

## **Educators and Counselors: Professional Allies in Addressing the National Teacher Shortage**

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*Secondary school counselors are key stakeholders in the Say Yes to FCS initiative and must be included in the efforts to recruit more family and consumer sciences (FCS) teachers. The initiative provides resources that would benefit school counselors in local districts that have FCS programs. To establish an effective partnership, FCS educators need to understand the current demands and expectations of school counselors as well as the often-limited training counselors may have received in career education and guidance in their counselor preparation program. This article explains the demands school counselors face and how FCS stakeholders can collaborate with school counselors in the local district. Commonalities between these two groups of professionals are also explored.*

As the *Say Yes to FCS* initiative continues to expand, new stakeholders are identified. Secondary school counselors are key stakeholders and must be included in the efforts to recruit more family and consumer sciences (FCS) teachers. Through collaboration, the local teacher can inform counselors of the critical shortage of FCS teachers and inform them of the important college and career readiness content that is addressed in the secondary FCS classroom. To establish an effective partnership, the FCS educator needs to understand the current demands and expectations of school counselors, as well as the often-limited training counselors may have received in career education and guidance in their counselor preparation program. Therefore, the two purposes of this article are: (a) to educate FCS teachers on the demands school counselors face, and (b) to help FCS teachers understand their role in educating the school counselors in the local district, so that greater collaboration can occur between professionals who have a common goal—providing students with the necessary skills to be successful in college, career, and life.

### **State of School Counseling**

School counselors are guided by the standards put forth by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) that suggest the role of school counselors is to “promote equity and success in rigorous educational experiences for all students” (2015, p.1). Counselors are also expected to “support a safe learning environment and work to safeguard human rights of all members of the school community and address the needs of all students through culturally relevant prevention and intervention programs that are a part of a comprehensive school counselor program” (ASCA, 2015, p. 1). Further, the ASCA national model suggests that school counseling programs be implemented as collaborative efforts benefitting students, parents, teachers, administrators and the overall community giving FCS teachers and counselors the opportunities to work together and not in isolation (ASCA, 2015).

ASCA provides a list of counseling (appropriate) and non-counseling (inappropriate) activities for school counselors on its website. School counselors are frequently assigned non-counseling activities (e.g. computing grade-point averages, maintaining student records, subbing

for absent teachers, keeping clerical records, hall duty, etc.) that are unrelated to preparing high school students for success after graduation (Hines, Lemons, & Crews, 2011). One of the most frequently assigned non-counseling duties of school counselors is the role of district or campus testing coordinator associated with the many state and federal mandates for standardized testing. Administrators justify this assignment with the reasoning that counselors are expected to provide academic support to students and testing is equated with academic support. Unfortunately, the role of testing coordinator has diverted much of the school counselors' time from other critical areas of a comprehensive counseling program (Schenck, Anctil, Smith, & Dahl, 2012). Because of these local expectations, school counselors are challenged with having enough time to effectively counsel students to take the courses, such as FCS, that not only meet high school graduation requirements but are also related to their career interests. Hines et al. (2011) determined that when students do not take the appropriate courses—academic and career-related—there can be negative consequences for students after graduation. Administrators, as well as teachers, need to recognize that “school counselors are responsible for each and every student in the building, and unlike others on campus, they are in a position to focus on the educational journey of the student” (Hines et al., 2011, p. 2).

Another pressing issue for most counselors is the large numbers of students they are assigned manage. ASCA (2015) recommends that counselors should have a ratio of 1 counselor to 250 students to implement a comprehensive developmental school counseling program designed to meet the needs of all students. However, the average U.S. counselor ratio is 1 counselor to 471 students. This disparity led the American Counseling Association to support a federal bill known as H.R. 320, the *Student Support Act*, which was re-enacted in January 2013 to provide additional funds to states to hire additional counselors that would lower the counselor-to-student ratio.

Finally, and surprising to many, most secondary school counselors were not required nor offered the opportunity to take a career counseling or career development course during their counseling preparation programs. This is especially a concern when counsellors participated in programs that were not accredited by the Counsel for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Program (CACREP). Standards were revised in 2009 by CACREP to include career development as one of the eight common core curricular areas required for students enrolled in a graduate-level counseling program (CACREP, 2009). Even with these increased standards for the more recently trained counselors, there is still a shortfall in career development content because it is often underemphasized in many counselor preparation programs. Miller (2015) found the CACREP-accredited university school counseling preparation programs in Texas require only one career counseling or career development course which tends to emphasize theory more than application.

This lack of preparation in career development may impact the counselors' self-efficacy in career counseling. For example, counselors may have limited skills and resources to connect students with labor market data. They may also be unaware of current high demand occupations, such as FCS education, because they have not been exposed to recent workforce data or know the resources to locate the data.

### **Alignment of Family and Consumer Sciences and School Counseling**

The mission of FCS education is to ensure students are prepared for independence, family, employment, and life by applying knowledge from a variety of educational disciplines (National Association of State Administrators of FCS, 2008). FCS meets this mission by

addressing national and state standards that help students successfully prepare for a future that includes in a rapidly changing workforce and global economy while concurrently preparing for careers. These standards provide students with the opportunity to develop their total well-being by empowering them to become healthy, well adjusted, self-confident, productive individuals, family members, and employees (National Association of State Administrators of FCS, 2008). The curriculum reflects the scope and diversity of FCS content in equipping all students with the life skills necessary to improve the quality of the physical, psychological, and social aspects of life for themselves and others.

The FCS curriculum aligns with the ASCA national model on college and career readiness standards for students. ASCA organizes these standards in three broad domains a) academic development, b) career development, and c) social/emotional development (ASCA, 2014). All domains promote mindsets and behaviors that enhance the learning process and create a college and career readiness culture for all students. The career development domain includes “standards guiding school counseling program to help students 1) understand the connection between school and world of work and 2) plan for and make a successful transition from school to postsecondary education and/or the world of work and from job to job across the life span” (ASCA, 2014, p. 1). The social/emotional development domain includes “standards guiding school counseling programs to help students manage emotions and learn and apply interpersonal skills” (ASCA, 2014, p. 1). Definitions for these domains harmonize with content within FCS curriculum. Most of ASCA’s 35 mindset and behavior standards (ASCA, 2014) include specific attitudes, knowledge and skills that students should be able to demonstrate as a result of their involvement in a school counseling program and are similar to FCS national and state standards. Consider, for example, the following ASCA standards (ASCA, 2014, p. 2):

- “BLS-7. Identify long- and short-term academic, career, and social/emotional goals.”
- “B-LS 9. Gather evidence and consider multiple perspectives to make informed decisions.”
- “B-LS 10. Participate in enrichment and extracurricular activities.”
- “B-SMS 7. Demonstrate effective coping skills when faced with a problem.”
- “B-SMS 8. Demonstrate the ability to balance school, home and community activities.”
- “B-SS 1. Use effective oral and written communication skills and listens skills.”
- “B-SS 7. Use leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse teams.”

