

1. Ms. Crystal Mathews  
Graduate Student  
Department of Agricultural Education  
and Communication  
University of Florida  
PO Box 110540  
Gainesville, FL 32611-0540

Dr. Hannah Carter  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Agricultural Education  
and Communication  
University of Florida  
PO Box 110126  
Gainesville, FL 32611-0126

2. Agricultural Leadership Programming: A Review of Literature and Recommendations for Future Research
3. Research Paper
4. Agricultural leadership programs have been in existence for over 50 years, but little research has been conducted on the curriculum, implementation and evaluation of these programs. This paper provides a synthesis of literature of these agricultural leadership programs and offers recommendations for future research.
5. Please consider for a poster presentation if not accepted.
6. Crystal Mathews was raised as one of five children on a family farm in Southwest Missouri. She graduated from the University of Missouri in 2005 with a B.S. in Agricultural Education. While at Mizzou, she completed her student-teaching experience at an inner-city Chicago high school, spent five months working for the USDA Livestock and Seed Program in Washington, D.C, and spent a year traveling the country as the National Beef Ambassador. After completing her M.S. in Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M University in 2007, Crystal began her doctoral program at the University of Florida, where she is currently studying agricultural leadership and serving as a graduate teaching and research assistant. She has presented youth leadership workshops across the country and continues to facilitate leadership conferences for the National FFA Organization.

Dr. Hannah Carter grew up surrounded by the potato fields of Aroostook County, Maine. She graduated 1995 with a B.S. degree in Environmental Science from the University of Maine at Presque Isle. Upon graduation, she began her career with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension (UMCE) working within Maine's potato industry. In 1999, she graduated with her M.S. in agricultural education and communication from the University of Florida and in 2004 she earned her Ph.D. from

UF in agricultural leadership. She currently is an assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication. Within this appointment, she is the Director of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources, a leadership development program for individuals involved in Florida's agriculture and natural resource industries. In addition to this, she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in leadership development and continues her research on leadership programming. She also conducts leadership workshops and presentation throughout Florida, and the nation, for various organizations and industries.

7. If accepted, please print in conference proceedings.

### **Introduction**

Following World War II, individuals at Michigan State University (MSU) recognized an ongoing need for effective leadership in rural areas. The agriculture industry was diversifying and becoming more complex, creating new challenges for rural communities and increasing its role in global and national politics, economics, and sociology. In the 1950s, Dr. Arthur Mauch, MSU professor of agricultural economics, organized public policy workshops to help inform rural Michigan leaders about agriculture production and marketing, community development and international affairs (Miller, 1976).

During the same time frame, the director of the Cooperative Extension Service, Dr. Paul Miller, created the concept of "agricultural statesmen." These were well-trained and knowledgeable individuals who had an understanding of the state's public policy issues as they applied to rural areas. The creation of a "Committee of 100" was then proposed by Dr. Thomas Cowden, then dean of MSU's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. This would be a group of farmers and rural leaders that would have a

working knowledge of current issues and the skills to present seminars across the state of Michigan (Miller, 1976).

These concepts and initiatives continued to develop until Dr. Mauch, Dr. David Boyne, and Dr. Russell Mawby were assigned the task of developing a leadership development program proposal. These men were assisted by others who helped promote the vision that eventually led to the Kellogg Farmers Study Program (Lindquist and McCarty, 2007).

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan, agreed to fund a “Michigan Farmers Study Group.” Beginning in 1965, the Kellogg Farmers Study Program began and was directed by staff of the Department of Agricultural Economics and the Cooperative Extension Service of Michigan State University. For the next seven years, this pilot program developed a nucleus of 150 agricultural and rural leaders across the state of Michigan. The motivation for this program came from the assumption that many Michigan farmers were trained and competent in technical and management skills, but lacking in social science and liberal arts education and understanding. There was also a foundational belief that the leadership development process could be accelerated through a concentrated training experience (Miller, 1976). The objectives of the study group were to create a better understanding of the economic, political, and social framework of American society, and to apply this understanding to the complex problems and unique concerns facing agriculture and rural communities (Miller, 1976). The leadership model was tested, evaluated, and evolved through this time frame, and results were reported to serve as a model for new programs.

After the success of the pilot program in Michigan, the concept spread rapidly to other states. The Kellogg Foundation played a role in contributing to the start-up funding of many of these programs. Based on the Michigan model, the Kellogg Foundation funded programs in California, Pennsylvania, and Montana in the early 1970s. With the success of these programs came another pilot program in Washington in the early 1980s, followed by the development and implementation of 12 more state programs and a collaborative program that combined the New England states (Helstowski, 2000). These programs were also funded by the Kellogg Foundation. Many other states and countries have created similar programs as well, with the help of \$5.3 million from the Kellogg Foundation and more than \$111 million from additional sources (Helstowski, 2000).

