

impact

of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences



Society-Ready Graduates

Agricultural Literacy Programs for K-12 Teachers

Issue

The earth's human population topped six billion in the year 2000. All those people depend on agriculture to provide them with food, clothing, and a variety of other products to enhance their lives. As more homes are built on prime farmland across the U.S., a smaller number of farms are providing for the basic needs of many more people. Less than two percent of the U.S. population is engaged in production agriculture. There aren't enough sons and daughters of current farm families available to carry on this essential industry. To interest K-12 students in finding out more about where their food comes from, and how they can pursue various careers in agriculture, agricultural literacy programs have been launched nationwide. Teachers need to understand agriculture themselves before they can integrate concepts about agriculture into their lesson plans.

What has been done?

The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, with funding from the Arizona Foundation for Agricultural Literacy, has conducted a five-day Summer Agricultural Institute for Teachers every summer for 12 years. The Institute educates participants about the Arizona agricultural industry and encourages

them to incorporate this knowledge into their classroom activities. The Institute combines hands-on learning about agriculture with practical curriculum development. Participants receive lesson plans, videos, and other take-home materials. Sixty-nine volunteers contributed 549 hours of service in 2002 to ensure the success of the Institute. Many of the teachers have little or no knowledge of the agricultural industry. They visit agricultural operations, stay with farm families and interact with the owners and managers of these businesses, to better understand the technical aspects of agriculture in Arizona, and the wide range of agricultural operations and career opportunities.

"Project Food, Land & People Resources for Learning" is another opportunity to extend the agricultural literacy message into schools. Teachers participate in six-hour workshops and receive 55 lessons that incorporate agriculture into any subject they teach. These nationally designed lessons have been aligned with Arizona's Academic Standards, and have been recognized as outstanding by the Arizona Department of Commerce.

Joint workshops with other educational providers is the third

opportunity for teachers to learn how to incorporate agriculture into their classroom curriculum. Teacher participants in these workshops receive an intensive two-day training, where they are given the curricula of Project food, Land & People, Project Learning Tree and Project WET (Water Education for Teachers). All three of these curricula are delivered by employees of the University of Arizona.

Impact

From 1990-2002 a total of 263 educators have attended the Summer Agricultural Institute. From 1990-2002 a total of 263 educators have attended the Summer Agricultural Institute. Seventeen percent have earned graduate level credit through the UA for completing the Institute program. Participants in the 2002 Institute stated that they would teach an average of 13 more years. The potential impact from these 28 teachers would be their contact with almost 20,000 students for agricultural literacy lessons. As for Project Food, Land and People, 585 teachers have participated in this program. Assuming an average of 30 students per class for these teachers, 17,550 students are learning about agriculture during the 2002-2003 school year.

Funding

Arizona Foundation for Agricultural Literacy

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