### **Family and Consumer Sciences’ Role in Providing Career Guidance and Career Readiness**

FCS teachers have historically been and continue to be in a unique position to complement secondary school counselors’ efforts to provide students with strong career guidance and prepare students to be career ready. In 1908, Frank Parsons established the first Bureau of Vocational Guidance. Since then, career guidance has been a vital component of workforce development and was foundational to the career education movement that developed in the 1980s. Career development has been a consistent component of the federal *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act* (Hoyt & Stein, 2005).

FCS National Standards include a process framework for emphasizing a practical problems approach in FCS that can be used to address career decision-making. FCS teachers are well suited for helping others to resolve practical problems because of the underlying philosophy

that focuses on helping individuals and families' think about and take action in response to the problems or issues of everyday life (Brown & Paolucci, 1979; McGregor, 2004). Practical problems are considered "what should be done" problems and are frequently continuing concerns that focus on the larger fundamental questions, issues, and concerns of individuals and families. For example, "What should I do about exploring my career options in teaching FCS?" is a practical problem, and students need to have an understanding of the contextual factors related to a problem to investigate and respond to it.

FCS curriculum also prepares students for careers in occupations that are in-demand, require high levels of skill, and are frequently offer a high wage (O\*NET Online, 2016). Career opportunities can be found in a range of occupational fields including, but not limited to, teaching, child care and development, early childhood education, housing and home furnishings, food service and hospitality, nutrition, health related occupations, social work, fashion construction and merchandising, and personal and family finance (O\*NET Online, 2016). FCS courses are aligned with the following national career clusters: Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources; Architecture and Construction; Arts, A/V Technology and Communications; Education and Training, Finance, Health Science, Hospitality and Tourism, Human Services; Marketing; and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (ACTE, 2015).

Advising tools known as programs/plans of study (POS) have been developed at the national and state levels for various career fields in these career clusters to help students and parents, as well as counselors, identify the courses, co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities (e.g. Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, hereinafter FCCLA), and extended learning opportunities (e.g. job shadowing, internships, work-based learning, and practicums) that are relevant to their career interest(s). Districts frequently customize POS to reflect local course offerings, thereby using the POS as a tool for program recruitment and an advising guide with students.

FCCLA is a national career and technical student organization for middle and secondary school students and should be an integral part of any FCS program. FCCLA is designed to be co-curricular, which means it should be embedded in the FCS curriculum. FCCLA provides leadership and scholarship opportunities, competitive and STAR events, and community involvement, all which prepare students to become productive citizens and leaders in their communities and careers. FCS curriculum is aligned with state and national FCCLA programs and projects to give students the full benefit of all available opportunities.

Providing work-based learning opportunities is an important consideration in preparing all students to be career ready. With work-based learning, students can complete occupationally specific FCS training delivered through school-based laboratories or work-based learning arrangements such as internships, mentoring, and job shadowing. A work-based learning experience allows students to apply knowledge and technical skills to real-world projects and problems alongside FCS-related career professionals. For example, a student interested in teaching FCS could be assigned as a classroom/lab aide for a FCS teacher, earning credit for this learning experience. Work-based experiences provide students with firsthand opportunities to determine the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in any chosen industry.

Students may also improve their career readiness through achievement of industry-recognized certifications. FCS programs in Hospitality and Tourism and Education and Training, for example, offer industry-recognized certifications that can be completed during high school. These certifications may also provide an opportunity for students to earn dual college or articulated credit, as well as qualify them for a job opportunity. School counselors should be

made aware of the college and career readiness experiences that occur regularly in the FCS classroom, which is the first step in creating a collaborative relationship between teachers and counselors that will, ultimately, result in more opportunities to explore in-demand occupations such as FCS educator.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations should be considered in the future by FCS teachers and school counselors to achieve a collaborative relationship:

- FCS teachers should make it a priority to work collaboratively with secondary school counselors to ensure that counselors are aware of an important resource in their building. Encourage the counselors to consider FCS teachers, and other teachers, as members of the counseling team. Teachers see their students daily and may recognize issues and concerns with students that are important to local counseling initiatives. Additionally, FCS teachers know the appropriate coherent sequence of courses are used in all FCS-related career pathways, especially the teaching pathway, and can identify those sequences for their counselors. Additionally, FCS teachers need to keep school counselors informed of any new standards or changes made at the state or national levels related to FCS, such as industry recommendations.
- FCS teachers should provide counselors with current employment outlook data on teaching FCS and promotional materials from the *Say Yes to FCS* campaign, such as posters, flyers, fact sheets, etc., that are designed to recruit potential students. Resources are available at the campaign website.
- Because counselors advise a broader range of students, they may be able to identify potential students not currently enrolled in an FCS course. For an example, there may be a student enrolled in Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources or the Fine Arts who have focused on those career-related electives, yet they might be a good fit a career in teaching FCS.
- Initiate a meeting with school counselors to discuss with them where there is shared background and how the FCS program can support school counseling expectations.
- Invite school counselors to the FCS classroom to observe the career development activities addressed in FCS courses and the career development resources and employability skills embedded in learning experiences. Having first-hand knowledge of the FCS curriculum and classroom experiences will better equip counselors to promote FCS courses for students and to accurately answer questions from parents and students.
- Invite school counselors to attend FCCLA events to see the rigorous and relevant instruction and competitions firsthand for increasing students' success in college and career readiness. Counselors might even be willing to judge FCCLA STAR Events.
- Attend professional development that focuses on career development and guidance to stay current with issues, resources, and data impacting the workforce.
- Seek professional development opportunities that promote collaboration between FCS teachers and counselors. These experiences will increase opportunities for both teachers and counselors to understand each other's roles in the high school program development and implementation process, as well as see the importance of working together in helping students achieve their postsecondary and career goals beyond high school.
- Work with local counselor(s) to establish partnerships with local and/or regional postsecondary programs to provide FCS dual college credit courses for students

interested in majoring in education. Courses could be either online or provided on the school campus. If secondary the FCS teachers meet the postsecondary requirements to teach a dual college credit course, they should be encouraged to offer the dual credit equivalent courses.

- Provide opportunities for current secondary school counselors and FCS teachers to discuss the alignments in their curriculums for providing the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development needed for students to see their potential for success in school.

