

## **Say YES to FCS: A National Campaign to Meet the Demand for FCS Teachers**

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*The “Say YES to FCS” campaign began in Kansas as a state-level recruitment tool and was adopted by the National Association of State Administrators of Family and Consumer Sciences in the spring of 2014 to promote the selection of family and consumer sciences (FCS) classroom teaching as a career of choice. Since then, the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) national organization and additional education and business and industry partners have continued this effort to meet the severe demand for FCS educators.*

### **Introduction**

The National Association of State Administrators of Family and Consumer Sciences (NASAFACS) meets annually to conduct business of the organization, and identify priorities for addressing state and federal mandates and educational initiatives that impact family and consumer sciences (FCS) classrooms at the middle and secondary levels. NASAFACS brings together state administrators, content consultants, post-secondary teacher educators, business and industry partners, and FCCLA state advisers and national staff to discuss relevant issues and facilitate collaborative actions. In 2014, and again in 2015, a top NASAFACS concern was the lack of FCS graduates to fill open classroom positions. This is not a new concern, as the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) acknowledged a teacher shortage several years ago, as evidenced in a 1996 resolution (AAFCS, 2016).

More recently, the work of Dr. Carol Werhan (2013) indicated that 50% of reporting states identified a current or future shortage of highly qualified FCS secondary teachers. Her study further indicated the course of action resulting from a lack of applicants for open positions would eventuate in the closure of the program, or hiring of teachers who are not prepared for the scope of work of FCS teachers (Werhan, 2013). Since a pre-requisite for being a chapter FCCLA advisor is also being a certified FCS teacher, this is a concern of FCCLA as well (FCCLA, 2015). NASAFACS decided to replicate and expand the Kansas theme, *Say YES to FCS*, to inform the public about the current FCS teacher shortage and encourage more to select the teaching field in order to meet the demand for middle and secondary teachers.

### **What is the National Association of State Administrators of Family and Consumer Sciences?**

NASAFACS is one of three FCS affiliate branches of the Association of Career and Technical Education (ACTE, 2015). The other two branches are the National Association of Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences (NATFACS) and the National Association of Teacher Educators of Family and Consumer Sciences (NATEFACS). Together these three organizations address the following components of the classroom experience: classroom

instruction, teacher preparation, state and federal educational standards, and mandate compliance (ACTE, 2015).

NASAFACS is comprised of both active and associate members. Active members are those who hold positions of employment which align to state administration; associate members are non-voting members who can participate in committee work and offer insight and support. Both active and associate members work under the mission of NASAFACS to “provide leadership for sustainable Family and Consumer Sciences Education programs” (NASAFACS, 2016a). Sustainable programs require certified teachers who can deliver the curriculum, teacher prep programs who offer effective training, and state administrators who maintain the national FCS standards and ensure FCS has a voice in education-related discussions.

### **Relationship between FCS and FCCLA**

It has long been known that application of skills in personal, school, community, and workforce settings is vitally important in preparing youth to become successful. Early in the history of career and technical education, formerly known as vocational education, student organizations were formed to enhance leadership and personal growth, apply technical skills, and provide recognition for their efforts. This was first noted in the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, which provided foundational recognition for advising and supervising vocational student organizations (VSO). Through the 1940’s, laws were added to offer financial support; however, it was Public Law 740 of 1950 that chartered one student organization and set the precedence for the recognition of VSO’s being a vital part of vocational education (Fiscus & Hyslop, 2008). Educators found a powerful instructional tool when the work of VSO’s was integrated into the classroom instruction or used as an authentic extension of the school experience.

In the mid-2000’s, the VSO name was changed to “Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO)” to better align with the “career and technical education (CTE)” movement. Over the last approximately 90 years, eleven CTSO’s earned recognition at the national level: 1928—National FFA Organization; 1942—Future Business Leaders of America/Phi Beta Lambda (FBLA-PBL); 1945—Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) (formerly FHA/HERO--Future Homemakers of America/Home Economics Related Occupations); 1946—DECA—An Association of Marketing Students; 1965—Skills USA (formerly VICA—Vocational Industrial Clubs of America); 1966—Business Professionals of America (BPA); 1976—Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA); 1978—Technology Student Association (TSA); 1980—National Postsecondary Agricultural Student Organization (National PAS Organization); 1982—National Young Farmer Educational Association (NYFEA); and 2010—Educators Rising (formerly FEA—Future Educators Association). Today, these eleven CTSO’s have a total membership of 14 million (National Coordinating Council for Career and Technical Student Organizations, 2016).

