

# **The National Council for Agricultural Education Report 2006 AAAE Conference**

## **Vision**

The vision of The National Council for Agricultural Education is to be the premier leadership organization for shaping and strengthening agricultural education at all levels in the United States.

## **Mission**

By providing leadership and coordination to shape the future of school-based agricultural education, The Council will:

- Proactively identify current and emerging issues of national concern,
- Provide innovative solutions in response to current and emerging issues,
- Coordinate the efforts of appropriate entities in strengthening programs, and
- Serve as a national advocate for school-based agricultural education.

## **Recent Accomplishments and Current Initiatives**

The National Council meets monthly via conference call, with the March and October meetings held face-to-face. The 22 members of the Council Board of Directors include the President-Elect, President, and Past President of AAAE. The Board held its October meeting in Indianapolis at the National FFA Center and devoted one day of this meeting to a joint strategic analysis of agricultural education with selected National FFA staff. The March Board meeting was held in Washington, DC in conjunction with the National Policy Seminar coordinated by the Association for Career and Technical Education. This meeting included visits by Council members to Congressional offices. The Council is in solid financial standing. Annual operating expenses account for approximately 60% of the annual budget, with the remaining expenditures directed toward high priority special projects. Funds to support operating expenses for one year are held in reserve. All funding for the Council is derived from the contributions of its member organizations. An outside audit performed by an independent accounting firm in 2004 found all Council financial records to be sound, complete, and up-to-date. A similar audit will be performed on a biannual basis in the future. The Council agenda continues to be directed by its strategic plan, which was adopted in 2004 and updated this past March. The following items highlight the key initiatives of the Council in each of its four mission areas.

### **Mission Area: Proactively identify current and emerging issues of national concern.**

1. Developed and distributed the first annual status report on agricultural education in the United States. Appointed a task force to determine the data needs and sources required for future annual reports. Contracted with Strategic Marketing research, Inc. for data collection and analysis. FFA will assist with design and printing. Next report available in February 2007.
2. Conducted studies in 2004 and 2005 to identify the major issues and trends affecting agricultural education in the U.S. In both studies the three most pressing issues were 1) the continuing shortage of agriculture teachers, 2) inadequate funding of local agriculture programs, and 3) lack of evidence that agricultural education enhances student achievement in math, science, reading, and communication. Perceptions of national issues and trends will be assessed every three years from this point forward.
3. Held a joint meeting with National FFA staff in October 2005 to perform a SWOT analysis of agricultural education in the United States. Potential response strategies were identified for the three issues cited in # 2 above.

### **Mission Area: Provide innovative solutions in response to current and emerging issues.**

1. Provided funding to support the development of a national research agenda for agricultural education. The document is scheduled for printing and distribution in September 2006 and is expected to be instrumental in helping faculty and graduate students focus their research programs and collaborate in grant writing efforts.

2. Commissioned the preparation of five white papers to help identify innovative solutions to current issues in agricultural education. Topics include providing a relevant and rigorous program, meeting accountability needs, responding to the teacher shortage, characteristics of the ideal middle school program, and experiential learning through SAE programs.
3. Established a task force to examine innovative curriculum models (e.g., Project Lead The Way) as a mechanism for enhancing program quality and impact and increasing the number of agricultural education programs nationally. This group meets later this month in Indianapolis.
4. Developed and made available on the Council website an informational brochure describing the purpose, activities, and membership of the Council.
5. Supported a mechanism for providing *JAE* research findings to practitioners/teachers. This idea is still under discussion.
6. As a follow-up to its support of research focused on enhancing student achievement in math, science, and reading, provided funding for the analysis of current knowledge and research needs in written and oral communication. The Council has continued to support efforts to secure federal agency support of research in content area reading in agriscience education.
7. Developed a strategy for partnering with the National FFA Foundation to identify high priority national initiatives funded by the newly established Ag Ed Opportunities Fund.
8. Endorsed the Ag Ed Learning Center concept as a central source for electronic access to curriculum materials by agricultural educators.

**Mission Area: Coordinate the efforts of appropriate entities in strengthening programs.**

1. Continued development of National Quality Indicators for Agricultural Education Programs with a final product anticipated late this year.
2. Prepared the background work to support the recent release of an RFP to develop National Curriculum Standards for Secondary Agricultural Education. Funding for this initiative is currently being sought by the National FFA Foundation.
3. Endorsed the goal of 10,000 quality agricultural education programs by the year 2015. A Council task force has been established to clarify goals and develop action plans and will report in October.
4. Signed an MOU with the Consortium of National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education to serve as the liaison for the Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources Career Cluster.
5. Revised the Bylaws of the Council to allow the appointment of consultants to the Council to provide leadership for key Council initiatives. The Council also amended its Bylaws to include the COO of the National FFA as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Council.
6. Collaborated with NAAE and the National FFA in distributing \$770,000 in disaster relief funds from the Seeds of Hope campaign to states affected by the 2004 and 2005 hurricanes.

**Mission Area: Serve as a national advocate for agricultural education.**

1. Appointed a National Council Advocacy Task Force to lead in the development and implementation of a national advocacy agenda for agricultural education. With leadership from the NAAE Executive Director, identified an advocacy team within each state.
2. Continued a business education partnership with ACTE to support collaborative advocacy efforts and strengthen relationships with ACTE and NAAE.
3. Contracted with Rhea and Kaiser Communications to coordinate a comprehensive marketing and communications plan for agricultural education.