### Summary

As the FCS profession continues to address the national teacher shortage, it is imperative that we embrace opportunities for new collaborations. The *Say Yes to FCS* initiative provides resources that would benefit the school counselors in local districts that have FCS programs. School counselors perform many counseling and non-counseling roles on a school campus, and often have extremely high advising loads. FCS teachers are valuable partners for school counselors because both groups share the common goal of meeting their students' physical, intellectual, social, and emotional developmental needs. Collaboration will provide a better learning environment for all students, as well as potentially increase enrollments in FCS programs because counselors will better understand the learning experience provided through FCS courses. A further outcome of increased enrollments is more students becoming aware of a rewarding career that is in high demand—teaching FCS.

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## **Profile and Promotion of the Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher Education Student**

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*Many family and consumer sciences (FCS) university teacher education programs are facing a decline in student enrollment which can lead to serious consequences for the profession. The purpose of this study was to create a profile of the FCS teacher education student and obtain strategies to promote FCS teacher education programs. Illinois FCS teachers provided the qualitative data in this research. Findings from the study can assist Illinois and other FCS teacher education programs in structuring promotion efforts to increase student enrollment.*

Nationally the number of students who major in family and consumer sciences (FCS) teacher education has declined in recent years (Lee, 2011). In Illinois, the seven FCS teacher education accredited institutions had a total of 52 FCS teacher education students enrolled during the 2012-2013 school year, representing a 38 percent decline in enrollments in FCS teacher education programs in Illinois in two years (D. Hopper, personal communication, September, 2012). Low enrollment numbers potentially threaten higher education FCS teacher education programs by devaluing the reputation and forcing reduction in programs that can result in the dismissal or reassignment of faculty positions and, essentially, the supply of available certified FCS teachers. With the known demand for FCS teachers (Cross, 2016; Werhan, 2013), the impact of declining enrollments is concerning.

Conversations about enrollment issues among FCS teacher educators at the Illinois FCS Teacher Education Council Spring 2012 meeting were held. The common response in the quest for a solution to these issues was recruitment. While promotion ideas were mentioned, no definitive plan was established due to uncertainty related to the most effective course of action.

Palmer and Gaunt (2007) indicated the first step to successful promotion requires knowing who your audience is and then effectively packaging your product toward meeting the needs of this audience. The purpose of this study was to create a profile of the Illinois FCS teacher education student and obtain strategies to promote FCS teacher education programs from previous FCS teacher education students who are now teaching in Illinois.

### **Review of Literature**

#### **University Program Enrollment**

The number of universities offering FCS teacher education have seriously declined in the past few decades. In the mid-1980's, there were 281 FCS teacher education programs reported nationwide; a decade later, that number declined to 171 programs (American Association of FCS, 2012). Currently, there are 103 institutions that offer FCS teacher education programs (Holland, 2017), representing a 63 percent decrease in program offerings since the 1980s. Bull and Cummings (2002) connected low student enrollments with program terminations.



## **Underlying Factors**

To achieve the goal of increased enrollments, programs must first examine the issues that have caused the decline in numbers of FCS teacher education majors to not repeat them. Several external and internal factors have been identified as contributors to the slide among FCS teacher education majors.

External factors that negatively affect enrollment include problems beyond the immediate control of the FCS teacher education profession. Historically, the image of the FCS profession has misguided the perception of what FCS entails (Lee, 2011; Mimbs 2002). For example, FCS-related subjects continue to be recognized by many as inferior to academics within the secondary education level, which could result in some students missing the opportunity to be exposed to the FCS-career path. Although males are not reciprocating similarly in FCS, another external factor is the large proportion of females that are entering nontraditional fields such as engineering and business (Rattray & Calvin, 2010). State reform initiatives, such as academic placement testing and increased high school graduation requirements is another factor that has narrowed FCS course options for students (Pickard, 2004). As a result, students are not exposed to the FCS curriculum or the FCS teacher and therefore are not aware of FCS teaching as a career choice.

Internal factors have surfaced to add to the FCS teacher education enrollment problem. Mimbs (2000, 2002) has identified fragmentation within the FCS profession as a factor (Mimbs, 2000, 2002). Students may not recognize that areas such as child development, nutrition, interior design, and fashion merchandising are related to FCS. Because FCS teacher education draws upon all of these specialty areas, disunity in the profession has a trickle-down effect on the FCS teacher education identity. Fragmentation may also make it difficult to locate FCS education programs at a university due to the absence of an academic home or recognizable name. For example, FCS teacher education is housed at some universities in units with names such as Human Ecology or Workforce Education and Development or Applied Science and Technology. Given the plethora of names, it is not surprising outsiders have a vague understanding of our profession or have difficulty locating the FCS department on a university website.

Another factor, possibly resulting from a combination of external and internal factors, is the way potential students view the profession of FCS education. Rattray and Calvin (2010) indicated that a large majority of secondary students reported they had never even considered a career in FCS or that they did not feel there were jobs available in the profession. Any action taken without addressing the underlying problems contributing to the decline in enrollments would merely provide temporary redress.

## **Program Promotion**

The shortage of FCS teachers has been well documented (Bartley & Sneed, 2004; Cross, 2017; Tripp, 2006; Werhan & Way, 2006; Werhan, 2013) leading researchers and others to focus on promotion or recruitment methods to generate growth. Lee (1998) pinned the promotion of irregular teacher certification approaches to the influx of FCS teacher vacancies. Mimbs, Stewart, and Heath-Camp (1998) studied the career choice influences of then-recent FCS teacher graduates for recruitment purposes. They recommended that recruitment plans revisit such influences to facilitate more productive plans and develop more focused recruitment plans for targeted audiences. Mimbs (2002) suggested that the following factors were important in the recruitment of FCS students: 1) early recruitment; 2) scholarship availability; and 3) community support for programs.

Recruitment efforts documented in the literature largely include recruitment fairs and events (Godbey, 2016; Jensen, Rowley, Skidmore & Hyom-Parker, 2003; Poirier, Sager, & Kounlavong, 2016; Smalley, DeBates, & Smith, 2016). Lee (2011) documented the development of a newsletter series to create a more personal, inviting touch as an outreach method to FCS teachers and their students. Poirier, Sager, and Kounlavong (2016) also identify communication with and the distribution of promotional resources to current teachers as central to their recruitment efforts.

