Agronomic Education Section

Interesting High School Students in Agricultural Science

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ATTRACTION high school students to agriculture is becoming a real problem with the decline in the farm population. The farms have fed college boys into agricultural curricula for many years. Many country boys believe in agriculture as a way of life. They are not ashamed of it. Consequently they have been able to envision careers in practical agriculture or scientific agriculture in which they could take pride and in which they could expect to find satisfaction and happiness. Many farm boys have grown up disliking the farm and the farm population has sent many students into other careers such as law, engineering, medicine, the clergy etc.; but, in general, agricultural schools have received their students from farm families. As farms grow larger and more highly capitalized it is quite possible that economic attrition will leave on the land only the brightest and most capable families. Also it may be that the boys from these successful farm families will be more interested in farming as a career than those boys from less successful rural families. If this is true, there may be a higher proportion of boys from commercial farm families going into agricultural careers in the future than in the past.

Personal attitude is important in a boy’s selection of a career. He will select what he believes in, enjoys, and is proud of. Because the farm boy understands agriculture, he usually has confidence in it and is proud of it as a career. City boys on the other hand, not understanding agriculture, usually feel apologetic about electing it as a profession. City people as a whole tend to disdain agriculture as something unworthy of a brilliant intellect. Few city people realize the splendid opportunities in management, sales research, and education which lie in agricultural fields and in the related agri-business fields.

With the declining enrollments in agriculture, an active educational program among farm youth and also city youth is essential to prevent a dirth of trained people needed in the agriculture of tomorrow and in the related agricultural industries.

Purdue is one of the few institutions of higher education in the country where the agricultural enrollment has not yet decreased. At Purdue, we have been sponsoring several programs quite actively designed to bring to both city and rural high school students the opportunities in agriculture. We have not analyzed the results of these activities to determine just how effective they are but we believe, in general, that all of them contribute to the level of enrollment which we have been able to maintain. The following activities are among those included in this program.

Operation Brain-Power

Purdue is fortunate to have a strong organization of its agricultural alumni. This group has a full-time executive director, other officers, and a governing board. Outstanding activities has been the sponsorship on the campus for high school students. The alumni clubs organize to bring high school students in cars or buses for the visitors’ day called "Operation Brain-Power".

A full program is planned to acquaint the students with university life. First a general assembly is held to discuss the value of higher education, the types of training offered, and general information about the university given by Purdue’s president, dean of agriculture, and top university officials. This is followed by tours of the major offices, laboratories, greenhouses, and climate facilities in the school of agriculture.

Lunch is served in one of the new dormitories followed by a tour of the intramural recreational facilities and a Ten basketball game.

The visitors are then divided into groups for an hour of questions and answers and discussion with the university’s teaching staff. An opportunity is given to visit counselors in the area of their interest.

This program has been quite successful although enthusiasm and the response, although no attempt has been made to determine its effectiveness. In the spring of 1964 more than 4,000 high school students are expected.

College Nights

Representatives of the Agronomy Department work with the Admissions Office in "College Night" programs at various high schools in the state. These men represent the total university’s teaching staff. An opportunity is given for the visitors to select counselors in the area of their interest.

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