

A CASE STUDY OF OKLAHOMA SECONDARY  
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' NEEDS  
IN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

By

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Agricultural education has been a part of the United States since its birth, both informally and formally (Grant, Field, Green & Rollins, 2000; National Research Council, 1988). Informal communication and education was used to teach early farmers about issues in agriculture. The first formal teachings were by the Georgia colonists in 1733 (National Research Council, 1988).

The signing of the Land Grant College Act, or Morrill Act of 1862, opened new doors for agricultural education (True, 1929). The Morrill Act gave government support to agricultural schools to teach agricultural and mechanical arts (Grant, et al., 2000).

The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 helped create federally supported agricultural education programs by further explaining the federal role and adding provisions for vocational agriculture programs (Phipps & Osborne, 1988). Not only did the act expand on the curriculum for training farmers, but also it offered a resource for the rural community to learn about trends and innovations in the agricultural industry (National Research Council, 1988).

Agricultural education received another boost in 1928 when 33 farm boys met at the Baltimore Hotel in Kansas City to mark the beginning of the Future Farmers of America (National FFA Organization, 2009). Since 1928, the name has changed to the

National FFA Organization, and membership has opened to women and minorities; literally millions have become members of the FFA (National FFA Organization, 2009). The changes in agricultural education go beyond a name change and more diverse membership as needs in the agricultural industry have shifted (Case & Whitaker, 1998). These authors and others (NRC, 1988) noted the shift from production agriculture to agribusiness and science-focused programs.

The original programs were designed to prepare students to return to the farms and ranches, but as programs have shifted, the NRC (1988) noted curriculum had failed to keep up with the changes. After evaluating the status of reform in agricultural education programs, the NRC indicated several challenges were to determine the success of a program. These challenges included developing curriculum, educating teachers, evaluating programs, providing adequate resources, revising of the focus and content of FFA programs and activities, and creating a more flexible and adaptive legislative and budgetary framework.

Modern agricultural education programs needed effective communication in agriculture as advancements were made and American lifestyles moved away from farm life (National Research Council, 1988). To achieve success in the missions of agricultural education at the secondary level, agricultural education teachers must have knowledge in the discipline of agricultural communications (Terry & Bailey-Evans, 1995).

Connors and Elliot (1994) stated teachers need to have an adequate knowledge base in agricultural communications for students to reach their full communications potential. To better understand the needs of the teachers, research was conducted to evaluate communications topics and teachers' knowledge in communications (Akers, 2000; Hanson, 2003).

Research following Akers' study compared secondary agricultural education teachers' perceived level of knowledge in the given competency areas to their actual knowledge level (Hanson, 2007).

## PROBLEM

After an extensive review of prior research, a lack of teacher-expressed, needs-based research about agricultural communications curriculum in agricultural education at the secondary level was identified. Previous research showed teachers' knowledge test scores to be below passing (60%) in many areas of agricultural communications; however, little research had explored the reasons behind these undesirable scores. This study sought to gain teacher reactions and assess needs to improve overall teacher comprehension.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to determine the professional development and curriculum needs of Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers as related to teaching agricultural communications.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Identify selected personal and professional characteristics of Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers who could impact students learning agricultural communications competencies;

2. Identify the sources used by Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers to help develop agricultural communications curriculum at the secondary level;
3. Identify the methods Oklahoma agricultural education teachers use to deliver curriculum for agricultural communications;
4. Identify Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers' responses to Hanson's (2007) research findings; and
5. Identify resources universities can offer to help Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers to teach agricultural communications.

#### TERMS

The following terms were defined for use in this study:

Agricultural Communications – an evolving discipline used as a tool for informing the general public as well as members of the agricultural industry about the field of agriculture (Graves, 2005).

Agricultural Education –

“(1) The general, formal knowledge of agriculture. (2) The course of study (in college or university or a department of government) to prepare and assist teachers of agriculture in the secondary schools. (3) The term applied to the modern high school course dealing with agriculture. Also referred to as ‘vocational agricultural education.’ Generally refers to the curriculum or program in agricultural education designed to offer students at the secondary level the opportunity to explore and prepare for agricultural occupations” (Herren & Donahuze, 1991).

Competency – A set of skills or knowledge a student can study based on potential employment opportunities. The skills and subjects necessary to complete a job that a student may obtain upon completion of study (Akers, 2000).

Curriculum – “1: the courses offered by an educational institution; 2: a set of courses constituting an area of specialization” (Merriam-Webster, 2003).

Secondary agricultural education program – Programs designed to teach junior high and high school students and adults about agriculture (Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, n.d.).

Secondary agricultural education teacher – An individual certified to teach agricultural education in Oklahoma high schools by the Oklahoma Department of Education (Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, n.d.).

## ASSUMPTIONS

The researcher made the following assumptions for the purpose of this study:

1. Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers were able to understand the discussion topics if they chose to participate in discussion.
2. Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers were honest in their discussion during the focus group interview sessions.
3. The Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers who participated in the focus group interviews were interested in teaching or already were teaching agricultural communications.

## LIMITATIONS

Qualitative or interpretive research faces challenges in the justification of its methodologies and processes (Creswell, 2007). The results of a case study are seldom able to be generalized and require boundaries. This research method requires more involvement from the researcher, and time often can become an issue for qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). These challenges were considered when choosing a method of data collection for this study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents a review of agricultural education and communications literature as deemed relevant by the researcher. The following sections are included: (1) history and background of agricultural education; (2) history and background of agricultural communications; (3) relationship between agricultural education and agricultural communications; and (4) conceptual framework.

Agricultural communications has become a part of the new curriculum in secondary agricultural education, which has led to a need for improvement and development of curriculum and teacher competence. To understand this need, it is important to understand the history of agricultural education and literature in the field of agricultural communications.

### HISTORY OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Agricultural education has played a major role in feeding America since the birth of the United States by “teaching tomorrow’s farmers and ranchers how to feed the world” (Grant et al., 2000, p. 1684). Agricultural education has been present at the secondary level since the beginning of public education (True, 1929).

During the Jeffersonian era, a movement began for the creation of federally supported agricultural colleges (Grant et al., 2000). This push for schools and colleges in the United

States was associated largely with the application and growth of natural sciences in Europe (True, 1929). *American Agriculturalist* magazine (1846) even published works pushing lobbyists to close the social gap in formal education:

Are [farmers] forever to remain the hewers of wood and drawers of water to every other class in the community, and see thousands annually devoted to the higher branches of education in other professions, and they not be allowed to receive a meager percentage of this outlay, for the necessary improvement of their own profession and interests? (*American Agriculturalist*, 1846)

The first major advancement of agriculture into the formal education system came with the passing of the Morrill Act of 1862. Also known as the Land Grant College Act, the Morrill Act was a support system for the teaching of agriculture in a formal college setting (True, 1929). This act crossed lines of profession and social class and paved the way for agricultural education by emphasizing the need for comprehensive education, which included agriculture and practical arts (Grant et al., 2000). Phipps and Osborne (1988) noted that in the beginning the courses were academic; vocational education classes came with later advancement and federal support.

The act granted 30,000 acres of land per each senator and representative in each state, at a cost of \$1.25 per acre paid by the federal government (Thirty-Seventh Congress, 1862). “Any State which may take and claim the benefit of the provisions of this act shall provide, within five years, at least not less than one college” (Thirty-Seventh Congress, 1862, p. 504). These colleges had to include courses in agriculture and mechanical arts but could include other fields of study. These colleges also were required to give an annual report on any progress made and any research completed at the college (Thirty-Seventh Congress, 1862).



The Morrill Act was followed by the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, also known as the National Vocational Education act, which defined the role of the federal government in the development of secondary agricultural education programs, then called vocational agriculture programs, and developed the first nationwide system of support (True, 1929). These schools were developed mainly for rural males and did not meet the needs of academic programs used in city schools (National Research Council, 1988).

In addition to training students to return to the family farm, these vocational education courses helped researchers spread information about the latest innovations in agriculture and the farming industry, including new techniques in animal husbandry, soils, and farm management (Phipps & Osborne, 1988).

Prior to this act, only five states were using state funding to supervise agricultural education programs adequately at the secondary level (True, 1929), even though 30 states had established courses in agricultural education in public schools (Phipps & Osborne, 1988). At this time, agricultural education targeted the students who were to become farmers. Agricultural education programs were used as a technical teaching program that gave students the hands-on training necessary to be a farmer or rancher (Phipps & Osborne, 1988).

The Smith-Hughes Act was effective in promoting the advancement of special agriculture schools. In 1918, only 170 special agriculture schools were in the United States, but 609 received funding from the act (True, 1929). This number increased rapidly and by 1923, there were 2,673 agriculture schools receiving Smith-Hughes funds (True, 1929).

By 1923, the schools ranged from large high schools to small institutions that typically employed only one teacher of agriculture (True, 1929). True (1929) said the teachings at the time were designed to supplement the work students were doing on home

farms. This work also was being accepted as coursework for high school students, which allowed the students to work toward a vocational career while still receiving the necessary credits to obtain a high school diploma (True, 1929). Students were enrolled in half-time courses for 36 weeks, and the programs were two-, three- or four-year programs, with the rest of the students' coursework being non-vocational courses (True, 1929).

Agricultural education went through major advancement with the introduction of the Future Farmers of America in 1928. The FFA is a youth organization designed to promote success in agriculture and other aspects of a person's life (True, 1929). With the beginning of FFA also came a new interest in the economic, political, and leadership aspects of agricultural education (Tenney, 1977). Even with this advancement, education still remained focused on training boys to return to the farm until the 1960s (Akers, 2000). The original FFA programs appealed to white males in rural areas, but over time, the FFA opened its doors to a variety of students, including women and individuals of different racial and ethnic groups (National Research Council, 1988).

The Vocational Education Act of 1963 and the amendments in 1968 and 1976 helped secondary and postsecondary agricultural education expand from traditional production agriculture (Phipps & Osborne, 1988). When combined with the Carl Perkins Act of 1984, the two acts broadened the objectives of agricultural programs and added funds to support those programs (Phipps & Osborne, 1988). The programs now included persons pursuing all careers that required knowledge in agriculture and was no longer limited to those wanting to return to production agriculture solely (Phipps & Osborne, 1988).

Phipps and Osborne (1988) stated that at this point agricultural education was focused to teach individuals at all educational levels to go into careers in agriculture. The authors also

said agricultural education carried the aim of creating and developing new jobs in the agricultural field as well as promoting occupational awareness based on the age of students enrolled.

Agricultural education teachers expanded Phipps and Osborne's definition in the late 20th century (Akers, 2000), including the part of developing curriculum to help students gain necessary communication skills.

Teaching is heavily impacted by curriculum that drives subject matter (Baker, 2002). With a new shift in the emphasis of secondary agricultural education programs, a need for newer and more diverse curriculum developed. The changes began to take effect with advances in technology and resources in the 1960s and 1970s, which are now present in many schools (Baker, 2002). The NRC (1988) placed responsibility on teachers to share their learning materials and software and help develop new instructional materials as the field changed.

These shifts were not only in the classroom but also were evident on many farms (National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2005). As the farms grew, fewer people were becoming farmers. With new technology, farmers could produce more; therefore, others could buy necessities from the farmers more indirectly through wholesalers and retail outlets. A shift in purchasing led to the distancing of farming from communities (National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2005). This distance caused a generally low level of agricultural literacy in the United States; however, researchers have expressed a need for understanding in the food and fiber industry (Graves, 2005).

Agricultural education programs face new demands as they are required to act as the intersection between the agriculture and education sectors of the United States (Stewart,

Moore & Flowers, 2004). Enrollment in agricultural programs peaked in the 1970s, but the field has seen decline and is working to recruit members into the program in the 21st century (Conroy, Kelsey & Scanlon, 1998). These authors noted the importance of agriculture not just in the history, culture and economy of the United States but also as a tool to connect content between all academic disciplines. Being able to adapt programs and change to environmental and social changes is crucial to the survival of agricultural education programs nationwide (Stewart et al., 2004).

## HISTORY OF AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

Agricultural communications, similar to other agricultural disciplines in the United States, dates back to the colonial days (Graves, 2005). At that time, the main line of communication in agriculture was by word-of-mouth and was passed from farmer to farmer (Boone, Meisenbach & Tucker, 2000). However, agricultural communications has been a professional field for more than 125 years (Kearl, 1983). The need for a professional field came in the 1800s when word-of-mouth was no longer effective for sharing information (Buck, 1995).

Reisner (1990) broadly defines agricultural communications as using communication skills and theories to make decisions concerning companies involved in food, agriculture or natural resources. This author defined an agricultural communicator to be one who uses communication techniques and theories to communicate with rural and urban populations on issues concerning food, agriculture and natural resources.

Agricultural journalism/communications programs were designed to forge the spirit of two worlds — producing scholars who utilize the fundamentals of communications

and agriculture to create graduates who are instructed to distribute agricultural reports to agricultural and non-agricultural groups. (Ciuffetelli, 2002, p. 10)

By 1988 changes in production agriculture created a need for communications to help communities understand the importance of agriculture . Agricultural communications became part of education to help students learn the skills needed to inform others of the impact of agriculture on their communities (Graves, 2005). Frick, Birkenholz and Machtmes (1995) concluded that the emphasis of agricultural literacy is for every person to have a minimum level of knowledge in the industry that produces necessary items for their survival.

Researchers also have shown the push for university-level agricultural communications stemmed from Extension as part of the outgrowth of Extension services in the early twentieth century (Duley, Jensen, & O'Brien, 1984). Extension needed a group of individuals with the skills to communicate research findings to an agriculturally based audience, and agricultural communications and agricultural journalism filled that need (Ciuffetelli, 2002).

As a result of early twentieth century growth, post-secondary classroom was then affected by the need for communications curriculum, and the teachers had the challenge of developing and understanding this new area of agriculture (Ciuffetelli, 2002).

By 1810, the first agriculture magazine was established in District of Columbia and was named *Agricultural Museum* (Graves, 2005). The first agriculturally formed magazine to be released into wide circulation was *American Farmer* in 1819 (Graves, 2005).

While these publications were present in the 1800s, it was not until 1905 that the first course in agricultural journalism was offered at Iowa State University (Graves, 2005). Universities needed a way to communicate research in agriculture to non-agriculture

audiences so a need arose for agricultural communications programs at the collegiate level (Evans & Bolick, 1982). At the time, most courses were being led by professional writers and editors from private industry (Tucker, Whaley & Cano, 2003). A lack of resources at that level limited the scope of communications programs, but these programs still grew throughout the 1900s (Tucker et al., 2003).

C.F. Curtis, dean of agriculture at Iowa State University, was present at a meeting of the International Livestock Exposition when members began discussing a need for training in communications and marketing, which was met with enthusiasm by Curtis (Marvin, 1946). Marvin (1946) noted that during the meeting, Curtis decided, if funds were available, he would develop a course in agricultural journalism to teach professionals how to promote the industry. This request was met with an endowment of \$1,000 annually from John Clay, Chicago livestock commissioner and writer, to fund a course titled “The Agricultural Press” (Burnett & Tucker, 2001).

The first course, which was taught by Will H. Ogilvie, was offered in fall 1905 after a development meeting of eight friends and editors in May 1905 (Marvin, 1946). Iowa State University continued to progress, and by 1911 offered eight courses in agricultural journalism; in 1930, ISU offered a bachelor’s degree in agricultural journalism (Marvin, 1946). John Clay’s contribution continued into the 1920s when he endowed a final \$7,000 research fellowship grant to the university (Marvin, 1946).