The influential role of the secondary FCS teachers has been a consistent reason why students pursue careers in FCS teacher education (Arnett & Freeburg, 2011; Jensen, Rowley, Skidmore & Hyom-Parker, 2003; Mimbs, 2000). Bull, Uerz, and Yoakum (2000) stated that “teacher involvement in student recruitment was crucial among secondary students choosing a career in FCS education.” Clearly, the FCS teacher at the local level is an important pipeline for university FCS teacher education sustainability; however, their level of self-promotion behaviors is uncertain.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Marketing of FCS teacher education remains a significant role played by FCS teacher educators (Palmer & Gaunt, 2007). Marketing and recruitment together is termed promotion. Promotion is a business process. Marketing starts with market research, a learning process in which marketers (e.g., FCS teacher education programs) get to know everything they can about the interests, needs, and wants of consumers (e.g., potential students). Once the marketing research is completed a program can tailor a message to targeted groups. An effective promotion strategy is beneficial because it is cost and time-effective, creates a concentrated message, provides for a systematic process, and streamlines resources and personnel.

The principles of social marketing are applicable in the development of a promotion plan. Emerging in the 1970s, the social marketing model applies commercial principles that focuses on a targeted group within the population and tailors campaigns and awareness with the aim of achieving specific goals relevant to an organization (Weinreich, 2011). Essentially, the process of social marketing gathers data from an experience-related group to develop a niche marketing strategy.

Applicable to this study, determining the FCS teacher education student profile and generating timely promotion strategies from former FCS teacher education students can help craft a successful message, directed at the right people in the right places. To date, the profile of a FCS teacher education student has not been determined in literature therefore implying broad tactics have been used for recruitment.

The key to social marketing is relating to the audience you are trying to reach. FCS teacher educators need to ask and listen from previous students for a targeted a promotion plan. Seeking information from the targeted population can generate ideas as well as barriers for enrollment. Additionally, by building connections with key people, such as Illinois FCS teachers, has the potential to bring attention and credibility to FCS teaching career path thus yielding positive results for a university FCS teacher education program.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to create a profile of the FCS teacher education student and obtain strategies for promotion for FCS teacher education programs.

## **Method**

This study used an online survey with a descriptive research design developed using SurveyMonkey.com. It was pilot tested with secondary career and technical education teachers (n=6) to determine internal consistency and was modified and revised to reflect the comments of the pilot test group.

The final questionnaire consisted of three sections: (a) demographics of the FCS teacher education student, (b) university selection, and (c) promotion strategies. The demographic section asked for participants to select from a list of demographic responses (gender, age range, ethnicity, home location, distance to university attended, type of program, and years teaching) and to indicate their reasoning for becoming a FCS teacher. The second section used an open-ended question to allow participants to describe their reasoning for selecting the university they attended. The final section, an open-ended question, asked participants to describe two strategies FCS teacher educators can use to promote FCS teacher education. Collectively, the demographic and university selection questionnaire sections contributed to creating the FCS teacher education student profile while the third section provided detailed promotion strategies that answered the second part of the purpose statement.

## **Participants**

Palmer and Gaunt (2007) suggested collecting data from previous clients (e.g., FCS teacher education students who are now FCS teachers) to establish a consistent pattern. The population consisted of Illinois FCS Teacher Association (IFCSTA) members during the 2012-13 year. The sampling frame was established using the IFCSTA membership list, and the entire population (N = 152) was studied.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

Using surveyMonkey.com, a cover letter that included the questionnaire link was emailed to every FCS teacher in the IFCSTA 2012-2013 membership. Participants were given one-week to complete the questionnaire. To increase the response rate, two subsequent weekly emails were sent to remind respondents to participate in the research study (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). Ninety-four respondents (62%) completed the questionnaire.

Data analysis was divided into three stages (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). In stage one, the primary investigator transcribed the data, established response categories, and placed responses in categories. In stage two, the questionnaire, coding rubric, and final results of the coding were independently reviewed by a panel to ensure conformity and validity. In stage three, the data were summarized, interpreted and reported.

## **Findings**

Illinois FCS teachers provided the data to generate a profile of the FCS teacher education student and timely strategies for the promotion of FCS teacher education. Findings provided a profile of a FCS teacher education students as an 18 to 22-year-old, Caucasian females who grew up in suburban areas, outside major cities, or in towns with a population less than 3,000. These students attended a traditional, four-year degree FCS teacher education program and selected FCS teacher education as their program major their freshman year. Respondents noted that they became FCS teachers because of their interest in FCS-related subjects and their high school FCS teachers.

Survey respondents were asked how they decided which institution to attend to earn their FCS teacher education degrees. The majority of participants indicated that being “close to home” was the decisive factor in selecting the university they attended. Interestingly, these teachers reported that the university they attended was within 100 miles of their home. Other factors mentioned related to the selection of a program: (a) the program’s reputation, (b) family or friends went to school there, and some mentioned that they (c) “fell into” the program as an undecided major or switched majors while at their university.

The questionnaire also asked participants to describe two promotion strategies that university FCS teacher education programs could use to recruit. Numerous suggestions were provided, but two categories emerged: (a) FCS faculty led-initiatives and (b) university led-initiatives. The top five recruitment ideas that FCS university faculty suggested included: (a) faculty visits to high school programs, (b) an emphasis on the availability of FCS teaching positions, (c) participation in university open houses and display student work and share success stories, (d) the creation and distribution of contemporary promotional materials including flyers, posters, and downloadable videos of program, and (e) becoming actively involved in FCCLA events. The second category of suggestions was more specific to the function or responsibilities of universities: (a) FCS teacher education programs should be prominent and accessible on university websites, (b) the image and visibility of the profession within the universities should be strengthened, (c) online courses or cohort classes at high schools should be offered to meet the needs of today’s students, and, (d) simply advertise the program.

### **Discussion**

Because of the decline in student enrollments in Illinois FCS education programs has serious consequences for the profession, Illinois FCS teacher educators needed a starting point. This study gathered information from a targeted audience practicing FCS educators to generate a FCS teacher education student profile and identify promotion strategies to initiate a recruitment plan to elevate enrollment in programs.

The profile of a FCS teacher education student is the traditional college-aged, Caucasian female that attends a four-year FCS teacher education program as a freshman with a strong connection with the FCS curriculum and/or FCS teacher. While this demographic data provides the characteristics of the population that should be targeted for pursuing a FCS teacher education degree, it also highlights missing demographics. Touted in other related literature, FCS lacks diversity within the teaching profession, meaning males and minority FCS teachers (Arnett & Freeburg, 2011; Werhan & Way, 2006) as well as those who are considering a career change or those who have stayed home to raise children. For example, reach out to stay-at-home mothers or fathers by promoting the FCS teacher career path as a natural transition from the managing the home to the classroom and off-set a major barrier by providing financial support exclusively for this group in terms of scholarships for tuition, book, child-care and living expenses. Also, to increase nontraditional enrollment, FCS teacher education programs could link with the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE) to increase student access and workforce diversity via professional development and technical assistance. By reaching out to these untapped markets could prove positive results in increasing enrollment for FCS teacher education programs.

