



MAELC Board Meeting - Official Meeting Minutes

September 19, 2025
Zoom Virtual Meeting

The September 19, 2025 MAELC board meeting was called to order by Representative Rick Hansen at 2:00 p.m.

Members Present:

- Rep. Paul Anderson
- Sen. Gary Dahms
- Terry Gaalswyk
- Julie Grossman
- *(on behalf of Brian Buhr)*
- Sen. Heather Gustafson
- Paul Hansen
- Rep. Rick Hansen
- Michelle Kamenov
- Rep. Bryan Lawrence
- Michael Martin
- Sen. Aric Putnam
- Eric Sawatzke
- Julie Tesch

Members Not Present:

- Patrice Bailey
- Jeff Lindeman
- Amber Seibert

Quorum was established.

Staff:

- Sarah Dornink (Executive Director)
- Kari Schwab (Program Coordinator)
- Henry Koerner (Student Worker)

Guests:

- Val Aarsvold (MN FFA Foundation)
- Holly Booth (St. Cloud Technical & Community College)
- Lindsey Brockberg (MN Dept. of Education)
- Amy Durand (South Central College)
- Keith Olander (AgCentric)
- Mary Hoffmann (MN FFA)
- Tina LeBrun (SACE)

Approval of Agenda

Gaalswyk moved to approve the agenda. Anderson seconded. Motion prevailed.

Approval of Minutes

Hansen, P. moved to approve the July 2025 MAELC meeting minutes. Dahms seconded. Motion prevailed.

Financial Report

Operating Budget

Dornink presented a detailed financial report, providing an update on expenditures and fund balances. She highlighted that the largest expenses since the last meeting were attributed to travel and scholarships. The fall half of undergraduate scholarships have been paid out, with the other half going out in January 2026 (line 35). Agricultural Education for All scholarships have also been paid to ten individuals (line 37). A reminder these are also split between the fall and spring semesters, and the other half of their scholarship comes out of the donor account. The final required donor match of \$5,000 for the Agricultural Education for All scholarship program was completed through utilizing the FY25 carryover (\$4,292.65), 2025 Blueprint left-over funds (\$272.56), and the remainder came from General Operating Services (\$434.79).

Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)/Special Project Budget

Contracts were sent out for the grants approved during the July meeting. Any grant recipients that underspent their project are noted on the budget sheet; These dollars will not be claimed from the MDA.

Farm Business Management (FBM) Budget

This budget includes funds for FBM Challenge Grants, FBM Additional Instructor grants, Mentor Program grants, and FBM evaluation. Dornink will complete a final report by September 30 in order to receive the last payment (\$450,000) for the previous biennium projects. Paperwork and the contract for the current biennium have been submitted to the MDA. All colleges submitted their final reports in July for the FBM Challenge Grants and Instructor Capacity Building grants. All seven colleges met at least five of the eight requirements in order to receive their final payments. Dornink met with the FBM Deans in July about the new Challenge Grant program approved by the Board in July. Colleges have submitted their new biennium Challenge Grant applications, with contracts going out soon. Doris Mold continues to be contracted with to evaluate the FBM grant programs. She submitted a proposal with her project scope and first invoice for payment. She will also receive the final payment of previous biennium funding upon completion of the final report and plans to present her findings along with her 10-year analysis of the FBM program at the December meeting.

Executive Director Report

Dornink welcomed new board members, Amber Seibert, who replaces Nikki Flaaen from the Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators (MAAE), and Dr. Mike Martin from UMN-Crookston, who is the new Agricultural Education higher education representative. National Teach Ag Day was celebrated on September 18. MAELC celebrated by sending a thank-you email and celebration guide to all agriculture teachers in the state. Governor Walz also officially declared it Teach Ag Day in Minnesota with a proclamation from his office. A "Nominate a Future Ag Teacher" giveaway contest is currently underway for future agriculture teachers. Selected winners will receive a "Tagged to Teach AG" kit.

Both Dornink and Schwab attended the Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators (MAAE) Summer Conference where Dornink co-presented a grant workshop with Sawatzke. During the conference, she also received the MAAE Presidential Award of Merit. Dornink was asked to serve on a virtual panel about Minnesota's recruitment and retention strategies for agriculture teachers for the National Association of Supervisors of Agricultural Educators state staff series. She also presented at the Farm Business Management Fall Professional Development Conference and at the Teacher Induction Program (TIP) kick-off.

MAELC continues to coordinate the recruitment and retention strategies with the State Teach Ag Results (STAR) program. The 2025 Agricultural Education Internship program has been completed with six interns placed across the state. Applications and sponsor requests are in process for the 2026 program.

