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January 17, 2012

Dear Fellow Legislators:

Please find attached to this letter the 2011 Report of the Joint Agriculture Education Advisory Commissions. We are very excited about the status of agricultural education in Georgia. Agriculture education provides a tremendous benefit to our students as they learn about science, business, technology, and natural resources. This year student membership in FFA grew for the thirteenth consecutive year and surpassed its all-time high for the sixth consecutive year.

Please let us know if we can provide you with any additional information about this very successful program. We appreciate your support of agriculture education in Georgia.

Respectfully yours,

Senator John Bulloch
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THE 2011 REPORT OF THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE AGRICULTURE EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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HISTORY

In 1917, Congress passed the Smith-Hughes National Vocational Education Act. The Act, which was sponsored by two Georgians, Senator Hoke Smith and Representative Dudley Hughes, aimed to promote agricultural training and for the first time made agricultural education a part of the public education system. Agricultural education is a systematic program of instruction available to students who wish to learn about the science, business, and technology of plant and animal production or about the environmental and natural resources systems. Today, more than 800,000 students participate in formal agricultural education instructional programs throughout the 50 states and three US territories.

The Georgia Joint Agriculture Education Study Committee was created by House Resolution 50 during the 2005 Legislative Session. The intent of the resolution was to provide direction to develop instructional strategies to teach specific agriculture standards from elementary through high school, then integrate these standards into a broad range of academic subject areas. The hope was that a stronger career preparation program would be made available to meet the demands of a dynamic and competitive agriculture industry.

During the 2006 Legislative Session, on the recommendation of the Joint Agriculture Education Study Committee, House Bill 1227 created the Agriculture Education Joint Legislative Advisory Commission (the Commission). The Commission consists of twelve members appointed as follows: three members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House, including one member from the House Committee on Agriculture and Consumer Affairs and one member from the House Committee on Education; three members of the Senate appointed by the Senate Committee on Assignments, including one member from the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Consumer Affairs and one member from the Senate Committee on Education and Youth; three members appointed by the Governor, who are not members of the General Assembly; and three members appointed by the State School Superintendent, who are not members of the General Assembly. During the 2011 Legislative Session, House Bill 125 amended the Commission's meeting requirements and extended its sunset date to December 31, 2016. The Commission is now only required to meet annually, rather than two to four times a year.

The Commission receives an annual report on activities, program direction, and trends in agricultural education, and then makes any recommendations necessary for any new directions or trends the program should make or follow.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The K-12 Agriculture Education program consists of three interrelated components: classroom and laboratory experiences; Supervised Agriculture Experience Program (SAEP); and the FFA organization.

Under the classroom portion of the first component, students learn concepts and theories dealing with a broad array of agricultural and agribusiness topics. During the laboratory portion of the component, those theories are carried through to their application and students are taught "hands-on" skills that ensure the skills learned are practical and usable.

The classroom and laboratory instruction is then put to use in the second component. Under the SAEP approach, students learn in real-life situations where they can obtain on-the-job skills. The experiences under SAEP can range from traditional home projects to entrepreneurship or cooperative work experiences in production or agribusiness.

FFA, the last component, gives students an avenue for developing leadership skills by providing co-curricular activities that build public speaking skills, personal growth, and teamwork. The FFA awards program provides students with an incentive for improved performance.

Classroom and Laboratory Experience

The lesson plans and materials used in classrooms and laboratories are developed, and constantly revised, by the Department of Education's Agricultural Education Office to meet Georgia Performance Standards (GPS). Agricultural Education teachers receive a Curriculum flash drive, which includes all updated resources and pathways. The flash drive allows teachers to access all content from the Georgia Ag-Ed website and download revised or new materials onto the drive.

Under the State Board of Education's graduation requirements, all students who entered the ninth grade during the 2009-2010 school year are required to earn four science credits. Agricultural education currently offers eight courses that qualify for the fourth credit: Animal Science Technology/Biotechnology; Plant Science and Biotechnology; General Horticulture and Plant Science; Wildlife Management; Veterinary Science; Equine Science; Forest Science; and Natural Resources Management.

