



Growing Our Future Podcast – Episode 11 Lesson Plan

Lesson Title: “Work to Have a Voice at the Table”

TEKs: (c) Knowledge and skills.

(1) The student demonstrates professional standards/employability skills as required by business and industry. The student is expected to:

(A) identify career development, education, and entrepreneurship opportunities in the field of agriculture, food, and natural resources;

(B) apply competencies related to resources, information, interpersonal skills, problem solving, critical thinking, and systems of operation in agriculture, food, and natural resources;

(D) analyze employers' expectations such as appropriate work habits, ethical conduct, legal responsibilities, and good citizenship skills; and

(E) identify careers in agriculture, food, and natural resources with required aptitudes in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, language arts, and social studies.

(5) The student analyzes the structure of agriculture, food, and natural resources leadership in organizations. The student is expected to:

(A) develop and demonstrate leadership skills and collaborate with others to accomplish organizational goals and objectives;

(B) develop and demonstrate personal growth skills and collaborate with others to accomplish organizational goals and objectives; and

(6) The student demonstrates appropriate personal and communication skills. The student is expected to:

(A) demonstrate written and oral communication skills appropriate for formal and informal situations such as prepared and extemporaneous presentations; and

(B) demonstrate effective listening skills appropriate for formal and informal situations.

Note. TEKs taken from the Principles of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources Course. However, similar TEKs can be found within any of the AFNR courses.

Terminal Performance Objective:

Through class instruction and the evaluation of the Growing Our Future podcast episode, students will create a cover letter, according to the criteria outlined in the assignment.

Enabling Objectives:

1. Identify various agriculturally based organizations.
2. Research the requirements needed to earn the different levels of FFA degrees.
3. Analyze the personal characteristics needed to be successful within the workforce.
4. Create a professional cover letter.

Vocabulary:

- **Accountability** - (of a person, organization, or institution) required or expected to justify actions or decisions; responsible.
- **Adaptable** – able to adjust to new conditions.

Bell Work:

Answer the following series of questions to the best of your ability:

1. What does the USDA stand for?

Answer: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- **Career** - an occupation undertaken for a significant period of a person's life and with opportunities for progress.
- **Communication** - the process or act of exchanging, expressing or conveying information and ideas through writing, speaking and gesturing.
- **Competitive Edge** - it is that special "something" .. the "it" ... that gives an advantage to a person or business over their peers. Many times, we don't know what "it" is, but we know they have it. Students involved in the agricultural education and FFA generally have a competitive edge over their peers who do not participate in the program. Their edge is evident in soft skills, work ethic, teamwork, problem solving, and communication.
- **Economics** – the branch of knowledge concerned with the production, consumption, and transfer of wealth.
- **Entrepreneurship** - a person who organizes and operates a business or businesses, taking on greater than normal financial risks in order to do so.
- **Flexibility** - able to be easily modified to respond to altered circumstances or conditions. Ready and able to change so as to adapt to different circumstances.
- **Gratitude** - is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness and joy. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships.
- **Goal** - the object of a person's ambition or effort; an aim or desired result.
- **Grit** – The power of passion and perseverance for having long term goals.
- **Integrity** - the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness.
- **Inspiration** - the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, especially to do something creative.
- **Job** – a paid position of regular employment.
- **Land Grant Universities** – is an institution of higher education in the United States

2. What does the USDA do?
Answer: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is a federal agency that plays a major role in rural development, particularly housing. It also oversees and implements programs related to the farming, ranching, and forestry industries and regulates food quality and safety, and nutrition labeling.
3. How many agencies fall under the USDA governance?
Answers: 18 Agencies
4. List all the USDA departments you have heard of before, and what those departments do.
Answers may vary.
See <https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/agencies>
5. How many FFA degrees are there? What are they called?
Answers: Five Levels of Degrees
 - Discovery Degree
 - Greenhand Degree
 - Chapter Farmer Degree
 - Lone Star (state level) Degree
 - American (national level) Degree
 See <https://www.texasffa.org/degrees-of-membership>
6. What does MANRRS stand for?
Answer: Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences
<https://www.manrrs.org/>
7. What is MANRRS?
Answer: The Mission at MANRRS is to promote academic and professional advancement by empowering minorities in agriculture, natural resources, and related sciences. Students have a valuable voice, and their participation matters.

Give them a few minutes to answer the questions and then review the answers together as a class.

designated by a state to receive the benefits of the [Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890](#).

- **Latinos in Agriculture** – is to create a network of America’s agricultural industry, government agencies and educators with student representatives of the country’s growing Latino population to promote advanced study and careers for Hispanics in agriculture and related fields.
- **MANRRS** - promotes academic and professional advancement by empowering minorities in agriculture, natural resources, and related sciences. Students have a valuable voice, and their participation matters.
- **Measurable Goals** - identify exactly what it is you will see, hear, and feel when you reach your goal. It means breaking your goal down into measurable elements.
- **Networking** – the action or process of interacting with others to exchange information and develop professional or social contacts.
- **Path** – the course or direction in which a person or thing is moving.
- **Professional Networks** – is when you build relationships with other professionals both in your career field and in other related fields. Networking allows you to foster relationships with others that are mutually beneficial to the careers of you and those in your network.
- **Record books** – is to provide you with a detailed description of your year's work. A complete book will be a useful reference in years to come and will also show your accomplishments for the year on Achievement Day.
- **Texas Farm Bureau** – is an independent, nongovernmental, voluntary organization governed by the people it represents. Its purpose is to enhance and strengthen the lives and well-being of rural Texans by working to improve education, economic opportunity, and social advancement.
- **Texas Workforce Commission** - is a governmental agency in the U.S. state of Texas that provides unemployment benefits and services related to employment to eligible individuals and businesses.

