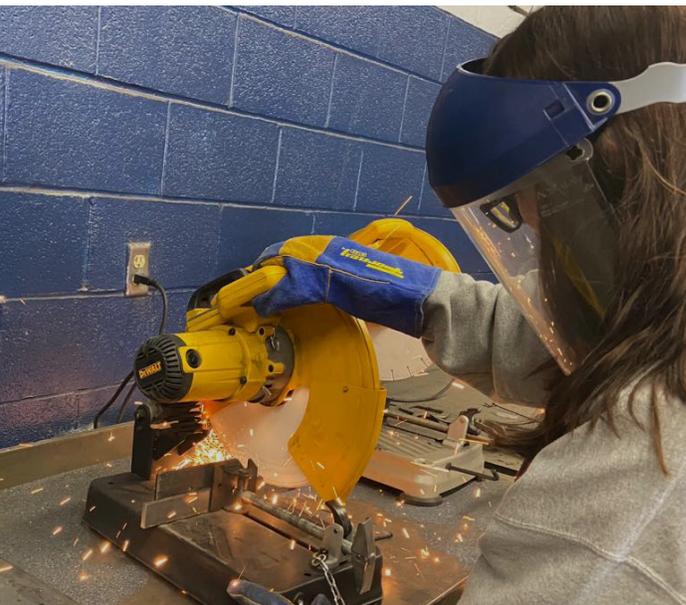


# MISSION



Illinois Association FFA  
2024-25



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# 2024

Illinois Agriculture, Food,  
and Natural Resources  
Education Report

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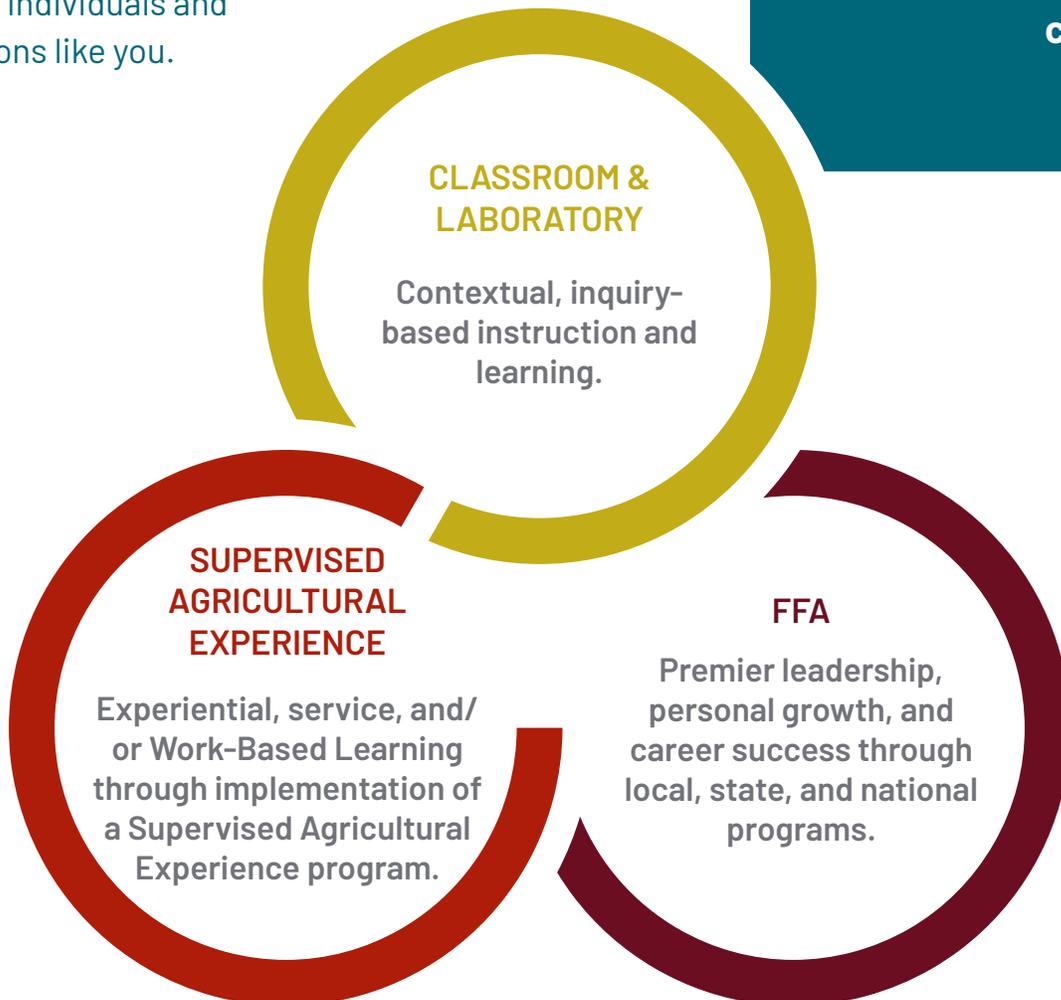
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**Agricultural education programs** in Illinois public schools are fortunate to receive support at the **local, state, and federal** levels. At the state level, specialized funding is provided through the Agricultural Education line item in the Illinois State Board of Education's annual budget. This funding supports eight distinct programs which get detailed on page 4, that enable us to offer **on site support**, engage others in **agricultural education, enhance curriculum**, create **Work-Based Learning** opportunities, and provide materials and experiences for **students** at all **grade levels**. Over the past year, we have seen **growth** not only in **student enrollment** but also in student and **public engagement**, the number of **teachers** in our **classrooms**, and the expansion of **agricultural programs statewide**. We hope you enjoy this publication and take pride in reflecting on the achievements and milestones from this past year, made possible through the continued support of individuals and organizations like you.



Agricultural education programs in Illinois public schools are supported by **local, state, and federal** funding opportunities.

Agricultural education is delivered through **three** interconnected **components**.