In 1908, the University of Wisconsin started the first program in agricultural journalism with lead instructor, J. Clyde Marquis (Burnett & Tucker, 1980). These authors noted Dallas S. Burch was the first person to receive a bachelor’s degree in agricultural

journalism in 1905, and he became a successful employee of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Significant growth in the number of colleges offering agricultural journalism courses occurred between 1908 and 1928, including Oklahoma State University's in 1928 (Sitton, S, personal communication, April 2, 2010). The growth then slowed until another growth spurt in the 1960s (Akers, 2000). In 1915, Morse code was used to broadcast the first weather and crop reports over a radio at the University of Wisconsin (Graves, 2005). The first vocal broadcast was given at the University of Wisconsin in 1921 (Graves, 2005).

The 1920s saw the beginning of major competition in the media market with the introduction of cinema and radio into the career field (Evans & Salcedo, 1974). Although moving pictures did not directly compete with farm broadcasts, the competition for revenue from movie patrons was evident; however, print publications in agriculture continued to prosper (Evans & Salcedo, 1974).

In 1944, the National Association of Farm Broadcasters was organized, and in 1990, more than 1,025 AM radio stations, 803 FM radio stations, 14 state and three regional radio networks, and five television stations specialized in agriculture (Graves, 2005).

Agricultural communications made a quick advance into the agricultural industry because the industry leaders were outspoken and used their reputations as editors and writers to argue the social and political causes for improving farming (Tucker et al., 2003). In 1970, an organization known as Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow was established to bring together college students who have a common interest in agricultural communications (Graves, 2005).

Although listed under other academic departments, agricultural communications programs continued to grow and include a wider variety of areas in the communications industry (Tucker et al., 2003). These authors also noted the change in diversity among students entering into the agricultural communications field, emphasizing the multi-gender growth of the field.

College programs were designed to fulfill the needs of graduates in two major areas of agricultural communications: developing a background and sources in the agricultural industry and teaching the basics of communications skills with emphasis on journalistic writing (Terry & Bailey-Evans, 1995).

By 2002, approximately 30 programs were available for agricultural communications students nationwide and included a variety of courses in the communication arts, including journalism, broadcasting, public relations and Web design (Irani & Scherler, 2002). Programs known as agricultural communications or agricultural journalism have become well established with more than 75% of the agricultural communications programs being located in colleges of agriculture or related fields (Akers, 2000).

Evans and Bolick (1982) noted a conflict between research completed in 1956 and 1957, showing a lack of agreement between professionals on the proper balance between technical agriculture and journalism in early agricultural communications curriculum. Mitchell (1956) completed a study with professionals and noted the employees wanted more emphasis to be placed on agriculture while the employers would like more emphasis on journalism. A definite lack of agreement occurred about the type of education needed for individuals pursuing a career in agricultural communications (Duncan, 1957; Mitchell, 1956)



Research in 1973 revealed flexibility in agricultural communications curriculum is important to achieve the goals set forth by individual students (Kroupa & Evans, 1973). The researchers discovered with the diversity in the agricultural communications field, curriculum had to be open and flexible to meet changing trends in communications. Kroupa and Evans (1973) noted a core curriculum should exist that each student follows but it should allow for students to choose specific subject matter. The researchers noted constant changes in technology, resources and methods in agricultural communications made flexibility a crucial part of refining agricultural communication curriculum and a student's course of study.

More recent research has focused on the development of agricultural communications constructs and the competencies students should acquire in those topic areas (Akers, 2000). Curriculum research was updated in the early 1990s when a group of researchers came together to develop a nationwide curriculum that was competency based (Terry et al., 1994). With a 70% approval rating from industry leaders, a competency-based curriculum was developed to meet the need of students, employers and educators (Bailey & Evans, 1994).

Bailey and Evans (1994) developed a set of core requirements for individuals seeking a career in agricultural communications. Their research revealed the following areas for core curriculum in agricultural communications: advertising, journalism, photography, public relations, public speaking, and telecommunications. Bailey and Evans (1994) also concluded that agricultural communications programs should expand across a variety of disciplines to achieve adequate understanding of agriculture. The researchers noted coursework should include the following disciplines: agricultural communications, agricultural economics, agricultural leadership, agronomy, animal science, environmental science, and food science

technology, along with coursework in business, marketing, computer applications, internship experiences, and international relations.

Although the original secondary agricultural education programs were designed to teach male students technical skills, Boone (1991) found that trends in agriculture at that time demanded more knowledge in communications and public relations.

Akers expanded on competency research in 2000 with a three-round Delphi study with professionals in agricultural communications. Her research revealed 11 topic areas for students in agricultural communications. Of the eleven topic areas, 93 competencies were identified for student learning, and 76 were recommended by a panel of experts for curriculum development at the secondary and post-secondary levels (Akers, 2000).

Hanson (2007) studied Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers and their perceptions of their knowledge in agricultural communications. Hanson found teachers perceived their knowledge levels to be average or above in most areas of communications, but when given a knowledge test, they scored below passing (60%) in all areas. “Based on knowledge test scores, Oklahoma agricultural education teachers did not have adequate knowledge to teach agricultural communications courses, which was not congruent with teachers’ perceptions of their abilities” (Hanson, 2007, p. 93).

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATONS AND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Boone et al. (2000) described agricultural communications as being different than agricultural education because the work occurs in a different environment. Communications

is teaching, but the teaching occurs in a different structure than the agricultural education classroom.

These authors continued to compare the agricultural communications field not only to education but also to extension education, rural sociology and agricultural economics, insisting they are all part of the social sciences but also are rooted in agriculture. Agricultural education teachers have even noticed the similarities in what they do and what is being done in agricultural communications and journalism in relation to secondary agricultural education programs (Boone et al., 2000).

Advancements and innovations in technology have impacted and united all areas of agriculture to agricultural communications and caused remarkable improvements to the industry (Canlon, Bruening & Cordero, 1996).

Agricultural literacy became increasingly important in secondary schools as the development of farming techniques enabled more families to move away from the farms and into nonrural areas (Boone et al., 2000). Agriculturalists across the field have seen an increased need for public relations, marketing and public education about agriculture (Foster, 1995). With the increase in the types of agricultural careers and the distance individuals have developed between them and modern production agriculture, it is the agricultural educators' responsibility to teach their students to express the needs of the agricultural sector and its participants (Foster, 1995).

Agriculture also has seen an increase in negative publicity in recent years, which has led to a shift in public thinking (Graves, 2005). Recent studies have shown American adults have a generally negative perspective of the agricultural industry as a whole (Graves, 2005).

This author stressed a “strong need for competent agricultural communicators” to “report effectively on the nation’s most vital industry” (p. 4).

With increasing diversity in the agricultural industry, a greater need exists for agricultural communicators, and secondary agricultural education programs need to begin the training for future post-secondary students in agricultural communications (Foster, 1995).

A major area for organizing and expressing the professional expectations in the agricultural communications field is the development of a universal curriculum. Research into agricultural communications curriculum began in 1905 with the introduction of an agricultural communications course at Iowa State University (Bailey-Evans, 1994; Graves, 2005; Mitchell, 1956; Duncan, 1957).

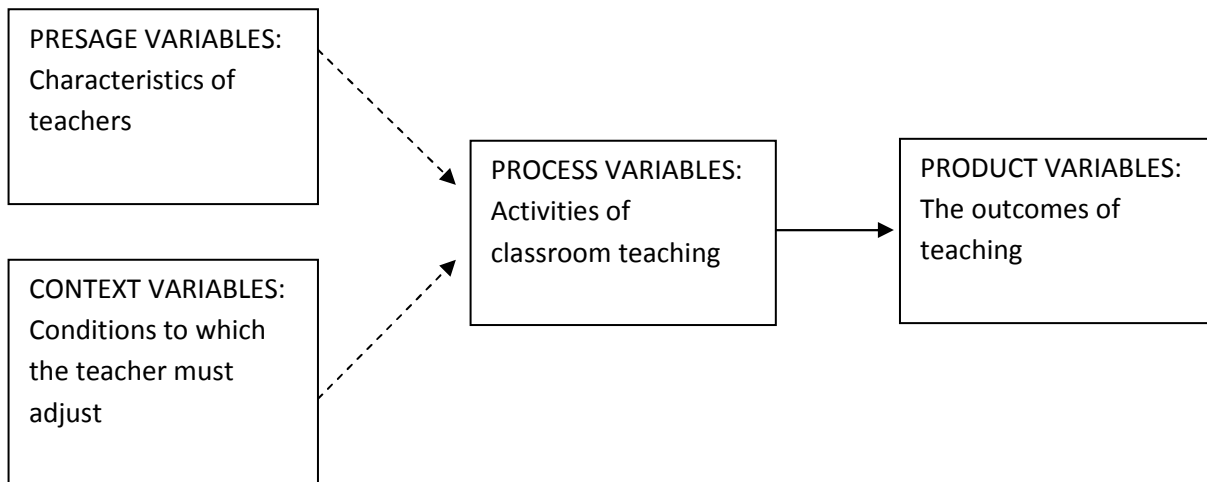
Coffey (1987) noted even once a curriculum has been developed, it should be reassessed periodically for effectiveness in training students to perform in their chosen career field. The agricultural communications programs nationwide have shown a variety of curriculum types, and research should be conducted to establish consistency among programs in the United States (Reisner, 1990).

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework was developed as a basis for this study. Developing a framework helps to guide the research and can be used later when evaluating the research and forming conclusions based on the data collected (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005).

The framework for this study was presented by Dunkin and Biddle (1974) and is a model of variables in teaching and learning. According to Dunkin and Biddle, four variables are present in the teaching and learning process: presage variables, context variables, process

variables, and product variables. The variables start in the broad context of the classroom and filter into the classroom to produce the product variables as demonstrated in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* A model of the study of teaching developed by Dunkin and Biddle (1974).

Context variables are presented as those to which the teacher must adapt, or “characteristics of the environment about which teachers, school administrators, and teacher-educators can do very little” (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974). These variables deal with the students’ experiences that help them develop characteristics prior to entering the classroom (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974).

Dunkin and Biddle (1974) defined process variables as the activities taking place in the classroom. This is the observance of all activities and interactions between teachers and students, not just activities that promote student learning (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974).

Product variables are all of the outcomes of the activities from within the classroom, both positive and negative (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974). Although these are typically mentioned

in a positive context, teacher and student interactions can hamper or harm the students in their learning process (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974).

For the purpose of this study, presage variables are the main focus in the study of teaching. Dunkin and Biddle (1974) defined these as the “characteristics of teachers that may be examined for their effects on the teaching process” (p. 39).

Presage variables include teacher formative experiences and encompass every experience the teacher has before entering the classroom (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974). These experiences include everything leading up to the teacher’s professional preparation (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974).

This study places more emphasis on the teachers’ preparation experiences and their roles as presage variables in a teacher’s professional development. Dunkin and Biddle (1974) noted these are the most common teacher experiences studied because they can be manipulated to improve the overall presage variable impact on a teacher’s classroom instruction. The authors also attribute the use of these experiences in studies to the fact many researchers conduct inquiries to improve their teacher-education programs and are teacher educators themselves.

The two main experiences studied previously included in-service professional development and new curricula as it impacts classroom teaching and learning. Strong evidence exists supporting the effectiveness of teacher preparation variables as compared to formative variables, but neither can be effective without specific teacher properties (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974).

Teacher properties include the measurable personality characteristics that a teacher brings into the classroom (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974). These characteristics determine the

effectiveness of other experiences because teaching largely involves personal relationships that require certain personality traits (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974).

This study did not focus on the context variables, but through changes in the presage variables, process and product variables can be impacted. By changing the teacher preparation experience, the classroom is changed and the effects on the students will change as a result of changes in the teacher's behaviors (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974).

## SUMMARY

The review of literature indicated great advancement and change in agricultural education as well as in agricultural communications. Agricultural education at the secondary level has been present since the 18th century and continues to change in the 21st century. Agricultural communications has gained more emphasis in agricultural education as the need for agricultural literacy has increased. As noted by Graves (2005), many adults in the United States are developing a negative attitude toward the agricultural industry and communications is crucial to improving people's perceptions of agriculture. Advancements like the Morrill act of 1862 and the Smith-Hughes act of 1917 have helped improve agricultural education and increase funding for agricultural education programs (True, 1929).

Agricultural communications has been around since the colonial days and also has seen many advancements as a discipline (Graves, 2005). This growth became necessary when word of mouth was no longer adequate for passing information along the agricultural industry (Buck, 1995). Agricultural communications became a part of the post secondary education system in 1905 at Iowa State University (Marvin, 1946) and grew to approximately 30 programs by 2002 (Irani & Scherler, 2002). Recent research has been conducted

concerning agricultural communications curriculum in collegiate programs, but little systematic investigation has focused on secondary education in preparing students to enter post-secondary programs in agricultural communications. Akers (2000) worked with professionals to determine competencies that should be taught to students at the secondary and post-secondary levels but did not explore preparation of secondary agricultural education teachers to teach those competencies. Akers' research was followed by Hanson's (2007) study on Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers' perceptions of their own knowledge and importance of competencies in agricultural communications. Hanson's research revealed the teachers' perceptions were high, but when given knowledge tests, their scores fell below a passing level.

Agricultural communications and agricultural education are both considered by Boone et al. (2000) as forms of teaching, but the teaching occurs in different environments. This comparison included extension education in a time when agricultural literacy was becoming increasingly important (Boone et al., 2000). A universal curriculum was developed in 1905 to organize and express the professional expectations in agricultural communications education (Bailey-Evans, 1994; Grave, 2005; Mitchell, 1956; Duncan, 1957).

The framework used in this study was based on Dunkin and Biddles (1974) model of the study of teaching. This model focuses on the variables within the classroom and teaching setting. The model starts with the presage and context variables, the characteristics and experiences the teachers and students possess upon entering the classroom (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974). These variables feed into the process variables, the classroom experiences, which all lead to the product variables, the outcome of teaching (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974).



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods used to conduct this research and how the methods were incorporated into the study. This chapter will discuss the sample population, method of data collection, and data analysis techniques; specific sections include research design, selection of location and population, focus group structure, protocol development, facilitator roles and trustworthiness in qualitative research.

### PROBLEM

After an extensive review of prior research, a lack of teacher-expressed, needs-based research about agricultural communications curriculum in agricultural education at the secondary level was identified. Previous research showed teachers' knowledge test scores to be below passing (60%) in many areas of agricultural communications; however, little research had explored the reasons behind these undesirable scores. This study sought to gain teacher reactions and assess needs to improve overall teacher comprehension.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to determine the professional development and curriculum needs of Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers as related to teaching agricultural communications.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Identify selected personal and professional characteristics of Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers who could impact students learning agricultural communications competencies;
2. Identify the sources used by Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers to help develop agricultural communications curriculum at the secondary level;
3. Identify the methods Oklahoma agricultural education teachers use to deliver curriculum for agricultural communications;
4. Identify Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers' responses to Hanson's (2007) research findings; and
5. Identify resources universities can offer to help Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers to teach agricultural communications.