- **USDA** – is empowering people and improving lives. USDA has set four cross-cutting strategic priorities as part of its work behalf of producers, families, and rural communities: Addressing Climate Change via Climate Smart Agriculture, Forestry, and Clean Energy; Advancing Racial Justice, Equity, Opportunity and Rural Prosperity; Creating More and Better Market Opportunities; and Tackling Food and Nutrition Insecurity.
- **Vision** – the ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom.

Preparation

Instructor Notes

Tell the class, *“The USDA is empowering people and improving our lives. On behalf of producers, families, and rural communities, the USDA is Addressing Climate Change via Climate Smart Agriculture, Forestry, and Clean Energy; Advancing Racial Justice, Equity, Opportunity and Rural Prosperity; Creating Market Opportunities; and Tackling Food and Nutrition Insecurity.*

The FFA degree system is organized so that all FFA members, no matter where you are from, have an equal chance of obtaining each degree of membership including the highest degree of membership within the FFA, the American FFA Degree. However, you must show progress in your Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) program to have a realistic chance at attaining this goal. If you are a freshman or sophomore in high school, now is the time to set your goal and create a road map on how you plan to achieve your goals within the FFA.

Let’s take a pop quiz to see how much you know about the USDA and the FFA degrees.”

Once students complete the activity, tell the class, *“The students who have the most correct answers to the activity will receive a prize.”*

Pass out candy, stickers, or whatever small prizes the school will allow you to distribute to students.

Activity Notes

Give each student the “How Much Do You Know” activity.

Give the student 10 minutes to complete the activity. They cannot use their cell phones nor any other technological device to look up answers.

Read the answers to the activity aloud to the class.

<p>Ask the class, “How many of you thought this activity was easy? Why or why not?”</p> <p>Discuss as a class.</p> <p><i>What information did you take away from this activity?”</i></p> <p>Discuss as a class.</p>	
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Presentation

Instructor Notes	Activity Notes
<p>Tell the class, “Now that we understand more about the USDA and the FFA degree levels, let’s hear from a woman who has experience with both. Benita Hodge is the Survey Administrator at the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), a part of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). She was the first female African American to earn the prestigious American FFA Degree. Her continued work with FFA helps students and teachers understand the wide range of careers in agriculture and inspires future leaders to go after what they love.</p> <p>Tell the class, “During the podcast video, I want you to use the handout to write down key characteristics Ms. Hodge and Aaron Alejandro mention in order to be successful in the workforce today. These characteristics might be personal ways to improve ourselves or professional skills we should work to develop.</p> <p><i>Also remember to write down any key quotes or phrase heard during the podcast that resonate (standout) to you.”</i></p>	<p>Pass out the “Personal and Professional Characteristics to be Successful in the Workforce” activity.</p> <p>Have students watch the Episode 11 of the Growing Our Future Podcast.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://youtu.be/x4iN1lQ5w8Y

Application

Instructor Notes	Activity Notes						
<p>Following the podcast video, ask the class, “What specific things did you take away from this podcast video?”</p> <p><i>(Allow time for class discussion)</i></p> <p>Tell the class, “Today’s lesson is all about you. How you can better yourself, your leadership skills, your personal goals, and professional workforce skills.</p>	<p>Step 1 – Have student watch the four motivational videos linked on the “What Does It Take?” handout.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="802 1724 1511 1976"> <thead> <tr> <th>Video Title:</th> <th>Website:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Episode 11 – Growing Our Future Podcast: Work to Have a Voice at the Table</td> <td>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4iN1lQ5w8Y&t=34s</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance</td> <td>https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_grit_the_power_of_passion_and_perseverance?language=en</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Video Title:	Website:	Episode 11 – Growing Our Future Podcast: Work to Have a Voice at the Table	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4iN1lQ5w8Y&t=34s	Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance	https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_grit_the_power_of_passion_and_perseverance?language=en
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<p>Pass out the “What Does It Take?” handout.</p> <p>Tell the class, <i>“On the following handout, you will find four video links. Each link is a motivational video you are going to view and evaluate individually.</i></p> <p><i>Once you have watched all four videos, you will use the information you obtained from each video to complete the ‘Personal and Professional Characteristics to be Successful in the Workforce’ activity.”</i></p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="803 94 1510 273"> <tr> <td data-bbox="803 94 1161 189"> Aaron Alejandro - Texas FFA President Retiring Address, 1986 </td> <td data-bbox="1161 94 1510 189"> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_ZMrxk6qIs </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="803 189 1161 273"> Rick Rigsby - Keynote Speaker - 88th National FFA Convention & Expo </td> <td data-bbox="1161 189 1510 273"> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tkx32ib6p7c </td> </tr> </table> <p>Step 2 – After watching each of the following videos, students will list the attributes or points of each video/podcast in their designated section of the activity. They need to be specific, clear, and concise, using detail.</p> <p>Step 3 – Once they have taken notes on all four videos, students should place any shared points in the designated section.</p> <p>Step 4 - Finally, students should write any quotes or statements that resonate (standout) with them in the final section of the activity.</p>	Aaron Alejandro - Texas FFA President Retiring Address, 1986	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_ZMrxk6qIs	Rick Rigsby - Keynote Speaker - 88th National FFA Convention & Expo	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tkx32ib6p7c
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Rick Rigsby - Keynote Speaker - 88th National FFA Convention & Expo	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tkx32ib6p7c				