# NUMBERS BY THE YEAR

## 42,815

### FFA Membership (1.39%↑)

\*FFA membership dues paid by Illinois Department of Agriculture,

## 41,282

### Ag Ed Enrollment, Unduplicated (3.28%↑)

\*Enrollment is lower than FFA membership due to course conflict/ graduated.

## 12,282

### Calendar Year SAE Participation 30% of Students with SAE Projects

## 17,852

### Unique SAEs Completed by Students

## \$14,549,340

### Calendar Year SAE Earnings

**Facilitating Coordination in Agriculture Education (FCAE), the Illinois FFA Center, and ISBE** work together to **improve** all aspects of **agricultural education in Illinois.**

✓ FCAE coordinates the statewide programming of agricultural education through local program support, curriculum resource management, and Work-Based Learning.

✓ Illinois FFA Center coordinates professional services for all agricultural education-related organizations to include the FFA student organization, FFA Foundation, FFA Alumni, Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers, Illinois Association of Community College Agriculture Instructors, and Professional Agriculture Students.

ISBE administers state funding for agricultural education to include the FCAE projects.

FY24 Line Item Budget	Three Circle Grant	\$3,888,986
	Incentive Funding Grant	\$1,186,620
	University Incentive	\$133,994
	GAST	\$300,000
	Preservice Internship	\$153,400
	FCAE- CRM	\$216,000
	FCAE- LPS	\$1,024,500
	FCAE- WBL	\$146,500
TOTAL		\$7,050,000

### Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) Data

**80** AITC Coalitions  
**634,314** PreK-12 Students Impacted  
**\$1,843,012** State and Local Funds Invested in AITC

### Agricultural Education Program Data

**386** Agricultural Education Programs  
**71.1%** Offering AFNR as Science Credit

### Ag Ed Teacher Data

**544** Agricultural Education Teachers  
**4.6%** increase from FY 2022  
**71.14%** Teachers in Three Circle Grant

### FCAE Program Data

**512.3** Professional Development Hours Provided  
**3** Graduate Courses Offered  
**756** Onsite or Virtual Program Visits  
**95** Teaching Vacancies Filled



### Teacher Three Circle Model of Agricultural Education

Three Circle Grants support implementation of the Three

Circle Model of agricultural education by working with Local Education Agencies (school districts and career centers) to compensate teachers for extended working time outside of their regular duties. Teachers must document 400 additional working hours equal to 60 additional days on FFA, SAE, curricular, and professional learning.

**387** Number of Participating Teachers

**284** Number of Participating Local Education Agencies



### Incentive Funding for Teacher Preparation Programs

Incentive funds support agricultural

education teacher preparation programs at public universities. Funding can be used for a variety of purposes based on the needs of the program and preservice teachers. Allocations are based on the achievement of program quality indicators each year. Quality indicators address all aspects of teacher preparation programs, including teacher readiness, academic advising, course content, preparation for licensure, and comprehensive field experiences offered to preservice teachers.

**\$313** per Quality Indicator

**4** Participating Universities



### Incentive Funding for Programs in Grades 5-12

Incentive funds support local agricultural education

programs for Grades 5-12. Funding can be used for a variety of purposes based on the needs of the local program. Allocations are based on the achievement of program quality indicators each year. Quality indicators address all aspects of school-based agricultural education, including teacher qualifications, student services, courses offered, facility and technology improvements, work-based learning integration, student leadership, and other FFA opportunities.

**\$35.87** per Quality Indicator

**372** Participating Local Education Agencies



### Growing Agricultural Science Teachers

Growing Agricultural Science Teachers (GAST)

funds are given to colleges and universities offering an agricultural education program of study to include the Introduction to Agricultural Education course (AGED 100) articulated across the state. Funds support initiatives to recruit, develop, and retain agricultural education teachers. The program has four main objectives – recruitment and retention, development of preservice teachers, professional learning for early career teachers, and professional learning for teacher educators.

**10** Participating Colleges

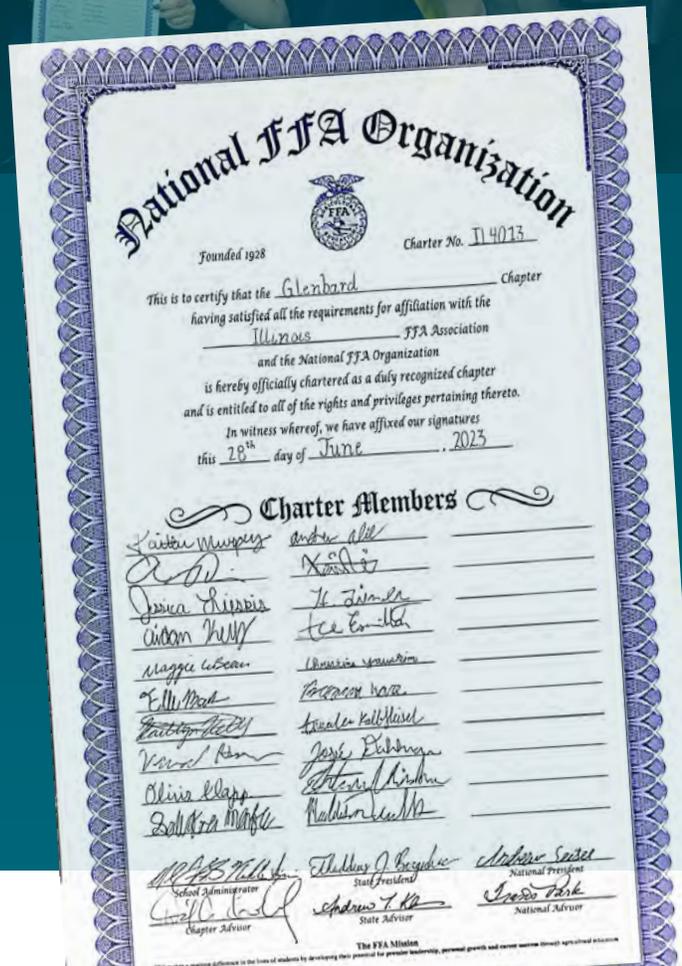
**135** Preservice Teachers Impacted

**169** Early Career Teachers Impacted





The **National FFA Organization** works through state associations to **endorse and deliver official charters to local schools** when meeting the requirements to start an official FFA chapter. Charters are signed by national and state leaders, as well as the first members of the local chapter who are forever dubbed as charter members.



