

Creation of a New Family and Consumer Sciences Education Program at Oklahoma State University

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The family and consumer sciences education program at Oklahoma State University (OkSU) was developed through collaborative efforts to help meet the ongoing need for professionals in the field. Program enrollment has steadily grown since the program was launched through focused and innovative recruitment strategies. OkSU's premier recruiting event is the Family and Consumer Sciences Education Academy held in the summer to immerse high school seniors in the profession and campus life. Students in the undergraduate program participate in activities and professional development meetings throughout the year to strengthen their preparation as a public school teacher and/or Cooperative Extension educator.

The College of Human Sciences at Oklahoma State University (OkSU) was given authorization by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to implement a family and consumer sciences education (FCSED) program in 2010. Students were admitted to the program with the first graduates completing their degrees in 2013. Through the use of innovative and traditional forms of recruitment, the program has steadily grown, producing highly-qualified graduates to fill positions as family and consumer sciences (FCS) educators in public schools and the Cooperative Extension Service (CES). However, several years of collaborative work were needed before the program was approved and in place. This discussion highlights OkSU's experience with the new FCSED program and offers suggestions for others who are seeking to achieve a similar goal at their institution.

Background

There is a long and rich history at OkSU for preparing professionals in FCSED. Domestic Sciences classes were first taught on campus in 1908. With continued growth and impact, teacher training became the Department of Home Economics Education by 1926 (Keeler-Battles, 1989). In 1929, the first Master of Science in Home Economics Education was awarded, and in 1952 a Doctorate of Education in Home Economics Education was available, followed by an interdisciplinary Doctorate of Philosophy in 1978. With strong leadership, the department provided students, graduates, and faculty with diverse opportunities to work with others in public education and CES positions at the local, state, national, and international levels. The program flourished for many years in the Division/College of Home Economics and then the College of Human Environmental Sciences, changing its name in the early 1980s to the Department of Home Economics Education and Community Services (Keeler-Battles, 1989).

However, by the late 1980s program enrollments were low and the department could not be sustained. Students already in the program were allowed to complete their degrees, and then the department was closed (OSU Office of the Registrar, 1994).

Collaborative Efforts

As shortages of highly-qualified FCS education professionals were seen in Cooperative Extension (CE) and public schools since at least the 1980s (Atiles & Eubanks, 2014; Miller & Meszaros, 1996; Tripp & Hollarn, 2016; Werhan, 2013), FCS professionals in Oklahoma began to realize the urgent need for a program at the state's land-grant institution. Leaders in the OkSU College of Human Sciences met with state FCS leaders from the CES and the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (ODCTE) to determine strategies for initiating such a program. Later, a planning committee was assembled that included representatives from administration, 4-H, agricultural education, the College of Human Sciences, CES and the College of Education. A curriculum, the FCSES and FCSSED Plans of Study (OkSU Department of Human Development and Family Science, n.d.), was developed and approved through departmental, college, and university committees before receiving final approval from the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to launch the program. A proposal was developed to request funding for a faculty program coordinator position which was funded by the university Provost's office.

Building the Family and Consumer Sciences Education Program

Work of the Coordinator

With the arrival of a new FCSSED coordinator in May, 2013, early efforts focused on building relationships and garnering support for the new program. Personal visits, telephone calls, and electronic messages were utilized to facilitate on-campus meetings. Support was sought during campus visits with the Department Head and faculty where FCSSED was housed; the College of Human Sciences Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Services, Dean and Associate Dean for Extension and Engagement; the College of Education's Coordinator of the Career-Technical Education program; and the Department Head and Teacher Educator of the Agricultural Education, Communication and Leadership program in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. Students already admitted into the program met both individually and in small groups with the new program coordinator. Introductions of the program coordinator were made during on-campus meetings of the Oklahoma CES Executive Council, the College of Human Sciences faculty meeting of CES state specialists, during Oklahoma 4-H Roundup, and during the ODCTE FCSSED New Teacher Academy.

Off-campus visits were made with the state FCS Program Manager at the ODCTE and the State FCCLA Adviser. The coordinator also attended and was introduced during the Oklahoma CES Home and Community Education (OHCE) annual meeting and the ODCTE annual meeting of FCS teachers. Each of these visits was designed to build awareness of the new program while also forming networks with which the coordinator would work while growing the program.

In addition to program coordination, the coordinator also teaches several courses each semester. In some cases, courses are taught online to provide more flexibility for the coordinator to dedicate time to continued FCSSED program development. An active research program is also maintained as is participation in department, college, and university committees.

State-Level Preparation

At the same time, the state was evaluating the FCS program to determine if it was meeting the expectations of preparing students for the state content competencies. The new coordinator gathered data from faculty who taught the courses in the FCSSED degree plan, those

who worked in the public schools with the student teachers, and those who collected evaluation data. Upon review of the report, the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation determined that the FCSED program met the criteria for full state certification. A few months later, the program was evaluated by the National Commission for the Accreditation of Teacher Education and received full accreditation.

