational programs to meet demands, fostering free enterprise, providing leadership, and elevating standards of excellence in all facets of agricultural education.

One of the important components of the total agricultural education program is the FFA organization. The FFA sought to address these challenges by continuing to perfect the image that it portrays to the youth of America. One area that was pursued was the implementation of a mission statement that provides central focus to what FFA does to assist in preparing young people for college and agricultural careers.

A plethora of literature exists that supports the use of mission statements in education and businesses. In fact, mission statements began as important tools to direct future decision-making of the entity it represents. Mission statements also influence the shape of an organization and they are used to stability for changes, or even serve as a catalyst for change. A properly crafted mission statement is a beacon that provides strategic direction for educational purposes. A mission that provides direction and linkages can serve as the base for its' measure of effectiveness. More specifically some agree that three particularly important components of mission statements to be purpose, values and description of skills.

Recognizing the important role that mission statements play in businesses and agricultural education, a visioning committee representing the National FFA Organization board

of directors recommended to the board at the July 1993 board of directors meeting that the following mission statement be adopted:

FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

It is a goal of the FFA to continually improve the mission statement by defining it in much detail. In April of 1999, FFA brought together representatives from businesses and industry, (which included both management and human resource representatives-both agriculture and non-agriculture), university agricultural education representatives, agriculture leadership staff, The National Council for Agricultural Education (NCAE), USDE, the FFA, FFA Foundation, National Association for Agriculture Educators (NAAE), state agricultural education leaders, and individuals representing other leadership and youth-focused groups (such as American Management Association) to further define the FFA mission statement.

The purpose of the meeting was to define the three components of the FFA mission statement premier **leadership**, **personal growth** and **career success**. As a follow up to the task force definitions of the three key components of the mission statement the FFA Board of Directors wanted to gain input from both the businesses and agricultural education communities on the revised mission and determine if these communities agree (at least generally) that the defined components and precepts are of value and are significant with the essential skills students acquire through FFA as they prepare for a future in the agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources system.

A detailed survey form containing the definition of each key area of the mission statement and each precept was used. Individuals were to rate the significance of each precept based upon his/her opinion.

The results of this study indicated that the input from both communities surveyed, education and businesses, agree that the three components of the FFA mission statement, premier leadership, personal growth, and career success and their precepts, are moderately and highly significant and are on target with what students acquire through the FFA organization activities.

Because of the strong positive skewness of the data, this study suggests that both communities, education and business, generally agree that the three components and their precepts are of value and are significant with the essential skills students acquire through FFA as they prepare for a future in the agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources system.

This study indicates that the education community views the personal growth precepts differently than the business community (human resources and front line managers). Those personal growth precepts are spiritual, emotional, and social.

Results from this study may provide the building blocks for an evaluation and data management system to be utilized by the National FFA Organization so that the FFA mission statement can continue to be studied and improved.

In 1993, the National FFA board of directors, including the officers, directors, consultants and staff was charged with the task of taking full responsibility for assuring that everyone connected directly or indirectly with the FFA organization understands its reasons for existing and have a clear vision of precisely what the organization strives to accomplish. The National FFA staff was directed to focus all resources (time, energy and finances) on the

achievement and studies of the FFA mission statement. This “charge” was the impetus behind the need for the refined FFA mission statement study.

As the world of agricultural education changes, so must the mission statements that are within the agricultural education realm. As these changes continue to occur, the National FFA organization will need advice, guidance and innovative input from the education and business communities. Research and affirmation of the FFA mission statement of today will help provide guidance to students who are ultimately our leaders of tomorrow.