The connection between the profile Illinois FCS teacher education major and his/her FCS teachers as an important reason why s/he chose to study FCS education reaffirms the findings from Arnett and Freeburg (2011), Mimbs (2002), and Bull, Uerz, and Yoakum (2000) of

the importance the secondary FCS teacher role is in the recruitment process for the FCS education profession. Clearly, the FCS secondary teacher is a major link in increasing potential enrollment in FCS teacher education programs thus recruitment efforts should start with the help of a secondary FCS teacher. Secondary FCS teachers should be prepared for the important role they play in recruitment. Providing professional development through related conference sessions or sending out a one-page flyer on how to 'grow your own' can help make these teachers become aware of their role. Another way to involve the FCS teacher is to ask for their participation on an advisory board to feel some ownership in a FCS teacher education program.

Concentrating efforts and building relationships with secondary FCS teachers should be a priority among university programs to ensure positive growth in FCS education programs. Relationship-building techniques suggested include sending personal letters or newsletters highlighting program successes or new happenings as described by Lee (2011) or hosting area regional events such as state organizational meetings or FCS-related student events (Godbey, 2016; Jensen, Rowley, Skidmore & Hyom-Parker, 2003; Poirier, Sager, & Kounlavong, 2016; Smalley, DeBates, & Smith, 2016).

In selecting a university FCS teacher education program to attend, majority of the participants in this study indicated their choice was based on proximity of their home, in fact within 100 miles. FCS teacher education programs should perhaps with the help of graduate assistants, identify all schools within a two-hour radius and promote heavily in the identified geographical area.

Interestingly, internal transfer students, students who switch their majors while at the university, are a population source for recruitment as indicated in the findings. FCS teacher educators and/or FCS teacher education students should present to underclassman FCS-related classes or attend undecided major events to communicate FCS teacher education as viable career option. Knowing this information, universities can heavily promote their program to the local surrounding areas and right on campus instead of a state-wide approach which may deem overwhelming and costly.

### **Promotion Strategies**

Two categories, FCS faculty led- and University led-initiatives, emerged as results of asking for strategies on how university FCS teacher education programs can promote students into their programs. FCS teacher educators be more visible and accessible. FCS teacher education student organizations can partner with the local Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) chapters for coordinated events at both sites. The teacher education students can build relationships with secondary students conversing about the FCS teacher education program in general, courses, college life, and in turn, the teacher education students can gain experience working with FCCLA programming.

The influence of social media today impacts how messages can be distributed, and communicated in a timely and inexpensive manner. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or YouTube can be efficient outreach modes to the suggested profile of FCS teacher education students.

Students today are stewards of technology. Programs need to use this source to their advantage and be responsive to the changing needs of students. For example, FCS teacher education websites need to be reflective of FCS today in terms of attention grabbing (visuals, fonts and colors), information the current and accurate, use of short videos, and a list of job placements and availability as a motivating factor. As a finding in this study, delivery methods

also need to re-examined to include online coursework with quality instruction and (re-) establish cohort groups. Also, websites such as Zinch.com are extremely useful tools that connect students with universities, career paths, and programs of study. Another strategy is to enlist FCS teacher education students to create visual and video-taped recruitment presentations to share with high school students as an assignment. It is important to involve the students majoring in FCS teacher education in the recruitment process so these future teachers will have experience with promotion efforts for their own programs.

As previously discussed by Mimbs (2002), the profession's identity (name uniformity, brand, and philosophical stance) was identified as an ongoing problem connected with enrolments. People in the profession know possible names to search in a search engine tool bar or university websites; however, many lay people do not. However, in efforts to bring uniformity and recognition to the FCS discipline, the American Association of FCS established the Branding Initiative in 2010 that introduced consistent key messages and an icon that has been endorsed by several FCS alliance organizations including the education sector. The intention of the initiative is to bring consistency and unity to the FCS discipline.

According to the social marketing model, research is crucial to determine the most effective and efficient vehicles to reach the target audience and increase demand (Weinreich, 2011). Previous FCS teacher education students in this study identified numerous strategies for Illinois FCS teacher education programs to reach potential students as well as barriers that can be improved for the FCS teacher education discipline. A relatable marketing strategy directed towards the targeted profile will provide a reference point for Illinois FCS teacher educators.

While the findings from this study are not novel, the promotional strategies discussed here brought the Illinois FCS educators who participated in this research to FCS teacher education. Therefore, quality efforts associated with of traditional avenues to promote FCS education as a career option may need to be reconsidered. As Mimbs, Stewart, and Heath-Camp (1998) recommended, programs should revisit current recruitment plans to facilitate for more productive plans and develop more focused recruitment plans for targeted audiences.

### **Limitations**

A limitation of the study is that it only surveyed teachers in one state. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to other populations. Further studies might expand the scope of inquiry to other states to determine if similar trends exist.

### **Conclusion**

The projected goal of this study was to assist Illinois university FCS teacher education programs with their promotion process. Essentially, this study sought to gather information from former FCS teacher education students about to ascertain what attracted them to certain universities and strategies to generate program growth. It is hoped that the results will allow Illinois FCS teacher educators to be more focused in their recruitment efforts. While each program is vying for student numbers, as a state we all share in the same issue: the need to increase enrollment numbers. The next step in the process is to address the targeted audience in an effective way by devising a plan specific to each university based on the findings.

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## **University of Wyoming and Colorado State University Partnership: Fulfilling the Need for FCS Teachers in Wyoming**

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*Although Wyoming has been ranked near the top states in the country for starting teacher salaries (National Education Association, 2016), it cannot meet its family and consumer sciences (FCS) secondary-level teacher needs. In 1995, the FCS teacher preparation program at the University of Wyoming (UW) was eliminated, leaving the state without a means to fill FCS secondary-level openings. After years of trying to fill FCS teaching openings with out-of-state candidates and Wyoming high school students' continued interest in the FCS teaching profession, other options needed exploring. As a result, during the period of 2014-2016 university personnel from UW and Colorado State University met to develop a collaborative partnership for FCS teacher preparation.*

The University of Wyoming (UW) Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) teacher preparation program administered jointly by the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources-Department of Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) and the College of Education-Department of Secondary Education, was eliminated along with all vocational education programs except Agriculture Education as part of a university refocusing in 1995. Wyoming (WY) was left without a FCS teacher preparation program and a mechanism to fill secondary FCS teacher openings.