CTSO’s continue to be important to the development of leadership, career and citizenship skills. FHA was established to promote youth involvement in family and community activities, and HERO was established to enhance the occupational experience through the discipline known at that time as Home Economics. Home Economics changed in 1995 to “Family and Consumer Sciences” and Future Homemakers of America followed with a name change to “Family, Career and Community Leaders of America” (FCCLA, 2015).

Through the FCS classroom, FCCLA enhances personal development and career training in human services, hospitality and tourism, education and training, and the visual arts (e.g. interior design, apparel and textiles). CTSO experiences include interactions with adults in a

variety of family, school, community, and workplace settings to provide students with authentic applications and an expansion of the classroom content including students identifying and implementing action plans for improving themselves, their families, schools, work environments, and communities. FCS students achieve this through practicing the 21<sup>st</sup> century process skills [such as critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, collaboration and leadership (NASAFACS, 2016b)] through locally identified projects and use of regional, state and national FCCLA competitions to demonstrate their skill proficiencies. FCCLA also provides the motivation to succeed.

### **The Need for FCS Teachers in Kansas**

Beginning in the spring of 2013, an annual survey of Kansas FCS teachers was used to collect state data concerning, class size, and future teaching plans. The 2014 survey was sent to 455 active classroom teachers, of which 266 responded, indicating that 143 of these teachers would be retiring within seven years. In addition, state data in 2015 indicated that 80 FCS teachers are at or exceeding retirement eligibility presently, with another 40 FCS teachers reaching that status within five years (Kansas State Department of Education, 2015b). Further, the number of Kansas FCS teachers entering the classroom without a FCS education degree, but entering through taking a content test, was increasing. By the spring of 2013, this number hit 77, indicating additional need for a campaign to recruit classroom teachers. The need for additional certified teachers was more than evident and action was needed immediately. As a result, *Say YES to FCS* was born.

The *Say Yes* initiative began with discussing this problem with two post-secondary FCS teacher educators, a department chair, a college dean and the Kansas FCCLA State Adviser (Kansas State Department of Education, 2015a). As a result, University events were enhanced or planned in the fall of 2013 at the two institutions which offer FCS Education degrees (Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS and Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, KS). In addition, classroom teachers were challenged to find students interested in FCS Education to increase enrollments in university programs and ensuring the teaching legacy continued.

### **NASAFACS Builds *Say YES to FCS* Campaign Partnerships**

In the spring of 2014, NASAFACS met for their annual administrators meeting in Reno, Nevada. The meeting agenda allowed each state to share their top three priorities to learn state-level concerns and to promote cross-state efforts. The results clearly indicated a need for additional certified FCS teachers. In fact, the majority of the state administrators in attendance identified this concern as a priority. According to research, FCS has 27,000 teachers who teach 3.5 million students annually (Werhan, 2013). This is a decline, however, from 37,000 teachers and 5.5 million students noted approximately ten years earlier (Werhan & Way, 2006). NASAFACS delegates shared low numbers of recent FCS teaching graduates and closures of post-secondary teacher preparation programs which added to the belief the issue was at a critical stage. All this information became the basis of a national *Say YES to FCS* movement.

Knowing NASAFACS members could not wait to address this concern another year, a committee of state administrators and associate members was created to develop a plan of action for immediate implementation of a collaborative national effort to build a platform for a consistent recruitment message. The committee, led by Mary Nagel (Washington), Gayla Randel (Kansas), and Sandy Spavone (FCCLA), decided to begin recruitment efforts with FCCLA members at the 2014 national FCCLA conference because approximately 4,000 to 5,000

student members attend this annual event. FCCLA members are a good recruitment audience as they already understand the FCS discipline and have a FCCLA connection, therefore may be swayed to continue this relationship as an adviser.

Through this partnership, a national outreach campaign began. FCCLA providing free booth space in the exhibition hall and together with NASAFACS developed and distributed materials and promotional items (e.g. student member *Say YES to FCS* wristbands, adviser *Ask Me about my Job* buttons, etc.). In addition, the interactive map of post-secondary teacher education programs developed by Texas Tech was displayed in the exhibit booth for FCCLA attendees to locate post-secondary teacher preparation schools in their geographic area. (An Interactive Map link is available [here](#)).

