

Minnesota's AgEd Advocate



MAELC

Spring 2016

Kari Schwab, Editor

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\$3,315,000 has been awarded to MnSCU colleges for their Farm Business Management (FBM) programs as part of MAELC's Challenge Grant and Additional Instructor Grant programs.



A Case for Stronger Agricultural Education: Extended Contracts

It is a warm Minnesota summer day and Mr. Eric Sawatzke, agriculture teacher at Dassel-Cokato High School, just finished assigning tasks to his students for a summer landscaping project. After a few hours, he moves on to working with his FFA Chapter Officers, who are developing their leadership plan and yearly program of activities. Later, he schedules the next day's student visits where he will learn more about each student's individual Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) project and assist them in planning future career exploration. Afterwards, he is off to an evening meeting to prepare for the upcoming local county fair. This is just a snapshot of Mr. Sawatzke's summer and shows the variety of activities Minnesota's agriculture teachers do outside of a normal school day.

Minnesota's Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (AFNR) education programs center themselves around a three component model including classroom and laboratory instruction, leadership education (FFA), and experiential learning, which supplements classroom instruction. In an ideal world, the agriculture teacher would receive pay for this additional experiential programming, known as an "extended contract."



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From the Desk of Sarah Dornink MAELC Executive Director

MAELC recently completed staff reviews for 2015 and it gave us an opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments of the past year, which was one of the most productive in MAELC history. A few highlights of the new programming and legislative directives we implemented include:

- MAELC's annual budget for grants and special projects was significantly increased through legislative action. We also secured additional project-specific funding outside of legislative dollars.
- We completed a comprehensive evaluation of our grant programs from their very beginning in 1997. This led to moving our entire grant and scholarship process online, including applications, review, and final reporting. We also decided to change our Common Fund grants to focus solely on statewide initiatives and implemented a second deadline for this grant program. With the additional funds awarded during the 2015 legislative session, we developed three new grant programs including Farm Business Management (FBM) Challenge Grant, FBM Additional Instructors, and Agricultural Instructor Mentor Programs.

“Although it was a busy year, it is encouraging to see the support and investment in agricultural education throughout the state. It is truly a team effort and our partners are critical in MAELC's success.”

- Our communication and outreach efforts were improved by developing and implementing a strategic communication plan, including an increased social media presence and quarterly MAELC E-Newsletter to supplement our current semi-annual print newsletter. We also took on a new leadership role as chair of the Minnesota Team AgEd committee.
- We continued to chair Minnesota's State Teach Ag Results (STAR) committee and implemented new strategies to combat the agriculture teacher shortage, including an inaugural Summer AgEd Internship program, Immersion Camp, mid-career mentorship program, current agriculture teacher professional development opportunities and numerous recognition/celebration activities.

Although it was a busy year, it is encouraging to see the support and investment in agricultural education throughout the state. It is truly a team effort and our partners are critical in MAELC's success. These actions are setting us up as we plan our upcoming 20th anniversary and begin the process of developing our next Blueprint, a statewide vision for agriculture education. Look for more details later in 2016, as we will rely on others for their creative ideas and enthusiasm!



Extended Contracts (continued)

Extended contracts are utilized for experiential learning that occurs outside of regular classroom instruction, which happens after school hours, on weekends, over holidays or during the summer months. They also allow for more individualized instruction and supervision of students.

Mr. Dean Jennissen, Principal of Dassel-Cokato High School, recognizes the importance of providing his agriculture teacher an extended contract. "I like that students are engaged throughout the summer in positive experiences that not only benefit the student and our school, but also our community," said Principal Jennissen. "The time Mr. Sawatzke spends with our students in the summer is really where he builds a cohesive 'team' of students interested in agriculture, service and leadership."

Extended contract activities look different in every community. Some of the most common activities include school gardens or greenhouses, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), county and state fairs, leadership retreats, Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) and career exploration visits, and building community and industry relationships. The amount of time each agriculture teacher spends on extended programming depends on the needs of their local school and community, however even one or two visible projects helps strengthen community support for the Agricultural Education program and the school district.



Dassel-Cokato FFA Officers plan for the upcoming year during their summer Officer Retreat.



Mr. Sawatzke, agriculture teacher at Dassel-Cokato High School, helps students prepare for the local county fair.

MAELC presented a workshop about extended contracts at the Minnesota School Board Association's Annual Conference where Mr. Sawatzke served as a featured panelist. The workshop was well attended, and one of the participating school districts has since offered their agriculture teacher an extended contract.

The topic of extended contracts has also gotten the attention of the state legislature. During the 2015 legislative session, bills were introduced to assist with providing agriculture teachers guaranteed extended contract days.

