Students Expand Professional Network in Agriculture

Professional Development in Leadership Education (AGED 310) is a required course for undergraduate students in the Ag Leadership Education concentration. The course focuses on preparing students to transition from college to career, specifically into areas directed toward non-formal youth and adult education, organizational leadership, community outreach, sales, communications, and human resource development in ag-related contexts.

The course, taught by Dr. Kari Keating, is offered each Spring and features a lineup of career-relevant guest educators who spend time with students telling stories of their own career paths, dispensing career advice, and even helping students one-on-one with resumes, interview tips, and job shadowing offers.

The Ag Ed Program would like to thank this year’s guest educators:

- Allison Biggs, Ashley McClintock, & Brittany Piepenbrink, GROWMARK
- Jamie Boas, Extension Educator, Youth Development, University of Illinois Extension
- Jean Drasgow, Career Services Director, College of ACES
- Emily Morehouse, Training & Development Manager, Farm Credit Illinois
- Stephanie Shampine, Manager of North American Staffing, ADM
- Eric Sitzman, District Sales Manager, Mycogen Seeds
- Jennifer Smith, Program Manager, IAA Foundation
- Jeff Yacup, Assistant Director, Illinois Leadership Center

In addition to benefitting from guest educators in the classroom, students spend 16 hours outside class as externs (i.e., 2-day interns) at organizations of their choice. This year, students completed externships with the following organizations:

- Beck’s Hybrids
- Illinois Farm Bureau
- LBO and Associates
- Ohio State University Extension
- St. Charles Horticulture Research Center
- State Farm
- University of Illinois Extension
- University of Illinois Human Resources

Ag Ed JBT Scholars

The Agricultural Education Program is proud to have five students as Jonathan Baldwin Turner (JBT) scholars. This honor is only offered to incoming freshmen who excel in academics and leadership potential.

Three freshmen were inducted into this prestigious group earlier this year. The students are:

- Rachel Allen, daughter of Ralph & Lori Allen, Mt. Pulaski, IL
- Betsy Kueker, daughter of Greg & Leslie Kueker, Mt. Vernon, IL
- Abby Marten, daughter of Kevin & Cheri Marten, Effingham, IL

Two Ag Ed sophomores are also JBT scholars. Those students are Shelby Cooper and Jacob Meisner.
Agriculture Science Education (ASE) Students: Learning & Teaching in Schools

Five seniors are completing their student teaching experience in high school ag programs throughout Illinois. During the spring semester, students have demonstrated their teaching skills and knowledge in a real-world setting with outstanding cooperating teachers and agriculture programs. In addition to teaching responsibilities, students also helped prepare Career Development Event (CDE) teams, assisted FFA members with proficiency award competitions, and helped supervise students during conferences and numerous other leadership experiences.

Kirsten Blackford
*Hometown: Paxton, Illinois*
Student teaching with Diana Loschen
Tri-Point High School

Liz Harfst
*Hometown: Pontiac, Illinois*
Student teaching with Monty Elvidge, Sue Schafer, and Stephanie Ruppert
Taylorville High School

Bryanne Kalous
*Hometown: Montgomery, Illinois*
Student teaching with Don Lockwood
Sullivan High School

Mark McKown
*Hometown: Sullivan, Illinois*
Student teaching with Tim McDermott and Heidi Clark
Waterloo High School

Kiersten Kasey
*Hometown: Ashmore, Illinois*
Student teaching with Tamra Gerstenecker and Jeff Jacobs
Carlyle High School

After completing their student teaching experience, students will return to campus to complete their coursework, prepare for graduation in May, and participate in a professional development trip. The trip will include tours of agriculture programs and agri-businesses in Missouri and Oklahoma.

**FIELD EXPERIENCE OBSERVATIONS**

Eleven juniors are completing early field experiences with ag teachers during the Spring semester. Thank you to each cooperating teacher!