State School Superintendent Dr. John Barge has directed the Career, Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) division to align its program with the National Career Cluster Model by July 2012. Over the next year, agricultural education will continue working to meet this directive. Many of the classes in the seven agriculture career pathways have already been completed, with only fifteen still needing to be updated. By providing three or four specialized courses per pathway, each career pathway provides students with the tools necessary to be successful at the next level of their education. The current agriculture pathways are Agribusiness Systems; Animal Systems; Environmental Systems (Agriscience); Food Products and Processing Systems; Forestry/Natural Resources Systems; Plant Systems; and Power Structure and Technology Systems (Ag-Mechanics).

Supervised Agricultural Experience Program

A Supervised Agricultural Experience Program (SAEP) is a specific learning experience planned and conducted by an individual student that contributes to the development of both agricultural and personal skills. With help from their agricultural teachers, students develop an SAEP project based on one or more SAEP categories: Agribusiness Entrepreneurship; Agricultural Placement; Agricultural Production; Agricultural Research; Directed School Laboratory; Agricultural Communications; Agricultural Exploration; and Improvement Projects.

Typically, an SAEP project will count towards 25 percent of a student's grade. Projects are completed either in a student's home, through a job placement at a farm or agribusiness, or through a community improvement project supervised by their teacher. In order for a school to meet state standards, at least 60 percent of students must have

an SAEP project. Students who complete SAEP projects are able to compete for local, state, and national recognition and scholarships through FFA.

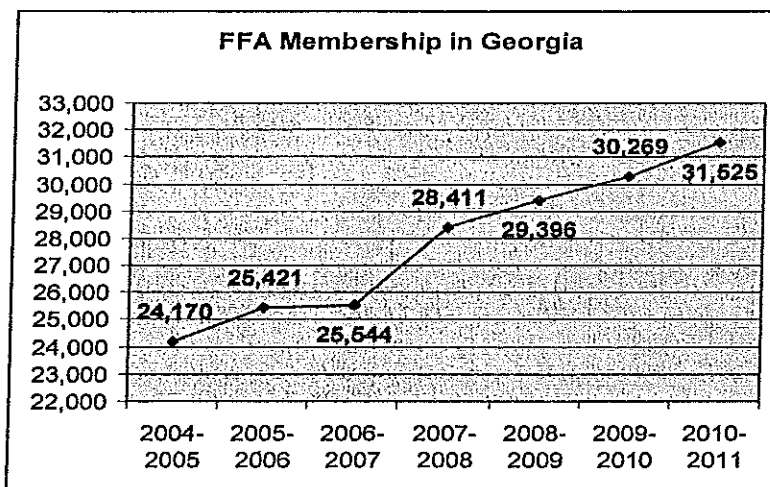
Georgia FFA

The Georgia FFA Association was founded in 1929. With more than 31,000 members, Georgia has the third largest state association nationally behind Texas and California. Nationally, there are more than 540,000 FFA members between the ages of 12 and 21 in more than 7,400 chapters across the U.S., Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands.

During the 2010-2011 year, membership in Georgia reached 31,525 members. This was the 13th consecutive year for membership growth in Georgia and the 6th consecutive year membership surpassed its all-time high. One hundred thirty-seven chapters saw 100 percent of its agriculture education students enroll in FFA during the same year. This is 12 more chapters than in 2009-2010. In 2011, Georgia had 14 National Proficiency Award Finalists, 10 National 3-Star Chapters, and 2 Agriscience Students of the Year. Only California, Wisconsin, and Texas have more proficiency finalists than Georgia; Georgia has more than half of the proficiency finalists in the Southern Region. The Georgia FFA Foundation raised industry sponsorship money to help offset the costs for each state winning team and individual who earned the right to compete on the national level.