Today, there are nearly 40 programs across the United States, in Canada and Australia. While each program has unique attributes, the core and basic structure of these programs are the same. These programs have collaborated to form the International Association of Programs for Agricultural Leadership, where directors and staff meet annually to network and exchange ideas (Lindquist and McCarty, 2007). The purpose of this paper is to consolidate all of the research and evaluations that have been done with these programs, the frameworks and models that have been used, and define the next research topics and questions we must answer to ensure agricultural leadership programs will be here to serve the next generation of agriculturalists. Content analysis was utilized in this review to achieve the purposes of the inquiry for this paper.

### **Literature Review**

While many state-wide agricultural leadership programs are in place, each of these programs has gone through the process of designing a program and curriculum to

meet the needs of their state agricultural industries. New programs can look to these established agricultural leadership programs as a model to work from as they design their own program vision and goals. Research has also been done to design leadership models to serve as a framework for programs in the initial process of design and implementation, and guide established programs toward improvement and focus in achieving their objectives.

Hustedde and Woodward (1996) developed a guide for designing a rural leadership program and curriculum. The guide advocates a post-heroic view of leadership, and develops the idea of this new kind of leader as a servant leader who fosters, strengthens, and sustains vibrant and diverse leadership in the community. There are three major ways that these servant leaders are nourished, in the forms of mentorship, self-study and practice, and community leadership programs. They highlight the Michigan State University Extension Service model for a rural leadership program.

Michigan State University Extension Service has a vision for its community action leadership efforts to develop energized communities of co-leaders and co-learners committed to concerted action for a collective vision (Vandenberg and Sandman, 1995). The MSU model is based on the following four concepts:

- Community : develop leadership programs that foster trust, respect, and appreciation of diversity in the community
- Vision: help community members develop a vision of what they want to become
- Learning: stimulate learning communities where people expand their collective thinking and learn together
- Action: stimulate action and encourage “leadership by doing”

These goals are a guide for leadership program activities. Every community is unique, and needs to address the goals and vision that are appropriate for that community, but clear goals are essential to the success of every leadership program (Vandenberg and Sandman, 1995).

From the four concepts outlined in the MSU model, Sandmann and Vandenberg (1995) further developed a conceptual framework for community action leadership development. The first part was a holistic philosophy of leadership based on the four concepts of community, vision, learning, and action. The second part relates these core concepts to seven action-based values. These values of community action leadership development include: visioning together, leading together, learning together, building community, developing energy, acting together, and communicating (Sandmann and Vandenberg, 1995). The third part of this framework defines the roles of leaders in promoting community action leadership. These leadership roles include: facilitation, learner focus, leadership focus, issue/action focus, non-prescriptive, and process as content (Sandmann and Vandenberg, 1995). This article highlights the importance of the role of Extension in taking this conceptual framework from concept to practice. Extension faculty and staff must not only understand the framework, but also have the time, commitment, and resources to consistently apply this framework for 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership.

Networking opportunities is a recurring outcome of agricultural leadership programs. Graduates of the Oklahoma Agricultural Leadership Program identified networking opportunities as the most important aspect of the program (Kelsey and Wall, 2003). Kaufman and Carter (2005) studied the community benefit from the networking

provided by agricultural leadership programs. Networks are identified as the connections people make with the life of their community. Leadership development programs foster opportunities for people to work together and create these connections (Kaufman and Carter, 2005). The Wedgworth Leadership Institute in Florida has shown over 77% of evaluated participants to site increased contacts and networking opportunities as outstanding program features. Over 50% of the same group noted that they were more involved in organizations as a result of the program. Quality networks are a necessary part of the infrastructure of successful rural communities (Carter, 1999).

### **Methods**

Agricultural Leadership Programs now have a rich history with over 40 years of growth and development and more than 7,200 alumni. The average state program is 15 years old and nearly half of all programs operate out of universities (Helstowski, 2000). While every agricultural leadership program varies because of the unique aspects of each location and the individual personalities of the people involved, there are many things that are similar in the structure of these programs. Most programs average two years in length, and meet at seminars once a month or every other month. Each seminar has a different focus or teaches to a specific objective. The seminars usually rotate to various parts of the state or province, and programs typically include a national trip with a visit to the nation's capitol and many incorporate an international experience.