- John Andress, Monticello with Bryce Hoffman and Elizabeth Rost
- Jennifer Boberg, Iroquois West with Sara Jane Caise
- Jacob Dickey, Pontiac with Parker Bane and Jesse Faber
- Josh Evans, Armstrong with Jennifer Hogan
- Claire Geiger & Brianna Harmon, PBL with Doug Anderson & Mike White
- Amanda Goin, Tri-Valley with Josh Rund and Kristin Myers
- Malory Hughes, Oakwood with Darcy Nekolny
- Sarah Moore, Altamont with Wes Wise
- Jeff Reale, Heyworth with Jestun Nutter
- Nic Turner, Unity-Tolono with Rich McCabe

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Agriculture Leadership Education (ALE): Learning by Doing with Internships

ALE students complete a 10-week internship as part of their required coursework. Although most students complete this during the summer months, some choose to do their internship during the fall or spring semesters. The students completing internships this semester include:

- Brittany Brown, Program Intern, Don Moyer Boys & Girls Club, Champaign, IL
- Danielle Brown, Ag in the Classroom Intern, University of Illinois Extension (Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, Vermillion Counties)
- Erika Ferguson, Rural Health & Farm Safety Intern, Carle Foundation Hospital
- David Fulton, Local Foods & Small Farms Intern, University of Illinois Extension (Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, Vermillion Counties)
- Trent Hawker, Youth Development & Horticulture Intern, University of Illinois Extension (Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, Vermillion Counties)
- Austin O’Neall, Education Intern, Children’s Discovery Museum, Bloomington-Normal, IL

Danielle Brown is serving as the Ag in the Classroom intern for the University of Illinois Extension program in Ford and Iroquois counties. Some of her responsibilities include creating new lessons and updating old lessons that are taught to students in K-4th grades. Lesson topics vary from animals, plants, and horticulture to agriculture careers. She is also planning the Summer Agriculture Institute for teachers in Ford and Iroquois counties, and helping create curriculum for local high schools using the resources available through their office.

Although she enjoys planning and preparing materials, Danielle says, “My favorite part of working with Ag in the Classroom is traveling to schools and presenting different lessons to students. The curiosity and excitement each child has makes the lesson so much fun! This job has been very rewarding, and I am looking forward to the weeks ahead.” Danielle is also very appreciative of the hands-on experiences she is gaining from this opportunity. “I can use what I’ve learned during coursework and apply it to real-life situations in the workforce.”

Rachel Hazen, Study Abroad Experience in Europe

Rachel Hazen, a junior in Agricultural Leadership Education and originally from Bartonville, Illinois, participated in a study abroad experience to Europe during the Fall ‘13 semester. “Going abroad was one of the most rewarding experiences of my lifetime,” said Hazen. She relished in the opportunity to live in a country for a brief time that many people only hope to travel to and see in their lifetime.

“Study abroad is a wonderful experience where you can take classes you normally wouldn’t take, live somewhere you normally wouldn’t live, travel the world, and gain real life experience all in one long extended trip. My time in Leuven, Belgium was everything I ever imagined and more. Studying abroad can show you things about yourself that you never knew, so take a chance!”
Several Agricultural Education students organized and actively participated in activities during ExplorACES weekend. Trent Hawker, Ag Leadership Education senior, along with Shelby Cooper, Ag Science Education sophomore, organized a hands-on workshop for prospective students interested in agricultural education. Presenters for the workshop included Betsy Kueker, Abby Marten and Jacob Meisner. Additionally, they were responsible for organizing all Ag Ed Program student volunteers, and coordinating schedules for both the Ag Ed Club and Ag Ed Program displays.

Mr. Gary Ochs serves as the Ag Ed Club advisor.

Ag Book Drive Collection

The Ag Ed Club is conducting an Agricultural Book Drive. The purpose of the book drive is to give elementary students access to a variety of books on agriculturally related curriculum and to spur curiosity in food, farming and more to students through books, activities and lesson plans.

The Agriculture Book Drive Project intends to work with local FFA chapters to purchase books and have high school and college students read these books with elementary students and provide an agricultural lesson based on the book. The lessons are being developed by students in the Agricultural Education Program who will train FFA members on performing these workshops in the classroom. All contributions towards this project will go directly towards purchasing books for schools.

For more information, contact Mr. Gary Ochs, Ag Ed Club advisor, at garyochs@illinois.edu.

ASE & ALE: What’s the Difference?

The Agricultural Leadership and Science Education degree at the University of Illinois offers two different concentrations -- Ag Science Education (ASE) and Ag Leadership Education (ALE).

**Ag Science Education** prepares students for a career in formal secondary (high school) agriculture classrooms as an ag teacher and FFA advisor. This concentration focuses on teaching strategies, learning theories, and FFA program management. Each student completes a student teaching experience during their final semester.

**Ag Leadership Education** prepares students for educational roles in agricultural businesses and organizations. This concentration focuses on understanding human development, group dynamics, and interpersonal communication. Students complete a 10-week internship with an agriculture business or community organization.

For more information, contact Mr. Gary Ochs, Ag Ed Club advisor, at garyochs@illinois.edu.