Evaluation / Summary

Instructor Notes	Activity Notes
<p>Ask the class, <i>“After watching all four of the videos, what specific characteristic stood out to you?”</i></p> <p>Allow time for in-depth class discussion.</p> <p>Ask the class, <i>“What quotes did you find that stood out to you?”</i></p> <p>Allow time for in-depth class discussion.</p> <p>Ask the class, <i>“How could you utilize the information in the videos in your life today?”</i></p> <p>Allow time for in-depth class discussion.</p> <p>Explain to the class, <i>“All of the characteristics you heard in the videos can be utilized in both your personal and professional lives. Now, we are going to test your ability to follow directions and represent your with dignity and integrity.</i></p> <p><i>For next assignment, you are going to create a professional cover letter. Your cover letter will be worth one major grade. Once you have completed the cover letter, I will review it with you one on one, and we will discuss what you can edit to improve the document.”</i></p>	<p>Pass out the “Professional Cover Letter Assignment”.</p> <p>The cover letter will be worth one major grade.</p> <p>Students should be given two to three class periods to complete all the parts of the assignment. Instructor should review the student’s cover letters with the student one on one, and have student make all the necessary adjustments/corrections.</p>



Growing Our Future Podcast – Episode 11 How Much Do You Know?

Instructions: Match the FFA Degree level with the correct description. Write the letter of the degree in the blank of the matching description. Each description only has one degree answer.

FFA Degree Levels

- A. Discovery Degree
- B. Greenhand FFA Degree
- C. Chapter FFA Degree
- D. Lone Star FFA Degree
- E. American FFA Degree

1. This degree of active membership is awarded by the National FFA Organization and is the highest level of active membership which can be achieved within the FFA. This final step in the FFA Degree system encourages members to grow and achieve personally toward establishing yourself in an agricultural career. Members may apply for their _____ degree only if they have received the State FFA Degree, have graduated from high school at least twelve months prior to the national convention and meet the very high standards for the degree.

These requirements include an excellent record of involvement within the FFA, operation and maintenance of records to substantiate an outstanding supervised agricultural experience program through which a member has exhibited comprehensive planning, managerial and financial expertise, have earned and productively invested a specific amount of both time and money.

The _____ FFA Degree is a sign of great accomplishment among FFA members. Only a small percentage of FFA members ever earn the degree (the greatest percentage of members ever to receive the degree in one year was less than one half of one percent).

2. This degree recognizes students enrolled in 7-8 grade agricultural science class making strides toward successful involvement in the FFA. Receipt of this degree is not necessary in order to obtain the Greenhand FFA Degree. This degree of active membership is awarded at the chapter level. This degree is the _____ degree.
3. Those FFA members that have received their Greenhand degree may apply for the _____ Degree. Members must be enrolled in an agricultural science class, have completed at least two semesters in agricultural science at or above the ninth-grade level, have in operation an approved SAE program, demonstrate leadership skills and be actively involved in the activities of the local FFA chapter. This degree of active membership is awarded at the chapter level. The _____ FFA Degree is given to an FFA chapter's top members.

4. FFA members enrolled in their first year of high school credit agricultural science, that have satisfactory plans for a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program and that have demonstrated their understanding of the history and purpose of the FFA may apply for their _____ Degree. This degree of active membership is awarded at the chapter level.
5. This is the highest degree of membership the State FFA Association can award. FFA members may apply to receive the _____ Degree only after they have received the Chapter degree. Those wishing to receive their _____ Degree must have been an active FFA member for at least two years, complete at least four semesters of agricultural science at or above the ninth grade level, maintain a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program, invest significant time and money in their SAE, demonstrate their leadership skills and show a commitment to the FFA through involvement at the chapter level and above. This degree of active membership is awarded at the state level during the Texas FFA convention.

Instructions: Match the USDA agency with the correct description. Write the number of the agency description in the blank next to its matching USDA name.