Despite the lack of a FCS teacher education program, UW students continued to inquire about licensure. Vincenti, a UW FCS faculty member and former University of Massachusetts FCS teacher educator, was often asked to advise students interested in becoming FCS teachers but lacked options other than recommending they enroll in an out-of-state teacher preparation program.

The prospect of leaving WY and paying out-of-state tuition to obtain a degree in FCS education isn't appealing to most students. In 2006, the WY legislature created the Hathaway Scholarship which encourages WY high school students to prepare for and pursue post-secondary education within the state. (WY Department of Education, 2016). For many students, the scholarship makes a college education possible.

Concerns related to tuition costs for UW college students and the quality of teacher preparation options, prompted creative efforts to fulfill the WY FCS teacher need. As a result, over a three-year period (2014-2016) discussions took place resulting in the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between UW and Colorado State University (CSU) FCS teacher education program. The CSU FCS teacher preparation program was chosen because of its quality and proximity to Laramie, WY.

### **Need for FCS Educators Nationally**

Werhan's (2013) survey of state FCS administrators, Career and Technical Education data collectors, and FCS state leaders representing all 50 states, found half the states reported having continuing trouble hiring enough licensed FCS teachers. As a result, some districts have been forced "to make the hard decision to either close a program or hire teachers who are not fully prepared for the scope of work of FCS teachers" (p. 44). However, because some states did not report data, Werhan concluded estimates were low. The unresponsiveness in some states can be explained by lack of state-level FCS leadership, over-extension of responsibilities, and/or lack of specific and consistent data collection.

Despite a national decline in the number of FCS teacher preparation programs, a decline in the number of FCS teachers and teacher candidates over the past 10 years, and increased emphasis in public schools on "core" academic courses tied to school funding, all 50 states still offer secondary FCS programs. In fact, nationally, some programs are doing very well and demand is increasing (Tripp and Ownbey, 2016).

A shortage of licensed FCS teachers has led to alternative methods of obtaining the FCS endorsement in some states. These alternative methods have impacted the quality of FCS programs because of inadequate academic preparation for teaching the breadth of FCS content and lack of preparation in experiential learning using the holistic integrative perspective of FCS content and co-curricular youth leadership (Werhan, 2013, pp. 44-45).

### **Need for FCS Educators in Wyoming**

"During the 2012/13 school year, 21.9% of WY teachers were age 55 or older and 13.7% were eligible for retirement, a statistic that will continue to grow" (Bullard et al, 2014, p. 5). Additionally, Bullard et al. (2014) stated that the public-school enrollment is expected to grow, likely exacerbating a shortage of teachers (p. 12).

Werhan and Whitbeck's (2015) national study of state superintendents supported the demand for FCS teachers in WY. This study was conducted to ascertain state superintendent's knowledge of the status of FCS programs in their districts, future need for FCS teachers, and the availability of licensed candidates to fill open positions. The study revealed 66-75% of the WY school districts reporting offered middle school and/or high school FCS programs with 20% (n=5 of 26) indicating no FCS courses were offered. Further, two of the superintendents in districts not offering FCS courses indicated the reason for the lack of a FCS program was the inability to find qualified teachers. Almost 59% of WY superintendents reported it being somewhat likely or very likely that they will need to hire a FCS teacher in the next three years with approximately 63% reporting having some difficulty or great difficulty finding licensed FCS teacher candidates, especially in rural districts. Seventy-one percent preferred hiring a teacher education program graduate, but were willing to take alternative credentials, such as content experts prepared through alternative routes (42%) and individuals with a teaching credential who were transitioning to teaching (50%), if necessary to fill the positions (D. Whitbeck, personal communication, November 18, 2015). WY superintendents indicated that their biggest concern with hiring through an alternative route was a lack of deep content knowledge, followed by other concerns such as inability to understand the role of FCCLA as an extension of FCS content, and lab safety and management (Vincenti, 2015).

Another indication of the need for qualified FCS teachers in WY came from Andrea Bryant, Executive Director of the WY Professional Teaching Standards Board, who indicated that three superintendents called her during the summer 2015 reporting challenges in filling FCS

teaching positions. They all succeeded, but were using some very “creative” ways such as having an Agriculture teacher teach a human nutrition course. These types of arrangements also reinforce the lack of geographically flexible licensed teachers waiting for open positions (Andrea Bryant, personal communication, October 9, 2015).

The state data collection inconsistency was reinforced by Vincenti’s finding that 52% of WY superintendents indicated they weren’t required to report teacher shortage areas to a state agency. In addition, because the WY Department of Education collects only aggregate data on Career and Technical Education, Vincenti surveyed the 92 FCS teachers in October 2014 with 49 (53%) responding. Ninety-four percent of the respondents expected an opening over the course of the next few years, primarily due to their own retirements. Sixty-two percent believed qualified teachers would not be available to replace them when they leave. The respondents also indicated that over the past four years approximately 118 to 130 of their students had expressed interest in becoming a FCS teacher. Some did find out-of-state options, but more than 90 chose other majors because they needed to attend UW to obtain lower tuition and Hathaway Scholarships.

Vincenti’s concern about tuition costs for UW college students and the quality of teacher preparation options, prompted her to seek creative ways to fulfill the WY FCS teacher need. In 2011 she reached out to Mallette, FCS teacher educator at CSU, as a viable partner for creative problem-solving because of the strength of CSU’s FCS teacher preparation program and its proximity to Laramie, WY. This effort was slowed by changes in the UW’s core curriculum and other graduation requirements, as well as changes in key university administrators.

### **Partnership Benefits**

Because of the shortage of licensed FCS teachers, the UW and CSU FCS education partnership’s goal is to increase the number of well-prepared teacher candidates primed to fill FCS teaching positions in both states. Identifying the benefits of the partnership for each program was an important first step. The most significant benefit for UW is the creation of a process for WY university students to complete a quality FCS teacher preparation program unavailable at UW so they can fill WY secondary-level FCS teaching positions. Benefits for CSU include increased FCS program teacher candidates, increased course enrollments, and increased tuition revenues.

### **Partnership Concerns and Challenges**

With every university partnership come challenges. The UW and CSU partnership faces some significant challenges. The fact that the two participating universities are in different states adds complexities to the partnership agreement. Below are only a few of the more significant questions addressed while developing the partnership MOU.

1. Is it possible for UW students to earn a dual bachelor of science degree upon completion of all requirements at both institutions resulting in UW and CSU counting graduates as program completers?
2. How does a UW student stay continuously/concurrently enrolled at UW during the semesters they are completing their teacher preparation at CSU?
3. How will cross-institutional advising be handled so the transfer to CSU is as seamless as possible?

