Agriculture Education

What is Agricultural Education?
Agricultural education is the preparation of teachers and other professionals to educate high school students and adults in the areas of agriculture.

A basic difference between those who succeed and those who do not is education. Thousands of men and women are employed in professional careers in agriculture today due to the influence and encouragement of a teacher of agriculture. High school agricultural education programs have played a significant role for more than 90 years in making America the agricultural leader of the world.

Teacher education in agriculture has long had as its purpose the preparation of individuals for entry-level positions as high school teachers of agriculture. Many county-level extension agents and vocational college agriculture teachers have also prepared themselves initially as high school agriculture teachers.

Because agricultural education includes a cross section of classes from all areas of agriculture, graduates are also employed by various sectors of agribusinesses, including farming.

An agribusiness emphasis in agricultural education is designed to prepare graduates to work as educators in industry or work in the cooperative extension service as a county agent. This emphasis does not require student teaching or many of the other education classes. Students graduating with this emphasis may choose to continue their education to receive their teaching license.

Requirements
Agricultural education teachers must have at least a four-year bachelor’s degree. At the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, the Bachelor of Science degree in agricultural education consists of 133 credits in general, agricultural and educational studies. In addition to the bachelor’s degree, 2,000 hours of appropriate occupational experience are required for certification to teach vocational agriculture.

Faculty and Facilities
Courses at all levels are taught by dynamic faculty members whose impressive credentials reveal a broad array of educational and occupational experience. Most faculty members conduct research and are otherwise involved professionally with their particular disciplines to keep their advice and course offerings current. Each student is assigned a faculty advisor who has taught high school agriculture and who keeps up to date on the continuing changes in agriculture. Campus facilities for instruction in agriculture include several laboratories:

- Computer Science
- Meat Animal and Dairy Science
- Soil and Crop Science
- Horticulture
- Equipment, Structure and Power Systems

UW-Platteville is proud of its picturesque and functional 430-acre laboratory and demonstration farm with its modern livestock units and cropping and soils management practices. Students majoring in the various agriculture degree programs use the university farm extensively.

High School Preparation
High school students planning to enter the agricultural education program at UW-Platteville should work closely with a guidance counselor to assure that admission requirements are being met. Careful planning and flexible scheduling will allow the high school student to select a desirable blend of both academic and vocational agriculture courses. Participation in such youth activities as 4-H and FFA is desirable.

Outstanding Career Opportunities
The National Association of Agricultural Educators lists nearly 10,000 agricultural educators on its roster. An attrition rate of 10 percent means that between 1,000 and 1,500 replacements are needed each year. Wisconsin’s 300 teachers of vocational agriculture require about 20-30 replacements each year.

Many business and government agencies seek both new and experienced teachers to fill career opportunities in agricultural credit, finance, farm service and supply management. Teachers are also needed for post-secondary education in agricultural extension programs in the Wisconsin vocational, technical and adult education system. All indications are that the demand will equal the supply of agricultural education graduates for the next several years.

Although basic production agriculture (farming) provides the foundation of all things agricultural, it is only part of the agricultural education enterprise. A comprehensive agricultural
education curriculum builds upon that foundation in developing the areas of agricultural business and technology. Consequently, the teaching of agriculture offers a professional opportunity to men and women with a broad array of experience backgrounds.

Internships
An agricultural background is not essential to becoming certified as a teacher of agriculture, but it can be very helpful. Many students majoring in agricultural education at UW-Platteville have a farm background and were enrolled in an agriculture program while in high school.

Students who do not have an agricultural background may gain such experience through the School of Agriculture summer internship program. Students who seek employment experience with an agricultural agency or firm can also benefit from an internship.

Extracurricular Activities
The Collegiate FFA provides leadership opportunities for students in agricultural education as well as other students. The collegiate chapter is similar to the high school FFA chapters. Members participate at local as well as national events. Several other organizations are available for students with specific interests such as dairy, livestock, crops and mechanics.

Nontraditional and Transfer Students
Nontraditional and transfer students fit well into the agricultural education major. Students are individually advised with regard to courses and credits. Students planning to transfer to UW-Platteville in agricultural education are urged to work with UW-Platteville advisors as they complete their education at another institution.

For More Information
High school teachers of vocational agriculture are the most available and qualified persons to answer your questions. They know what the career involves and the personal requirements needed. Their advice can complement that of your school’s guidance counselor, your parents and others whose counsel and advice you can depend upon.

For more information, write to the School of Agriculture, UW-Platteville, 1 University Plaza, Platteville WI 53818-3099 or call 608.342.1393. Visit www.uwplatt.edu/soa.

For general information on the university and its programs, consult the web at www.uwplatt.edu or contact the Prospective Student Services, 1 University Plaza, Platteville WI 53818-3099 or call toll-free 1.877.897.5288 or locally 608.342.1127.

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