USDA Agencies

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) _____	Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) _____	Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) _____
Agricultural Research Service (ARS) _____	Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) _____	Risk Management Agency (RMA) _____
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) _____	Forest Service (FS) _____	Rural Development (RD) _____
Economic Research Service (ERS) _____	FPAC Business Center _____	Rural Utilities Service (RUS) _____
Farm Service Agency (FSA) _____	National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) _____	Rural Housing Service (RHS) _____
Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) _____	National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) _____	Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) _____

1. _____ offers a variety of programs to build or improve housing and essential community facilities in rural areas. _____ offers loans, grants and loan guarantees for single- and multi-family housing, child care centers, fire and police stations, hospitals, libraries, nursing homes, schools, first responder vehicles and equipment, housing for farm laborers and much more.
2. The _____ implements agricultural policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster and farm marketing programs through a national network of offices.
3. _____ is USDA's principal in-house research agency. _____ leads America towards a better future through agricultural research and information.

4. _____ is USDA's principal social science research agency. Each year, _____ communicates research results and socioeconomic indicators via briefings, analyses for policymakers and their staffs, market analysis updates, and major reports.
5. _____ increases food security and reduces hunger in partnership with cooperating organizations by providing children and low-income people access to food, a healthy diet, and nutrition education in a manner that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence.
6. _____ facilitates the strategic marketing of agricultural products in domestic and international markets while ensuring fair trading practices and promoting a competitive and efficient marketplace. _____ constantly works to develop new marketing services to increase customer satisfaction.
7. _____ offers programs to help businesses grow as well as job training for people living in rural areas. These programs help provide the capital, training, education and entrepreneurial skills that can help people living in rural areas start and grow businesses or find jobs in agricultural markets and in the bio-based economy.
8. _____ helps rural areas to develop and grow by offering Federal assistance that improves quality of life. _____ targets communities in need and then empowers them with financial and technical resources.
9. _____ sustains the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.
10. _____'s mission is to invest in and advance agricultural research, education, and extension to solve societal challenges. _____'s investments in transformative science directly support the long-term prosperity and global preeminence of U.S. agriculture.
11. _____ helps to ensure that farmers have the financial tools necessary to manage their agricultural risks. _____ provides coverage through the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, which promotes national welfare by improving the economic stability of agriculture.
12. _____ provides leadership in ensuring the health and care of animals and plants. The agency improves agricultural productivity and competitiveness and contributes to the national economy and the public health.
13. _____ serves the basic agricultural and rural data needs of the country by providing objective, important and accurate statistical information and services to farmers, ranchers, agribusinesses and public officials. This data is vital to monitoring the ever-changing agricultural sector and carrying out farm policy.
14. _____ works to improve foreign market access for U.S. products. This USDA agency operates programs designed to build new markets and improve the competitive position of U.S. agriculture in the global marketplace.
15. _____ provides financing to build or improve infrastructure in rural communities. This includes water and waste treatment, electric power and telecommunications services. These services help expand economic opportunities and improve the quality of life for rural residents.
16. _____ provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain and improve our natural resources and environment.
17. The _____ Business Center is a first-of-its-kind organization at USDA, combining the talent of employees from all three _____ agencies into specialized teams that serve employees and customers across the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Risk Management Agency (RMA).
18. _____ enhances public health and well-being by protecting the public from foodborne illness and ensuring that the nation's meat, poultry and egg products are safe, wholesome, and correctly packaged.



Growing Our Future Podcast – Episode 11 How Much Do You Know? KEY

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FFA Degree Levels

- A. Discovery Degree
- B. Greenhand FFA Degree
- C. Chapter FFA Degree
- D. Lone Star FFA Degree
- E. American FFA Degree

1. This degree of active membership is awarded by the National FFA Organization and is the highest level of active membership which can be achieved within the FFA. This final step in the FFA Degree system encourages members to grow and achieve personally toward establishing yourself in an agricultural career. Members may apply for their E. degree only if they have received the State FFA Degree, have graduated from high school at least twelve months prior to the national convention and meet the very high standards for the degree.

These requirements include an excellent record of involvement within the FFA, operation and maintenance of records to substantiate an outstanding supervised agricultural experience program through which a member has exhibited comprehensive planning, managerial and financial expertise, have earned and productively invested a specific amount of both time and money.

The E. FFA Degree is a sign of great accomplishment among FFA members. Only a small percentage of FFA members ever earn the degree (the greatest percentage of members ever to receive the degree in one year was less than one half of one percent).

2. This degree recognizes students enrolled in 7-8 grade agricultural science class making strides toward successful involvement in the FFA. Receipt of this degree is not necessary in order to obtain the Greenhand FFA Degree. This degree of active membership is awarded at the chapter level. This degree is the A. degree.
3. Those FFA members that have received their Greenhand degree may apply for the C. Degree. Members must be enrolled in an agricultural science class, have completed at least two semesters in agricultural science at or above the ninth-grade level, have in operation an approved SAE program, demonstrate leadership skills and be actively involved in the activities of the local FFA chapter. This degree of active membership is awarded at the chapter level. The C. FFA Degree is given to an FFA chapter's top members.