Curriculum is focused on leadership development with an emphasis on educating participants about local, state and national issues affecting agriculture and rural areas. Participants build relationships and network with industry and policy leaders and many continue their program involvement through alumni associations. Leadership topics may

include analytical and problem solving skills, interpersonal skills, decision making, policy development, coalition and network building, and addressing local, state, national, and global issues. This is by no means an exhaustive list of topics that may be included in seminars.

An important component to an effective agricultural leadership program is the people who are involved in the implementation of these programs. Each program is directed and operated by a staff of dedicated professionals who are committed to seeing agriculturalists across the state develop their leadership abilities and in turn step up to the challenge of leadership in their communities and industries.

The participants that are chosen for these programs must prove themselves capable of leadership before the offer is extended through previous involvement in local and state agricultural organizations, and leadership roles they've held in community, church, educational and commodity organizations. Some programs have age requirements, and most participants are between 25-45 years of age. Applicants are put through interviews or a selection process to make the cuts necessary to create each high caliber class. They make a commitment to give up to 80 days to program participation over the next two years, taking time away from their family and work in an effort to better themselves and serve their communities and industry.

Research has shown that one factor effecting participation in agricultural leadership programs is socioeconomic status. High-income group leaders have had a greater extent and degree of participation in program alumni activities than did low-income group leaders (Dhanakumar, et al., 1996). Wall, Pettibone, and Kelsey (2005) used factor analysis to test the effect of socioeconomic status on leadership and

participation of agricultural leadership program graduates. Results showed that levels of income and education were statistically significantly related to community commitment. It was suggested that program directors need to recruit from various socioeconomic groups, which may require attention addressed to the cost of tuition and travel expenses (Wall, et al., 2005).

### **Findings**

Agricultural leadership programs are a huge investment of time and resources for sponsors, staff, facilitators, participants and their families. Thus, it is pertinent that these programs are evaluated periodically to ensure their effectiveness and make improvements and adjustments as needed. These evaluations also need to be conducted to ensure the continuation of funding. Several studies have been conducted on specific state agricultural leadership programs to assess the viability and validity of the program and make suggestions for changes that could be implemented.

Horner (1984) evaluated the impacts of the Nebraska Leadership Education/Action Development Program after its third class. The program was designed to bridge the gap in public policy education for adult leaders in agriculture, and therefore focuses on public policy leadership education. From the first class of 30 individuals, more than 30% have held gubernatorial appointments on state boards and commissions. Others have been elected to state producer, educational, and professional offices. Several implications are highlighted as integral to the success of this program. One is the important role of extension educators as a link between citizens and policymakers. Promotion is essential to getting an adequate number of quality applicants. Horner

emphasizes the need for analysis of public issues to be included in the program design (Horner, 1984).

In 1992, Whent and Leising conducted an evaluation to assess the impact of the California Agricultural Leadership Program on its participants from 1970-1990 and identified opportunities for program modification and curriculum change. A comparison of pre-measure and post-measure program perspectives was conducted by asking graduates to rate themselves on various items prior to their participation in the program and after as a result of the program. Participants perceived the program to have had a direct impact on their personal and professional lives. Results showed that respondents with fewer years of education showed greater gains in program objectives, leadership skills and family and peer relationships, and a recommendation was made for admission policies to consider this. Seven percent of respondents were from minority groups and less than thirteen percent were female. Based on these findings, it was suggested that the program increase the number of minorities and women in the program to reflect the California agriculture industry. From information gathered through open-ended questions in phone interviews, it was further recommended that there should be an increased emphasis on written and verbal communication, self-assessment of individual leadership styles, and clinical practice of effective leadership techniques (Whent and Leising, 1992).

Lee-Cooper (1994) gathered graduate's perceptions of the Oklahoma Agricultural Leadership Program to examine the impact on its participants and measure the extent to which the objectives of the program were appropriate and accomplished. Respondents indicated the objectives of the program were highly appropriate and were accomplished

above average, but felt further attention could be paid to understanding U.S. cultural and social systems and how they affect Oklahoma agriculture. Participants' perceived the program to have developed their networking abilities and confidence in answering questions in large group settings. If funding were available, respondents would add a joint meeting with other agricultural leadership programs across the U.S. (Lee-Cooper, 1994).

Dhanakumar, Rossing, and Campbell (1996) evaluated the outcomes of the Wisconsin Rural Leadership Program. Results showed that alumni of the program had gained valuable knowledge and skills, but the higher the age of the alumnus, the less valuable the program was to them. Graduates who pay greater attention to public issues beyond their community were more satisfied with the program. Those who gained communication and networking skills were more interested in public office positions, as well as those who had more children. Communication and networking with other community activists had a significantly positive impact on community development accomplishments. Alumni financial contributions to the Wisconsin Rural Leadership Program were supported by knowledge gained in life priorities and self-confidence, personal and professional life and strain, and public affairs and confidence. This study suggests rural leadership education is a product of the process, and rural leaders learn best through a process of action and reflection (Dhanakumar, et al., 1996).

