



Overview

Partners for a Better Tomorrow:

Workforce Florida and Florida Farm Bureau Federation

Workforce Florida, Inc. and the Florida Farm Bureau Federation have teamed up as the two major entities funding the Banner Center for Agriscience.

Workforce Florida, Inc. began establishing Banner Centers across Florida in 2006 through grant funding. The Banner Center concept was initiated to effectively supply Florida's workforce with highly-skilled, highly-trained workers.

Banner Centers are charged with being the state-wide go-to resource for the industry they represent. There are twelve Banner Centers across Florida and all of them are teamed up with an academic institution as their primary partner, except the Banner Center for Agriscience. With the Employ Florida Banner Center for Agriscience being housed under the Florida Farm Bureau, a strong and respected link to the agricultural industry is already established.

Although the Banner Center for Agriscience is primarily grant funded, Farm Bureau is a substantial financial contributor.

Inside the Banner Center for Agriscience

The Employ Florida Banner Center for Agriscience is based out of the Farm Bureau Building in Gainesville. Pat Cockrell, Assistant to the President for the Florida Farm Bureau Federation, is the Grant Administrator for the Banner Center. In late August, Melissa Raburn, a former agriculture teacher, was hired as the Program Coordinator, and in September Joyce Debusk was brought on as the Executive Assistant. In addition to the Banner Center Staff, the Florida FFA Association also employs a staff member who will contribute to the efforts of the Banner Center. Erin Stoutamire, the Program Coordinator for Leadership and Career Development Programs, will be responsible for linking the new frameworks and curriculum to our FFA Career Development Events. Beyond the staff members listed here, is a network of individuals who support and offer resources to the Banner Center. All of the partners make significant contributions to these efforts because they see the impact the Banner Center will have for our students and industry. The Banner Center staff and supporters are a closely knit circle of people who believe in agriculture.



Florida Agriculture

An Economic Engine

The Sunshine State often brings people's minds to Disney World and our famous beaches; however, there is a quieter but consistent staple to the Florida economy that is often forgotten. Florida agriculture can be seen in its various forms across our state, and perhaps its diversity is the reason it isn't widely recognized. It is easy to picture the mid-western states with their rolling fields of corn, wheat and soybeans, but when it comes to Florida, our agriculture is as diverse as the people who live here. In reality, agriculture is the number two industry that contributes to our state's economy, and in tough times like today it is one of the few industries that is holding strong. In fact, agriculture is so prominent in Florida that it ranks first in the nation for production of snap beans, fresh market tomatoes, cucumbers for fresh market, cucumbers for pickles, bell peppers, squash, watermelons, oranges, grapefruit, tangerines, and sugarcane for sugar and seed. In addition to its number one rankings, Florida also ranked second in the sales of greenhouse and nursery products, sweet corn and strawberries.

If you would like to learn more about the economic impact that Florida agriculture provides, please check out the information provided by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services at http://www.florida-agriculture.com/economic_impact.htm.

Because Florida agriculture is so diverse, if you would like to learn more about agriculture in your area, please feel free to use these tools to look at county specific information: http://www.florida-agriculture.com/assessment_by_county/index.htm and <http://www.florida-agriculture.com/pubs/pubform/pdf/FlaMap.pdf>

Additionally, for an update on Florida agriculture's financial contributions and legislative state, please see the press release from Florida Farm Bureau at, http://floridafarmbureau.org/press/2009_1102_pres



Industry Partnerships

A Strong Partnership

Although Florida Farm Bureau and Workforce Florida, Inc. are the two main entities housing the Banner Center for Agriscience, several other organizations have also come on board to contribute to these efforts. These partnering institutions are: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Department of Education, University of Florida and the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, and the Florida FFA Association. These partners have agreed to contribute time, money and other resources to aid in the labors of the Banner Center. Each of these organizations brings something unique and valuable to the table; with their combined efforts, the Banner Center will benefit from each partner.

If you are interested in learning more about our partners and their institutions, please feel free to check out their websites:

Florida Farm Bureau: <http://floridafarmbureau.org/>

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services: <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/>

Florida Department of Education: <http://www.fldoe.org/>

University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences: <http://ifas.ufl.edu/>

Florida FFA Association: <http://flaffa.org/>

Agriscience Industry Advisory Council

In addition to the partners of the Banner Center, an Advisory Council has been established to provide guidance and direction. The Agriscience Industry Advisory Council is comprised of industry representatives, education representatives and the partners of the Banner Center. The council members are drawn from each part of the state to insure an accurate and complete perspective. The Advisory Council has already held its first meeting and will hold three additional meetings through June.