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Because this study involved human subjects, federal regulation and Oklahoma State University policy requires all instruments be reviewed and approved before an investigator can begin his or her research. The review is conducted by the Oklahoma State University Office of University Research under the direction of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to protect the rights and welfare of human participants engaged in biomedical and behavioral research. This study and the instrument were reviewed by the OSU Office of University Research Services through the Institutional Review Board and received

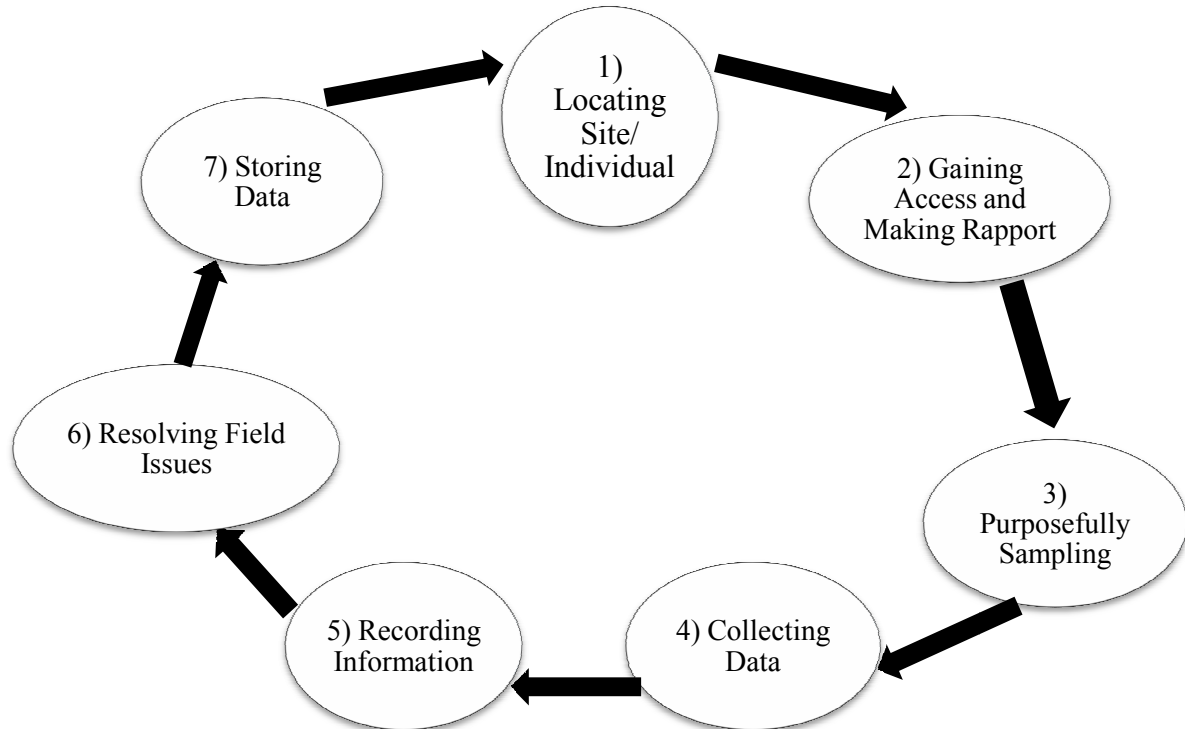
permission to be implemented. This study was assigned the following IRB number: AG0924 (see Appendix A).

## RESEARCH DESIGN

Based on the objectives of the study and previous research in the field, the researcher conducted a case study. A semi-structured focus group interview method was used to collect data from Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers, i.e., a purposeful sample.

John Creswell (2007) described case study research as “the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (p. 73). In this research, the issue is the knowledge of Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers about agricultural communications, and the case was a focus group conducted with a sample secondary agricultural education instructors.

Once the issue and case have been established, data must be collected to address the issue. Creswell (1998) presented a data collection circle to visualize the necessary steps for acquiring accurate data. Figure 2 represents the visual circle presented by Creswell (1998).



*Figure 2. Data Collection Activities (Adapted from Creswell, 1998).*

The data collection circle or process starts by selecting an accessible site or individual who is willing to share information related to the case (Creswell, 1998). Part of gaining access includes approval from the Institutional Review Board and giving participants an option to leave the study at any point (Creswell, 1998).

Oklahoma State University, Stillwater campus, was chosen because it was centrally located, and the researcher worked in cooperation with the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (ODCTE), which is headquartered in Stillwater, OK. ODCTE offered teacher in-service education to develop new curriculum in agricultural communications at Oklahoma State University.

Two rooms were used for the sessions of the focus group. Session one was located in a small auditorium style classroom that seats 63 students. A table was placed at the front of the auditorium, and the teachers were seated around the table facing each other. Session two

was located in a small communications classroom designed with computers lining the walls. The table was located in the center of the room, and the teachers were seated around the table facing each other.

The sample population in qualitative research is purposeful, giving the researcher the ability to choose certain criteria the participants must meet before taking part in the data collection exercise (Glesne, 2006). This population must be narrowed down because the research situation is “too vast to interview everyone” (Glesne, 2006, p. 34).

The population selected for this study was Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers who teach or want to teach agricultural communications. Random sampling was not appropriate in this study because a certain population was being targeted. Therefore, the researcher chose homogeneous purposive sampling (Glesne, 2006) to determine the sample used in the study.

The selected teachers showed an interest in teaching agricultural communications through their participation in a teacher professional development workshop at Oklahoma State University. When participating in the in-service program, the teachers were asked to take part in the study. All 19 of the in-service participants (100%) agreed to participate in the study, and thus formed the researcher’s purposeful sample (Glesne, 2006). At least one representative from each of the five districts of Oklahoma FFA participated in the study (see Figure 3). The five districts in Oklahoma serve as sub-state administrative units for secondary agricultural education.

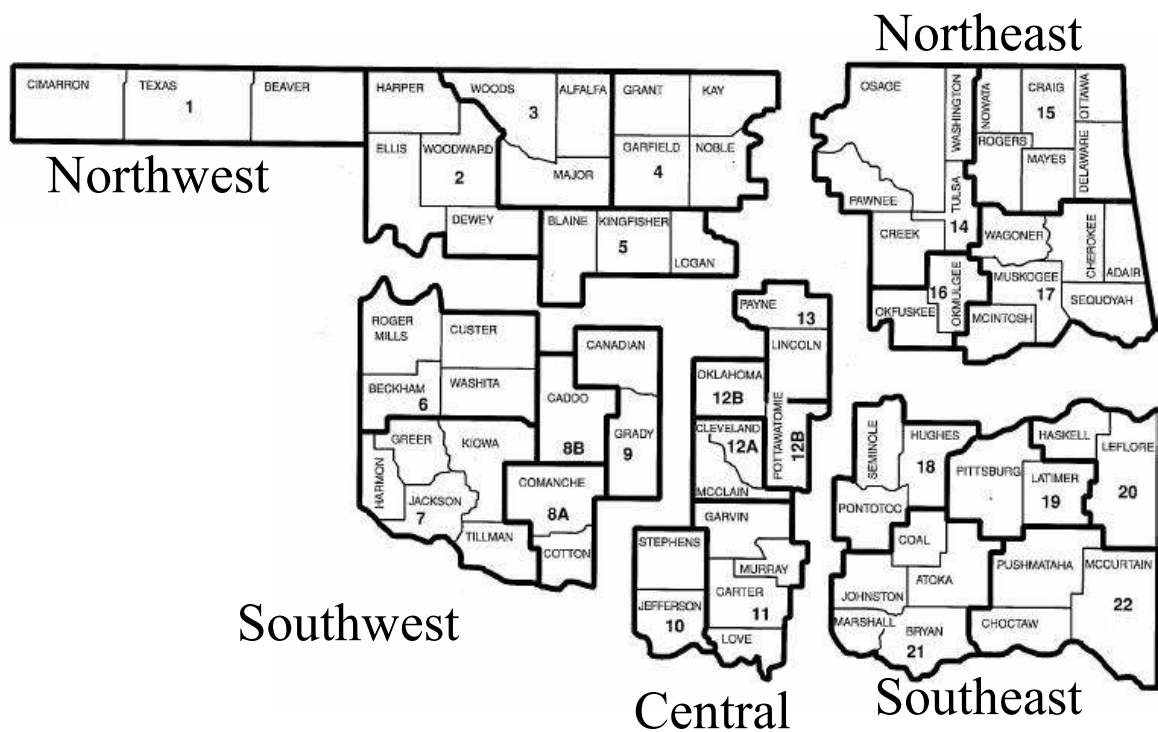


Figure 3. The five FFA districts of Oklahoma.

Once the research site and a sample population have been chosen, a data collection method must be determined to meet the objectives of the study most effectively (Creswell, 1998). The most common methods used in qualitative research are interview, focus group interview, and researcher observation (Creswell, 1998).

This study used a focus group interview for data collection because a larger sample could be interviewed, and it allowed the members to reflect on other members' thoughts and differing opinions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The focus group was divided into two sessions – one with 10 participants and the other with nine participants. The focus group followed a specific protocol, and facilitators were trained to conduct the interview sessions to ensure consistency between the groups.

During data collection, multiple methods can be used to record the data, including voice recording, video recording, and researcher note taking (Creswell, 1998). Data collected in this study was recorded on a voice recorder as well as video recorder. The voice recorder

was placed in the center of each table, and the video recorder was placed at the end of the tables to capture all participants' contributions.

Creswell (1998) developed a list of common issues based on student notes in qualitative research. Two main issues exist: (1) a need to change data collection mode during the study and (2) overwhelming response rate that increases the time the researcher needs for analysis. The best method for anticipating these problems is to conduct two or three practice interviews to estimate the time commitment and estimate the extent of data to be collected (Creswell, 1998).

Once the protocol was developed, the researcher tested the interview protocol using a pilot group in Illinois. This was done to test the process of the protocol, not to collect any data. The pilot was done using a population close to the actual population of the study to ensure understanding of the protocol and practice for the researcher as suggested by Glesne (2006). A request was sent to 20 secondary agricultural education teachers in Illinois, and nine responded with an interest in participating. The pilot took place in Ramsey, Illinois and required 35 minutes to complete. A 15-minute follow up was then completed with the researcher to discuss any issues the teachers had with the protocol.

The final stage in the data collection circle is the storing of data collected. Creswell (1998) stated his surprise in the lack of materials developed to address methods of storing data. He noted the data should be filed carefully and stored in one consistent location throughout the study to ensure all data is used in the research.

The researcher stored all data in a locking file cabinet to protect the rights of participants. All voice recordings were also stored in digital format on the researcher's

password protected computer. This allowed easy access to the materials and ensured all materials remained together.

Creswell's (1998) visualization of the data collection process was followed when developing the methods for this study.

## PROTOCOL DEVELOPMENT

Question development is important when facilitating discussion within a focus group; because the data comes from responses to the prompts provided by the facilitator (Glesne, 2006). In this particular study, more than one section of the focus group was being conducted simultaneously; so the researcher was not the facilitator of both sessions. With multiple facilitators, a protocol must be developed and followed to ensure consistency of discussion topics and prevent leading from the facilitators (Glesne, 2006).

The protocol for this study was created by the researcher to promote rich and full discussion among participants while still allowing ease of transcription after completion of the interviews. Directions had to be given to the participants to ensure the group would run efficiently and to maintain structure in the focus group (Glesne, 2006).

Each focus group session started with the facilitator giving instructions for the focus group procedures. This included addressing issues of comfort and confidentiality in the focus group and gave brief instruction for conducting the focus group. The statement used by the researcher follows:

I ask for research purposes that you please give your most honest answers based on your experiences. I also would appreciate your cooperation in making the recording and interpretation of data as simple as possible by speaking clearly



and by taking turns speaking. Although they will not be used in the final written research report, could you please state your name before speaking each time? This will help me to keep my data clear and organized. Are there any questions before we begin?

The group began by providing information about selected personal and professional characteristics as a method for establishing a comfort zone for talking in front of each other. By doing this, each person had the opportunity to speak and release the initial anxieties he or she may have had communicating with his or her peers (Glesne, 2006).

The information about selected personal and professional characteristics was followed by questions designed to encourage free-flowing discussion among all members of the focus group. The main questions were made to be simple to encourage members to express their thoughts and opinions through a supportive environment (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

The following questions were used to stimulate group interaction and open communication:

- 1) What resources do you use to develop your agricultural communications classes and where do you obtain your resources?
- 2) What methods do you use for teaching your agricultural communications curriculum?
- 3) In a previous study, Oklahoma agricultural education teachers perceived their knowledge level in agricultural communications to be average or above average, but when given a knowledge test, the average scores fell below a passing level.

What is your reaction to this research? Please include possible reasons for the difference in perceived knowledge and knowledge test scores.

- 4) How does this difference impact the knowledge level of students?
- 5) The previous study also found the teachers perceived the importance of these courses to be high, but the knowledge scores in these areas were low. Please take a moment to reflect on these study results. What, if any, conflict exists between perceived importance and knowledge?
- 6) What are some suggestions you have for increasing knowledge levels for current teachers who teach or wish to teach agricultural communications?
- 7) What are some suggestions you have for teacher training at universities for teachers wanting to teach agricultural communications?
- 8) Please take a moment and reflect on any concerns or input you may have that was not covered in this focus group.

Once a set protocol was developed for the focus group interview, facilitators had to be chosen and trained to conduct the focus group sessions.

#### FACILITATOR ROLES

The role of the researcher was to facilitate discussion through broad topics but not lead discussion like an informational interview (Glesne, 2006). To achieve consistency in data collection, a protocol was developed, approved by the OSU IRB, and followed by the facilitator in each focus group interview session. The lead researcher conducted focus group session one and a fellow graduate student was the facilitator for focus group session two.

The second facilitator was given a brief description of the research and directions for data collection. After the instructions were given to the other facilitator, the researcher and her facilitator revised the protocol and discussed any questions or concerns about the data collection protocol. The other facilitator assisted in the data collection process but did not participate in analysis of data collected.

During the focus group interview sessions, the facilitator and the researcher followed the protocol and used only the questions included in the protocol to direct participants' discussion. Based on review of video from each focus group session, protocol was followed, i.e., the facilitators did not become involved in the discussion, as was suggested by Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook (2007) as important for obtaining accurate data. With facilitators guiding rather than leading the group's discussion, the discussions could be open to new topics.

### TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Trustworthiness is important to consider in qualitative research while developing a research design as well as during the data collection process (Glesne, 2006). The researcher took measures during this study to improve the validity of the findings, or trustworthiness.

Following the collection of data, the transcripts were sent to the participants to review for accuracy. Member checking, or the sharing of transcripts, helps ensure the participants' ideas and opinions are being represented accurately (Glesne, 2006). One copy of each transcript was sent to each member of the focus group so they could read the transcripts and mark any changes that needed to be made to the data. Teachers who did not return the transcripts via postal mail were contacted, by telephone, and asked by the researcher if any

changes needed to be made. Teachers did not indicate any changes for the focus group transcripts.

It was determined on review of the video recordings, the facilitators followed the questions on the protocol; therefore, the participation of a facilitator did not impact the accuracy of the data collection. Researcher bias is often an issue when conducting qualitative research (Glesne, 2006). However, the researcher was aware of the possibility of subjectivity in data analysis and used coding of member statements to limit its effects.

Records were kept for all parts of the study, and all paperwork was stored in a locked file cabinet. Having records available for material audit increases validity because it allows an outside party to examine the research process and assess the researcher's methods and analysis (Glesne, 2006). Recordings of the focus group were destroyed to protect the privacy of participants, but all other records, including coded focus group transcripts, were kept for later auditing.

Although other options were available for improving validity, these three methods were considered most applicable for this study (Glesne, 2006)..

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the findings of the research as it applies to the objectives of the study.

### PROBLEM

After an extensive review of prior research, a lack of teacher-expressed, needs-based research about agricultural communications curriculum in agricultural education at the secondary level was identified. Previous research showed teachers' knowledge test scores to be below passing (< 60%) in many areas of agricultural communications; however, little research had explored the reasons behind these undesirable scores. This study sought to gain teacher reactions and assess needs to improve overall teacher comprehension.