Carter (1999) conducted an evaluation of the Florida Leadership Program for Agriculture and Natural Resources, which continues to operate as the Wedgworth Leadership Institute. Finding showed the program was meeting its objectives and participants felt the program to be beneficial and worthwhile. Participants broadened

their perspectives through exposure to various cultures, increased their network and ability to raise awareness of rural issues, and further developed their critical thinking skills. Participants also increased their leadership skills, knowledge of political systems, and indicated they would continue to build on the foundation provided by the program. Carter conducted spouse interviews that also validated the program benefits for participants and further verified the program to be meeting its objectives (Carter, 1999).

Kelsey and Wall (2003) determined the extent of rural community development and involvement of graduates after completing a two-year agricultural leadership program from 1982 to 2001. Findings showed that graduates were aware of the importance of rural community development, but they were not serving in leadership positions and taking a minimal role in community improvement. While the program increased the awareness that communities have needs, it did not teach knowledge or skills to identify community needs, and therefore did not contribute to training leaders for community development. Conclusions recommend changing the program goals to establish leaders who can become community developers to justify the cost of the program. There was also an emphasis on the need for curriculum that teaches needs assessment, project development, and change agent skills to give participants the skills and knowledge they need to be effective community leaders (Kelsey and Wall, 2003).

In 2005, Abbington-Cooper conducted a study to determine if graduates of the LSU AgCenter's Agricultural Leadership Development Program from 1988-2004 have increased their leadership skills and involvement in community and agricultural issues. Results showed that respondents were satisfied with the program; it met their needs, improved their self-concept and had a positive impact on relationships and leadership

competencies. Respondents indicated that they had a better understanding of U.S. agricultural systems and Louisiana state issues as a result of the program. Participants were more influential and involved in both agriculture and non-agriculture issues. Some suggested topics for additional practicum included leadership development, the business of farming, marketing and trade, agriculture and public opinion, public policy, and family (Abington-Cooper, 2005).

Black (2006) evaluated the outcomes of an Ohio statewide agricultural leadership program at three levels: individual, organizational, and community. The research was conducted using the EvaluLEAD framework developed by Grove, Kibel and Hass and measured post-program outcomes and program achievements. Findings showed several positive outcomes were reported on the individual and organizational level, with one positive outcome at the community level. There were several community levels and one organizational level reported to have low outcomes (Black, 2006).

### **Conclusions/Recommendations/Implications**

Much of the research that has been done in relation to agricultural leadership programs has been an evaluation of the impacts of the program on its participants and their further involvement in agriculture and community leadership roles. A common recurring theme in the outcomes of these programs is the networking opportunities they provide to participants. Numerous program evaluations in several different states validate the impact that these programs make and track the accomplishments of program alumni since their participation. There are still opportunities for growth as adjustments are made to improve the quality of these programs and the preparation that they provide for future leaders.

Helskowski (2000) highlighted several challenges and opportunities for the future of agricultural leadership programs. Many times programs and alumni are disconnected, and there may be great potential in linking programs and alumni by regions and interests using modern technology to increase communication and action. Forging a national network of program alumni and increasing the national profile of these programs could amplify the impact made on agricultural policies and practices at multiple levels (Helstowski, 2000). An ongoing issue highlighted in evaluations of many state programs is a lack of gender equity and diversity in the class compositions. And there is a value-added opportunity for programs to continue education for alumni and program directors.

There is still further research that can be done to improve the information we have on agricultural leadership programs. It is difficult to measure the value of these programs, but important to be able to justify the cost, which can be around \$250,000 per class (Kelsey and Wall, 2003). Research to measure the economic impact of these agricultural leadership programs would be extremely beneficial in gathering and maintaining program financial support and justifying the tuition costs for individual participants.

There is a large gap between what agricultural leadership programs are designed and believed to be, and what we can measure and justify that they provide. There is a gap between what we teach in these programs and the research that supports the framework and structure for what is being taught. Alumni will attest to the value of the programs and the personal impact it has made in their own life, the lives of their families, their communities, and careers. But the gap remains, and questions remain unanswered. The purpose of this paper is to consolidate all of the research and evaluations that have been

done, the frameworks and models that have been used and define the next research topics and questions we must answer to ensure agricultural leadership programs will be here to serve the next generation of agriculturalists.

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