# AGRICULTURE EDUCATION STATE STAFF

## Facilitating Coordination in Agricultural Education (Local Program Support)



Jennifer Waters  
State Coordinator



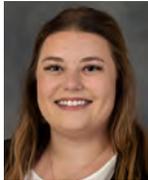
John Heiser, District I  
Program Advisor



Luke Allen, Chicago  
Area Program Advisor



Jenny Wold, District II  
Program Advisor



Allie Bode, District III  
Program Advisor



Megan Coy, District IV  
Program Advisor



Casey Bolin, District V  
Program Advisor

## Illinois FFA Center



Mindy Bunselmeyer,  
Executive Director



John Edgar, Associate  
Director

## ISBE



Jason Mott,  
Principal Consultant

# 2024 CELEBRATIONS

As state staff, we are pleased to share a few **accomplishments** we are proud of in Illinois from this past year. **Thank you** for allowing us to serve **Illinois agricultural education!**

## Students

- 12% increase in the number of programs in the past 5 years.
- 47% increase in student leadership conference participation.
- 275% increase in Illinois PAS membership in the past 4 years.

## Teachers

- 27% increase in the number of teachers in the past 5 years.
- 756 visits to schools, colleges, and universities completed by FCAE-LPS field staff.
- 512.3 hours of professional learning completed by 2,020 teachers (duplicated).

1986

**SENATE BILL 255**

Established a comprehensive education program in agriculture in the public school system.

2006

**HOUSE BILL 4986**

Bolstered Three-Circle Model of agricultural education as requirement for state and federal funding.

2017

**SENATE BILL 2975**

Created the Teacher Three Circle Grant.

2024

**FFA MEMBERSHIP PAID FOR BY DOA**

Illinois Department of Agriculture provides FFA membership dues funds for every student enrolled in agricultural education.

**HOUSE BILL 3814**

House Bill 3814 allows student absences related to their involvement in FFA and 4-H to be listed as an in-person attendance day.

extracurricular activity; and (3) a mechanism for ensuring the involvement of all secondary agricultural education students in formal, Supervised Agricultural Experience activities and programs.”

**Senate Bill 2975** passed and was signed into law effective

January 1, 2017, creating Public Act 99-826 and Section 2-3.80b of the Illinois School Code. This legislation “created an agriculture education teacher grant program to fund personal services costs for agriculture education teachers in school districts. The grants shall be for the purpose of assisting school districts with paying for personal services costs of agriculture education teachers.” This grant today is known as the Teacher Three Circle Grant.

**Senate Bill 1498** passed and was signed into law effective August 13, 2019, creating Public Act 101-554 and Section 2-3.80d of the Illinois School Code. By this new law, the “State Board of Education must, in consultation with the Board of Higher Education, develop an Agricultural Education Pre-Service Teacher Internship Program, beginning at the secondary education level, for pre-service teaching students.” This program today is known as the Preservice Internship Program.

**Senate Bill 1624** and **House Bill 3218** passed and were signed into law effective January 1, 2022, creating Public Act 102-0403. This Public Act amended various Acts relating to the governance of public universities in Illinois. With respect to the high school coursework

**Senate Bill 255** passed and was signed into law on September 19, 1986, creating Public Act 84-1452 and Chapter 122, Section 2-3.80 of the Illinois School Code stating: “The General Assembly recognizes that agriculture is the most basic and singularly important industry in the state, that agriculture is of central importance to the welfare and economic stability of the state, and that the maintenance of this vital industry requires a continued source of trained and qualified individuals for employment in agriculture and agribusiness.” SB 255 thereby established a comprehensive education program in agriculture in the public school system – pre-K through adult education – and required that the State Board of Education make this program readily available to school districts.

**House Bill 4986** became Public Act 84-1452, which amended the Illinois School Code, on January 20, 2006, stating: “Provides that a school district that offers a secondary agricultural education program that is eligible for state and federal funding must ensure that, at a minimum, the following are available to its secondary agricultural education students: (1) an instructional sequence of courses approved by the State Board of Education; (2) a state and nationally affiliated FFA Chapter that is integral to instruction and is not treated as an

2019

**SENATE BILL 1498**

Created the Preservice Internship Program.

2022

**SENATE BILL 1624  
HOUSE BILL 3218**

Adds agricultural science and agricultural education as course options for university admission.

**HOUSE BILL 3178**

Changes the composition of the Illinois Committee for Agricultural Education.

that a person must satisfactorily complete for university admission, adds agricultural sciences as a course option for the science category and agricultural education as a course option for the electives category.

**House Bill 3178** passed and was signed into law, creating Public Act 102-0463. This Act amended ILCS 5/2-3/80 to effectively change the composition of the Illinois Committee for Agricultural Education.

**House Bill 3814** allows student absences related to their involvement in FFA and 4-H to be listed as in-person attendance days. This law went into effect on January 1, 2024.

Fiscal Year	Amount
1987	\$48,500
1988	\$48,500
1989	\$1,000,000

1990	\$1,040,000
1991	\$1,040,000
1992	\$1,040,000
1993	\$1,040,000
1994	\$1,081,600
1995	\$1,081,600
1996	\$1,181,600
1997	\$1,299,000
1998	\$1,429,700
1999	\$1,500,000
2000	\$2,000,000
2001	\$2,000,000
2002	\$1,950,000
2003	\$1,881,200
2004	\$1,881,200
2005	\$1,881,200
2006	\$2,381,200
2007	\$2,881,200
2008	\$2,881,200
2009	\$3,381,200
2010	\$3,043,100

2011	\$1,947,600
2012	\$1,800,000
2013	\$1,800,000
2014	\$1,800,000
2015	\$1,759,900
2016	\$1,800,000
2017	\$1,800,000
2018	\$5,000,000
2019	\$5,000,000
2020	\$5,000,000
2021	\$5,000,000
2022	\$5,000,000
2023	\$7,050,000
2024	\$7,050,000
2025	\$7,850,000



Illinois FFA Association state officers met with Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton on Agriculture Legislative Day at the State Capitol to share a basket of products made in Illinois.