4. What financial aid opportunities are available to minimize the difference between the undergraduate in-state tuition (with the Hathaway Scholarship) in WY and the out-of-state undergraduate tuition at CSU?

Through conversations, negotiations, and compromise the answers to these challenges were address and resolutions were spelled out in the MOU.

### **Partnership Agreement Development**

A MOU for the partnership was necessary to obtain official university approval at both institutions. An initial draft of the MOU was constructed by the CSU Associate Registrar and FCS teacher educator at CSU. The memorandum includes the purpose, agreements, limitations, a prescribed curriculum for the dual degree, MOU review and timelines and signature lines for the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, College Dean, Department/School Director, Legal Counsel and the University Controller. The draft was reviewed and revised in separate discussions held at each institution with the Vice Presidents for Undergraduate Affairs (VPUA), College Deans and Associate Deans, Department Heads, and administrators from the Registrar's Office and Student Financial Services. Edits were made and then shared again for a conference call discussion with representatives from both registrar's offices, and the WY State Board for Teacher Standards. A finalized MOU was approved the fall of 2016. Following are a few of the more significant items addressed in the agreement:

#### **Requirements of UW Students**

- Complete the FCS Human Development and Family Sciences bachelor's degree program requirements with a minimum of senior standing with no more than 6 remaining credits in the UW program left to meet the graduation requirements. Student must earn a minimum of 150 credits between both programs (120 credits at UW) and (a minimum of 30 credits at CSU) to be awarded baccalaureate degrees from both institutions.
- Complete the remaining UW course requirements for graduation concurrently (online, summer) while taking courses at CSU to maintain continuous/concurrent enrollment at UW.
- Meet the same teacher preparation requirements as a CSU FCS bachelor's degree candidates (i.e. GPA requirement, C or above in all content and teacher preparation coursework, 20 hours of experience working with school-aged children, obtain a passing score on the FCS content exam) and be certifiable in WY and Colorado.
- Pay out-of-state tuition unless they meet the requirements and are chosen to participate in the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), a transfer award offering a select number of students reduced tuition, in recognition of their academic achievement and ability to contribute to their chosen field. Other financial aid options continue to be investigated.

#### **Assurances from CSU Program Administrators**

If UW students meet the above criteria and are accepted into the teacher preparation program, they are assured that:

- All qualifications for educator licensing in Colorado and WY are being met, and

- Fulfilling the student teaching requirement in a secondary school in southern WY is an option.

### **Requirements of Both Institutions (UW and CSU)**

- Upon completion of the jointly-approved curriculum at both UW and/or CSU, the courses will transfer directly into each institution,
- Assure the program meets the eligibility requirements for FCS teacher licensure in both Colorado and WY, and
- Faculty will be transparent and collaborative in advising students within the program.

The review and timeline for the MOU was set to remain in force for a total of three years and the two programs agreed to notify each other by May 1 of each year to monitor program activities, capacity concerns, resource challenges, and/or changes to curriculum/admission/transfer requirements.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations for FCS Educators**

The absence of a teacher preparation program and the problem of filling teaching positions with licensed candidates are not unique to WY. There are other states currently without a university FCS teacher preparation program. Consequently, more secondary-level FCS teaching positions will be left vacant or filled with unlicensed candidates increasing the potential of programs to be lost. To turn the tide, states without FCS teacher preparation programs should consider exploring creative ways to develop mutually beneficial cross institutional partnerships to meet the need.

The development of a partnership/MOU takes time, compromise, and the involvement and collaboration of multiple levels of administrators at each institution. It is worth the effort if the result is quality licensed teacher candidates who can fill FCS teacher openings in turn minimizing the opportunity for program closures due to a lack of qualified candidates. As Werhan (2013) stated: “With the groundswell of support for FCS content and the soaring employment prospects for FCS educators, this may be the time to redouble the efforts of the profession to support FCS secondary education and quality teacher preparation” (p. 45).

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## **Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher Shortage Inaccuracies: Collaborating to Set the Record Straight**

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*Although the shortage of family and consumer sciences (FCS) teachers has been documented in the literature for over ten years (Werhan & Way 2006; Werhan 2013), government data documenting areas of teacher shortage do not always include the need for FCS educators. The omission of such data may impact awareness of the shortage, recruitment efforts, and financial aid opportunities for college students. This paper seeks to explain how this incongruity may occur and provides suggestions for individuals to press for authentic data.*

In a world of technology, it may be assumed that data related to the number of family and consumer sciences (FCS) teachers employed by schools, the number of FCS teaching positions that are open, and the number of students who are enrolled in FCS classes would be readily available at the federal or state levels, but they are not. Werhan (2013) contacted each state in the United States when she conducted a national survey of secondary FCS programs between 2012 and 2013, in part to determine the “number of FCS teachers employed and needed” and “ascertain the changes in teacher and student numbers since the last data collection” in the decade prior to the study (p. 42). Werhan found that some states do not collect this data, or the process of obtaining it was cost-prohibitive. Using the best data available, Werhan (2013) confirmed what the profession suspected, states were struggling to fill FCS teacher vacancies, and the shortage of FCS teachers was expected to grow. But, when reviewing documents which use the United States Department of Education (USDOE), Office of Post-Secondary Education as a source of shortage data, FCS is not regularly identified as a shortage area and this conflicts with the Werhan data.

The USDOE publishes a list of teacher shortage areas developed from a reporting document turned in annually by each state’s Chief State School Officer (USDOE, 2016). This annual list has been considered infallible and is used extensively for workforce education documents and as the basis for state and federal loans and scholarships for teacher education students. Those scholarships include:

Targeted teacher deferment for borrowers under the Family Federal Education Loan (FFEL) and Federal Supplemental Loans for Students (SLS) programs (34 CFR 682.210(q));

Full-time teaching in fields of expertise, cancellation of up to 100 percent of their debt under the Federal Perkins Loan Program (34 CFR 674.53(c)); and



Teaching obligation fulfillment for recipients under the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program (34 CFR 686).

In the USDOE (2016) document, only 12 states specifically list FCS as a teacher shortage area; however, in the Werhan (2013) data, 20 states reported a current, active FCS teacher shortage. Given the many inconsistencies between data recently published by the USDOE (2016) related to FCS educator shortages and Werhan's (2013) research, the question of why the need for FCS educators has not been communicated effectively to the USDOE remains.