4. FFA members enrolled in their first year of high school credit agricultural science, that have satisfactory plans for a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program and that have demonstrated their understanding of the history and purpose of the FFA may apply for their **B.** Degree. This degree of active membership is awarded at the chapter level.
5. This is the highest degree of membership the State FFA Association can award. FFA members may apply to receive the **D.** Degree only after they have received the Chapter degree. Those wishing to receive their **D.** Degree must have been an active FFA member for at least two years, complete at least four semesters of agricultural science at or above the ninth grade level, maintain a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program, invest significant time and money in their SAE, demonstrate their leadership skills and show a commitment to the FFA through involvement at the chapter level and above. This degree of active membership is awarded at the state level during the Texas FFA convention.

Instructions: Match the USDA agency with the correct description. Write the number of the agency description in the blank next to its matching USDA name.

USDA Agencies

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) <u> 6. </u>	Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) <u> 18. </u>	Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) <u> 16. </u>
Agricultural Research Service (ARS) <u> 3. </u>	Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) <u> 14. </u>	Risk Management Agency (RMA) <u> 11. </u>
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) <u> 12. </u>	Forest Service (FS) <u> 9. </u>	Rural Development (RD) <u> 8. </u>
Economic Research Service (ERS) <u> 4. </u>	FPAC Business Center <u> 17. </u>	Rural Utilities Service (RUS) <u> 15. </u>
Farm Service Agency (FSA) <u> 2. </u>	National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) <u> 13. </u>	Rural Housing Service (RHS) <u> 1. </u>
Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) <u> 5. </u>	National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) <u> 10. </u>	Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) <u> 7. </u>

1. RHS offers a variety of programs to build or improve housing and essential community facilities in rural areas. RHS offers loans, grants and loan guarantees for single- and multi-family housing, child care centers, fire and police stations, hospitals, libraries, nursing homes, schools, first responder vehicles and equipment, housing for farm laborers and much more.
2. The Farm Service Agency implements agricultural policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster and farm marketing programs through a national network of offices.
3. ARS is USDA's principal in-house research agency. ARS leads America towards a better future through agricultural research and information.

4. ERS is USDA's principal social science research agency. Each year, ERS communicates research results and socioeconomic indicators via briefings, analyses for policymakers and their staffs, market analysis updates, and major reports.
5. FNS increases food security and reduces hunger in partnership with cooperating organizations by providing children and low-income people access to food, a healthy diet, and nutrition education in a manner that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence.
6. AMS facilitates the strategic marketing of agricultural products in domestic and international markets while ensuring fair trading practices and promoting a competitive and efficient marketplace. AMS constantly works to develop new marketing services to increase customer satisfaction.
7. RBS offers programs to help businesses grow as well as job training for people living in rural areas. These programs help provide the capital, training, education and entrepreneurial skills that can help people living in rural areas start and grow businesses or find jobs in agricultural markets and in the bio-based economy.
8. RD helps rural areas to develop and grow by offering Federal assistance that improves quality of life. RD targets communities in need and then empowers them with financial and technical resources.
9. FS sustains the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.
10. NIFA's mission is to invest in and advance agricultural research, education, and extension to solve societal challenges. NIFA's investments in transformative science directly support the long-term prosperity and global preeminence of U.S. agriculture.
11. RMA helps to ensure that farmers have the financial tools necessary to manage their agricultural risks. RMA provides coverage through the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, which promotes national welfare by improving the economic stability of agriculture.
12. APHIS provides leadership in ensuring the health and care of animals and plants. The agency improves agricultural productivity and competitiveness and contributes to the national economy and the public health.
13. NASS serves the basic agricultural and rural data needs of the country by providing objective, important and accurate statistical information and services to farmers, ranchers, agribusinesses and public officials. This data is vital to monitoring the ever-changing agricultural sector and carrying out farm policy.
14. FAS works to improve foreign market access for U.S. products. This USDA agency operates programs designed to build new markets and improve the competitive position of U.S. agriculture in the global marketplace.
15. RUS provides financing to build or improve infrastructure in rural communities. This includes water and waste treatment, electric power and telecommunications services. These services help expand economic opportunities and improve the quality of life for rural residents.
16. NRCS provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain and improve our natural resources and environment.
17. The FPAC Business Center is a first-of-its-kind organization at USDA, combining the talent of employees from all three FPAC agencies into specialized teams that serve employees and customers across the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Risk Management Agency (RMA).
18. FSIS enhances public health and well-being by protecting the public from foodborne illness and ensuring that the nation's meat, poultry and egg products are safe, wholesome, and correctly packaged.



Growing Our Future Podcast – Episode 11
Personal and Professional Characteristics to be Successful in the Workforce

Instructions: After watching each of the following videos, list the attributes or points of each video/podcast in their designated section of the activity. Be specific, clear, and concise, using details. Once you have taken notes on all four videos, place any shared points in the designated section. Finally, write any quotes or statements that resonate (standout) with you in the final section of the activity.

Episode 11 – Growing Our Future Podcast: Work to Have a Voice at the Table:

Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance:

Aaron Alejandro - Texas FFA President Retiring Address, 1986:

Rick Rigsby - Keynote Speaker - 88th National FFA Convention & Expo:

What personal characteristics and professional responsibilities were discussed in all four videos?