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The purpose of this study was to determine the professional development and curriculum needs of Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers as related to teaching agricultural communications.

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3. Identify the methods Oklahoma agricultural education teachers use to deliver curriculum for agricultural communications;
4. Identify Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers' responses to Hanson's (2007) research findings; and
5. Identify resources universities can offer to help Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers to teach agricultural communications.

### Findings related to Objective 1: Selected personal and professional characteristics

Objective one was to identify selected personal and professional characteristics of Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers that could impact agricultural communications competencies.

The study's protocol included questions about experience and education. Gender could be determined through observation of focus group participants (N=19) with five female participants (26.32%) and 14 male participants (73.68%).

The 19 participating teachers attended an ODCTE-sponsored in-service workshop where they were given the option to participate in the study. All 19 teachers (100%) agreed

to participate in this study (see Table 1). Teacher participants in the focus group represented each of the five administrative districts in Oklahoma: Northwest district had six participants (31.58%), northeast district had five participants (26.32%), central district had four participants (21.05%), southeast district had three participants (15.79%), and southwest district had one participant (5.26%).

Table 1  
*Distribution of focus group participants among the Oklahoma FFA Districts*

	Participants in each district	%
Northeast District	5	26.32
Northwest District	6	31.58
Central District	4	21.05
Southeast District	3	15.79
Southwest District	1	5.26
Total	19	100.00

Based on the answers given during the focus groups, 13 participants (68.42%) were in their first five years of teaching. Five teachers had experience of more than five years (26.32%), with two (10.53%) having more than 20 years of teaching experience. One teacher (5.26%) did not respond because of his late arrival (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Teachers' experience teaching agricultural education at the secondary level*

Years teaching secondary agricultural education	Participants	%
Zero to Five	13	68.42
Six to Ten	2	10.53
Sixteen to Twenty	1	5.26
More than Twenty	2	10.53
No response	1	5.26
Total	19	100.00

Eleven participants (57.89%) had between one and five years of experience teaching agricultural communications at the secondary level. Seven (36.84%) had not taught agricultural communications at the secondary level, and one (5.26%) did not respond because of his late arrival (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Teachers' experience teaching agricultural communications at the secondary level*

Years teaching agricultural communications	Participants	%
None	7	36.84
One	2	10.53
Two	3	15.79
Three	3	15.79
Four	1	5.26
Five	2	10.53
No response	1	5.26
Total	19	100.00



The final question regarding personal and professional characteristics was to determine each individual teacher’s amount of college course work in the field of agricultural communications. Eleven teachers (57.90%) had taken an agricultural communications introductory course, or its equivalent, at the university level; one (5.26%) had taken three courses, one (5.26%) had taken two courses, one (5.26%) had taken one course, four teachers (21.06%) had no courses in agricultural communications, one teacher had taken “several courses” (5.26%) and one (5.26%) did not respond because of late arrival (see Table 4).

Table 4  
*Teachers’ formal academic preparation in agricultural communications*

College courses completed in agricultural communications	Participants	%
None	4	21.06
One introductory course	11	57.90
Two courses	1	5.26
Three courses	1	5.26
Several courses	1	5.26
No response	1	5.26
Total	19	100.00

Findings related to objective 2: Resources

Objective two was to identify the resources used by Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers to help develop agricultural communications curriculum for their use with students.

Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers had curriculum available through the Curriculum and Instructional Materials Center (CIMC) at the Oklahoma

Department of Career and Technology Education. Six (31.45%) of the teachers expressed they were using selected sections of these materials to teach their agricultural communications courses.

Four teachers (21.05%) used members of their professional networks to develop portions of their agricultural communications courses. These included using other instructors' materials, such as an English teacher or a computer teacher who taught Web design, and incorporating their materials into the agricultural communications course. One participant (5.26%) brought in a professional from the field to teach the students once a week for a month and a half. This individual worked in networking and taught the students Web design. This participant said, "We watched her as a professional, who probably did what we couldn't have done, but it was great."

Teachers also mentioned using a variety of textbooks in their courses. The books included the Associated Press Stylebook, Rhett Laubach's books, the agricultural communications career development event book from Texas, and the Delmar leadership book. Two (10.53%) of the participants mentioned using a variety of books, but they did not know the specific names of the books.

Four participants (21.05%) mentioned using the Internet as a way to find materials to enhance their agricultural communications courses. One participant (5.26%) had found a specific Web site to be helpful in her classroom and used materials from that Web site. Four members (21.05%) of the group expressed a need for time, which they indicated they did not have, to browse Web sites looking for materials.

A final method mentioned was the use of materials from the introductory collegiate courses taken by three (15.79%) of the participants in the group. The discussion of using

these materials came up later in session one to be an ineffective way of teaching because the teachers were using college-level materials in a secondary classroom.

One participant said, “I know my teacher when I was in college, which wasn’t very long ago, but they said, your biggest mistake is going to be if you try to just take your college materials and teach it to the high school students.”

Table 5 presents teachers’ responses regarding the resources they use to develop and teach their agricultural communications courses.

Table 5  
*Teachers’ resources used in teaching agricultural communications*

	Responses	
	<i>n</i>	% of teachers
I use CIMC curriculum	6	25
I use a network of professionals and teachers	4	16.67
I use Web sites with agricultural communications information	4	16.67
I use materials from the courses I took in college	3	12.5
I use Delmar books in communications and leadership	2	8.33
I use Rhett Laubach books in communications	2	8.33
I use other books, not yet mentioned, to develop my curriculum	2	8.33
I use the agricultural communications career development event book	1	4.17
Total	24	100.00

### Findings related to objective 3: Teaching methods

Objective 3 was to identify the methods Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers use to teach curriculum for agricultural communications.

Two of the focus group questions were used to determine methods used by teachers to teach the lessons developed using the teaching materials and resources they identified. All participants were given an opportunity to discuss their current classroom practices and how they applied to teaching agricultural communications to their classrooms.

One teacher (5.26%) reported using lecture as a main technique. He continued to mention the school's lack of resources was the reason he did not use hands-on methods.

The room that I teach in literally used to be a garage that they enclosed. It's where they used to wash and clip livestock so, um, technology-wise, I had a laptop and I have a portable projector that I use on the sheet metal ... I try to incorporate lecture with find, you know, read this, whatever to get the information out there about ag. communications stuff. Handouts whenever I can. As far as reaching different learning types, the visual, not a whole lot I'm able to do with a whiteboard, um, more auditory than anything. And again, not saying that's most effective.

One teacher also mentioned using a method of incorporating all areas of his agriculture program into the production of a newsletter. This teacher had his students produce all areas of the newsletter, including editing, photography, and writing. They completed the calendar, and each student was assigned a specific section. Once the newsletter is complete, the students distribute the newsletters to local businesses including the banks, gas stations as well as other businesses. The agricultural production and technology class was involved by creating horseshoe holders that are made to hold a tri-fold sheet of computer paper. These holders were placed at the local businesses to add a creative look to the distribution of the newsletters.

Table 6 presents the teaching methods used by Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers who participated in the study's focus group.

Table 6  
*Teaching methods used to teach agricultural communications*

	Responses	
	<i>n</i>	% of teachers
I use "hands-on" techniques (newsletters, Web sites, etc.).	4	66.66
I use lecture techniques, which include handouts.	1	16.67
I use cooperative learning with my students.	1	16.67
Total	6	100.00

Findings related to Objective 4: Teachers' response to a previous research study conducted in Oklahoma

Objective 4 was to identify Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers' responses to Hanson's (2007) research findings.

The teachers were asked three questions with the opportunity to respond to previous research results collected from their peers in Oklahoma. The themes that emerged were divided into three sections: reasons for teacher knowledge level, impact on student learning, and perceived importance compared to test scores.

When asked about the difference between perceived knowledge levels and test scores, the most common response was a lack of resources. Both technology and study materials were discussed as resources needed by teachers. Two teachers (10.53%) mentioned needing better technology in their agricultural education programs, and one teacher (5.26%) mentioned needing material to study to gain knowledge in agricultural communications.

I don't know how your guys' facilities are out there, but I have to fight with other teachers and other programs for the computer lab because we only have the teacher's computer in our facility and that's difficult when you're trying to demonstrate and have them look up different Web sites and interpret, well, this is not the correct font for instance, and so on, when you only have, maybe. It's just difficult without the right tools.

Two focus group participants (10.53%) mentioned a misunderstanding of the scope of agricultural communications. They stated many teachers think it is just public speaking and leadership, but students do not learn the other aspects of agricultural communications that teachers do not teach.

I think a lot of ag teachers view ag communications as public speaking, and since a lot of [teachers] have students who are competitive at speech competitions they think that's ag communications. And they don't realize the editing and AP style and I think that's the misinterpretation there of what ag communications is.

One participant noted the extent of the duties the teachers complete, giving the example of helping with editing student work, may make the teachers feel as though they are experienced in agricultural communications, but they may not have the correct answers on a knowledge-based test.

When asked how the lack of knowledge would impact the students, three teachers (15.79%) mentioned the ability to pass knowledge along to the students. One teacher explained it as not being able to pass along what you do not know.

Personally, I think we are all here because we want to learn more. I think when you think you know more than you do is when you stop learning a little bit so you go back

home and you don't really know a whole lot. You know you're not teaching a whole lot ... if you don't know what you think you know, then your students can't know, because you don't know but you think you know it.

One teacher (5.26%) used cooperative learning, and he said if other teachers are aware of the lack of knowledge in a particular area, they should work through that area with the students and learn as they teach.

A final response discussed lifelong learning as it applies to agricultural communications.

This kind of goes back to the lifelong learning deal that we learned about at OSU. You always need to kind of learn a little more each day. Whenever you, you know, you think you may know how to do résumés really good, but when you don't do them for three or four years and you come back to it, you may realize, hey, you're not that swift at it and you need to refresh yourself and kind of gain more information on how things are done today compared to how they were five or 10 years ago. So you need to learn more to teach your students together.

The final question for objective four addressed differences between perceived importance of agricultural communications areas and the knowledge test scores in those areas. Four areas emerged in response to this topic.

The most common response was the lack of scope in agricultural communications. Four teachers (21.05%) went back to the discussion of public speaking and leadership being the two main areas of focus for most teachers. The participants noted most teachers focus on those areas and do not take the time to learn the other areas of agricultural communications.

Well, we all think it's important to be able to communicate, but I mean I also agree, some of these ag comm. tests we're taking include radio broadcast, ethics in communications, abbreviating the states correctly, and things like that that we don't use in our everyday lives. If that's what they're being tested over, I can see, I don't even know that stuff. I mean, just because I don't know it doesn't mean I don't think communications isn't important. I think it's important for kids to be able to communicate, but I don't know all of that stuff. That was probably on the test or a lot of us don't know anything about broadcasting and advertising and marketing, you know.

Two teachers (10.53%) returned to lifelong learning. One (5.26%) expressed an increase in topic areas and need for agricultural communications. He said areas that were not studied 15 to 20 years ago are being studied now, and while they are important, teachers may not have any experience with those areas.

Two teachers (10.53%) also mentioned the importance of student benefits in agricultural communications. They said the material being taught in agricultural communications is important across the curriculum because the skills are something students can take and use in the real world.

I think part of what makes it so valuable is that every single kid in your program can benefit from it. You don't have to have just that state-winning public speaker, that's in ag comm., that's really polished, and, you know, that kid isn't the only one that can benefit from it, because you got your good ole boys that are hard workers that have the technical skills that are going to be great for the agricultural industry that can make it that can show everybody what they can do. But you know, getting these



skills in an ag communications course and then going and getting a job, or going further in their education, but they can say, you know, ‘I’m great in the shop, I’m good with working livestock,’ you know I will at some point probably still have to put together a résumé, and, you know, I can tell people better that, you know, I went through this ag ed program, and I’ve got these set number of skills and even though I’m not the state-winning public speaker or running for state office or anything like that I benefitted from this course because I got the job I wanted, because I could tell people what I could do, and I think that is where the value is. It is so applicable to every kid in your program.

A final response from one teacher (5.26%) was that agricultural teachers are confident in their abilities, but they may not realize where they need to improve their knowledge level until those skills are tested.

Table 7 shows the distribution of themes in the three areas teachers chose to comment on regarding previous research related to the purpose of this study.

Table 7

*Themes developed from teachers' responses to previous research*

Category	Emergent Themes
1) Knowledge Tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Lack of available technology and study materials</li> <li>2) Misunderstanding of the full scope of agricultural communications</li> <li>3) Teacher duties lead to a perceived knowledge level</li> </ul>
2) Impact on Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Teachers need knowledge to pass knowledge tests</li> <li>2) Learn cooperatively with the students</li> <li>3) Teachers should continue to be lifelong learners</li> </ul>
3) Perceived Importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Teachers perceive agricultural communications as public speaking and leadership</li> <li>2) Teachers need to be lifelong learners</li> <li>3) Children have a variety of benefits from teacher with higher knowledge</li> <li>4) Agricultural teachers may be confident in their abilities until they are tested</li> </ul>

### Findings relate to Objective 5: Teachers' expressed needs

Objective 5 sought to identify resources universities can offer to help Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers teach agricultural communications effectively.

Five teachers (26.32%) mentioned a need for improved curriculum, which was followed by agreement from other participants. They said improved curriculum would help them understand what they should be teaching their students.

Teachers also expressed concern about the limited areas addressed in the CIMC curriculum they were using. They said the curriculum is developed more for public speaking and leadership, but the teachers would benefit more from curriculum that covers all aspects of agricultural communications.

I think new curriculum is going to help that in congruency, because if you look at the CIMC curriculum now, you're not going to learn a lot about, um, ag communications. You're going to get a little bit of public speaking in there, you're going to get some leadership in there, and, um, you know you're not, It's not a one-stop shop for, um, what agricultural communications encompasses in my mind right now so I think the better curriculum that covers all of the elements of ag communications will help us gain the knowledge we need to educate the students.

The teachers indicated that once new curriculum has been developed they still need a resource list to be available to supplement the material. This includes making study materials available that come with the answers for teachers. The teachers stated they have to know a

variety of subjects and teach multiple classes in a semester and it is difficult to have to search for all of the resources needed.

You wanna help ag teachers that are out teaching right now put together a resource database. That is the downfall to teaching five classes. Math teachers teach one, maybe two, they don't have to research. Even history teachers, one maybe two. Ag teachers teach five classes, five different classes a day. They need someplace where they can easily access material so they can put together good lesson plans, where they can pull together good lesson plans so they can beef up what they think is important to teach their students. That's a big thing.

Teachers also mentioned a need for more appropriate courses at the collegiate level. The teachers said it would be more beneficial to create a course for agricultural education teachers who want to teach agricultural communications instead of taking an agricultural communications course designed for communications majors.

A participant said, "I should be learning the information that I can take back to my students not just some random facts and things that I'm not going to be able to use and high school students may not have the cognitive abilities to understand yet."

Teachers mentioned the need for university professors to encourage taking agricultural communications courses as part of electives.

A participant in focus group one said, "I think there needs to be a little bit more guidance or thought put into what classes you have to take as far as your controlled electives and things of that nature because I mean, and they were both important classes, like you said we took horticulture and then we took plant propagation, which was a great class if you

hadn't taken horticulture ... whereas, if I would have known ahead of time [I would have] taken a Web design class through ag. communications."

Teachers said they also had difficulty getting enrolled in courses at the collegiate level because the agricultural communications students received first priority for enrollment. One teacher reported attempting to enroll in a course three times, but the class was full every time she tried to enroll.