Agriculture is particularly important to our state and keeping qualified agriculture teachers in the classroom is imperative. While many recognize the importance of an agricultural educator, they may not realize all that the teacher facilitates outside of their classroom in order to support their students. Extended contracts will hopefully be an incentive to retain Minnesota's current agriculture teachers and recruit future teachers into the profession. The next time you see an agriculture teacher, be sure to thank them and encourage your own school district to consider supporting an extended contract.

Minnesota Student Teachers Receive "Survival Kit"

Each student teacher placed in Minnesota received a "Survival Kit" as part of Minnesota's State Teach Ag Results (STAR) program. Each kit contained a letter from the President of the Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators (MAAE), a book called "The Energy Bus", a Teach Ag poster, pens and notepads from MAELC, and other teacher survival necessities.

These students will be graduating in May and then hopefully starting in a classroom of their own.





MAELC Awards Over \$72,000 in Grants

MAELC Board Members

Welcome



Andrea Vaubel was appointed Assistant Commissioner at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture in February, 2016. As Assistant Commissioner, Vaubel oversees the Agriculture Marketing and Development and the Plant Protection divisions. She serves as the Department of Agriculture representative on the MAELC board, replacing Santo Cruz.

Vaubel hails from Verona, WI and earned her degree in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse. She has worked in the Commissioner’s Office since January, 2013, most recently as the Director of Government Affairs. Prior to her time at the Department of Agriculture, Vaubel worked for Congressman Tim Walz both in Washington, DC and Mankato, MN.

Vaubel resides in St. Paul with her husband and daughter.

New to Minnesota Agricultural Education



Juleah Tolosky is the new Executive Secretary for the Minnesota FFA Association. Juleah joined the Minnesota FFA leadership team in October, 2015. She previously served as the Executive Secretary for New York FFA Association.

Juleah has experience in organizing, developing, and implementing new and existing trainings for student growth. In her position, she is responsible for the operation, delivery, communication, and marketing of all Minnesota FFA programs.

When first arriving in Minnesota, Juleah was surprised by how flat and wide-open the state is compared to upstate New York. She is continually impressed by how diverse and strong agriculture is in Minnesota - and the fact that “Minnesota Nice” is a real thing.

Juleah’s favorite thing about FFA is that it gives students “that could be me” moments where they see others succeed and learn about opportunities and recognition they can earn. She appreciates that there are so many different ways in which students can find personal achievements in FFA, including leadership, community service, entrepreneurship, skill mastery, speaking skills, and so much more. FFA members grow into confident, capable and passionate leaders, and she is thrilled to be even a small part of making that possible.

This past fall, MAELC awarded over \$72,000 in Strategic Initiative grants to Minnesota high schools, post-secondary institutions, and community organizations that work to improve agricultural education in the state.

Institution	Amount	Project Description
AgCentric	\$10,200	Technology Trailer
Benson High School	\$12,495	Integrating STEAM into the Demand for the Future of Manufacturing
Buffalo High School	\$6,000	Garden to School: A Produce Project
Chatfield High School	\$5,592	Production Engineering: Engineering in Metalworking & Robotics
Foley High School	\$3,831	Mechanronics Applications in Agricultural Mechanics
Holdingford High School	\$13,000	Agriculture Mechanics Curriculum Update
MACCRAY High School	\$4,073	Electronic Kits & Supplies
Minnesota FFA Association	\$1,500	Minnesota FFA Historical Documents
Ogilvie High School	\$500	Improving the Food Chemistry Experience
Pipestone Area High School	\$13,314	Agricultural Technology in the 21st Century
Riverland Community College	\$1,500	STEM on the Farm - Summer Day Camp Pilot



Children’s Museum of Southern Minnesota - Unleashing the Superpower of Play to Expand Ag Ed in Southern Minnesota (MAELC Grant given in 2014)

Grant applications and final reports can be found online at www.mn.gov/maelc/grants.html

Grant Spotlight - MyCAERT

Written by Joel Larsen, Minnesota Department of Education Program Specialist -
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources Education



Since 2007, MAELC has provided grant funding for all Minnesota agriculture teachers to access MyCAERT through a state-wide subscription. MyCAERT is an integrated online system to plan, document, deliver, and assess Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (AFNR) instruction while maximizing quality classroom instruction. The foundation of the MyCAERT system is over 1,000 ready-to-use lesson plans and PowerPoint Presentations organized by topic into multiple libraries.

The grant provides access to four curriculum libraries, including Biological Science Applications in Agriculture, Environmental Resources, Animal, Plant, & Soil Science, and Minnesota Natural Resources Science.

Each of these curriculum libraries has been cross walked with Minnesota's academic science standards for grades 9-12. Through MyCAERT's search tools, instructors can identify Minnesota science standards embedded in selected lessons or search by a specific science standard to receive a list of lessons addressing that standard.