Famous Quotes from:

- **Episode 11 – Growing Our Future Podcast: Work to Have a Voice at the Table:**

- **Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance:**

- **Aaron Alejandro - Texas FFA President Retiring Address 1986:**

- **Rick Rigsby - Keynote Speaker - 88th National FFA Convention & Expo:**



**Growing Our Future Podcast – Episode 11
What Does It Take?**

Video Title:	Website:
Episode 11 – Growing Our Future Podcast: Work to Have a Voice at the Table	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4jN1lQ5w8Y&t=34s
Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance	https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_grit_the_power_of_passion_and_perseverance?language=en
Aaron Alejandro - Texas FFA President Retiring Address, 1986	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_ZMrxk6qls
Rick Rigsby - Keynote Speaker - 88th National FFA Convention & Expo	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tkx32ib6p7c



Growing Our Future Podcast – Episode 11 Professional Cover Letter Assignment

Background: To be considered for almost any position, you will need to write a letter of application or a “cover letter”. A cover letter explains your purpose for applying for a specific job or career, highlights a few of your experiences or skills, and requests an opportunity to meet personally with the potential employer. The cover letter is your introduction to an employer and should be impressive and effective. Remember, the cover letter not only tells of your accomplishments but also reveals how effectively you can communicate.

The appropriate content, format, and tone for cover letters vary according to the position and the personality of the applicant. Thus, you will want to ask several people (if possible) who have had experience in obtaining jobs or in hiring in your field to critique a draft of your letter and to offer suggestions for revision.

Instructions: For this assignment, you will be writing a cover letter as if you were applying for an internship position within the Texas FFA Association. The job description for the 2023 Texas FFA Internship is attached for you to reference. You will need the following criteria within your cover letter:

Cover Letter - (100 points)

1. Submit a single-spaced letter of intent [cover letter] using 8½” x 11” of *white* paper.
2. The paper is to be single-sided only, typed using 12-point Times New Roman font and left justified.
3. The letter is to be addressed to:

Jennifer Jackson
Executive Director
Texas FFA Association
614 East 12th St.
Austin, TX 78701

4. Greeting should be addressed to: Dear Ms. Jackson.

Reference Materials: Please see the attached reference materials and cover letter examples to help guide your writing.

- 2023 Texas FFA Association Internship Application
- Cover Letter Basics
- Cover Letter Examples
- Cover Letter Scoring Rubric



2023 Internship Opportunities

Description:

The Texas FFA Association has two internship opportunities available for junior and senior level college students. Both internship opportunities will focus primarily on helping facilitate the state degree check and scholarship selection process as well as coordinate several different facets of the annual state leadership conference and state convention. These are intense, hands-on, project-based internships that require attention to details, excellent customer service skills, effective communication, and professionalism.

As an FFA intern, you will be responsible for effectively assisting the needs of the Texas FFA staff, state officers, advisors, contractors, and volunteers. You will also independently manage special projects. Specific responsibilities will include, but are not limited to:

- Notification correspondence
- Event management related to the Texas FFA Convention and State Leadership Conference
- Assist with the annual award, degree and scholarship selection
- Texas FFA publication development
- Updating and creating web-based content
- Leadership content development
- Provide coaching and deliver both one-on-one and group feedback

Skills and Qualifications Desired:

- University students currently pursuing a degree in the field of agriculture. College junior, senior or recent college graduates pursuing ag. education, ag. leadership, or ag. communications preferred. (Current high school students or recent high school graduates will NOT be considered)
- Knowledge of the Texas FFA and its programs
- Attention to detail (excellent proofreading and organizational skills are a MUST!)
- Ability to work effectively as a team and individually
- Ability to oversee and complete projects without constant supervision
- Proficiency in MS Office programs as well as Google Docs
- Facilitation experience in small and large group settings



2023 Internship Opportunities

- Location:** Remote with scheduled work days at the state office.
614 East 12th St. Austin, TX
- Hours:** 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday
(Additional hours to be expected)
- Salary:** Paid Internship (twice per month)
- Travel:** This internship also includes travel to Stephenville, Dallas and other locations as assigned. All expenses and accommodations related to work required travel will be paid for by the Texas FFA Association.

Application Deadline: April 1, 2023 **Interviews:** To be scheduled after deadline

Start Date: To be scheduled after deadline **End Date:** No earlier than July 30, 2023

How to Apply:

Submit letter of interest and resume including: formal education, work experience, FFA related experience, and references to Jennifer Jackson at jennifer@texasffa.org.

Cover Letter Basics

What is a cover letter and why do you need one? Contrary to what you might think, a cover letter is **not** a short essay where you get to tell your potential employer: 1) All the amazing things you've done since starting your degree, 2) What you hope to gain or learn when you get the job, and 3) How the job will help you achieve your future goals.

Like the resume it accompanies, the cover letter is not really about what you want/need or are most proud of at all.