Finally, Dornink highlighted the addition of Henry Koerner as MAELC's student worker. Koerner is a Junior studying Agricultural Education at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

Scholarship Committee Report

Agricultural Education for All Scholarship Report

Martin presented the 2025-2026 Agricultural Education for All scholarship awardees from the July 1, 2025 deadline. It was noted that the scholarship committee has the authority to act, so a formal vote was not required for these awards.

2025-2026 Scholarship Programs and Applications

Dornink presented the 2025-2026 MAELC scholarship program proposal along with the applications for the Undergraduate, Graduate, and Agricultural Education for All scholarships. The proposed changes are as follows:

Undergraduate Scholarship (Juniors & Seniors only):

- Deadline Change: Move application deadline from February 1 to October 15 (effective October 2026) to align award decisions and disbursement with the actual fiscal year, rather than committing funds before budgets are finalized.
- Award Disbursement: Provide full award in the spring semester

Graduate Scholarship (Awarded student teaching semester):

- Deadline Change: Move application deadline back from November 1 to October 15 (effective October 2025) to align with the undergraduate scholarship deadline
- Award Amount & Structure: Modify award to be "up to \$2,500" and remove split disbursement
- Eliminate interview requirement

AgEd for All Scholarship:

- Consolidate Deadlines: Replace three existing deadlines with a single deadline of February 1. Awards would remain split between fall and spring semesters (these dollars function differently than the regular scholarship program).
- Eliminate Interview Requirement

**See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

Dahms moved to approve the 2025-2026 MAELC Agricultural Education Scholarship programs and applications as presented. Anderson seconded.

Roll-Call Vote:

Rep. Paul Anderson - Yes
Patrice Bailey – Absent
Sen. Gary Dahms - Yes
Terry Gaalswyk - Yes
Julie Grossman - Yes
Sen. Gustafson - Yes
Paul Hansen - Yes
Rep. Rick Hansen - Yes

Michelle Kamenov - Yes
Rep. Bryan Lawrence - Yes
Jeff Lindeman - Absent
Michael Martin - Yes
Sen. Aric Putnam - Yes
Eric Sawatzke - Yes
Amber Seibert - Absent
Julie Tesch - Yes

Motion prevailed.

Grant Program Impact Presentation

Schwab presented a “MAELC Program Grant Impact Update,” detailing the data collected through grant final reports from Round 27 & 27-2 (FY24), and FY2024 Common Fund projects (both rounds). These reports are the most recently completed reports for a full fiscal year. Thirty-three grant projects were analyzed, totaling \$300,000 in funding. The largest category of funded grant projects is for Classroom Equipment (67%), followed by Agricultural Literacy (12%) and Greenhouse/Garden (12%), then Curriculum (9%). Direct grant impact totaled 10,036 people, with the highest categories being Elementary students (K-6) and Middle/High School students (7-12).

**See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

Grant Committee Report

Dornink presented the 2025-2026 Grant Program proposal, along with the grant application. The proposed changes include:

- Merging the Common Fund and Strategic Initiative grant programs into one newly renamed grant program
- Eliminating the board presentation requirement (currently part of the Common Fund grant program)
- Adding a project priority statement, such as “Priority will be given to school-based agricultural education and post-secondary AFNR programs or for projects connected to school districts and colleges/universities.”
- Updating project eligibility to include goals and strategies from the 2030 AFNR Education Blueprint

- Updating the request amount language by adding a range (\$1,500-\$25,000), as well as including the average award amount
- Adjusting the grant award financial procedure by switching to a reimbursement process instead of all grant awardees receiving advanced funds (current process - 75% awarded at the beginning of the project, 25% awarded upon completion of the project and submission of a final report and proof of expenditure). If needed, organizations may request advanced funds up to 50% of the grant award

**See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

*Sawatzke moved to approve the MAELC grant program proposal and application as presented.
Gaalswyk seconded.*

Sawatzke noted that a change in financial procedures to full reimbursement rather than 75% upfront will require increased communication and marketing to school districts. He emphasized making sure that schools are aware the funds are not necessarily tied to the AFNR program's budget and can be spread across school years depending on when the grant funds are awarded.

Roll-Call Vote:

Rep. Paul Anderson - Yes
Patrice Bailey – Absent
Sen. Gary Dahms - Yes
Terry Gaalswyk - Abstain
Julie Grossman - Yes
Sen. Gustafson - Yes
Paul Hansen - Yes
Rep. Rick Hansen - Yes

Michelle Kamenov - Yes
Rep. Bryan Lawrence - Abstain
Jeff Lindeman – Absent
Michael Martin - Yes
Sen. Aric Putnam - Yes
Eric Sawatzke - Yes
Amber Seibert – Absent
Julie Tesch - Yes

Motion prevailed.