To answer this question, we contacted the Office of Post-Secondary Education (OPSE) at the USDOE to identify: 1) who completes the report, 2) what data are included, and 3) what steps can be taken to insure the report is completed accurately. Information from this government office indicated that the "Chief State School Officer" would have that responsibility. This prompted an inquiry at the state level that could be replicated by others within their own state and perhaps correct an on-going issue of inaccurate data.

### **Identification of the Issues**

Responding to the information provided by the OPSE, we tried to identify who specifically completed the report in their home state of Kansas, a state that does not list a shortage of FCS teachers for the 2016-2017 academic school year (USDOE, 2016). Within Kansas, it was ascertained that the Commissioner of Education has this responsibility. Data for USDOE's list were gathered from a superintendent's report submitted to the Kansas State Department of Education. Teacher application data were also used to determine shortage areas. The Commissioner did not conduct a survey to gather the data on teacher shortages. Instead, the listing submitted to the USDOE (2016) document related to teacher shortages was prepared by extrapolating data from unrelated reports.

### **Response to the Issues**

A 23-question perception survey was developed to determine, among other inquiries, if Kansas superintendents thought there was a shortage of FCS teachers and if they were aware of the report from which shortage data was collected by their state. This survey was emailed to a list of 286 Kansas superintendents provided by the Kansas Department of Education. The response rate from Kansas superintendents was 29%, with 34% of superintendents reporting great difficulty in finding FCS teachers and 24% having some difficulty. Despite this difficulty in finding FCS teachers, Kansas did not list FCS as a shortage area on the USDOE report during the last three years.

The survey was edited for clarity and emailed nationally to 11,618 superintendents of public, non-charter districts throughout the United States. Contact information for this national group was collected from a variety of sources including contacts with state departments of education, posted information from online state superintendent databases and in over half of the individual districts, conducting a search of school district web sites. These methods were required because some states would not provide contact information for personnel. Contact information was collected over a six-week period. Less than 1% of the contact information was determined to be unusable.

The national response rate was poor at 12%, with 55% of reporting superintendents reporting great difficulty and 35% some difficulty in finding FCS teachers. Fifty-six percent indicated that they did not provide shortage data to their respective state, despite assurances from the federal level that the data was collected by the Chief State School Officer from the local

school administrators. The national report from the OPSE shows all U.S. states submitted data on their shortage areas. This raises the concern of the source of the data and who actually contributes to the report as a significant number of those listed as being the provider of data are unaware of its collection.

During the time period the survey was being sent out to Kansas superintendents, inquiry was being made at the state level regarding the report which was sent to the OPSE and how the shortage data was collected. A few issues were identified that impacted a report being sent to the federal level that did not indicate FCS was a teacher shortage area:

First, it was determined that several different offices completed portions of the report. It appeared to be an administrative duty without much awareness of the impact of the report. Additionally, the timing of when the superintendents were provided information from which the assumed level of open positions was drawn and what constituted “unfilled” was problematic. (Examples: superintendents were not clear on if an unfilled position meant one that was total unfilled, unfilled because of failure to search, or unfilled because the person currently employed did not have the required license, etc.) Finally, it was determined that a flawed procedure of comparing the number of teacher job openings to the number of applications being submitted was being used to determine “shortage”. This procedure did not account for duplication of applications by teachers. Fifteen people may be looking for a FCS secondary position but those fifteen filled out a total of thirty applications. This was seen by the state department as being thirty people looking for a job, not just thirty applications. Once these inconsistencies were pointed out to those managing the reports, alternations were made in the survey which should have resulted in accurate data for all teacher shortage areas being send to the federal level, at least from Kansas. However, the survey was altered again to address a different target which resulted in inaccurate data being collected once again. It is critical that those charged with data collection follow-through to collect meaningful data for accurate reports to be developed.

### **Replication in Other States**

At the 2015 American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences *Say Yes to FCS* Summit, researchers encouraged all states to look at the teacher shortage data for their individual state and see if it was accurate. Knowing that a survey sent out from regional researchers may have a higher rate of return than a national survey, the original survey sent out to Kansas superintendents as well as materials supporting the survey, were offered to representatives from the states attending. Three volunteers from Wyoming, Minnesota, and Wisconsin sent out the survey to superintendents in their states to determine if they understood that FCS was a shortage area and if they were aware of how shortage data are collected. This provided those volunteers the needed information to contact their state’s Departments of Education to see if the method of reporting shortage data was accurate.

Initial response rates for states when the survey was sent from the authors based in Kansas for the three states was 9%. When the respondents were asked by someone within their state to respond the rate jumped to a range of 47% to 53%. While the survey results of the superintendents’ understanding did not change, the confidence in the data was far greater.

### **Recommendations for Continued Action**

Those who would like to ensure state and national data are accurate can facilitate this by first checking the states OPSE’s list of teacher shortage areas (USDOE, 2016). Is FCS listed specifically for state in the United States in question? Or, does the report just list Career-

Technical Education (CTE) without specific content areas? Each CTE area needs to be listed separately for accurate communication between those that use this document as a reference tool.

How does a specific state collect data about teacher shortage? To get an answer to this question may take several phone calls or email messages, but these conversations are important ones. Do superintendents list a position when filled by a substitute teacher or an emergency hire as “filled” or is it listed as “unfilled?” Clarification of terms is essential to identify if programs are being taught by highly qualified teachers or just someone to fill-in until a teacher can be found. Collaboration between FCS teacher educators and state supervisors with their colleagues in other content areas may be beneficial to raise greater awareness of the issue.

If and when the federal document lists a state having an FCS shortage area, then the next steps are to ensure that all teacher preparation programs in the state are aware of this designation. Does the teacher education website include FCS as a shortage area? It may only take a phone call to make that change. The financial aid office at the university also needs to be aware that FCS is a shortage area in order to process the federal funding opportunities for the students. This is a critical step. Also even if it is not listed as a teacher shortage area within your state, if the financial aid office lists FCS Education as eligible if the student is moving to a teaching job in a state where there is a shortage then they still qualify for additional assistance. Additionally, the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) in a state needs to list FCS as a shortage area. Some universities go by the CHE (or other politically appointed groups) stated shortage areas for financial aid.

Working with state-wide government agencies, universities, and interested individuals is essential to make sure FCS Education gets the publicity and benefits that a “teacher shortage area” receives. It is the experience of the writers that most people want the shortage data to be accurate and are willing to investigate and make changes that insure that there are no inaccuracies. Someone just needs to call it to the attention of those who can make the changes and apparently people are beginning to do so. Since 2015, nine more states have specifically listed FCS as a shortage area. We must continue to be diligent to make sure the shortage data are reported accurately.

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