Suggestions were given to have a professional development session for the students who want to compete in the agricultural communications Career Development Event.

Have a workshop with the kids, uh, you know, maybe in the fall to bring them up to go over the contest, a teaching one. Let them see how the contest will be run, let them be on it, let them sit down and look at the pictures ... Let them come in and have the judges go back over it. We did this this way, you know, the four photos like she said. Then go back over the writing styles, you know. It was edited. You know, this is what would be changed; this was wrong.

Where they can actually then see what's expected of them ... Then when they come back in the contest in the spring they will know what to expect, what to do. I think she said something about they was going to try to make it into a junior CDE contest, that'd be good for your freshmen, then to get them introduced to it to see, and also something like that, the more kids you can get here on campus, the better off it helps campus.

Other suggestions given during the focus groups included having a representative teach the teachers to use the curriculum, develop materials to show teachers that agricultural communications is more than public speaking and leadership, have practice contests so

students are not just studying for one competition, and have collegiate agricultural education programs promote endorsements in speech and language arts so courses could be offered for dual credit.

Table 8 represents themes that emerged regarding teacher-expressed needs for teaching agricultural communications effectively.

Table 8

*Themes from discussion of teachers' needs in agricultural communications*

Category	Emergent Themes
1) Curriculum Structure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Broadened scope of agricultural communications</li> <li>2) More appropriate material for the secondary level</li> <li>3) Include more related to the career development event</li> <li>4) Send field representatives to ensure proper instruction</li> </ol>
2) Teaching Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Develop a resource database</li> <li>2) List supplemental materials to prepare for contests</li> <li>3) Offer answers to supplemental materials</li> </ol>
3) Teacher professional development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Continue to offer teacher in-service</li> <li>2) Develop courses to teach methods of teaching agricultural communications</li> <li>3) More promotion of courses in agricultural communications</li> </ol>
4) Student resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Develop a DVD with CDE instruction</li> <li>2) Offer a student training day for the agricultural communications CDE</li> </ol>

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter includes conclusions for each objective based on the findings of the research study, recommendations for further research, recommendations for implementation and a discussion of the findings.

### PROBLEM

After an extensive review of prior research, a lack of teacher-expressed, needs-based research about agricultural communications curriculum in agricultural education at the secondary level was identified. Previous research showed teachers' knowledge test scores to be below passing (< 60%) in many areas of agricultural communications; however, little research had explored the reasons behind these undesirable scores. This study sought to gain teacher reactions and assess needs to improve overall teacher comprehension.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to determine the professional development and curriculum needs of Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers as related to teaching agricultural communications.



## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Identify selected personal and professional characteristics of Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers who could impact students learning agricultural communications competencies;
2. Identify the sources used by Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers to help develop agricultural communications curriculum at the secondary level;
3. Identify the methods Oklahoma agricultural education teachers use to deliver curriculum for agricultural communications;
4. Identify Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers' responses to Hanson's (2007) research findings; and
5. Identify resources universities can offer to help Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers to teach agricultural communications.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Conclusions related to Objective 1: Selected personal and professional characteristics

Based on the answers given during the focus groups, most of the teachers in the study had five or fewer years of teaching experience, and all the teachers had taught agricultural communications either five years or less or not at all. All five Oklahoma FFA districts were represented, and the sample was primarily male. Most participants had taken an introductory class in agricultural communications during their college education experience.

### Conclusions related to objective 2: Resources

Teachers were using a variety of resources to develop their curriculum to teach agricultural communications. Few used the CIMC curriculum available in Oklahoma, and they were looking to other people in their professional network to gain materials. Some were using materials and resources from their college courses and incorporating that into the classroom, including books and handouts from college courses they completed.

### Conclusions related to objective 3: Teaching methods

The most common method for teaching agricultural communications was a hands-on, project-based teaching method. In some cases, teachers were having their students create the materials they would create as professionals in the field. These projects included Web sites, newsletters, newspapers, speech writing, and résumé building. One teacher expressed the use of lecture but would prefer to use hands-on methods if he had the resources available.

### Conclusions related to Objective 4: Teachers' response to a previous research study conducted in Oklahoma

Major themes were presented in response to previous research findings related to agricultural teachers' knowledge level in agricultural communications. Teachers have a lack of understanding regarding the broad scope of communications, which is similar to previous findings (Hanson, 2007). Many of the teachers perceived agricultural communications as public speaking and leadership and were not familiar with all of the competency areas in agricultural communications developed by Akers (2000).

Teachers have a lack of available resources and technology to gain knowledge in agricultural communications. The teachers perform many tasks and are gaining communications knowledge through their duties, but they do not have many resources to

study the full scope of agricultural communications.

The teachers perceived the field of communications is important for students and students can benefit from communications courses; however, teachers were not learning new techniques as the agriculture field changes. Having more resources available for the teachers would help to increase their knowledge in areas other than public speaking and leadership.

#### Conclusions related to Objective 5: Teachers' expressed needs

Some of the more experienced teachers expressed concern for the broad range of topics an agricultural teacher is expected to learn. The teachers would benefit more from resources they could apply directly to the classroom rather than resources that would improve their own knowledge level generally. Based on the focus group findings, the teachers have a need for an updated curriculum. The curriculum should include detailed instruction for implementation to assist them teaching agricultural communications more effectively.

The need exists for an agricultural communications resources or references list for Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers. The teachers discussed the extent of time required for FFA activities outside of the classroom, which led to little time to find resources. By having a compiled list of resources for the teachers to access, they could spend more time focusing on the use of said resources. Teachers also would have access to materials for a broader range of communications topics and they could expand the scope of agricultural communications curriculum they teach.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

More research should be done to assess the needs of pre-service agricultural education students wanting to teach agricultural communications. Research should include a

content analysis of the agricultural communications courses being offered to agricultural education students at the collegiate level.

Additional study should be done regarding methods to teach agricultural communications for teachers who do not have technological resources available for use in the classroom because teachers expressed their preference for using hands-on methods but they were limited by their resources.

An inquiry should be done with students to determine the secondary students' needs in agricultural communications. This research should include the needs of students who want to participate in the agricultural communications Career Development Event.

Research should be conducted in other states to determine other states' secondary agricultural education teachers need in agricultural communications. Teachers' needs in other states may differ from those in Oklahoma.

Other professionals should be consulted about the needs in agricultural communications education. This could include agricultural communications faculty, agricultural education faculty, and agricultural education state staff.

After new materials are developed, research should be done on the impact of the new materials on the product variables in agricultural communications education at the secondary level.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The findings of this study can be used to address some of the issues presented by Hanson (2007) in a study of Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers' perceived

knowledge in agricultural communications. This study expanded Hanson's research to assist teachers based on their expressed needs.

The study began as an assessment of professional development needs for Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers teaching agricultural communications; however, teachers expressed more need for classroom resources than they did for professional development. Based on the conclusions of this study, the researcher made the following recommendations for helping Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teacher improve knowledge in agricultural communications:

Most teachers in the study are not currently using the CIMC curriculum available to Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers (CIMC, 2001; CIMC, 2002; CIMC, 2003). Curriculum should be improved to include all of the core communications competencies (Akers, 2000) in a manner that can be used effectively by the teachers. For example, curriculum should be developed in each specific area of agricultural communications and should include a variety of teaching methods and resources.

An agricultural communications database should be developed to compile the resources for teachers. It should be made available to teachers, in print and online, as a way to find supplemental materials for agricultural communications. This database should be linked to the ODCTE website of agricultural education as well as the Oklahoma State University agricultural communications website.

In-service education should be offered more often for agricultural communications. and based on the teacher expressed need for a district level training in agricultural communications (focus group session 1). These trainings should include all areas of

communications and should extend teachers knowledge beyond speech writing and leadership.

In-service education should be done in specific areas of agricultural communications, including writing, editing, photography, broadcasting, and graphic design. There should be lesson plans and resources available in all of these areas, as well.

Teaching resources in agricultural communications should be expanded to offer varied methods for teachers. As new technology becomes available, teaching resources should be developed to accompany new technology.

Collegiate-level courses should be offered for prospective teachers. These courses should include production of lesson plans and materials that can be used by the teacher in their secondary agricultural education classroom.

Guest speakers should be used in the classroom. The presenters should be agricultural communications professionals because they have experience and credibility that could strengthen the lesson presented in the classroom.

Workshops should be conducted simultaneously with students and teachers to prepare both groups for the agricultural communications career development event. Workshops should be conducted at the state and district levels to accommodate the teacher-expressed needs.

The CIMC curriculum was improved in 2009 to address some of the issues presented during the interviews conducted in this study. Topics now include Communication Theory, Photographic Journalism, Business Writing and Resumes, Journalistic Writing, Broadcasting Media, Graphic Design, Creating Presentations, and Delivering Presentations (CIMC, 2009).

Teachers should utilize this new material in their classroom to improve the overall classroom experience.

## DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS

Little research has been conducted on the needs of the teachers as to why their perceptions do not match their outcomes nor about how their knowledge levels can be improved. Little can be done with the curriculum if the teachers do not know and understand proper techniques for transferring information. Therein lies a need for research with the teachers who are charged with teaching the skills necessary for students to work effectively in agricultural communications.

Suggestions were given in this study for improving Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers' knowledge in agricultural communications. While it may be difficult to make all of the changes, an attempt should be made to implement as many changes as possible into the current practices in Oklahoma, so as to improve the experience of students in secondary agricultural education.

Some teachers are using materials from college-level courses, which may not be appropriate for secondary students. Agricultural communications competencies need to be sorted, and topics need to be chosen that are level-appropriate for secondary agricultural education and agricultural communications (Akers, 2000).

Current agricultural communications courses need to broaden the subjects to include more of the previously determined agricultural communications competencies (Akers, 2000). Many programs are teaching public speaking based agricultural communications with some leadership. The scope of agricultural communications goes beyond public speaking and

leadership, and students need to know the options available in agricultural communications as well as what they need to learn to be proficient regarding entry-level employment or an entrance into post-secondary study.

By improving the resources available to the teachers and by increasing opportunities for training students in agricultural communications, the overall agricultural communications classroom experience will be improved. Dunkin and Biddle's (1974) model of the study of teaching shows the connection between positive teacher and student experience and positive outcome in the classroom.

The recommendations in this study can be used to improve the presage variables in the classroom, which will improve the product variables. While research was not conducted directly with the students, the teachers in this study offered some suggestions on improving the context and content variables. Workshops for students will help them improve their knowledge level in agricultural communications outside of the classroom.

By using the teacher suggestions and creating curriculum and materials for classroom use, the content variables will be improved. The teachers will have materials available to bring into the classroom and improve the agricultural communications classroom experience.



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## APPENDICES



APPENDIX A  
IRB FORM

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Thursday, May 28, 2009  
IRB Application No: AG0924  
Proposal Title: A Qualitative Approach to Assessing Professional Development Needs of Oklahoma Secondary Agricultural Education Teachers Teaching Agricultural Communications  
Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 5/27/2010

Principal Investigator(s):  
Ashley Stockamp Shelly Siton  
5911 E. Lakeview 435 Ag Hall  
Stillwater, OK 74075 Stillwater, OK 74078

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The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

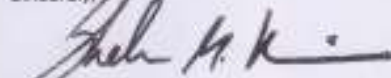
The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Shelia Kennison, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

## APPENDIX B CONSENT FORM

### Consent Form

#### A Qualitative Approach to Assessing Professional Development Needs of Oklahoma Secondary Agricultural Education Teachers Teaching Agricultural Communications

You are being asked to take part in a research study to assess the discrepancy of perceived knowledge and importance, as well as the actual knowledge based on knowledge test scores, for Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers in agricultural communications.

What the study is about:

The purpose of this study is to determine the professional development needs of Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers as related to agricultural communications curriculum.

What we will ask you to do:

If you agree to be in this study, we will conduct a focus group with other teachers. During this focus group, you will be asked to discuss your courses in agricultural communications and your reactions to previous research. You also will be asked to discuss the affect of teacher knowledge on student performance.

Research Objectives:

1. Determine Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers' reasons for the difference in perceived knowledge and knowledge test scores in agricultural communications;
2. Identify the methods Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers use to deliver curriculum for agricultural communications at the secondary level;
3. Identify the sources used by Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers to help develop curriculum at the secondary level; and
4. Identify selected demographic characteristics of Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers that could impact agricultural communications competencies.

Risks and benefits:

You are participating in this study with other members of your teaching community, and you may feel pressured in your responses to discussions. No one has control of discussion beyond this focus group.

You will benefit from this study by possibly developing solutions to any issues related to knowledge in the area of agricultural communications.

Compensation:

After completion you will be given a copy of the new agricultural communications curriculum when it is published in summer 2009.



**Confidentiality:**

The recordings taken during the focus group will be destroyed after they are transcribed and any records kept will be filed and kept by the researcher. These records will be kept in a locked storage cabinet and the researcher will be the only person with access to these records. Any written reports will not include identifying information for participants.

It is very important that you maintain confidentiality regarding the identity of the focus group participants and the content of the focus group discussions. By signing this consent form, you agree not to disclose the identity of the focus group participants nor to discuss the content of this meeting outside of the focus group. I cannot control what is said by participants once we leave the focus group so please be aware of information you give during the focus group.

**Voluntary Participation:**

This focus group is completely voluntary, and you may choose not to discuss any topic during the focus group. You can choose to remain silent until a point you are comfortable to rejoin discussion.

You may contact any of the researchers at the following addresses and phone numbers, should you desire to discuss your participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study: Ashley Stockamp, 5911 E. Lakeview Rd, Stillwater, OK 74075, (618) 780-4544, and Shelly Sitton, Ph.D., 435 Agricultural Hall, Dept. of agricultural education, communications and leadership, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 744-3690. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676 or [irb@okstate.edu](mailto:irb@okstate.edu)

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study and be video recorded.

- Participation in study
- Video recording
- Use of data for publication
- Maintaining confidentiality of group

Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

I have read the form to participants and offered for questions concerning consent agreement.

Signature of researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of researcher \_\_\_\_\_

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the IRB on May 28, 2009.



## APPENDIX C FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

### Focus Group Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my research. Before we begin, please review the consent form and sign if you agree to participate? As the consent form states, I cannot control what is said by participants once we leave the focus group. While the consent form addresses confidentiality, you should still consider your statements carefully and honestly.

I ask for research purposes that you please give your most honest answers based on your experiences. I also would appreciate your cooperation in making the recording and interpretation of data as simple as possible by speaking clearly and by taking turns speaking. To protect confidentiality I am asking you to use the code names provided. This will allow for better understanding of data during transcription. This will help me to keep my data clear and organized. Are there any questions before we begin?

We are about to begin the focus group. This will take approximately 1½ hours and will address the research objectives presented in the consent letter. Please remember my job here is to be a facilitator for discussion, not to lead discussion. I encourage the group to talk openly about the topics that are presented to you. There are no time limits for each question, so feel free to discuss the topics fully.

This focus group will begin with demographic questions to be answered individually around the table and will progress into the more in-depth topics for discussion. Are there any questions before we begin the focus group?

Please start by giving your "code name" clockwise starting to the left of the researcher.

- 1) How long have you been teaching agriculture at the secondary level?
- 2) How long have you been teaching agricultural communications at the secondary level?
- 3) Was agricultural communications included in any part of your formal education? In what way?