During the 2011-2012 school year, there are 282 local FFA chapters in Georgia. Seven chapters were newly chartered this year. FFA believes that the reasons for its continued growth are its committed agricultural education teachers and FFA advisors; the support of the General Assembly for Extended Day/Year funds; the Area Teacher program and a total team approach; support from Industry and Alumni; and the ability to continue to provide opportunities for more students.

The chart below shows a significant increase in student enrollment and FFA membership since the formation of the Joint Agricultural Education Study Committee and the Commission:



Georgia FFA Alumni Association

The mission of the FFA Alumni is "To secure the promise of FFA and agricultural education by creating an environment where people and communities can develop their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success." The Georgia FFA aggressively pursues this mission with its support of local communities. During 2010-2011, the total value of FFA Alumni support for Georgia FFA and Agricultural Education was \$24,185. This brings the total amount of support over the last five years close to \$90,000. There are 62 FFA Alumni affiliates in Georgia who represented 2,444 members during 2010-2011.

Middle School Agriculture Education Programs

The purpose of the Middle School Agricultural Education Program is to explore and stimulate interest in the world of work in the agricultural industry through prescribed classroom and laboratory experiences designed for basic understanding, introductory skill development, agricultural literacy and personal development. Some of the objectives of the Middle School Agriculture Education Program include providing a basis for student selection of one or more career areas for further study at the high school and collegiate level and to develop agricultural and environmental literacy skills for all students for their benefit as consumers and citizens. During the 2011-2012 year, there are 80 middle school programs across 60 Georgia counties.

YOUNG FARMER PROGRAM

The Young Farmer Program (YFP) is the adult component of the agricultural education program in Georgia. It is the mission of YFP to provide education, leadership, and networking opportunities for those interested and involved with agriculture. The YFP is an educational program designed for the systematic instruction of young farmers actively engaged in the business of farming. YFP is under the direction of the State Department of Education and the local high school agriculture departments.

The program, which was initiated in 1951, is planned jointly by the Young Farmer Teachers and class members. Until 1970, the program was coordinated full-time by Young Farmer Teachers and functioned only as an instructional program. In 1971, the Georgia Young Farmers Association (GYFA) was organized as an extension of the instructional program. The primary purpose of the association was to coordinate activities at the state level to provide leadership activities for the young farmers. GYFA is currently the largest Young Farmer Organization in the country with more than 3,700 members.

Young Farmer Teachers are certified agriculture teachers who participate in all aspects of the agricultural education program, including adult education, FFA, classroom instruction, and supervision of student agricultural projects. YF teachers provide instruction on everything from new farming techniques, risk management strategies, water management, and agricultural awareness to legislative issues. During the year, YF teachers were able to reach and instruct more than 10,000 Georgians through classes, small groups, and individualized instruction. YFP currently operates in 52 counties across the state.

EXTENDED DAY/EXTENDED YEAR FUNDS

Extended Day/Extended Year funds are grants to local school systems with an agriculture education program for the purpose of providing instructional services, leadership development activities, and supervision of agricultural projects beyond the regular school day and year. Approved activities for Extended Day/Extended Year grants include:

- SAE visits and exhibits;
- FFA Career Development Events (CDE);
- FFA chapter activities;
- Community projects;
- Leadership activities;
- Professional development;
- Industry contacts and partnerships;
- FFA Camp participation;
- Food Processing; and
- Academic reinforcement.

Applications for the grants are submitted in the Spring to the local system for approved funding. The applications are evaluated, and approved or denied by Region Directors and the State Program Manager. To be eligible, teachers must complete a Program of Work that supports the activities of the school's agriculture education program. Teachers complete a monthly report on-line for record keeping and accountability of approved activities. Each Spring, teachers are evaluated on the Program of Work.

The table below shows the amount appropriated for Extended Day/Extended Year funds over the last several years, as well as the number of school systems and agriculture education teachers receiving them.