"I like the MyCAERT features of test building, collecting data on standards achievement for individual students, and allowing students to take quizzes and tests online. There is a wealth of lessons on so many subjects, and students seem to like to read them. MyCAERT is a real time-saver and gives us access to curriculum we could not otherwise afford!" – Gretchen Schleper, Agriculture Teacher-Upsala Area Schools

Providing high quality AFNR agri-science resources for Minnesota schools is the goal of the MAELC's grant for the state-wide MyCAERT subscription. It is designed to allow instructors to focus on teaching and learning strategies that allow students to be successful learners. MyCAERT is a critical resource for early career teachers, however when a survey was completed of MyCAERT users, it was found that this curriculum resource is used across a large span of teacher experience. MAELC has been working with MyCAERT to continue this grant program for a three year period beginning in July, 2016 through June, 2019.

For more information about how to access a MyCAERT subscription for your classroom, please contact Joel Larsen – (651) 582-8395 or joel.larsen@state.mn.us



MAELC Common Fund Projects

In its ninth year, MAELC again provided agricultural education grants for statewide projects in Minnesota through the Common Fund grants program. Common Fund grants are designed to encourage collaborative initiatives with an emphasis on agricultural education. New in 2015, a second round of Common Fund grants was added; applications are now due April 15 and November 15 each year.

Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators (MAAE) - \$27,595

Professional Development for Minnesota Agriculture Teachers

This grant will provide funds for hands-on professional development for agriculture teachers in the areas of welding, record keeping, construction, and food science.

Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom (MAITC) - \$10,000

Empowering Agricultural Literacy Using an Innovative Web Portal

Funds will support the development of an interactive website to connect print resources, like the AgMag and AgMag Jr, with an interactive platform. This will provide enhanced student and teacher engagement, leading to a stronger collaboration and systemic embedding of agricultural literacy education in K-12 curriculum.

Minnesota Department of Education - \$32,500

MyCAERT-Online Agricultural Science Curriculum Library

This program gives all agricultural education pre-service and current teachers in Minnesota access to resources regarding Natural Resource Science, Plant Science, Animal Science, and Biological Science. These resources are all aligned with the state science standards.

Minnesota FFA Alumni Association - \$17,000

Alumni President's Circle

This grant will fund leadership development to enhance and build FFA Alumni leadership and strengthen alumni affiliates across Minnesota.

University of Minnesota - Extension Center for Youth Development - \$15,000

Minnesota 4-H Science of Agriculture Challenge

Funds will support the 4-H Science of Agriculture Challenge event, designed to help youth explore and develop science-based solutions to agricultural problems they have identified in their communities.

MAELC Awards Over \$51,000 in Scholarships

MAELC is helping students achieve their collegiate goals by awarding nearly \$51,000 in scholarships to first-year, continuing education, and graduate students studying Agricultural Education. Over the past 17 years, MAELC has awarded over \$520,000 in scholarships to Agricultural Education students.

Freshman Awardees

Name	Amount	High School
McKenzie Barth	\$1,400	Upsala
Harley Braun	\$1,400	Sleepy Eye
Janelle Hueners	\$1,400	Chisago Lakes
Bailey Leaman	\$1,400	Mountain Lake
Abby Penzenstadler	\$1,000	Chisago Lakes
Donavan Phoenix	\$1,000	Hayfield
Lucas Potthoff	\$750	Martin County West
Amanda Stafford	\$1,000	Forest Lake

Continuing Undergraduate Awardees

Name	Amount	Hometown
Ethan Dado	\$1,500	Amery, WI
Mariah Daninger	\$1,200	Forest Lake
Michaela Gallup	\$1,500	Dassel
Cody Hager	\$1,500	Appleton
Anna Johnson	\$900	Sebeka
Winona Johnson	\$1,200	Shoreview
Morgan Krause	\$900	Buffalo
Alexis Larson	\$1,200	Belle Plaine
Maggie Larson	\$1,500	Aitkin
Haley Leiding	\$900	Fountain
Natasha Maninga	\$1,500	Menahga
Joseph Ramstad	\$900	Forest Lake
Caleb Rempel	\$900	Mountain Lake
Audrey Schleper	\$900	Holdingford
Adam Stevermer	\$900	Easton
Ellyn Swanson	\$900	Trimont
Brandon Thurk	\$1,200	Lakefield
Savannah Zippel	\$1,200	Le Sueur

Graduate Agricultural Education Licensure Awardees

Name	Amount	Hometown
Sarah Armstrong-Serbus	\$7,000	Waconia
Karli Anderson	\$7,000	Farmington
Jacqueline Artymiuk-Moe	\$7,000	Cottage Grove

Teacher Spotlight - Natalie Utsch



Natalie Utsch is the agriculture teacher for both Paynesville and ROCORI High Schools. She is in her 12th year with Paynesville, and added ROCORI to the agriculture program during her second year. There were four FFA members in the program when she first started, and that grew to 18 during her first year; they now have about 50 members.