The State Board of Education worked with the Governor and state legislature to increase the Agricultural Education Line to allow for the growth of programs, students, and teachers.

The **Illinois Committee for Agricultural Education (ICAE)** is a group of professionals **tasked with advising the Illinois State Board of Education on agricultural education.** Pursuant to Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/2-3.80), the 13-member committee is composed of members representing a variety of agricultural education roles.



**Erika Allen**  
Chair  
Urban Growers Collective

**Erika Allen**  
CEO Urban Growers  
Collective Inc.

**Allyn Buhrow**  
Pioneer Seed

**Kevin Daugherty**  
Illinois Farm Bureau

**Gary Ochs**  
University of Illinois

**William Ladd-Cawthorne**  
Gary Comer Youth Center

**William Hook**  
Chicago High School for  
Agricultural Sciences

**Elizabeth Patton-Whiteside**  
East Side Health District

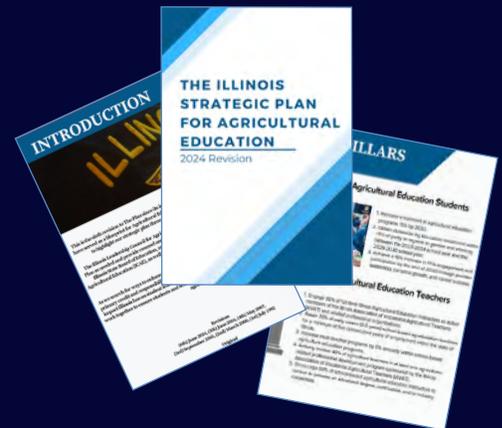
**Karen Schieler**  
Compeer Financial

**Trenton Taber**  
Cambridge High School

# CHECK THIS OUT

Learn about the collaborative efforts of agencies, postsecondary schools, educators, and student leaders that fuel Illinois agriculture programs!

Scan to read the  
Illinois Strategic  
Plan for Agriculture  
Education.



The **Illinois Leadership Council for Agricultural Education (ILCAE)** is a volunteer, grassroots agricultural industry group **focused on the expansion and improvement of agricultural education programs** at all levels. ILCAE is responsible for the vision of agricultural education through the Illinois Agricultural Education Plan.



**Allyn Buhrow**  
Chair  
Farmer, Pioneer

**Erika Allen, CEO**  
Urban Growers Collective Inc.

**Rene Barr,**  
**Service Agent**  
Thacker Insurance

**Acacia Berg, Producer**  
Zumwalt Acres

**Jared Brown, Manager**  
Brandt Consolidated Inc.

**Abby Coers, Marketing Coordinator**  
Central Illinois Ag

**Allen Dietz, Farmer & Retired  
Educator**  
Dietz Farms

**Jeff Galle, President**  
Global Pork Production Enterprises

**Perry Harlow, Program  
Coordinator**  
Illinois Farm Bureau

**Kenny Hartman, Farmer**  
Glendell Farms LTD

**Michael Hmurovich, Senior  
Technical Manager**  
Griffith Foods Inc.

**Dakarai Howard,**  
**Policy Advisor**  
Illinois Department of Agriculture

**Donna Kaufman, Grant  
Manager**  
ROE 9

**Chris Kendall, Director**  
Peoria Educational Region for  
Employment Career and Training

**Katie King, Assistant  
Vice President Farm Manager**  
First Mid Ag Services

**William Kling, Attorney**  
Community Collaborative LLC

**Christina Lueking, Educator**  
University of Illinois Extension

**Mindy McDermott, FieldView  
Learning and Development  
Specialist**  
Nutrien

**Paige Mettler-Cherry, Director**  
National Great Rivers Research and  
Education Center

**Mary Moritz, Manager**  
Moritz Lawn Care & Trucking

**Dan Reedy, Retired Manager**  
Illinois Farm Bureau

**Aaron Schafer, Farmer**  
Schafer Stock Farm

**Karen Schieler, Manager of  
Corporate Giving**  
Compeer Financial

**Kay Shipman, Retired Legislative  
Affairs Editor**  
Farm Week

**Haley Siergiej, Director**  
The Fertilizer Institute

**Holly Spangler, Editor**  
Prairie Farmer/Farm Progress

**Tyler Strom, Director**  
Illinois Agri-Food Alliance

**Dan Swanson, Representative**  
Illinois General Assembly

**Ryan Tate, Associate Director**  
Illinois Farm Bureau

**Cynthia Tucker, Analyst**  
PepsiCo

**Greg Webb, Vice-President State  
Government Relations**  
Archer Daniels Midland

**Wyatt Williamson, Executive  
Director**  
Edgar County Farm Bureau

Visit Teach Ag



The **number of openings** for agriculture teachers **exceeds the number of teaching candidates**, so agricultural education is recognized by the Illinois General Assembly as an area of **high staff shortage** (IL110 ILCS 947/65.25). **Aggressive strategies** and **targeted support** are utilized to **recruit, develop,** and **retain high-quality agriculture teachers** in Illinois public schools.

**State Teach Ag Results Program**

The State Teach Ag Results (STAR) program is a project of the National Teach Ag Campaign, a teacher recruitment and retention initiative managed by the National Association of Agricultural Educators. STAR provides funds for states to develop sustainable programs to increase the number of agriculture teachers. High school and college students explore becoming an agriculture teacher.