- **It is about the employer's wants and needs.** The cover letter is your chance to expand upon the facts listed on your resume by showing the potential employer (in one page or less) that you "get" them; that you understand what they need in the position you are applying for, and how the skills and qualities you possess are ready to meet that need.
- **It is also a writing sample** that gives you a chance to prove that you possess great written communication skills (a quality that ranks anywhere from #1 to #3 on annual surveys of skills employer seek).
- Like writing an essay, **you should have a solid thesis statement before you write the cover letter.** Your thesis statement guides how you write your cover letter and your resume. These two documents should support each other; and the thesis statement is the starting point. In order to come up with that thesis statement, you must first analyze the position announcement to identify the employer's needs and the language they use. (See example on the next page)
- **The cover letter should complement, not duplicate, resume information,** and focus the prospective employer's attention to pertinent areas of your experience.

NOTE: The cover letter is ALWAYS tailored to a specific position/organization. There is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all cover letter.

Who should it be addressed to? If the name of the contact person is not given in the job listing (or if you are sending an "unsolicited" letter of inquiry), here are strategies for finding a name of an appropriate individual:

- Call the company directly and ask for a contact person
- Check on BuckyNet in the "Employers" section for contact information for companies who recruit through this office
- If you cannot find any name to whom to address the cover letter, use "Dear Hiring Manager."

Tips for electronic delivery: Send your resume and cover letter as PDF attachments to preserve formatting unless otherwise instructed. If completing an online application which asks you to upload your resume, save the cover letter and resume as one document and upload them as one attachment. If sending an email, include the cover letter in the body of the email as well as an attachment, or consider sending a shorter, introductory email referring to the attached resume and cover letter.

Addressing "Difficult" Issues

Difficult issues can be anything from a lack of internship/volunteer experience, to a low GPA, to why an employer should take a chance on a candidate who wants to move from Texas to New York City. Basically, difficult issues are anything that make you worried that the employer will exclude you from the candidate pool before you even get a chance to present yourself in person.

- **To address or not to address?** – Obviously you'd much rather explain these topics in person during an interview, but you are worried you may never get an interview unless you explain them first. A career counselor can guide you in determining whether or not the issue you feel compelled to address in the cover letter truly needs to be addressed or not.
- **Be succinct** – If you do address something, don't spend more than 1-2 sentences on it. You are merely trying to be proactive, not give the employer your life story.
- **Where should they be mentioned?** -- Difficult items should only be brought-up in the final paragraph of the cover letter.

The Salary Question

Applicants are sometimes asked to include salary requirements. The final paragraph of the cover letter is the place to do this. As a recent graduate, your salary history doesn't necessarily reflect your abilities. Here are a few key salary tips to keep in mind if asked about this:

- Never give a specific dollar amount, but instead list a range if at all possible
- Let your prospective employer know that salary isn't the only criteria by which you judge a job offer
- Research salary information for comparable positions and companies/cities on www.salary.com or www.glassdoor.com

Applicant Follow-up

Applicants who have not heard from an employer after two to three weeks may choose to follow-up by email or telephone. Follow-up should be directed to the original contact person/office or email address. Take a "low key" approach -- state the date the original application materials were sent, ask if they were received (the Post Office and the Internet are not infallible), restate your interest in that specific position, and politely ask where they are in their selection process. It is important that the follow-up does **not** come across to the prospective employer as, "Why haven't I heard from you?"

BASIC COVER LETTER FORMATTING

(adapted from *Building the Better Burger: Cover Letters* published on GovLoop by Paul Binkley)

Your street address (notice your name is not here)

Your City, State and Zip Code (no phone number or email address)

Date

Contact's name, Title (if known)

Organization Name

Street Address

City, State and Zip Code

SALUTATION: "Dear Mr. Smith:" or "Dear Ms. Jones:" (do NOT use "Mrs." unless you know for sure), or simply "Dear Hiring Manager:"

INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH (Thesis Statement)

Start with a "grabber" statement. This serves as your chance to tell the employer how you heard of the position and/or mention a personal connection you have with the organization. Then add your thesis which tells the reader what you are about to prove and in which order. It should be direct and confident without being arrogant or wishy-washy. You have the skills/abilities they need and you are going to prove that to them in this letter.

Example: *"Brian Jenkins, director of the Environmental Policy office, recently told me about the Management Analyst position in the Human Resources Office. My research, analysis, and project management skills make me an excellent candidate for this position."*

BODY PARAGRAPHS (Proof Statements)

These paragraphs should demonstrate two things: Why you are a good fit for the job, and why you want to work for this *specific* employer. Body paragraphs often are 3-6 sentences long. They can be longer or shorter depending on relevant content but they should never be just one sentence. The Body of the cover letter is the place where you support your Thesis Statement from the Intro Paragraph *not* by summarizing your resume, but by making connections for the employer between your skills and the needs of their business.

1. In the example above, research skills were listed first, so you would begin by discussing your research experience: ("**Throughout my work and academic experiences, I developed strong research abilities.**")
2. Follow that statement with some examples which illustrate your research skills (work, volunteer opportunities, class projects, etc...)
3. Show how your experiences tie into the employer's mission, and/or business model, and/or the specific job you're applying for
4. Move onto the next skill listed in your Thesis Statement (in this example "analysis") and complete steps 1-3 for that skill and finally do the same thing with "project management."