Minnesota Department of Education – Secondary Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (AFNR) Education Update

Minnesota Department of Education staff Lindsey Brockberg, AFNR Specialist presented about Minnesota AFNR education. Data was not provided as the Department of Education has had issues in collecting accurate data and is still verifying it. Summer Agricultural Education Grants are being worked on for release. New this year, Brockberg will be overseeing the grants for the next round. The third edition of the Safety Manual is available and includes valuable resources for AFNR and Trade and Industry (T&I) instructors, specifically related to shop safety.

Updates were made in 2025 to Table C, a table of codes used by MDE for program approval with AFNR programs, and to the AFNR Frameworks, which are similar to how standards are utilized for other content areas. Also in 2025, Advance CTE, which is nationally based, updated the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Wheel. The new wheel utilizes the terms clusters and subclusters instead of pathways. It also demonstrates skills that cross-cut and overlap among all areas (ex: business concepts relate to all other areas). MDE is comparing the Advance CTE changes to what Minnesota currently utilizes with CTE pathways and could lead to some terminology changes. Brockberg also noted that Natural Resources is no longer listed with AFNR and has become a separate cluster with Energy. Natural

Resources will continue to be taught in agriculture; however it might also be found in other areas like Trade and Industry (T&I).

**See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators (MAAE) Update

Sawatzke provided an update about MAAE, highlighting several key achievements. He announced Representative Marion Rarick was presented with the MAAE Bell Ringer Award for her crucial role in protecting loan forgiveness programs from budget cuts, a decision that had a direct positive impact on agricultural educators. Sawatzke also noted Pam Koenen has officially taken over as Executive Director, after a transition period with former director, Tom Appel. The meat cutting curriculum project is moving along, which was made possible through a MAELC Common Fund grant awarded in July 2025.

**See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

University of Minnesota Update

Dr. Grossman presented an update on the University of Minnesota's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resources Sciences (CFANS). As a pilot program, CFANS is offering five "First-Year Experience (FYE)" courses, which aim to increase students' sense of belonging and awareness of careers paths in agriculture, food and natural resources (AFNR). Enrollment numbers not yet finalized, however they are seeing a preliminary increase across the college. She also spoke about a new collaboration between CFANS, the University of Minnesota, Crookston, and Minnesota State, which aims to build systems to keep Minnesota students at Minnesota higher education institutions.

**See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

Minnesota State & Farm Business Management (FBM) Update

Dr. Gaalswyk shared there has been continued success in hiring talent for FBM as faculty retire and are replaced. A key to new instructors' successes continue to be the mentor programs offered by FBM, which are supported by MAELC through legislative funds. For Minnesota State overall, current enrollment numbers are trending anywhere from 3-4.5% higher than the previous year, both for two-year institutions, as well as universities and graduate programs.

**See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

University Agricultural Education Updates

Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU)

Dr. Kristin Kovar was unable to attend the meeting; Dornink highlighted pieces of the written report, including their Agricultural Education program having twelve students enrolled. SMSU is also in the process of hiring a Director of Outreach.

**See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

University of Minnesota-Crookston (UMC)

Dr. Mike Martin presented about UMC. He mentioned their enrollment is slightly higher this year compared to the previous year, and they are preparing to have three student teachers in the spring. He

also announced the hiring of a new science education faculty member, which will enhance the program's ability to prepare future agricultural educators.

**See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

Dr. Amy Smith and Dr. Kirby Schmidt were unable to attend the meeting. Dornink highlighted pieces from the written report including the new addition of Dr. Kirby Schmidt to the program and there is a need for judges for the UMN FFA invitational held on October 8.

**See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Update

Bailey was unable to attend the meeting. Dornink noted a written report is available in the board packet.

**See handout for more information (included in board packet).*

Other Business/Announcements

The next board meeting will be held in-person in December in the Twin Cities. Upcoming dates of events and activities were highlighted (included on the back of agenda).

Rep. Hansen noted he is considering potential legislation to raise the per diems for citizens serving on agricultural boards. He noted that many boards have not had their per diems increased for decades, and believes that a raise would help encourage more citizen participation. He clarified that the legislation would be permissive, meaning it would allow boards to raise the per diem up to a certain level, but would not mandate it.

Rep. Hansen adjourned the meeting at 3:29 p.m.