**\$8,000** STAR Dollars in FY 2024  
**85** Preservice Teachers Impacted

**Growing Agricultural Science Teachers Program**

GAST is a grant project of the Illinois State Board of Education. GAST funds support the efforts of teacher preparation programs to recruit, develop, and retain agricultural education teachers. Allocations are contingent on annual funding priorities. Funding in FY 2024 was used for student scholarships, mentorship programs, and professional development for early career agriculture teachers.

**\$280,000** GAST Dollars in FY 2024  
**110** Preservice Teachers Impacted  
**114** Early-Career Teachers Impacted

**Teacher Three Circle Grant Program**

The Three Circle Grant program is a project of the Illinois State Board of Education. Three Circle funds support an educator’s extended salary beyond the regularly assigned teaching duties. Participating school districts benefit for 400 additional working hours. ISBE pays a greater amount for new programs.

Fiscal Year	Agricultural Education Job Openings	Graduates in AFNR Teacher Education Programs	Non-traditionally Licensed Teachers Hired in Ag Ed
2022-2023	139	33	36
2023-2024	95	29	36
2024-2025	93	22	26

**\$3,888,986** Three Circles Dollars in FY 2024  
**71%** of Illinois Teachers Participating  
**387** Participating Teachers  
**\$18,975** Average Salary Increase  
**490** Average Hours Worked Outside of School  
**343** Average Hours on FFA  
**55** Average Hours on SAE  
**92** Average Hours on Curricular/PD

**Teacher Contract Lengths**

**415** are 40-60 Days Beyond 180  
**6** are 31-45 Days Beyond 180  
**30** are 16-30 Days Beyond 180  
**17** are 01-15 Days Beyond 180  
**61** are 0 Days Beyond 180

**Recruitment Activities for High School Students**

**90** Students Competing in the Agricultural Education CDE  
**57** Junior Internships with Agricultural Educators  
**112** Students Attending ELITE Conference

**Retention Activities for College Preservice Teachers**

**41** Student Teacher Awards at IAVAT Summer Conference  
**44** Participants in IAVAT Student Branch Activities  
**18** College-level Internships with Agricultural Educators

**Retention Activities for Current Teachers**

**35** Teachers at 1st Year Teachers’ Conference  
**26** Teachers at 2nd Year Teachers’ Conference  
**2,020** Participants in SBAE Professional Development  
**4** New Teacher Retention Grants from IAA Foundation

# Teaching Agriculture is the



# BEST. CAREER. EVER.



## START

Enroll in a community college or university degree program.

## PREP FOR YOUR CAREER IN HIGH SCHOOL

- Take agricultural education classes.
- Get involved in FFA, Jr. MANRRS, 4-H.
- Shadow an agriculture teacher.
- Build your public speaking skills.
- Practice teaching whenever possible.
- Complete college coursework.
- Apply for agricultural education scholarships.



## PREP FOR YOUR CAREER IN COLLEGE

- Attend agricultural education meetings and conferences.
- Assist ag youth organizations as a judge, mentor and chaperone.

## MENTOR

the next generation of leaders, problem-solvers, entrepreneurs and agriculturalists.

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

by being a role model and positively impacting countless lives.



## MOTIVATE

students through quality classroom and lab instruction, leadership development through FFA, and experiential learning.

Meet with faculty advisors and begin coursework!

Become a NAAE student member.

Apply for NAAE programs like FAST and #TeachAg Ambassador.



It's time to STUDENT TEACH!

Engage in activities that build your resume.

Study for your credentialing exams.

Find job postings on the NAAE website.

## BEGIN THE BEST CAREER EVER!

Earn your master's degree before you take your first position OR during your teaching career.

# #TEACHAG



### Earn your ag ed degree in Illinois

Western Illinois University



Illinois State University



University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign



Southern Illinois University



**Student leadership, work ethic, and inspiration** are at the **heart of this organization**, and **all members benefit** from this **system and structure of leadership** that is FFA.

**42,815**

**FFA Members  
FY 2024  
(1.39%↑)**

**42,217**

**FFA Members  
FY 2023  
(76%↑)**

**23,289**

**FFA Members  
FY 2022  
(1%↑)**



**FFA Membership**

Gender	FY24	Change from FY23
Male	<b>24,065 (56.2%)</b>	+602 Members
Female	<b>18,098 (42.3%)</b>	+1,032 Members
Withheld	<b>652 (1.5%)</b>	+36 Members
Race/Ethnicity	FY24	Change from FY23
Asian/Pacific Islander	<b>318 (0.7%)</b>	-55
Black	<b>2,298 (5.4%)</b>	+106
Hispanic/Latino	<b>2,046 (4.8%)</b>	+243
Two or More	<b>1,117 (2.6%)</b>	+58
White	<b>36,298 (84.8%)</b>	+1,233
Withheld	<b>323 (0.8%)</b>	-199
Fillipino	<b>76 (.2%)</b>	+76
American Indian	<b>180 (0.4%)</b>	+180
Native Hawaiian	<b>17 (0.03%)</b>	+17
Native Alaskan	<b>14 (0.03%)</b>	+14
Middle Eastern/ North African	<b>128 (0.3%)</b>	+128

**Twenty-five section presidents** and **five major state officers** work together to **lead the state FFA** throughout the year. Major state officers postpone college and career for one year to serve the FFA.



Team of 2024-2025 State Officers

**State Officers**  
**President**  
**Trenton Payne**  
 Olney FFA

**Reporter**  
**Sidney Stiers**  
 Williamsfield  
 FFA

**Treasurer**  
**Emma Dinges**  
 Amboy FFA

**Vice President**  
**Brody Will**  
 Dieterich FFA

**Secretary**  
**Owen**  
**Torrance**  
 West Prairie  
 FFA



FFA state officers are, from left, Owen Torrance, Sidney Stiers, Trenton Payne, Emma Dinges, and Brody Will



Thaddeus Bergschneider, Franklin FFA, was elected the 2024-25 national FFA president. Thad was the Illinois FFA President in 2023-24. He is currently attending University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

When discussing his goals, Thad shared, **“We have to continue to make all members feel like they belong and engage them in FFA, and that means members from traditional and production ag backgrounds who question if they belong and that means members from urban backgrounds who question whether FFA and agriculture is the industry they want to participate in.”**

**“Every single member needs to know that they have a place in this organization, and that falls on us.”**

The **Illinois Agriscience Fair** recognizes students who gain **real-world, hands-on experiences in agricultural research**. Students use scientific principles and emerging technologies to solve complex problems related to agriculture, food, and natural resources. The Agriscience Fair is for middle and high school students. Participation begins at the local level and progresses to district, state, and national levels.