#### Discussion Questions

- 1) What resources do you use to develop your agricultural communications classes and where do you obtain your resources?
- 2) What methods do you use for teaching your agricultural communications curriculum?
- 3) In a previous study Oklahoma agricultural education teachers perceived their knowledge level in agricultural communications to be average or above average, but when given a knowledge test, the average scores fell below a passing level. What is your reaction to this research? Please include possible reasons for the difference in perceived knowledge and knowledge test scores.
- 4) How does this difference impact the knowledge level of students?



5) The previous study also found the teachers perceived the importance of these courses to be high, but the knowledge scores in these areas were low. Please take a moment to reflect on these study results. What, if any, conflict exists between perceived importance and knowledge?

6) What are some suggestions you have for increasing knowledge levels for current teachers who teach or wish to teach agricultural communications?

7) What are some suggestions you have for teacher training at universities for teachers wanting to teach agricultural communications?

8) Please take a moment and reflect on any concerns or input you may have that was not covered in this focus group.

I will now conclude this focus group. Thank you for your time and effort. You will be contacted with follow-up information and asked to review the transcripts from this focus group.



## APPENDIX D

### FOCUS GROUP 1 TRANSCRIPT

#### **Focus Group 1 Transcript**

FRANK, HOUSTON, WADE, TROOPER, VELO, TORO, REEES, LINDSEY, ALLEN, SMOKIE

**1:26 FACILITATOR:** How long have you been teaching agriculture at the secondary level?

FRANK: Just started, I start July 1

HOUSTON: Just finished my 5th year

WADE: 2 years

TROOPER: 9 years

VELO: 2 years

TORO: 5 years

REESES: 2 years

LINDSEY: A semester

ALAN: 0

**FACILITATOR:** How long have you been teaching agricultural communications at the secondary level?

FRANK: 0 years

HOUSTON: 4 years, no 3 years

WADE: 2 years

TROOPER: 4 years

VELO: 0

TORO: 1

REESES: 2 years

LINDSEY: 0

ALAN: 0

**FACILITATOR:** Was agricultural communications included in any part of your formal education? In what way?

FRANK: Yes I took several courses

HOUSTON: Yes I took introduction to ag communications.

WADE: I had the intro class at OSU

TROOPER: No

VELO: I took the introductory to ag communications course at OSU.

TORO: I actually took a class at the junior college that was the same as the intro to ag communications class at OSU so it transferred.

REESES: Just the intro to ag comm. class at OSU.

LINDSEY: Intro to ag comm. at OSU.

ALAN: No

#### **Discussion Questions**

FACILITATOR: What resources do you use to develop your agricultural communications classes and where do you obtain your resources?

VELO: Since we don't teach a class on agricultural communications, I rely on old English textbooks, hit up our English teacher for handouts, subject, verb, adverb type stuff. And internet for topics, tips on writing speeches and things of that nature.

HUSTON: So you don't have an ag comm. class, but you teach an ag comm. theme or you try and ag comm. theme.

VELO: Uh we didn't have an ag comm. team but we utilized that information towards speeches and clean it up a bit so.

TORO: In my class we use a lot of Retlaw books and I utilize speaking material. And some of the web sites I use have material. Done.

REESES: Uh, I use the uh introductory, the basic speech class that we have to take at OSU I use that book, and uh just materials that I gained through the introduction course here at OSU. And then we do some similar stuff to what Toro said with um also writing speeches and uh working on those in class.

VELO: did you use like photo copy stuff out of your book or,

REESES: Um I actually came back and bought one. I did not do that. I took the book, but as far as using quizzes or anything out of it but I use it to put together lesson plans and stuff like that. Some of the basic communications stuff out of there, I went back to the book store and bought that book.

HOUSTON: I use a multiple of different things. I use ah multiple books I had a leadership book, I believe it was a Delmar book that was called leadership which was uh communications and something else. I used uh that book and also a lot of just personal uh, I play a lot of games from like alumni camps, team building communications stuff, but now I'm going to start using your stuff and your stuff. And then someday use this curriculum that we are working on right now.

WADE: I use uh 2 sections out of the CIMC curriculum book and I just uh incorporate them into the class. I use all the stuff that I learned through the introductory class at OSU. We do resumes, job interviews, stuff like that. We do a newsletter as part of the class project. And then some of the public speaking stuff from the Retlaw book.

HOUSTON: How often do you do a newsletter?

WADE: Every month. Yeah we do a newsletter and what I do is I rotate each person has a certain part, like they are the editor or they have to do these two sections of it or the other two sections or they have to do the calendar or they have to take the pictures for it so I just rotate people out.

VELO: Now Wade do you use, or do you do the materials for or do you make the newsletter or do your students do that.

WADE: Students do it all, I make the, the first one I'm the editor on and I go through it, proof read it and everything and make sure everything is in the place that I want., and then

they fold it up and we send it out to different places, businesses around town, then after that they do it all.

REESES: This may be a little bit off the topic, but is it like a trifold?

WADE: Yeah, and then built some things in shop, some little horse shoe deals that I make in shop that I set them in like at the bank, at bev's, at the gas station or whatever. This little like a horse shoe deal that just holds them. Like a napkin holder out of horse shoes.

Incorporating everybody you know, the whole program.

TROOPER: I use three sections out of the ag curriculum, CIMC curriculum, the Delmar book and I use some materials from, our school has a um computer class that does web design and we use, I use some of that teachers curriculum because I touch students that he generally doesn't touch.

VELO: We have a, we are a decent size school and we have a production class where they do like the year book pages and they do uh a wildcat minute and they even have a televisions type program that broadcasts to the whole high school. Does anybody else have anything like that have any of yall worked with you class to engage those other students. Or team work or something like that?

(Side conversation) I haven't done that, or like a radio program, ugly people like radio.

That's what I'm going for. Is he trying to pressure us to answer his questions?

What did you ask again raptor?

VELO: we have a yearbook class, per say, and in addition to the yearbook they put out handouts and stuff.

You have it or the school?

VELO: I apologize, the school has it and I'm part of the school, but what they do as a class is not an aged class, it is purely an elective, usually for senior girls, they do scrapbooking stuff for the yearbook, they do uh a weekly or bi weekly wildcat newsletter, we also have like a they call it Channel 19 or 11 I'm not really sure what it is at our school that runs in the morning, but it also loops on the local cable network; so anything we can put up there. We really haven't utilized it um, kind of a territorial situation there, but in the future I think that would work. My question is has anybody done that. Pros, cons, yes, nos, maybes.

(Noone replies with experience)

FACILITATOR: What methods do you use for teaching your agricultural communications curriculum?

WADE: We do a lot of hands-on, everything's hands-on, everything we do. You know if they are going to have to write a speech they are going to have to give a speech, if they are going to make a newsletter they are going to have to do every part of it.

REESES: Project oriented type stuff, just a lot of what Wade said, project oriented stuff and stuff that's career based whether were doing cover letters or resumes or public speaking or something, we try to relate it to a career of some type. That way it all have some contacts, have some value in their eyes whether they're going to be an ag comm. Major or not they have some contacts.



VELO: The room that I teach in literally used to be a garage that they enclosed. It's where they used to wash and clip livestock so um technology wise, I had a laptop and I have a portable project that I use on the sheet metal it's not super good, um so it's kind of hippie, so hand out is kind of an issue also, a lot of mine, and I realize this is counterproductive to what I was taught in the school where I got my 4 year degree, but they say you can't get up there and lecture. I try to incorporate lecture with find you know read this, whatever to get the information out there about ag communications stuff. Handouts whenever I can, as far as reaching different learning types, the visual, not a whole lot I'm able to do with a whiteboard, um more auditory than anything. And again not saying that's most effective.

WADE: Does anybody have a web page at their school?

VELO: We have moodle, it's kind of like a blog kind of. It's kind of like a school webpage where you can put information like, it's really good for like text, you can upload a word document to it, but I don't think anybody reads it.

(no I want one)

(we're trying to start one)

(A guy like me it's difficult)

(Yeah I don't know a lot about it)

FACILITATOR: In a previous study Oklahoma agricultural education teachers perceived their knowledge level in agricultural communications to be average or above average, but when given a knowledge test, the average scores fell below a passing level. What is your reaction to this research? Please include possible reasons for the difference in perceived knowledge and knowledge test scores.

WADE: I don't know who you surveyed, but I know I'm not very good at it.

VELO: It, Um having mandated that we took a class, I thought that I knew something about ag communications, I never took a survey, but then when it comes to something where I actually have to perform, I'm sure compared to an 8<sup>th</sup> grader it was good, but on a national level I am sure it was pretty pitiful.

FACILITATOR: How does this difference impact the knowledge level of students?

REESSES: Personally I think we are all here because we want to learn more, I think when you think you know more that you do is when you stop learning a little bit so you go back home and you don't really know a whole lot you know you're not teaching a whole lot if you don't know a whole lot so the way I see it, if you think you know more that you may know, then you don't you know, if you don't know what you think you know then your students cant know, because you don't know but you think you know it.

WADE: I think we think we know a lot because it's like raptor said, we're talking to 8<sup>th</sup> graders or freshman or sophomores, and they don't know much, but if we know more than them we think we know a lot but we're not really teaching them what we should be teaching them because we don't know as much as we think we know.

VELO: The first year of teaching I made kind of a discovery, don't assume they know anything, from tying their shoe to how to clip an animal to anything so I, it sounds pretty

elementary but approaching things like that, when we get into something that even I don't know a lot about, we kind of learn together and they were pretty receptive of that. As opposed to thinking oh I know it all, I just can't pass this test that says I do.

TORO: this kind of goes back to the lifelong learning deal that we learned about at OSU.

You always need to kind of learn a little more each day whenever you, you know you think you may know how to do resumes really good, but when you don't do them for three or four years and you come back to it you may realize hey you're not that swift at it and you need to refresh yourself and kind of gain more information on how things are done today compared to how they were five or ten years ago so you need to learn more to teach your students together.

TROOPER: Lifelong knowledge.

FACILITATOR: The previous study also found the teachers perceived the importance of these courses to be high, but the knowledge scores in these areas were low. Please take a moment to reflect on these study results. What, if any, conflict exists between perceived importance and knowledge?

FRANK: Definitely you know, if you think it's important than you need to be a lifelong learner and try to uh learn what you can about it so that your student's will be able to get the most out of it that they can.

HOUSTON: We do have, like a lot of times you will hear across our state that the public speaking and leadership stuff is the most important stuff that we can really push to the kids and uh I think anything that kind of goes along with that public speaking and communications that we think that anything that really goes along with that would be really important, and I agree with that, I do, I think it's very important that they get that in addition to the other stuff that we need to be trying and getting them to.

I think the ag communications is kind of a new deal as far as it wasn't offered when I was in school and so that's why a lot of us are here today because we do want to know more about it but our generation really didn't have the opportunity to know more about it unless you were trying to major or double major in ag communications there wasn't room to take more than one or two courses in ag communications.

TROOPER: I think it's something we heard today about, an ag teachers knowledge base is 3 miles wide and an inch thick, and uh some people call it arrogant, some people just call it confidence, but whichever adjective your using, our profession, everyone is pretty confident in their ability, until we are put in a situation where it is put to the test when we learn about the things that we don't dabble in quite as much, we're probably not quite as good at, or maybe it's only a half an inch thick so we know what's going on a little bit, but it's not our area of expertise so uh with the way agriculture is changing, and the way we need to educate people, teachers, or ag teacher are having to continually retool or retrain in order to get that in a more effective manner and ag communications, is one of those things that 15 or 20 years ago was no big deal but it is today because the industry has to communicate with people.

VELO: I think you're exactly right, um you know. In our ag mechanics class, we can teach kids how to weld and they can do that, what I really like about ag communications is, it's geared toward a career. We no longer have to say as soon as you graduate you going use this. Being part of the career tech system maybe plays kind of into that maybe but, you can say this is a resume, ok, you're going to use this, this and this. You know this is public speaking skills which is you know one of the largest fears in our country. Yet we cover a lot of stuff and it is geared toward higher education instead of you are going to graduate and take this into the workforce and earn your \$12 an hour or whatever. It seems like it is uh, progressive thinking perhaps.

REESES: I think part of what makes it so valuable is that every single kid in your program can benefit from it. You don't have to have just that state winning public speaker that's in ag comm. that's really polished and you know that kid isn't the only one that can benefit from it because you got your good ole boys that are hard workers that have the technical skills that are going to be great for the agricultural industry that can make it that can show everybody what they can do. By you know getting these skill in an ag communications course and then going and getting a job or going further in their education but they can say you know I'm great in the shop, I'm good with working livestock, you know I will has some point probably still have to put together a resume and you know I can tell people better that you know I went through this aged program and I've got these set number of skills and even though I'm not the state winning public speaker or running for state office or anything like that I benefitted from this course because I got the job I wanted because I could tell people what I could do and I think that is where the value is it is so applicable to every kid in your program.

WADE: And even though some of the kids may not be as associated with ag, you can take something like that and maybe if they want to they can go into journalism, broadcasting or something else like that and then maybe have that association with agriculture and they can spread the word about it more and the reason I wound up teaching ag Is because I love it so much and if I can teach more people in their field, and associate it with agriculture that just spreads it out even more.

FACILITATOR: What are some suggestions you have for increasing knowledge levels for current teachers who teach or wish to teach agricultural communications?

VELO: Like Houston said he didn't even have the class in high school and he's what 32, 33, so people that are still teaching that aren't that old may not have had the opportunity to learn this it may not even have been a requirement for their college degree so just what we're doing right now, in-service things of that nature kind of if you build it they will come way of thinking. If we put it out there and say this Is good, word of mouth we'll say hey this is good you should take this up this is an exciting new area, or this is just something like the voice before this has positive benefits for you students, uh, which will teach your tax payers.

HOUSTON: I think new good curriculum is going to make all the difference amen to that

WADE: every time that I teach something that I'm not as familiar with, if I use a good curriculum I learn about it more and more each time I teach it. And maybe having people

who develop that curriculum come by the schools and maybe show you how to use it. I know that some companies do that, they send field representatives out and help you get started with it and I think that'll be the biggest thing with the new curriculum and better curriculum.

HOUSTON: and by offering that and getting more on track as far as classes and being able to offer that in high school you're gonna have more kids come in and as far as college you're going to have more ag teachers that graduate that had a little bit of that when they were in high school. At the college level it would be great if there were a couple classes we could take, but I know our, to graduate age d is already pretty full anyways as far as taking just the basic level courses here there and everything just getting that inch deep in everything and that's kind of what we do in college too. As far as at the level where we're already teachers, you're gonna offer little in-services here and there and the ones who are interested are going to come take it and the ones that aren't will never really adapt to it, but that's ok because in our profession there I room for us all to kind of specialize in separate areas and you can kind of pick and choose kind of where you want to be specialize a little more in that area I guess.

WADE: I don't think you're ever going to be able to train all the teachers to be specialized in any area either I think that the teacher just has to be the person who is conveying the message to the students and they have to be able to know how to use the curriculum. I mean I'm never going to be great at everything I teach but if I can convey that message to them and get them interested in it and maybe show them parts of it then they will specialize in it later.

REESSES: I just kind of wanna echo what you said in the fact of curriculum to me is, if there was great curriculum out there I think a lot more people would do it. When we were out earlier and we were talking about ok what stuff do you use, Hey I'll be the first to admit I don't teach as great a class as I wish I could, um part of the reason why I'm here today. But when we went around and talked about ok, what do you use when you put together your ag comm. curriculum, one person said CIMC stuff and he said I use two units out of it and hopefully you know this new curriculum that comes out will be like this that it is really user friendly that the ag teacher that graduate 10-15 years ago that didn't have an ag comm. class, that didn't grow up with it in their high school will be able to, you know maybe the school says we want you to teach this class instead of sittin in class and just writing speeches or judging livestock class reasons and calling it ag comm. if there was good curriculum that they could use and it was really user friendly and it didn't take going out and buying 3 or 4 different books and spending a lot of money, I know I've gone out and I've bought ag comm. books that aren't any good. I've bought some Delmar stuff that you know we've bought 15 of them and I've looked through them and we don't use them at all you know they just sit on the shelf, I think if there's good CIMC curriculum uh that was user friendly I think that would be the biggest thing.