Utsch teaches a variety of courses, including Natural Resources, Welding, Computers in Agriculture, and the University of Minnesota-Intro to Animal Science course, which allows students to receive college credit. She hopes to add more of a variety of agriculture classes that will appeal to the school population and draw more students into the program. This will also help open the door for students to explore future education and career opportunities.

The FFA members do a lot locally with education and community service. They have great alumni who support the members and chapter, doing a tremendous job working with Paynesville's Educational Plot and keeping up to date with technology, working with the community, and educating students about crop production.

Over the past 12 years, many students have received regional, state, and national honors. During Utsch's first few years, they had a horse team go to nationals, which helped motivate all teams to strive to go to Nationals again, even coming close a few times. This fall, Paynesville FFA hopes to have their first American Degree recipient! They have also had region officers, state stars, and many state degree recipients.

Utsch is most proud of seeing members take advantage of the variety of opportunities offered. She also enjoys helping students further their growth and development as a leader and young adult, and finding their passion as they explore and prepare for their future careers.



Farm Business Management Growing in Minnesota



MAELC recently awarded \$3,315,000 to eight Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) Farm Business Management programs. These grants are part of a brand-new program designed to maintain and increase the number of Farm Business Management instructors and students in local programs.

The MnSCU Farm Business Management (FBM) program is extremely important to the state's farm economy. As the agricultural economy fluctuates, there is an increased demand for FBM education. At the same time, the number of FBM instructors has decreased over the past ten years, leading to a shortage of instructors available to students. To address these challenges, the Minnesota Legislature and MAELC created the FBM Challenge Grants program. These funds were made available through the Agriculture Research, Education, Extension, and Technology Transfer grant provided by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.



"The nationally recognized Farm Business Management programs offered by eight MnSCU colleges have provided educational opportunities to Minnesota's farming community for over 60 years. The Challenge Grants offered through MAELC will allow these vital programs to flourish and to strengthen a vital sector of our state's economy," said Dr. Larry Lundblad, President of Central Lakes College and MAELC board member.

Institutions awarded a Challenge Grant include Alexandria Technical and Community College, Central Lakes College, Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Northland Community and Technical College, Ridgewater College, Riverland Community College, South Central College, and St. Cloud Technical and Community College.

In February, an additional \$425,000 was awarded to assist in hiring five additional FBM instructors as part of the new Additional Instructor grant program. These grants are designed to assist FBM programs by covering the costs



associated with employing a brand-new instructor. Central Lakes College (2 positions), Minnesota West Community and Technical College (2 positions), and Riverland Community College (1 position) all received grants. Each college identified areas where instructors or coverage for farmer students was low or non-existent. They are currently in the process of hiring new instructors in the indicated shortage areas of the state.

MAELC hired Doris Mold of Sunrise Agricultural Associates, LLC to evaluate the Challenge Grant and Additional Instructor Grant programs over the next two years. It will be important to track the meaningful outcomes and impacts of the programs and to look at how effective they are at maintaining and increasing instructors.

SMSU Awards Scholarships

Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) awarded \$16,000 in scholarships during their 4th annual Ag Bowl Scholarship Invitational on February 19, 2016. These scholarships were awarded to Career Development Event (CDE) winners. Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted FFA Chapter was also awarded \$1,000 for having the most cumulative points.

500 High School FFA students from 27 schools and 3 states competed in 16 CDE's. Educational workshops were also offered to students in order for them to learn more about the opportunities in Minnesota's agriculture industry and SMSU's School of Agriculture.



Capitol Activities

Agricultural Education Legislative Breakfasts

MAELC, the Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators (MAAE), and the Minnesota FFA Association, co-hosted six legislative breakfasts to discuss Agricultural Education for the third year. Nearly 170 legislators, agricultural teachers, students, and stakeholders attended the events held throughout Minnesota.



Twenty-two Minnesota FFA members attended APEx (Ag Policy Experience) and had the opportunity to visit with Department of Agriculture staff, legislators, and agriculture leaders. The culminating activity for students was visiting with Governor Mark Dayton over lunch at his residence.



Ag Policy Experience (APEx)

FFA Day at the Capitol

150 FFA members and supporters came together for FFA Day at the Capitol, giving students and advisors a chance to meet with their legislators, discuss vital issues surrounding agricultural education, and see state government in action. FFA Day at the Capitol is sponsored by the MAAE, and organized by the Minnesota FFA Association and MAELC.



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