**FFA member participants in the Agriscience Fair FY 2024**

Project Category	Grades 7-8	Grades 9-10	Grades 11-12
Animal Systems	High Individual: No Entry High Team: No Entry	High Individual: <b>Drake Slutz, Sycamore</b> ★ High Team: Martha Smutzer & Isabella Jewett, Cambridge	High Individual: Cole Kinsella, Stark County High Team: No Entry
Environmental Service and Natural Resource Systems	High Individual: Tinley Wold, Somonauk-Leland High Team: Aubrey Huston & Makenah Allensworth, Southeastern	High Individual: Nadya Jayawardene, Carbondale High Team: <b>Maxwell Baum &amp; Hunter Wexell, Cambridge</b> ★	High Individual: Greyson Applebee, Maroa-Forsyth High Team: Abigail Shaffer & Savannah Ramsey, Southeastern
Food Products and Processing Systems	High Individual: Charles Anderson, Somonauk-Leland High Team: No Entry	High Individual: <b>Toby Williams, Stark County</b> ★ High Team: No Entry	High Individual: <b>Chelsey Stotler, Stark County</b> ★ High Team: No Entry
Plant Systems	High Individual: No Entry High Team: <b>Kirby Kimes &amp; Mason McCarthy, Pleasant Plains</b> ★	High Individual: Addison Brown, Wesclin High Team: <b>Luke Short &amp; Deacon Shanks, Taylorville</b> ★	High Individual: Tessa Gazza, Princeville High Team: Olivia Bird & Sadie Bays, Princeville
Power, Structural, and Technical Systems	High Individual: No Entry Individual: No Entry High Team: <b>Gage Rost &amp; Preston Jarboe, Southeastern</b> ★	High Individual: <b>Henry Waters, Pleasant Plains</b> ★ High Team: No Entry	High Individual: <b>Avery Watson, Unity</b> ★ High Team: No Entry
Social Systems	High Individual: No Entry High Team: No Entry	High Individual: No Entry High Team: Winter Harrington & Francisco Ceja, West Carroll	High Individual: <b>Adam West, Stark County</b> ★ High Team: No Entry



National Finalist



National Champion

**Work-Based Learning (WBL)** is **sustained interaction with professionals** in **real workplace settings** or **simulated environments in school** that foster in-depth, **firsthand engagement** with the tasks required for specific AFNR careers.

These tasks are also aligned to relevant AFNR curriculum and instructional standards. In local AFNR programs, WBL is commonly facilitated through Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs. SAE opportunities are endless and entirely based on exploring students' passions and career interests. Students will start with a Foundational SAE, then expand to include one or more Immersion SAEs.

### SAE Participation Data

- 12,282** Students with SAEs
- 17,852** Unique Projects
- \$14,549,340** SAE Earnings
- 1,184,092** Journal Hour Entries

### Project Types

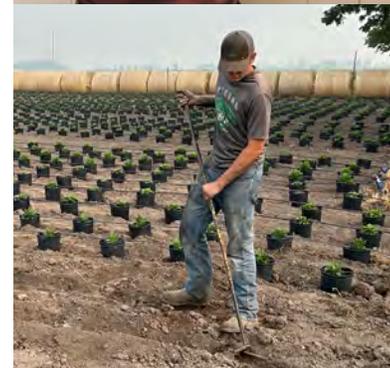
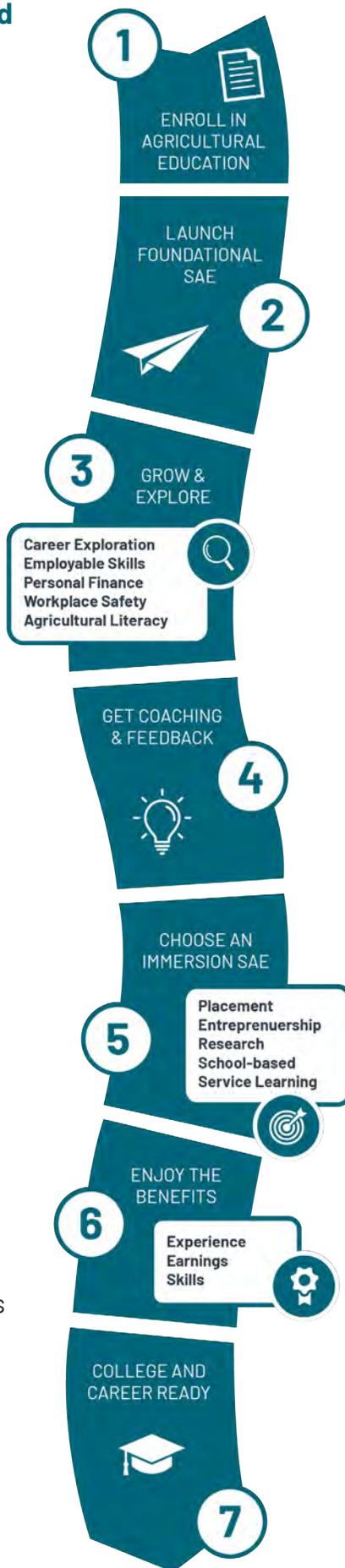
- 29%** Placement/Internship
- 19%** Entrepreneurship/Business
- 12%** Foundational
- 2%** Research/Agriscience

### Project Levels

- 57%** Individual
- 4%** School-based
- 1%** Service-Learning

### Projects by Pathway

- 3734** Animal Systems
- 1736** Plant Systems
- 759** Food Products and Processing Systems
- 714** Power, Structure, and Technical Systems
- 713** Agribusiness Systems
- 431** Career Ready Practices
- 306** Multiple Pathways
- 153** Natural Resource Systems
- 130** Environmental Service Systems
- 5** Biotechnology Systems



## FFA Degrees and Star Awards

Student members of FFA are recognized through a sequence of awards based on achievement in multiple aspects of the AFNR instructional program, including academic success, leadership roles, and SAE progression. These awards are known as Degrees.

