

## A NEW LOOK AT RECRUITMENT

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The need for superior teachers of agriculture is a recurring and currently acute problem. As those in education know, the passage of the 1963 Vocational Act provided a basis for many new programs and expanded existing ones, with the result that the short supply of qualified agriculture teachers has been intensified considerably.

Traditional approaches meant to attract qualified persons into teaching agriculture have met, at best, with limited success. This is not to detract from the need for brochures, slides, films, newspaper articles, and other mass media coverage; however, when all is said and done, personal contact has been the most effective method of recruiting and probably has accounted for most of the persons currently teaching.

It seems evident, considering the situation, that we must not only try other and different methods of approach, but we must look in other areas. This point can best be illustrated by considering the current group of newly enrolled teacher candidates in the Department of Agricultural Education here at the University of California, Davis. In the spring semester of 1965, six new persons entered the program to begin their fifth year of college work needed to qualify for the credential. All of these persons had received bachelor's degrees in some area of agriculture and, after graduation, had worked at something unrelated to teaching. One was employed as a field representative for a seed company. Another had worked for several years in a dairy and was subsequently employed by a farm machinery corporation before entering the program. A third was a salesman for agricultural chemicals. The fourth had just completed two years in the U.S. Army. The fifth was in fruit inspection work for the California State Department of Agriculture. The sixth had been an exchange student in the International Farm Youth Exchange Program. Almost to a man, these persons had not considered teaching of any kind while they were in college. They were good students and active in student affairs, including campus political matters, athletics, and agricultural interest groups.

While many trainees do not come from this diverse a background, and while a few do plan to teach from the day they enter college, in general, such careful, long range career planning is atypical. The usual pattern can be illustrated by considering the fall (1964) group of student teachers, in which 7 out of 18 came from industry or other related occupations and had been employed for several years before considering teaching. The remainder did plan to teach upon receiving their bachelor's degree; however, in many instances this decision was made at the end of the senior year.

These figures indicate that the most important people toward whom recruiting efforts should be directed are those persons who have their bachelor's degree in agriculture and are currently out in the field performing some kind of agricultural work. Many of these persons never considered teaching of any kind while in college, and in many cases may have been convinced at that time that they did not want to teach. After experience in another line of work, teaching may appear in a much more favorable

light, so that all it takes is the effort to alert these people to the possibilities, point the way, and work out a solution to their individual needs.

In the past, teacher educators and others concerned have been thin-skinned about these people, feeling that unless a person was completely dedicated since entering school, he was not a desirable candidate. There may be some merit in this thought, as dedication is one demonstrable factor in predicting teacher success. However, the degree of one's dedication is not predicted on the date or chronological age at which one achieves it, and so we have no way of knowing that those who come late to teaching are any less dedicated than those who begin early. Indeed, having a broad experiential background they may be, in many cases, even more dedicated than the student who has tried no other form of endeavor. Also, few students consider teaching as a career while in high school; and in like fashion, many college students, while not opposed to teaching, are so intensely interested in some other field that teaching is excluded as a possibility.

If this is profitable ground for recruitment, then every effort should be made to capitalize on it in an attempt to increase the ranks of qualified agriculture teachers. If recent graduates currently employed in agriculture are an untapped source of potential teachers, then there may be other completely different areas of recruitment that are unexplored. The approach for teacher educators should be to search for these areas rather than continue to exhaust themselves in traditional but ineffective ways.