

A CASE FOR INCREASED EMPHASIS ON CAREER  
INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING IN  
HIGH SCHOOL VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE WITH  
IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

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Introduction

A wide variety of job opportunities with lucrative salaries are available to agricultural college graduates. A perusal of recent reports indicates that, nationwide, the agricultural college graduates of last year (1969-1970), each received an average of two job offers. The average beginning salary for these graduates was approximately \$7800. Such bright prospects for employment should serve to encourage large numbers of high school graduates to pursue an agricultural major at the college or university level, but the question arises -- are high school students, especially those in vocational agriculture, being made aware of the employment opportunities available to agricultural college graduates?

Through a cooperative effort by the Office of the Dean of Resident Instruction and the Department of Agricultural Education in the College of Agriculture at Oklahoma State University, a study was conducted recently to determine the amount of agriculture-related career information provided by Oklahoma vocational agriculture teachers and the possible relationship of this information to the

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college plans of their students. All of Oklahoma's 384 vocational agriculture teachers were mailed questionnaire forms and 68.7 percent responded. Additional information was gathered through interviews and discussions with vocational agriculture teachers, counselors, college administrators, and other agricultural leaders in Oklahoma.

#### Lack of Career Information

The findings indicated that most adults and students, including those in agriculture and those not connected with agriculture, were generally unaware of the employment opportunities and economic rewards available in those agriculture-related occupations requiring a college degree. Most vocational agriculture teachers had only limited information on agriculture-related career opportunities and much of their information was not up-to-date. There appeared to be a serious lack of information concerning the number of specific job opportunities and average starting salaries for agriculture college graduates. High school counselors were also generally unaware of the number of job opportunities and average starting salaries for agricultural college graduates.

#### Vo-Ag Content and College of Agriculture Enrollments

Fifty-five percent of the 1969 high school vocational agriculture graduates in Oklahoma enrolled in a college or university. Of this number, slightly more than half (53.1 percent) chose some field of agriculture as their major area of study.

Teachers who had offered the greatest amounts of classroom instruction on agriculture-related career information and teachers who spent the greatest amount of classroom time in counseling on agriculture-related careers had the highest percentage of students who enrolled in college and who chose a major in agriculture. Teachers who provided the least amounts of classroom instruction on agriculture-related career information and teachers who spent the least amount of classroom time in counseling on agriculture-related careers had the lowest percentage of college enrollees choosing a major in agriculture.

### Implications for Teacher Education

An average of 1.41 pre-service courses in guidance and counseling had been completed by the vocational agriculture teachers surveyed. Three-fourths of the teachers indicated a belief that in-service training in means and methods of guidance counseling in agriculture career opportunities would be helpful to them. Also, three-fourths of the teachers replying believed that pre-service training (college undergraduate level) in means and methods of guidance counseling in agriculture career opportunities would be helpful to future vocational agriculture teachers.

### Conclusion

It appears that vocational agriculture students could become more aware of the many employment opportunities and economic rewards available in agriculture-related careers if their teachers provided them with more classroom instruction and individual guidance and counseling on agriculture-related career opportunities. Possibly, there would be an increase in the number of vocational agriculture graduates attending college who would choose an agricultural major, and this would certainly help in meeting the unfilled demand for agricultural college graduates.

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