## Discovery Awards

The Discovery FFA Degree is awarded to members in Grades 7 and 8 at their local chapter banquet each year. Those middle school members receiving their Discovery Degree can also apply for statewide Star Awards in specific project areas. For this year, those went to:

**Star Agribusiness:** Macie Bartlow, Macomb Middle

**Star Agricultural Placement:** William Smith, Franklin

**Star Agriscience:** Lily DeAth, Salt Fork

**Star Farmer:** Lucy DeAth, Salt Fork

## State Awards

The State FFA Degree is the highest honor the Illinois Association FFA can bestow on a student. This past year, 559 members were awarded the coveted State FFA Degree. From these awards, outstanding members are recognized as "stars" in their respective project areas. Those stars are:

**Star Agribusiness:** Ty Robinson, Goreville

**Star Agricultural Placement:** Waylon Paulek, Taylorville

**Star Agriscience:** Olivia Shike, Unity

**Star Farmer:** Drew Mickey, Taylorville

## National Awards

The American FFA Degree is the highest honor the National FFA Organization can bestow on a student. This past year, 185 members from Illinois were awarded the American FFA Degree. From these awards, Illinois selects outstanding members to be considered by National FFA for American Star Awards. Those stars are:

**Star Agribusiness:** Kendra Downing, Cambridge

**Star Agricultural Placement:** Jack Beetz, Mendota

**Star Agriscience:** Lizzie Schafer, Taylorville

**Star Farmer:** Ty Steffen, Newark

## Two Illinois Students recognized as 2024 American FFA Star Candidates.

Only 16 students across the nation are selected each year, and this year Illinois is the proud home to two of the candidates. Ty Steffen of the Newark FFA Chapter and Lizzie Schafer of the Taylorville FFA Chapter were named American Star Candidates, as the best of the best among thousands of 2024 American FFA Degree recipients.



Ty Steffen



Lizzie Schafer

Visit [FFA.org/Stars](https://www.ffa.org/stars) for more information about the American Star Awards.



National  
18 Finalist



National  
Champion

## Ty Steffen - American Star Farmer Candidate

Diversity is the key to Ty's unique SAE project including six acres of pumpkins, a half acre of gourds and broom corn, over 6,000 cut gladiolas and other cut flowers, 1,600 potted mums, and a vegetable garden. Ty sells these products at the local farmers' markets and through the honor system on his hayracks. Ty ranked among the top four American Degree Star Farmers in the nation.

**"A unique aspect of my SAE is my flower production where I show and hybridize gladiolus in different states and even internationally."**



## Lizzie Schafer - American Star in Agriscience Winner

Lizzie conducted five studies in bovine reproduction and cattle health through her SAE program. This research has been utilized by Angus cattle producers to increase the production of IVF calves and achieve above-average successful embryo transfer pregnancies. She was named the national winner as the 2024 American Star in Agriscience.

**"I now realize it was never about the award or title; it was all about the journey. The journey to this point is genuinely what makes the achievement so special. Feeling the support of all of my friends and family was without question the absolute best experience of my life and is a feeling I will never forget."**



## National STAR finalists enjoyed early start in FFA

BY HANNAH SPANGLER  
FarmWeek

Illinois FFA's two National STAR finalists, Lizzie Schafer (Christian County) and Ty Steffen (Kendall County), will discover if they are a STAR Champion at National FFA Convention Oct. 25.

Both students, now in college, have wanted and worked their entire lives to become a national finalist. Each has a parent as an ag teacher, meaning their time in FFA began before they zipped up their blue jackets for the first time.

"I was seven years old when I went to my first State FFA Convention," Lizzie Schafer, American Star in Agriscience finalist, told FarmWeek. "I saw the top three finalists in Creed Speaking carrying in flags and I told my mom I was going to do that some day."

Schafer did just that, going on to win state Creed speaking and later state prepared public speaking. In the midst of that, she maintained her 4.0 GPA and grew her ag science supervised agriculture experience (SAE).



Left to right, Aaron, Lizzie and Sue Schafer. (Photo courtesy of Sue Schafer)

tion. Her goal is to continue those projects in college because she's seen how her research has benefited producers.

"She has always had a list of goals," said Sue Schafer, her mom and one of the ag teachers at Taylorville High School. Sue Schafer told FarmWeek that what sets her daughter and other successful students apart is that they don't just set goals; they set habits to reach those goals.

Ty Steffen, an American Star SAE finalist, has also

has been the Newark ag teacher. "I have grown up in FFA, and I've had a lot of great role models growing up," Ty Steffen said. "I've just seen what it takes to be successful in such a great organization."

When it was finally his chance to be a part of FFA, Ty Steffen said he knew where to start and dove right away. He has spent every year of high school and beyond growing his unique FFA project.

The non-traditional farmer grows six acres of pumpkins



Left to right, Toby, Joe, Tracy and Ty Steffen. (Photo courtesy of Joe Steffen)

"I'm happy Ty has taken the opportunity and worked hard at his SAE to become a two-time national finalist at the National FFA Convention and a three-time American STAR finalist," Joe Steffen said of his son's success in the FFA.

Success, however, has not come without sacrifice. Joe Steffen and Sue Schafer said growing up immersed in the FFA means their children have traveled with their parents to FFA activities and experienced

his nights before they were in faith No. 1, farm No. 2 and my career is No. 3. Having those priorities in order makes everything else fall into line," Sue Schafer said.