Pat Cockrell, Grant Administrator, commented on the Advisory Council, "I am very proud of our advisory committee because it truly reflects the depth and breadth of this diverse industry that we call agriculture. They not only represent farms, but also the entire support infrastructure that makes the agricultural industry the dynamic and economic engine that helps power Florida and the nation's economy. The Florida agricultural industry has new and emerging occupations, as well as traditional jobs, that need to be filled by trained and qualified workers. These employees are essential if the Florida agricultural industry is to continue to be domestically and globally competitive. With the input and vision of the Banner Center for Agriscience Industry Advisory Council, we certainly will be meeting those goals and providing a very real service to the Florida agricultural community."

A complete list of our Advisory Council and the areas they represent can be seen at our website, agrisciencebannercenter.org



Curriculum

Results in the Classroom

Ultimately, the Banner Center for Agriscience will ensure that our agriculture education students are being successfully trained according to industry needs. In order to guarantee this goal is being achieved, industry representatives from across the state have been asked to play a crucial role in our curricula development.

Through the Next Generation Occupation Standards project, the Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources Working Group established a plan to determine the agriculture education course revision schedule; this year the Animal Science and Services, Agritechnology and Veterinary Assisting courses are being evaluated. These three courses embody the largest enrollment of all agriculture education courses. Therefore, within the first year of operation, the Banner Center will have affected a substantial portion of all agriculture education students.

In the following years, the Banner Center for Agriscience will follow suite in revising courses according to the established work plan. The curriculum that is being developed will be very usable for teachers with the flexibility for them to tailor it to their specific program and needs.

By creating state-wide, rigorous and relevant curriculum that is deemed viable to our industry, it will be justifiably apparent that Agricultural Education is preparing trained, skilled agricultural workers for the industry.

Behind the Curriculum

Although teachers will receive finalized curriculum this May for Agritechnology, Animal Science and Veterinary Assisting courses, the curriculum project actually began much earlier.

Teachers, industry representatives and teacher educators gathered this September to look at the frameworks for the Animal Science, Agritechnology and Veterinary Assisting programs. These individuals met at the Florida FFA Leadership Training Center in Haines City, Florida. They were charged with reviewing our standards and then revising them to reflect the current status and needs of our industry.

Industry representatives from across the state looked at the frameworks to answer the questions, “What do I need my employees to be able to do?” Teachers then took those recommendations, formatted them into our frameworks and aligned them with the Sunshine State Standards.

By involving industry and education representatives, the end product will be curriculum that is deemed rigorous and relevant by the school systems and viable according to industry standards.

After the frameworks were revised, they were then sent on for curriculum development. Ultimately, school boards, parents, students, industry representatives and the public will see the increased value of our usable, consistent, state-wide curriculum.



In the Future

Bright Future for Agriculture and Agricultural Education

Imagine a bridge connecting the agricultural industry with the agriculture classroom. Lined up across this bridge is a multitude of highly trained, skilled, competent students who are prepared to enter the work force. The Employ Florida Banner Center for Agriscience is the bridge that connects those two valuable entities. In addition to developing rigorous and relevant curriculum for our agriculture education programs, the Banner Center will take on several other endeavors to make sure our agricultural industry has a viable workforce.

All efforts that the Banner Center for Agriscience undertakes will be guided and directed by agriculturists. In addition to the Agriscience Industry Advisory Council and the partners of the Banner Center, the Banner Center will also receive direction from Focus Groups composed of active agriculturists from around the state. By doing this, we can ensure that all projects of the Banner Center are directly and appropriately linked to the industry.

Once curriculum has been developed, the Banner Center, in cooperation with the University of Florida, will train teachers in the new curriculum. This year alone, the Banner Center will train over 100 teachers in Agritechnology, Animal Science and Veterinary Assisting.

In addition, the Banner Center for Agriscience has teamed up with its partners to develop a Marketing and Outreach Plan to spread information. This plan outlines the specific tactics and methods we will use to market the Banner Center to agriculturists, teachers, school faculty, Regional Workforce Boards, students, parents, and other supporters. In order to ensure that our efforts at the Banner Center are being seen across the state, there will be close communication with all involved parties.

Ultimately, the Banner Center for Agriscience will serve as a resource center for agriculture and agricultural education. Agriculturists will hire from a more qualified source of employees. Students will receive real-world training that directly links them to future careers. Consumers and citizens will see more advancements and higher quality in our food and fiber production.