Melanie Nelson, CEO of Learning Zone Express and NASAFACS member, learned of this partnership and offered to support this collaborative effort by donating graphic design staff and resources to develop a *Say YES to FCS* banner for the campaign. Learning Zone Express continued their support by developing a set of four posters and matching stickers, with donations from sales going to NASAFACS to address future FCS Education promotional costs (Learning Zone Express, 2014).

### **Current Status of *Say Yes to FCS***

#### **FCCLA National Leadership Conference Initiatives**

In the summer of 2015, a *Say YES to FCS* booth was again hosted at the FCCLA national leadership conference. Over 320 *Say YES to FCS* commitments were collected from student members who indicated that they “want to be a FCS teacher.” The student commitment information was shared with postsecondary program contacts through an online collection system and tracking map created by AAFCS in 2015. Interested student members were given an *I said YES* nametag ribbon to wear, and all 250 were gone by noon of the meeting’s second day. Stickers donated by Learning Zone Express were handed out to teachers and student members who visited the booth. Five hundred FCS teacher *Ask Me about my Job* buttons were gone by the end of the first day of the conference, and most of the 1000 member wristbands were gone by mid-morning of the second day. National FCCLA increased booth visitation by securing a sponsor to donate a gold iPad to use as a drawing prize. Student entry requirement was dropping off a completed FCCLA survey at the NASAFACS *Say YES to FCS* booth.

#### **Status of the Kansas *Say YES to FCS* Campaign**

The Kansas *Say YES to FCS* campaign now includes items distributed to classroom teachers, promotional grants to design local recruitment or retention campaigns, and FCCLA presentations and displays. In the spring of 2016, a new *Say Yes to FCS* display was set up during the State FCCLA Leadership conference, with eighteen students indicating a definite interest in becoming FCS teachers and FCCLA advisers. The names were shared with Kansas FCS postsecondary teacher educators for a personalized follow up. Additionally, Kansas postsecondary FCS teacher education programs have approximately 85 students preparing to become FCS teachers, which reflects a steady increase over the past two years. Both universities attribute this increase to the efforts of present classroom teachers, post-secondary recruitment efforts and state developed posters, declaration of intent post cards and e-newsletter articles.

Since its inception, the *Say YES to FCS* campaign has gained momentum across the nation, with other entities adopting it and organizing their own events and activities. In addition, AAFCS has developed an enhanced campaign to promote the need for FCS educators and

postsecondary teacher educators have sponsored several summits to discuss this issue from a more global perspective. The NASAFACS website (NASAFACS, 2016c) has developed a page to serve as a repository of recruitment items such as video clips of middle/secondary FCS teachers sharing why they “said yes” and why you should “say yes too,” sample lesson plans for promoting FCS education careers, state efforts, and links to the banner graphic which is now used as the branding logo for this initiative.

### **Conclusion**

As a result of the collaborative work of NASAFACS and FCCLA, the need for FCS teachers has gained national attention with many other key partners joining the campaign to coordinate efforts to support and recruit FCS educators and FCCLA advisers. In fact, NASAFACS is exploring the creation of a virtual library to offer a “first step” to those new to the FCS classroom. This resource would include vetted resources to not only provide good examples of research-based content, standard aligned curriculum and rigorous classroom expectations, but to also ensure instruction reflects the FCS body of knowledge and integration of FCCLA.

However, there is additional work needing to be done. States who are lacking FCS leadership and postsecondary FCS education programs are in dire need of assistance from other states to offer guidance, support and recruitment strategies. An expansion of recruitment efforts might include a focus on attracting a more diverse teaching pool by ensuring marketing items and messages include representation from males, Hispanics, African Americans, and other groups.

Lastly, national research is necessary to determine if the *Say Yes to FCS* effort does actually increase enrollments in FCS teacher preparation programs as expected. NASAFACS is a national organization, but state data are missing. The severity of this need for FCS teachers could be impacted absence of these data, something that Werhan (2013) noted as an issue across the United States (Werhan, 2013). Further research and relationships are needed to ensure that states whose data are not currently available have a voice in future efforts. In conclusion, it is strongly suggested that strategies to retain the teachers we presently have, and an ongoing, continually-updated recruitment plan be created, to avoid the perpetuation of the current dire situation related to FCS teacher recruitment and retention in the future.

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