Student Organization

Students in the program expressed a desire to have an organization for their major, so they worked with the coordinator to develop a constitution and by-laws for the FCSED Club. Officers were elected and all members became involved with projects and activities. Upon completion of the review process, the organization received recognition from the College of Human Sciences Student Council and the OkSU Student Government Association. Members continue to be active in productive meetings, learning more about the profession from guest speakers and from members who have participated in internships and other pre-professional activities. In addition, they serve as judges for FCCLA STAR Events, are involved with 4-H activities, and visit with secondary FCS students during exhibits at FCCLA and 4-H meetings.

Advisory Board

An advisory board was formed for the purpose of reviewing program goals, activities, plans, and make recommendations to further strengthen the program. Members of the board include secondary FCS teachers, the program's academic advisors, current students, and alumni of the former OkSU Home Economics Education program, as well as FCS CES District Program Specialists and the state FCS Program Manager for the ODCTE. This advisory board meets annually in person and as needed electronically.

Scholarships

To strengthen retention efforts and bolster recruitment incentives, students receive scholarships from College of Human Sciences as well as state and national sources. Additional scholarships are being pursued to provide financial assistance that will help offset the rising costs of a university degree.

Service Opportunities

OkSU has a long and rich heritage of international service. To better provide global learning experiences for students in the FCSED program, opportunities for student teaching abroad were facilitated in the College of Human Sciences with the Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Services who engaged in an agreement with the United States Department of Defense Education Activity. To date, one student has participated in international student teaching at a military installation in Europe.

Recruitment Efforts

Family and Consumer Sciences Education Academy

The premier event for building awareness of the FCSED program and for recruiting students is the FCSED Academy. This five-day event immerses high school students in the FCSED profession and OkSU campus life. Students who are high school juniors apply for the Academy. Selection is based on their statement for students' plans related to the FCSED profession, their letters of recommendation, their leadership and other activities, and their

eligibility for admission to OkSU. The only costs to those who are accepted to the academy is their round-trip transportation to the OkSU campus plus any incidentals they choose to purchase while they attend. The program has been carefully constructed so that participants interact with FCS professionals with the CES and the ODCTE, develop and present a lesson, and tour exemplary FCS programs of county CES and public schools. In addition, they tour the College of Human Sciences, visit summer classes, interact with current FCSED students, and tour athletic facilities. Students who attend the academy may join in games and activities planned for them during the evenings.

Participants are housed in a campus village suite, sharing a common kitchen and lounging area. Three meals and access to snacks are provided each day, including visits to popular local restaurants. Breakfasts are prepared by members of the county CES OHCE and delivered to the residence hall by the county's FCS CE educator. The week ends with a special recognition luncheon in the Student Union. Participants' parents and their county CE FCS educator and FCS public school teacher, and the state FCS Program Manager from the ODCTE are invited to join the College of Human Sciences Dean, Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Services, Associate Dean for Extension and Engagement, and FCSED program coordinator as participants' perspectives of their Academy experiences are shared and completion certificates are received. Those students who attend the Academy and enroll in OkSU, major in FCSED, and maintain a satisfactory GPA, are awarded a \$1,000 scholarship after their first semester at OkSU.

Other Recruitment Efforts

Several varied recruitment activities are undertaken throughout the year. The FCSED program coordinator periodically reviews state FCCLA and 4-H calendars to determine those events where a presentation and/or exhibit should be visible for enhanced program awareness. When possible, travel is coordinated with the College of Human Sciences Prospective Student Services Coordinator, such as for FCS Day at the Capitol and the FCCLA State Convention.

Program materials are available in print form for distribution and information is also available online. The program coordinator demonstrates the need for FCSED professionals by displaying a state map on her exterior office door of current openings in county CES offices and in public schools. Removable dots are used on this poster-sized map that was created to provide an immediate visual display for students, staff, faculty, administrators, and parents that walk by.

On campus, the program coordinator and available students participate in events ranging from College of Human Sciences Discovery Day and Junior Day to Welcome Week. With their exhibit as the basis for sharing information, they visit with interested students about the FCSED program.

The FCSED program coordinator has also delivered presentations at the district, state, national, and international levels to promote the program. During these sessions, information about the program is shared, primarily by showing students participating in classes and activities. The focus of each presentation relates to its audience. If a presentation is for secondary students, it includes an engaging combination of topics related to the Academy, projected shortages of professionals, university admissions information, freshman learning communities, course requirements, campus organizations and activities, scholarships, opportunities to study and teach abroad, internships, and expected career prospects upon graduation. When a presentation is given to a professional organization or adult interest group, its focus shifts to program development and growth, achievements of students, and the need for additional scholarships in addition to some of the topics listed above.

Conclusion

The process for developing and implementing a new academic program at a land-grant university requires the dedicated efforts of many persons both on- and off-campus. Resources needed to accomplish this goal include generous amounts of time by key administrators to focus on generating documents that portray the need for the program and its benefits to the state, developing academic degree plans, and creating and filling a new faculty position. Specific budgetary commitments must also be secured early in the process. Once in place, concentrated and ongoing stakeholder relationships further strengthen growth and development, as will having physical and electronic presence at sites where secondary students and their teachers, counselors, administrators and parents as well as FCS professionals are located.

With the shortage of professionals documented to continue for at least ten more years, but likely much longer due to expected retirements (Atiles & Eubanks, 2014; Tripp & Hollarn, 2016), resolving to build similar programs at other institutions is a pressing goal. Ongoing organization and management of the process is critical for successfully providing an avenue for the profession of FCS to flourish.

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