	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012
Extended Day Funds	\$1,757,649	\$1,833,068	\$1,833,068
Extended Year Funds	\$1,215,929	\$1,236,589	\$1,237,942
School Systems	143	139	149
Ag-Ed Teachers	329	313	325

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION YOUTH CAMPS

To deal with budget restraints, the Youth Camp leadership structure was reorganized. The position of Camp Director for Leadership and Development was reinstated to oversee the vision, development, and leadership of both FFA-FCCLA Centers. A Camp Manager was hired for each Center to oversee the day-to-day operations.

Georgia FFA/FCCLA Center (Covington)

During 2011, the FFA Summer Leadership Camp was attended by 1,675 students, an increase of 9 percent over attendance in 2010. But, due to the loss of the camp grant to pay FCCLA teachers a stipend at camp, attendance at the FCCLA Summer Leadership Camp saw a decrease of 37 percent in 2010.

During the year, a number of service improvements were made to the Center. Some of the improvements included:

- The purchase of 100 new mattresses and 200 mattress covers;
- The replacement and repair of many recreation items;
- The development of new procedures for more customer-friendly handling of group reservations; and
- The development of online registration systems for Summer Camps.

Even with constant improvements, there is always a need for more. The Center has recognized the need for a security gate as a high priority. The facility currently has little control over the entrance to the camp and a gate would help increase the safety and security of the campers. Additionally, seven of the camp's cabins, which account for approximately 250 beds, are in need of renovation, and several camp buildings need a new roof.

Camp John Hope (Ft. Valley)

During 2011, Camp John Hope completed its first of two new FFA and FCCLA camps. The first FFA Ag Mechanics Leadership Camp had 40 campers in attendance. The FCCLA Culinary Arts camp had 35 campers in attendance.

A number of improvements were made at Camp John Hope during 2011 including:

- The completion of the Caretaker's residence;
- A new paintball course;
- A ten-element leadership course; and
- The purchase of 200 new mattresses.

Camp John Hope has secured \$2.1 million in bond funds for use at the two facilities. The funds will be used for two new cabins, new recreation areas, and a new roof for T.G. Walters Dining Hall and Tabor Memorial Auditorium.

AREA TEACHERS

Area teachers are certified agriculture educators with programmatic and technical expertise on Agricultural Mechanics, Animal Science, Forestry/Natural Resources, and Horticulture. The twelve area teachers conduct specialized training to over 400 agriculture teachers and nearly 40,000 agricultural education students.

Area teachers assist other teachers in meeting program standards by: developing specific goals for individual teachers and program improvements; assisting beginning teachers with technical skills, classroom and laboratory management and mentorship; conducting professional development activities for teachers; providing technical and curriculum training for apprentice teachers at the University of Georgia and Fort Valley State University; and conducting nearly 100 curriculum driven, hands-on trainings for teachers and students each year.

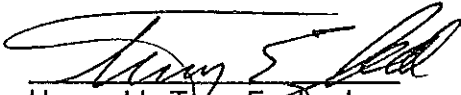
Area teachers develop and update technical instructional materials for classrooms, laboratories, and field experiences and assist in the bid and purchase of plants, animals, and materials through consolidation orders to save money. They also conduct approximately 175 FFA career development events for more than 15,000 participants annually.

RECOMMENDATIONS

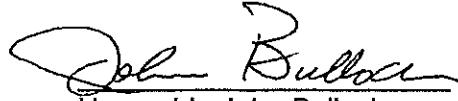
During the August 24, 2011 meeting, the Commission adopted the following recommendations:

- Continue to set the all-time FFA membership for Georgia.
- Establish a middle school Ag-Ed program for every high school program.
- Create a model urban Ag-Ed program in Atlanta, and then grow the number of urban and suburban programs in Georgia.
- Grow Georgia Young Farmer membership to 10,000 members and work to establish an active FFA Alumni affiliate in every Ag-Ed program in Georgia.
- Insure that every agriculture teacher in Georgia is supported in meeting all Ag-Ed Program Standards for Extended Day and Extended Year funds.

**SIGNATURES OF THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE AGRICULTURE EDUCATION
ADVISORY COMMISSION CO-CHAIRMAN**



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Representative, District 108
Chairman



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Senator, District 11
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