TROOPER: It in uh if you look at ag programs and the people who are sitting here there is not a single one of them that are alike, they may be similar but they're not alike, everybody has their own individual things when you break their classes down you can take everybody in

here that teaches the same class, even those classes aren't the same. You wanna help ag teachers that are out teaching right now put together a resource database that is the downfall to teaching 5 classes, math teachers teach 1 maybe 2 they don't have to research, even history teachers, one maybe two, ag teachers teach 5 classes, 5 different classes a day. They need someplace where they can easily access material so they can put together good lesson plans, where they can pull together good lesson plans so they can beef up what they think is important to teach their students, that's a big thing.

FRANK: Maybe even like a syllabus so you can know what you're expected your students to have covered.

FACILITATOR: What are some suggestions you have for teacher training at universities for teachers wanting to teach agricultural communications?

FRANK: I think one idea would be to like, through your ag communications class, if you're going to take a class in college maybe develop like a unit that you could actually use in high school with it you know. Like that could be one of your assignments for that class and you could get a grade for it and you can use it a few years down the road when you're teaching your classes.

WADE: So like an ag comm. class for ag teachers.

REESES: I don't know if it would be possible but if in something like that maybe go through you know you could even use the ag comm. CDE as kind of a guideline because I know I sometimes use the CDE as a guideline for what we do or what we learn in class. Um if you went through and you know in the first couple of weeks we are learning about photography and the next web design and then writing articles and you know goin back to to project oriented stuff you know what I want my kids to do goes back to, you know I don't think to myself I hope they pass their test and stuff like that I think I want them to be able to do I want them to make a newsletter like you were talking about I want them to make a web page you know I want them to be able to pick out a good photo between a bad one, you know project oriented things and hands on oriented things that if there is a course beyond that introductory level for ag teachers you would find more ag teachers that are comfortable in it that could go into it right away.

WADE: I think to me what makes the difference is if our courses in college were more hands-on, I know the courses I benefitted most from were like horticulture because we were actually doing it. When I'm sittin in there listening to lecture about this is how you need to do it, this is how it works I don't get anything out of it so if our class, I know they teach us, like they taught us here at OSU each time you gotta be hands-on you gotta reach all the different types of learners, but the whole time they were just up there preaching it instead of actually doing things with me.

FRANK: I know my teachers when I was in college, which wasn't very long ago but they said your biggest mistake is going to be if you try to just take you college materials and teach it to high school students. I think that is why I was an agricultural education major because I wanted to learn how to teach high school students so I should be learning the information that

I can take back to my students not just some random facts and things that I'm not going to be able to use and high school students may not have the cognitive abilities to understand yet.

REESES: I think going with that I think there needs to be a little bit more guidance or thought put into what classes you have to take as far as your controlled electives and things of that nature because I mean, and they were both importance classes like you said we took horticulture and then we took plant propagation which was a great class if you hadn't taken horticulture because it was pretty close to the same thing. Or at least the things that were applicable to what I'm teaching were the same in both classes. Where as if I would have known ahead of time taken a web design class through ag communications or take a better animal science class, now is everybody going to do that no. There were opportunities I had and I missed that I wish I would have taken advantage of now, but at the same time I think there needs to be more thought put into do we really need to take forestry is that that important, how much of it can we teach? Um, and if I know I want to go to a part of the state that has forestry I can always sign up and take it. You know, um but I think a lot of the electives that we take, or at least when I went through, felt like we had to get it out of the way, and I was just gonna go get my grade and then find the value in something else.

WADE: I think we need advisors that push ag comm. a little more too because like they didn't have that program, a lot of them, when they were teaching, so it's something that is more, evolving, more new.

HOUSTON: I think we are in the group that's evolving, you know were gonna look back in 20 years and it's going to be something that's pretty common. You know we're kind of in the group that kind of helped initiate a lot of that stuff so I think we're not in bad shape as far as what we have done with our opportunities. A lot of us didn't have the opportunities because we are just on the forefront of getting this incorporated into the high schools.

LINDSEY: some of those courses were really hard to get enrolled in, they were already full with other people in there too. So maybe just something that's for aged people, I know I tried to take the web design class several times and I couldn't get in it.

TORO: I know here at this school when I was going to school here at OSU the professors would always encourage everybody to go get your science certificate you know, that way you can offer your classes as a science credit and help those kids get all the graduation requirements. With graduation requirements getting tougher and tougher it gets pretty complicated, I'm at a pretty small school and we don't offer a lot of different classes, but I think that maybe some of the professors here ought to encourage some of the people to take the speech, drama and debate certification and so they can teach their ag comm. course as a fine art. I went and did that last summer and so now this year that class gets to count as a fine art. So I don't lose those kids because they say well I have to get my art out the way. I can say well I can keep you and you can take a fine art with me.

WADE: How'd you do that?

TORO: I just went and took my speech, drama and debate, just go take that subject area test.

LINDSEY: was it difficult?

TORO: No I didn't know what to study for it, I just went and took it, and I just scraped by I didn't worry about it anymore, I just printed off the study guide that's on the web there and it's not too helpful. Most of it was foreign stuff to me because I wasn't very well versed in the debate, they have some debate stuff on there that is pretty foreign stuff to use you know we don't really deal with too much of that, but if you can get through that maybe ask a speech teacher or somebody at your school that has taken it for some help you know it's just another way to keep kids in our program. I'm sure all of us deal with the same deal of you know you'll have a kid that's great their freshman year and their sophomore year then come their junior year you say man why is this kid not in my class anymore then they come and talk to you and say well I have to get my other fine art of the way or I have to get history class or whatever to graduate. Especially with art, kids in my school they go to take half a day and they come back and they've only got 3 or 4 classes to take and they've gotta get everything to fit just perfect and stuffs only offered one hour each day and so its tough so I would encourage new ag teachers to go take that certification test, you know maybe take it after you've taken a speech class you know pretty recent. And just another way to help keep kids.

ALLEN: I agree that um at the college level in the communications classes, needs to be hands on so that when you go into a classroom to teach the kids you have an idea of how to actually teach the kids in the areas, particularly those who are involved in the agricultural communications CDE. I've been a grad student as a TA helping students through classes and teaching em animal science classes, the college I went to was limited in all areas and we tried to teach in the lab the livestock judging and stuff like that, the things that help them, because the classes were limited and so maybe instead of offering a class for the ag teachers, try to retool some of the current college classes for the ag teachers to try to make them more hands on dealing with some of the stuff that could be taught at the high school level.

VELO: To be honest with ya as far as I comes as knowing knowledge you know we talked about how we take a lot of general classes and we learned a lot about that what I want to learn the most about to be professional capable is how to teach and manage my profession better I think if I can teach and I can get better at teaching strategies and things of that nature, I can go online and find semi credible information to the eighth graders, because from my experience you don't teach as much volume then you do repetition and more, going over the facts so they retain the information as much, I think for ag comm. ag ed, uh horticulture, made me a better teacher and I can be more effective as opposed to more classroom during my collegiate years with ag comm. or whatever.

FACILITATOR: Please take a moment and reflect on any concerns or input you may have that was not covered in this focus group.

HOUSTON: We mentioned uh we are supposed to bring it up in this session, this would be a good place to bring it up, is having a one year or one time a year to have the ag teachers bring their kids up that are hopefully going to compete in the ag comm. CDE and have some of the collegiate professors help kind of give us a quick study guide or maybe a one or two hour

lesson on how to get prepared for the next four months before the contest. I think that would be a good idea.

REESSES: It's pretty easy to find resources. If you know have a meats judging team, I know some web sites I can go to and if I wanna have a livestock judging team well I can order some dvds and stuff or I can go out and look at some animals and give reasons, but for something like that, for an ag comm. deal you know I wasn't in ag comm. I can't just go and line out you know get four pictures and just say hey im gonna tell you some reasons I can't, I don't know how to do that, and so I think what you said would be so valuable because we don't know where to gather resources for that particular CDE where as a lot of the other ones you see, with a livestock judging team I'm not very good at it, but I know how to do that. I know we can go say alright that's a pig it's got 4 legs it's got muscle this why its good as opposed to here's a picture I have no idea what to tell you.

TROOPER: That goes right back to if there was a resource attached to OSU's web site or the aged website or even one that's out there and its more than likely that these folks are going to know where it is better than we will and if we had a way to access it, that we can access it without having to spend, because I don't know about the rest of you but I don't have hours in the day to just spend sittin on the computer looking for teaching materials, because I've got kids with sick livestock and I've got kids that their livestock out in the sticks and it takes me an hour to get out there and an hour to get back and that's if I don't talk to anybody so.

SMOKIE: one thing that I'd like to see the university do is put out video tapes or something, some type of CD that goes through all the CDEs. There's a lot of different types of CDEs that I don't have any knowledge about if we had that information that we could plug into a projector someplace and put it on the computer that might draw the kids in that classroom to that particular CDE. There is some of that stuff that I have kids that don't know anything about and I've got kids that may be interested in doing it. It would be good information for me and my students.

VELO: I always try to teach a CDE introduction you know at the beginning of the year, these are CDE's that are out there for you and I think you're exactly right, when I was trying to teach it I felt pretty Naïve about a lot of them. This is what I print off online, we'll try to set something up but with that and they change a lot, it seems to me like there's a change every year.

SMOKIE: I would just like to see something put together. You know because there's so many different CDE's. Just like yourself I mean how many different contests can you go to, I mean livestock is pretty safe and poultry is pretty safe with me, although crops, I don't know anything about crops, I would like to learn. I don't know anything about crops. Ag comm. that's why I am here today I don't know anything about it. All these different CDE's we offer these kids, their missing opportunities and I'm missing opportunities as an ag teacher and that's what we need to cover. That needs to be covered in these DVDs. Every CDE that's offered in Ag ed we need a video or CD to show these people.



TORO: that would be pretty neat if there was just a video put out of each department you know, nothing fancy just have a student walk through you know this is what you are going to have to do for this contest, this is what you are going to have to do for this contest. You're going to have a paragraph that you're going to have to edit you know show the paragraph circle the mistakes. And then your going to have to give a job interview you know and give all the different parts and just walk through it. You know. Walk through a contest or something like that so you can tell the kids or show them real plainly this is what you do. Have a mock contest at the end of it that would be pretty cool.

FRANK: This would be a little different but maybe at some of these interscholastic contests you guys could actually have more ag comm. participation. There's lots of touching on everyone but like I think Redlands is the only one that at the contest that's actually had a state contest.

REESSES: There's a lot to be said for that because like it's hard to say alright were going to spend all these hours and all these days for one contest where as for livestock contest even if you not that good, you can go to 4 or 5, you can go nearly every day in april and that is why it was so fun and why I was so excited about it in high school because we loved going. And even if you got beat, a we still learned every time we went out there because we'd go through the classes and say ok here's why you were wrong on this one, and then there was the competition between the members on that team you know low man buys the pop and you know the guys that wins everybody pats em on the back and you know it encouraged you to get better. And I think if you get that kind of mentality where like you were saying if there was more of them than just one it encourages them to get better every time they go to those contests, I think that is a great idea.

HOUSTON: That's one of the reasons why the speech part is so strong you know you can go to a dozen speech contests in the course of four weeks and so it makes the kids who is gonna take the time to write the speech and research it and memorize it and get it down they can go out the first time an get beat and they've got 10 other contest to redeem themselves a little bit after putting all that effort into it.

TORO: in the ag comm. deal, the speech contests are really good because the kids can leave and you can read the critique sheets and you know you've only got half of it memorized and so tomorrow evening this is what you need to be working after school you need to be working on this or it says your facts on this first page are total junk well we need to fix that we need to get those out of there and fix that you know whatever the mistake is you need to get that out of there and fix that.

REESSES: I know when we did the job interview contest, the thing I was more excited about, we had a kid place well but I think I was more excited about the stuff we got back from it because that was only the second time I had a kid do that contest, getting all those materials back it was written all over his resume and all over his, everything he did, the tapes of the interview itself, every single thing we did had ink on it. I'm going alright now next year, sorry Josh but, you did well today but next year I feel like we've got a kid we can really go at

this good because now I know what we did wrong. Now they're not only getting better, but at a teacher you know what to do here's the mistakes we made that we don't have to make anymore. Whereas a lot of the new contest when I go into it I feel like an idiot because my kids are like "well I didn't know this was coming, you didn't tell us about this." I just feel so dumb like "oh I just wanted to surprise you" you know that doesn't work. You don't want to be doing that to your kids and also it kind of ruins your credibility as a teacher if you don't necessarily know what's going on. But you get that critique sheet back and now I feel so excited about next year I've already got a kid in mind and everything because we had all that feedback all on josh's stuff.

SMOKIE: I find that so often that some of those kids that don't do livestock and don't do some of the things we do, may want to do some of the other stuff. We're missing opportunities these kids are missing out on things because we don't have the knowledge or we don't have the materials to present to them. We might have somebody that likes legislature or government or somebody else in our classroom that because we didn't know anything about ag communications we didn't teach it in the classroom we might be missing something. If we had that information, it might help their career. It might draw them out to the classroom. They might be the shy kid that doesn't talk much, they might be the kid that's in special ed, we're missing opportunities.

VELO: I think when it all boils down to it you're exactly right, it's all about helping these kids get whatever they can, and that something that I feel like, and I will admit, that I do poorly, as long as we can keep getting stuff, bullets to load that gun and go out there each and every day and shoot down those fears and give them the best opportunity to succeed uh as far as from a collegiate standpoint, from a leadership standpoint, keep putting stuff on the web sites, keep feeding us emails, keep a web site up to date with resources keep at it, fight the good fight, you got people here that are in it with ya.

TROOPER: There's a couple issues that we're all fighting already a little bit and that's only going to get worse, one of those is, you mentioned earlier about we need to have science credit, we should try to pursue a fine arts credit so we can keep kids in our program. Another one is the number of days they're going to let these kids out of school to go participate in the events and it varies from school to school but uh I can promise you over time it's going to continue to be scrutinized for it and uh as much as we like to think we could, all of you know we are never going to compete with sports unless we do such a good job of leveling the field by providing kids with useful talents, that the kids that sits on the bench all season realizes that hey if I go over here and use my 10 days over here at the ag program, uh as long as we can provide those kids something because its pretty cool in my school because this year I had 3 students apply for jobs one of our students was competing for a job with 2 of our school premier athletes for a local job, each one of those students had to go through a job interview well I got news for you, that ag student smoked those other two and got the job and when he walked into the room, people doing the interviews didn't have a clue who he was and knew both of the athletes because those are the superstars in town, we gotta compete in town, we

gotta compete at home, and the only way to compete at home is to provide things that those kids need to be successful. So we can get help from osu through the state department and from the other schools in our state to tool our kids to compete with those athletes to smoke them in every job interview, we'll be around for a long time, if we don't we'll get pushed out just like all the other vocation programs.

SMOKIE: I'd much rather haul a bunch of kids to a contest someplace, to several different contests, and just load up the ag truck because they gain knowledge. You load up the ag truck with some of the kids and those other kids that are left there at school, it just does something to em. Because they're not participating.