SPECIAL NOTE: *There is one key piece of information that you must include in your cover letter:* demonstrate what you know about the employer; their mission, business model, recent achievements, etc... and link that knowledge to your own skills and achievements relevant to doing the job. You may achieve this either by:

- Interweaving knowledge of the employer into your Proof Statements as you go along;
- Including a separate paragraph after your Proof Statements and before the Conclusion Paragraph wherein you discuss things you've learned about the employer from your research which genuinely impress you.

CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH

The first sentence of this paragraph is a restatement of your thesis: "Given the research, analysis, and project management skills I've just discussed, I believe I am an excellent candidate for the Management Analyst position." This is also the place to mention any schedule-related information such as when you graduate or when you are available to begin the position. The final paragraph might also include transitional thoughts such as: "I look forward to learning more about this position with a personal interview." You may also restate your contact information if desired. The paragraph should end with you thanking them for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Name

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

509 Northgate Road, #112
Madison, WI 53702

February 22, 20xx

Madeleine Johnson
Manager, AS/COA Miami
2655 LeJeune Road, 5th Floor
Coral Gables, FL 33134

Dear Ms. Johnson:

In researching non-profit organizations serving the Latin American community, I discovered the listing for a Membership and Programs Development Specialist in Miami on your website. Please accept my application as I feel that my research and writing experience, data handling, and both Spanish and Portuguese language skills will allow me to excel in this position.

Through my experience as both a student and at a variety of internships, I have learned to hone my research, administrative, verbal and written communication skills. In the past year I have taken on two different independent research projects which included personal interviews with UN delegates and a project I undertook as part of a course where I utilized skills in project design, data collection, analysis utilizing Excel, and a presentation and report on the interpretation of the data. Additionally, through my work for a U.S. Senator, I interacted with many high level government officials and business and government leaders. This was in addition to the administrative work that relied on my ability to be both detail-oriented and prioritize a variety of tasks in a fast-paced environment with minimal staff.

For the past three years, I have been involved with the Latino community through my study abroad experience and my extensive travel throughout Latin America. My experiences with Latino culture have increased my desire to use my knowledge of both the Spanish and Portuguese languages and Latin American cultures to advocate for Latino communities in the United States. As evident from my resume, I have a track record of accomplishments and commitment to community service. These volunteer positions taught me about interacting effectively with diverse groups of people and confirmed my interest in helping others. I am dedicated to serving the Latino community which is why I am impressed by what I have learned about the Council of the Americas. The work you do, the populations you serve, the working groups you facilitate, and your organization's mission statement are all aligned with my own passions and interests.

I hope you will agree that my research and communications skills in English, Portuguese, and Spanish plus my facility for working with large amounts of data will make me an excellent Membership and Programs Development Specialist. Attached is a copy of my resume for your consideration. In the meantime, if I can provide you with additional information, please contact me at 608-555-1298 or ksandler@wisc.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Karina Sandler

COVER LETTER RUBRIC - 100 POINTS

Student Name: _____

INDICATOR	Very strong evidence of skill is present 5-4 points	Moderate evidence of skill is present 3-2 points	Weak evidence of skill is present 1-0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
Format and General Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Does not exceed one page without overcrowding *Margins are 1" and single spaced; font size is 11 pt. and Times New Roman font *Uses appropriate business format (left justified) *Date and address at top *Addressed to appropriate person *Appropriate signature block *IF PRINTED: On plain white paper, single sided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Does not exceed one page without overcrowding *Margins are 1" and NOT single spaced; font size is 11 pt. and Times New Roman *Uses appropriate business format, date and address at top *Not addressed to appropriate person *Inappropriate signature block. *IF PRINTED: On plain white paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Exceeds one page *Margins are not 1"; font size is either larger or smaller than 11pt and style is not Times New Roman *No signature; no date or address *No inside address; not the appropriate business format *IF PRINTED: Not on plain white paper 		X4	
Introductory Paragraph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Identifies position they are applying for *States how they heard about the position *States why they are interested in the position *Uses wording to attract reader's attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Identifies position that are applying for *Does not state how they found the job *Vaguely describes why they are interested in the job *Introduction is bland and not attention catching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Does not clearly identify position they are seeking *No description of how you heard about the position *Does not grab the reader's attention 		X4	
Skills and Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Identifies two to three strongest qualifications for the job *Indicates how education has prepared them for this job *States why you are interested in the position; skills and experiences are consistent with resume *Makes reference to resume 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Identifies one to two qualifications for the job *Indicates how education has prepared them for this job *Provides a vague explanation of why interested in the job *Skills and experiences are somewhat consistent with resume *Makes reference to resume 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Does not identify relevant qualifications for the job *Does not indicate how education has prepared them for this job *Does not state why they are interested in the job *Skills and experiences are not consistent with resume *Does not mention resume 		X4	
Closing Paragraph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Thanks reader for taking time to read *Provides appropriate contact information *Makes appropriate provisions for follow up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Thanks reader for taking time to read *Provides contact information, but makes reader to assume a follow up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Does not thank reader *Does not mention a plan for follow up *Does not provide any contact information 		X3	
Spelling/Grammar/Punctuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are extremely high quality with two or less errors in the document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are adequate with three to five errors in the document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are less than adequate with six or more errors in the document 		X5	
TOTAL POINTS						