

AED 104: “An Agriculture Education Bridge Program”
Introduction to Agricultural Education, Leadership & LifeKnowledge®

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Introduction/Need for Innovation or Idea

Action Agenda 1 for agriculture education, developed by the National Council for Agriculture Education states a need for, “An abundant supply of highly motivated well-educated teachers in all disciplines, pre-kindergarten through adult, and to provide agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources systems education” (Council, 2000). AED 104 is a web-based course designed to increase the awareness of agriculture education to high school students while providing an opportunity to enhance LifeKnowledge® learning in agriculture education. In addition, AED 104 provides the chance to bridge high school agriculture students to Murray State University’s School of Agriculture. Students in high school are encouraged to pursue degrees in every field of agriculture, with the exception of education. On a similar note, many students do not receive the opportunity to enroll in an agriculture class, but can provide the agriculture education community with a “new twist” on the teaching profession.

Agriculture students must be prepared to cope with the world in order to function in their future occupations and roles in a less-agriculturally oriented society (Rollins, 1990). As high school agriculture students continue to become more non-traditional, so does the training provided by our agriculture education, teacher education program. The need for qualified teachers with an understanding of agriculture is higher today than ever before. The same can be said for the support for quality educators. A study conducted by The Ohio State University shows higher values of teacher remembering, processing, creating, and evaluating were associated with higher values on student performance (Cano, 1990). Therefore, teachers in today’s education setting need to provide a stringent curriculum that expects high cognitive thinking. This three-hour university credit will encourage high school students to analyze teaching strategies in various education settings and focus on the diversity need in agriculture. AED 104 will serve as a catalyst in developing higher level teaching strategies in the diverse agriculture education classroom. With the support of the Department of Education in Kentucky, Illinois, Tennessee, and Missouri, Murray State University will help in molding future teacher leaders in Agriculture.

Program Phases

The School of Agriculture at Murray State University was granted permission in September of 2006 from the University Provost to offer a “bridge program” between high school students and the Department of Agriculture Education. Opportunities to take AED 104 as a web-based, off-campus, lecture basis were put into action.

Phase One consisted of planning the curricula design and material development for teaching. Phase Two was notification and distribution of promotional material, syllabus, and

course content to teachers among the Commonwealths of Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and Illinois. Phase Three was the implementation of instruction delivery systems through teleconferencing, web-based instruction, and high school laboratory instruction. Phase Four involved the designing of a final assessment day targeted to expand the student's mind in diversity and LifeKnowledge® practices.

Results to Date/Implications

- Within two semesters, AED 104 has seen an enrollment of 42 students from a four state area. Nearly seventy-five percent of the students will be freshman, agriculture education majors at Murray State University during the 2007-2008 academic school year.
- Creation of a diverse entry, multiple area, and seamless transition from high schools through the baccalaureate degree program in an articulation partnership at Murray State University.
- Produce an increase of diverse, highly qualified educators that will meet the demands of modern day agriculture education.
- Assist with the training of future enrolled students.

Future Plans

AED 104 and its outcomes will strongly assist in developing a multi-state agriculture education system linking high schools to the universities through an articulation agreement. This model will serve as a pilot for other universities looking to implement joint system in agriculture education. The high schools and the university will keep an ongoing commitment to this project. Enrollment in the class will increase following the approval of a state mandated high school credit within the state of Kentucky.

Costs/Resources Needed

Currently the costs of AED 104 are minimal, but anticipation of a grant can possibly eliminate or decrease the expenses of the course. The following expenses are expected for the organization and implementation of the program:

The bridge student pays:

- \$100 Class Enrollment Fee/Student
- \$30 University Registration Fee/Student

The university provides the following:

- \$500 Registration of Finals Hall
- \$250 Meal Fee for Finals Weekend
- \$150 Implementation Mailing and Web-based Organization
- \$1500 One-Time Web-Based Class Stipend
- \$75 Stipend/Student Enrollment
- \$250 Stipend to High School Agriculture Teachers

References

- Cano, J. (1990). The Relationship Between Instruction and Student Performance at the Various Levels of Cognition Among Selected Ohio Production Agriculture Programs. *Journal of Agriculture Education*, 31(2), 74-80.
- National Council for Agriculture Education (2000). *The National Strategic Plan and Action Agenda for Agriculture Education: Reinventing Agricultural Education for the Year 2020*. Washington, DC.
- Rollins, T. (1990). Levels of Critical Thinking of Secondary Students. *Journal of Agriculture Education*, 31(3), 47-53.