**57:98**

APPENDIX E  
FOCUS GROUP 2 TRANSCRIPT

**Focus Group 2 Transcript**

WILLADEAN, DON, RAMSEY, COUNTRY GIRL, 007, YANKEE, KDOC, BO, TEX

FACILITATOR: How long have you been teaching agriculture at the secondary level?

WILLADEAN: 3 years

DON: 5 years

RAMSEY: 7 years

COUNTRY GIRL: 1 year

007: 25 years

YANKEE: 1 year

KDOC: 16 years

BO: 30 years

TEX: 2 years

FACILITATOR: How long have you been teaching agricultural communications at the secondary level?

WILLADEAN: 3 years

DON: 5 years

RAMSEY: 5 years

COUNTRY GIRL: 0 years

007: 3 years

YANKEE: 1 year

KDOC: 2 years

BO: 0 years

TEX: 0 years

FACILITATOR: Was agricultural communications included in any part of your formal education? In what way?

WILLADEAN: Yes, I had uh two courses one in the requirement for ag ed and the other I started as an ag communications major and took the introductory course.

DON: Yes, I had three ag communications at OSU.

RAMSEY: Yes, I had one, one ag communications class at OSU.

COUNTRY GIRL: I had one communications class at OSU.

007: I had one class at OSU. It's not relevant to what we do today, but I had one.

YANKEE: Yes Intro to ... here at OSU, and uh I did some other work on the side before I decided to become a teacher.

KDOC: No

BO: Not that I can remember

TEX: Here at OSU, Intro.

### **Discussion questions**

FACILITATOR: Now were going to move on to the discussion questions ok. So this is an open discussion amongst yourselves. What resources do you use to develop your agricultural communications classes and where do you obtain your resources.

WILLADEAN: I use the AP Stylebook and I just bought it from the student union.

COUNTRY GIRL: I use the brace little thing and the CIMC Ag 1 book because that's all I got.

YANKEE: I use the CIMC but I also outsource my stuff because I uh have a mar, through my marriage here I have people who are into web design through corporate networks and I have area, I have two area newspapers and I use my resources a lot.

RAMSEY: I recommend the Texas ag comm. CDE book, I use it. I use the state AGCM CDE, the one on the OSU website and um we also have a web site that we just (Snap) don't use the curriculum for it to develop it, we just do it on our own.

007: Everything we use is off of either the OCIMC or off the internet which is easier than going and buying a book.

DON: I use some of my ag. Comm. Stuff from my college classes, and the CIMC

FACILITATOR: What methods do you use for teaching your agricultural communications curriculum?

YANKEE: Hands-on, I do a lot of hands on stuff, I mean we go when, through our curriculum with web design I had the (?) networking, she came to us and she came once a week for about a month and a half and introduced the concept, how she got started and you know just very career based. You know, introducing that you know, ag. Communications can offer you this and they donated their resources and their time and a webpage and they showed, our class put together with conjunction with (?) network. So we watched her as a professional who did what we probably couldn't have done. But it was great.

FACILITATOR: Ok, in a previous study Oklahoma agricultural education teachers perceived their knowledge level in agricultural communications to be average or above average, but when given a knowledge test, the average scores fell below a passing level. What is your reaction to this research? Please include possible reasons for the difference in perceived knowledge and knowledge test scores.

007: We just don't have any material to study for it. I mean there's not really that much else. For us to have copy or access to, to work with our students or ourselves too, If we take the test I know I'd be below average if I took a test on it.

WILLADEAN: I think we might feel like we are average or above average because of the duties and responsibilities we have like working with the newspapers and having chapter reporters and trying to edit their um news releases and all of the photography for applications and slide shows and things like that and most of us have a chapter website that uh we have to keep updated and uh we have to be a part of the components of agricultural communications, but when it comes to the, I guess, correct answers we might not be.

DON: I think a lot of ag teacher view ag communications as public speaking and since they a lot of them have students who are competitive at speech competitions they think that ag communications and they don't realize the editing and AP style and I think that's the misinterpretation there of what ag communications is.

COUNTRY GIRL: We just don't have the new technology out there.

YANKEE: I don't know how your guys' facilities are out there but I have to fight with other teachers and other programs for the computer lab because we only have the teachers computer in our facility and that's difficult when you're trying to demonstrate and have them look up different websites and interpret well this is not the correct font for instance and so on when you only have maybe, it's just difficult without the right tools.

FACILITATOR: How does this difference impact the knowledge level of students?

007: If we don't know it we're not going to be able to pass that on to our students, like you said a lot of this, like the tests are AP writing style and I've never been schooled on it and didn't even know until today until she gave us this, where to get information on AP writing style. Like he said, most of what we consider is our communications in our speech.

TEX: I think they get a broad aspect though from proficiencies and record books and different things like that because of the pictures and writing skills and things like that It's something I, I mean it says we're below average, but I think they're learning something.

FACILITATOR: The previous study also found the teachers perceived the importance of these courses to be high, but the knowledge scores in these areas were low. Please take a moment to reflect on these study results. What, if any, conflict exists between perceived importance and knowledge?

007: Of which courses? Is this just ag. comm.?

FACILITATOR: Ag. comm. courses.

COUNTRY GIRL: Could you repeat the questions.

FACILITATOR: I sure can. The previous study also found the teachers perceived the importance of these courses to be high, but the knowledge scores in these areas were low. Please take a moment to reflect on these study results. What, if any, conflict exists between perceived importance and knowledge?

YANKEE: I think it's important to be able to communicate.

RAMSEY: Well we all think it's important to be able to communicate, but I mean I also agree, some of these ag comm. tests we're taking include radio broadcast, ethics in communications, abbreviating the states correctly and things like that that we don't use in our everyday lives. If that's what their being tested over, I can see, I don't even know that stuff I mean, just because I don't know it doesn't mean I don't think communications is important, I think it's important for kids to be able to communicate but I don't know all of that stuff that was probably on the test or a lot of us don't know anything about broadcasting and advertising and marketing, you know.

COUNTRY GIRL: We don't have the resources available to show them what's proper, what not proper.

007: It's different than opening one of these catalogs and seeing it done than setting down and showing them, you know, this is what all has to go into making this paper, you gotta write this way and you gotta you know I mean when they see the end product, its done, it's perfect and everything, and they don't realize what goes through. And we don't really either you know. That's why I'm here, to learn find out how we can learn to teach this better.

WILLADEAN: I think new curriculum is going to help that in congruency, because if you look the CIMC curriculum now, you're not going to learn a lot about um ag communications, you're going to get a little bit of public speaking in there, you're going to get some leadership in there and um you know you're not, it's not a one stop shop for um what agricultural communications encompasses in my mind right now so I think the better curriculum that covers all of the elements of ag communications will help us gain the knowledge we need to educate the students.

COUNTRY GIRL: yeah, and reflecting back on the ag comm. that I had in high school, you know the curriculum then an then what I had at OSU, completely different. Like she said, it was focused more on style and writing, and I don't know, just talking.

DON: We look at it as a public speaking ag communications, not a journalism ag communications.

COUNTRY GIRL: Cause that's what we have.

FACILITATOR: What are some suggestions you have for increasing knowledge levels for current teachers who teach or wish to teach agricultural communications?

YANKEE: Having workshops like this.

007: Have uh, or maybe have a one or two days school where you come through cause the curriculum won't be ready until maybe following CDEs so there's probably a chance I will have probably so it will be another year before we can buy the new materials in our school so maybe more instructions in ag feature what is in the new material you know what's in the new books for us to use.

COUNTRY GIRL: What about teaching methods.

YANKEE: If there was like some samples of a syllabuses or something in that regard for us to reference to and follow similar or follow through with that would definitely help with the competencies in ag comm.

RAMSEY: I think too hands-on type, here's a picture describe what's wrong with it I mean

COUNTRY GIRL: Kind of like a supplement

RAMSEY: Yeah like not just reading and teaching it gets really boring teaching and they sit there and take notes and they listen. Stuff, um, editing quizzes, I have to dig quite a bit on the internet to find editing quizzes with the answers. If I don't have the answers I don't know if it's right either. (Laughing) The editing quiz with answers, photos, show them a photo I think someone, someone sent me some pictures, um this is what's good about this picture, this is what's good about this picture I thinks there's a proficiency award on OKFFA that about taking good pictures. I think, I think the problem is digging for it. You have to dig to find stuff like that, if it was just a part of the curriculum ...

COUNTRY GIRL: Compiled all together

RAMSEY: If there was photos or Web sites, this is a good Web site or this is not or click on this tell me what's good about it and then make sure we have the answers, because I know I don't like to teach anything if I don't know the answer.

007: Does OSU have a Web site where you can go for the ag communications and get us ready for the test.

WILLADEAN: Well they have the ones without the answers. They have uh, but they have a CDE site that they put out and we looked at it about a month before the CDE contest. It said check back soon for more and I never did but uh there weren't the answers there. It was just on the editing it would be nice to have some uh you know uploaded photos

007: If they could give us some work, if they could give us a deal that would go through the whole contest for those kids to kind of sit down and practice some that would sure help a lot too.

COUNTRY GIRL: Cause I've been on Web sites like poultry judging, that have everything, livestock judging 101, they have an ag comm. 101.

007: Plant judging 101

FACILITATOR: What are some suggestions you have for teacher training at universities for teachers wanting to teach agricultural communications?

YANKEE: Have an actual class on how to teach ag communications and what do you expect out of future teachers instead of just throwing us in with all of the ag comm. majors. You know when you have us take the intro class a supplemental deal you know have a

COUNTRY GIRL: Here's the basics, here's what you do with it.

YANKEE: Yeah, This is what we want you at OSU to do for the Oklahoma Ag Ed workforce.

BO: Yeah but there's no way they can cover everything though, so really they just need to do more focus on after you get out if you wanna do ag comm. then they need to offer ways for you as a teacher to get that in at the (p) thing

FACILITATOR: Please take a moment and reflect on any concerns or input you may have that was not covered in this focus group.

007: Ok what was mine again

Girls: a workshop about the kids

007: oh yeah have a workshop with the kids uh you know maybe in the fall to bring them up to go over the contest. A teaching one, let them see how the contest will be run, let them be on it, let them sit down and look at the pictures

COUNTRY GIRL: What the judge is looking for.

007: Let them come in and have the judges go back over it we did this this way you know, the four photos like she said. Then go back over the writing styles you know. It was edited, you know this is what would be changed, this was wrong, where they can actually then see what's expected of them

COUNTRY GIRL: Something they can actually take home with them.



007: Then when they come back in the contest in the spring they will know what to expect, what to do. I think she said something about they was going to try to make it into a junior CDE contest, that'd be good for you freshmen, them too, get them introduced to it to see. And also something like that, the more kids you can get here on campus, the better off it helps campus. If you have a workshop for those kids, that's going to help them recruit those kids later.

COUNTRY GIRL: Or maybe not even at OSU, but break it up into districts. I mean because a lot of teachers won't drive to Stillwater for a day and stuff. If they could have a state one that would be great, if they could break it up into districts that would be even handier.

007: like our speech workshop we went to it was down in Patoka, it's kind of central.

WILLADEAN: Well I think it's helpful too because, uh you know, there's a point whenever you have kids just competing in a CDE contest that they don't know the answers, they didn't know where to start studying and so it's going to be easier for those that are grading as well to actually have some right answers so I think that it will be prepared, help people be prepared at all levels.

RAMSEY: When we went to um a contest in Alva the lady had an actual rubric, like you get so many points for pointing this out in your critiques, I think that would be good if that was somewhere and there was like an actual rubric to where we knew as far as contest.

COUNTRY GIRL: Where do those points go?

RAMSEY: Yeah, how to get those points in your writing, you know what they were, cause it's just like livestock you know, If you don't have a really good set of reasons you don't know if you are saying the right thing.

YANKEE: For all you guys who teach ag comm., this is my question, what all did you guys encompass in the school year in your ag comm. like did you guys focus on web design, of course public speaking, what was your guys' focus?

007: We did the public speaking, and wrote the school newspaper. Then next year I think they gave it to somebody else. I know they make one copy every year, we did every two weeks.

RAMSEY: That's cool.

007: I mean somebody else took it over the next year though. I don't know why they gave it to them, we had a new principal come in and said they didn't want us and that's all that was ever made of it so ... so that gives them some, you know they have to go out and find them some information, come back, write it, go to the computer, put it all in and arrange it on the page and everything. And we had an editor and I will never do that again. You can't have one person in charge there's no such thing, they will fight. We just put them in () with us. I don't know it just may have been the girls I had that year (laughing). The girls, they were always fighting over, over everything so. I will not have an editor again if we ever redo it, they'll just be responsible for putting their page together and that'll be it.

RAMSEY: We just kind of do a little bit of every, we don't do a lot of any, we do a little bit of everything, We have a Web site and sometimes its updated sometimes it's not.

COUNTRY GIRL: It just depends on how busy you guys are.

RAMSEY: and the kids.

007: Do you keep up your own Web site?

RAMSEY: Me

007: Yeah

RAMSEY: Yeah

007: Cause they outsourced, our Web site's done by an outside firm now, I only get to see it, I mean we can't change something or do nothing, our school hired and outside source to build, together our Web site. Like I said it looks terrible. I've got freshman kids that can come in a put together a better Web site than their paying for this. We can't update it or change it or do nothing anymore so, that's one of our problems are our school is our Web site. In fact I don't think they ever got last year's officers up there. I think I've got officers on there from two years ago. This company never did get around to updating our page.

## VITA

Ashley Lynn Stockamp

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: A CASE STUDY OF OKLAHOMA SECONDARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' CLASSROOM NEEDS IN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS.

Major Field: Agricultural Communications

### Biographical:

#### Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in agricultural communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2010

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in agricultural education at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Carbondale, Illinois, in May 2007.

Experience: Facilities supervisor, City of Stillwater Parks and Recreation, spring 2010; graduate research assistant, Oklahoma FFA, spring 2010; general assignments reporter, Stillwater NewsPress, summer 2009; graduate research assistant, Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids, fall 2008 through spring 2009.

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Name: Ashley Stockamp  
Institution: Oklahoma State University

Date of Degree: May, 2010  
Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: A CASE STUDY OF OKLAHOMA SECONDARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' CLASSROOM NEEDS IN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS.

Pages in Study: 98

Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Agricultural Communications

Scope and Method of Study:

The purpose of this study was to determine the professional development and curriculum needs of Oklahoma secondary agricultural education teachers as related to teaching agricultural communications. A qualitative study was conducted through a semi-structured focus group interview. The interview took place at a teacher training and included 19 participating teachers.

Findings and Conclusions:

A majority of the participating teachers had fewer than five year experience as secondary agricultural education teachers and in teaching agricultural communications. The participants expressed a need for better teaching resources and curriculum in agricultural communications. The teachers said a database should be available to help the teachers develop their lesson plans and prepare for the agricultural communications career development event. Workshops for students were mentioned as a way to improve performance in the agricultural communications career development event. Based on these findings, the researcher concluded the universities need to assist in developing appropriate agricultural communications materials for secondary agricultural education. Prospective teachers also should be given training in agricultural communications during post-secondary education. Students at the secondary level should be given more opportunities to attend workshops in all areas of agricultural communications. More research should be conducted on the needs of secondary agricultural education students in agricultural communications as well as into the effects of improved materials for current secondary agricultural education teachers. This study should be repeated with different professional groups including agricultural communications faculty, agricultural education faculty, and pre-service students in agricultural education. The CIMC curriculum was improved in 2009 to address some of the issues presented by participating teachers.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: \_\_\_\_\_