In This Edition

Since our annual meeting in June, there have been several activities related to the Alabama Association of County Agricultural Agents and Specialists. These activities include: The County Agents Kitchen in Mobile, The Annual Meeting and Professional Improvement Conference of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents in Orlando Florida, and I have tried to look into some areas of concern identified by the membership. These areas included the CEC selection process that took place this spring, the selection and hiring of a new Dean for the College of Agriculture, and the eligibility of non-specialist to become program coordinators. Plans are also being made for the 2005 Annual Meeting in Mobile.

The County Agent's Kitchen

The County Agent's Kitchen was very well organized. Jim Todd did a fine job of coordinating the efforts of Agent's from around the state. He collected the funds from active members and life members. He ordered the food and arranged to get donations from around the state. He secured lodging for the agents who participated in serving the commissioners. He also coordinated the efforts of the agents, the hotel wait staff and the Association of County Commissioners staff. I have, on my desk, a resolution adopted by the Association of County Commissions of Alabama expressing appreciation to the Alabama Association of County Agricultural Agents. The resolution expresses appreciation to AACAA&S for enhancing the quality of life for Alabama counties' citizens, working closely with county governments, and providing outstanding food and hospitality for members of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama members. I love taking credit for Jim's work.

I want to thank the agents, specialists and life members that contributed to this event. The donations of the AACAA&S members were leveraged with help from Extension Administration and through donations from around the state. We had the opportunity to utilize some AACAA&S members that had never participated in the County Agent's Kitchen. I hope AACAA&S members who have not had the opportunity to participate in this outstanding public relations activity will do so in the future.

NACAA AM/PIC

The National Association of County Agricultural Agents Annual Meeting and Professional Improvement Conference was held in Orlando Florida July 12th through the 16th. Alabama was represented by a strong delegation. We were especially pleased to see that Dr. Paul Mask could come to the AM/PIC.

As many of you know, there has been a long standing and divisive issue related to the NACAA participation in Galaxy. Galaxy is a joint meeting of Extension Professional Associations on a periodic basis. The Southern Region and AACAA&S have opposed participation in Galaxy over the years. This year the NACAA voting delegates voted to participate in Galaxy. During the voting delegate session a motion to realign the states into different regions, that would have diluted the power of the Southern Region, was voted down.
CEC Selection Process

After the AACAA&S annual meeting in Decatur, I talked to several people who were involved in the CEC selection process this spring. One person was on the committee (an AACAA&S member who I know and trust) that developed the process, and made recommendations to the administration. My question of interest to this person was; why didn't the MAP scores or the Assessment Center scores figure into the selection criteria. His response was that the committee recommended to Barbara Duncan not to use either of these. The rational was that some of the applicants had participated in the Assessment Centers, others had not. The committee viewed the transition to the MAP scores away from the Assessment Centers as too abrupt. I also learned, from one of our members who was present at the Extension Employee Association annual meeting, that the membership of the Extension Employees Association was very upset about some of the selections. They had extensive discussions related to the process at their annual meeting. I also talked with someone who served on the interview committees. He indicated that the groups were not allowed to interact with the participants in any way that might guide them to the correct answers to the questions. The reason given for this lack of interactions was to prevent discrimination. He did however indicate that interviewees who went through the process multiple times were able to increase their scores.

The bottom line of this brief investigation is that it is very difficult to prove any gender or racial bias in the selection procedure. It is relatively easy to prove that the procedure is flawed, and probably does not allow for matching of the individual to the respective job assignment. Unfortunately, there is little recourse for an ineffective selection process, so long as it does not discriminate based on race, national origin, gender, or religious affiliation.

Mailings on Behalf of the Membership

As I instructed at the AACAA&S annual meeting, I wrote a letter on behalf of the association in support of Dr. John Jensen. I received a letter from the provost indicating that there was and on going selection process and that Dr. Jensen was not a candidate. While I was on a letter writing streak, I also wrote Dr. Smith expressing my concern when I learned that REAs and CECs would not be considered for Program Coordinator positions. It had been told by reliable sources that only specialist would be considered for these positions. In a return letter, I was told that the reorganization was a dynamic process and the executive leadership had decided that only specialist would be considered for Program Team Leaders unless the State Program Leaders made a request for exception and were able to demonstrate unusual circumstances that warranted an exception.

AACAA&S Board to Meet With Leadership

The AACAA&S board of directors is scheduled to meet with Dr. Smith and Fowler on October the 27th. We will meet with the new Dean of the College of Agriculture (Dr. Weiss) on the 28th. If you have issues that you would like to bring to present to these administrators, please forward them to me as soon as possible. I will submit your concerns to them in writing prior to our meeting. So, they can prepare to give us an answer. I will respond to the membership with the questions and the answers.
2005 Annual Meeting

As many of you know, we have had a great deal of trouble securing a hotel for our 2005 annual meeting. Each time we secured a hotel the hotel closed. Many of the rooms in Gulf Shores are converting from hotels to condominiums. We are reluctant to change the dates of the annual meeting. Keeping the date we have set rules out the Perdido Beach Resort in Gulf Shores. The State Park is closed and there are no other hotels that can accommodated a conference the size of AACAA&S. We have finally given up on Gulf Shores for 2005. After hurricane Ivan came through, I'm pretty sure that loosing our business is not the major concern of the Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Chamber of Commerce. I asked Jim Todd to book us at the Riverview Plaza in Mobile. This was formally the Adam's Mark Hotel. He did, and we are planning to have a successful AACAA&S annual meeting in Mobile June 1st - 3rd 2005. With any luck the hotel will not close and the town will not be blown away by a hurricane.

I hope all is well.
Sincerely,

Olin F. Farrior
President, Alabama Association of Agricultural Agents and Specialists