As parents of STAR finalists, Joe and Tracy Steffen, and Aaron and Sue Schafer, will receive their Honorary American Degrees at the same time Ty Steffen and Lizzie Schafer receive their American FFA Degrees. Joe Steffen admitted this is not his first time receiving the degree, presented to those who have given unstated

## FUN FACT

Both Lizzie and Ty are children of current Illinois agriculture teachers!

Proficiency Award Satatewide Winners

<b>Agricultural Communications</b>	Natalie Pratt, Amboy
<b>Agricultural Education</b>	Paige Horstmeyer, Staunton
<b>Agricultural Mechanics Design and Fabrication</b>	Tanner Speiser, Carlyle
<b>Agricultural Mechanics Repair and Maintenance –</b>	Tucker Berlien, Morton
<b>Agricultural Mechanics Repair and Maintenance – Placement</b>	Cole Pruitt, St Joseph-Ogden
<b>Agricultural Processing</b>	Emma Salato, Newark
<b>Agricultural Sales – Entrepreneurship</b>	Tyler Worthey, Neoga
<b>Agricultural Sales – Placement</b>	Abby Woolcott, Unity
<b>Agricultural Services</b>	Reed Naughton, Olympia
<b>Agriscience Research – Animal Systems</b>	Thomas Boatman, Byron
<b>Agriscience Research – Integrated Systems</b>	Olivia Shike, Unity
<b>Agriscience Research – Plant Systems</b>	Lexi Seabuagh, Brownstown FFA
<b>Beef Production – Entrepreneurship</b>	Drew Mickey, Taylorville
<b>Beef Production – Placement</b>	Grace Lemenager, Prairie Central
<b>Dairy Production – Entrepreneurship</b>	<b>Alaina Dinderman, Orangeville</b> ★
<b>Dairy Production – Placement</b>	Ella Gunderson, Eastland
<b>Diversified Agricultural Production</b>	<b>Waylon Paulek, Taylorville</b> ★
<b>Diversified Crop Production – Entrepreneurship</b>	<b>William LaFary, Delavan</b> ★
<b>Diversified Crop Production – Placement</b>	Joseph Thomas, Pittsfield
<b>Diversified Horticulture</b>	<b>Elizabeth Corrie, Rushville-Industry</b> ★
<b>Diversified Livestock Production</b>	Ellorie Drach, Prairie Central
<b>Environmental Science and Natural Resources Management</b>	Gwen Happ, Heritage
<b>Equine Science – Entrepreneurship</b>	Megan Seebach, Rochelle
<b>Equine Science – Placement</b>	Emma Bialko, Peotone
<b>Fiber and Oil Crop Production</b>	Danielle Mudd, Waterloo
<b>Food Service - Entrepreneurship (Illinois only)</b>	Kate Bushue, Sullivan
<b>Food Service - Placement (Illinois only)</b>	Nicolas Barclay, Waltonville
<b>Forage Production</b>	Wyatt DeAth, Salt Fork
<b>Forest Management &amp; Products</b>	Blaine Steber, Red Hill
<b>Fruit Production</b>	<b>Gehrig Bunselmeyer, Maroa-Forsyth</b> ★
<b>Goat Production</b>	Lauren Witte, Orangeville
<b>Grain Production</b>	Emma Moss, Pittsfield
<b>Landscape Management</b>	Samantha Hazelwonder, Central A&M
<b>Nursery Operations</b>	<b>Caleb Wagner, Mercer County</b> ★



National Finalist

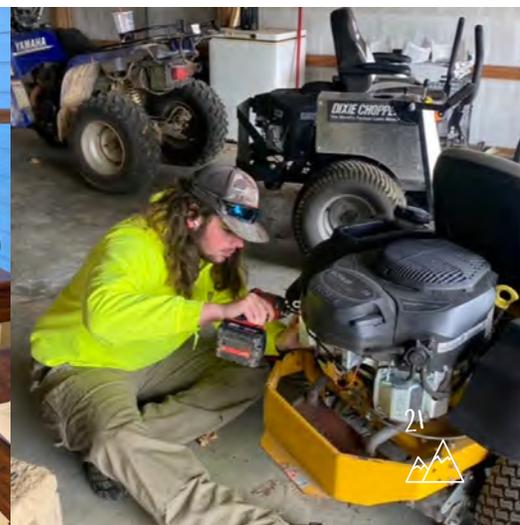
National Champion

**Proficiency Award Satatewide Winners**

<b>Outdoor Recreation</b>	Abigail Frank, Scales Mound
<b>Poultry Production</b>	Jake Whetsell, Taylorville
<b>Safety (Illinois only)</b>	Cooper Einsweiler, Galena
<b>Service Learning</b>	Malayna Kinney, Somonauk-Leland-Sandwich
<b>Sheep Production</b>	Alivia Porter, Clifton Central
<b>Small Animal Production and Care</b>	Owen Pree, Iroquois West
<b>Specialty Animal Production</b>	Morgan Hampton, Lincolnwood
<b>Specialty Crop Production</b>	<b>Benjamin Biros, Seneca</b> ★
<b>Swine Production – Entrepreneurship</b>	<b>Hannah Miller, Prairie Central</b> 🏆
<b>Swine Production – Placement</b>	Taylor Armstrong, Rushville-Industry
<b>Turf Grass Management</b>	Ty Robison, Goreville
<b>Vegetable Production</b>	<b>Riley McDermott, Waterloo</b> 🏆
<b>Veterinary Science</b>	<b>Sydney Long, Streator</b> ★
<b>Wildlife Production and Management</b>	John Bierman, Tri-Valley

**Supervised Occupational Experience**

<b>Arts and Communications (Illinois only)</b>	Taylor Pace, Cambridge
<b>Finance and Business (Illinois only)</b>	Piper Steinacher, Carrollton
<b>Information Technology (Illinois only)</b>	Benjamin Wamsley, Taylorville
<b>Health Science and Technology (Illinois only)</b>	Ashlyn Schubert, Stockton
<b>Human and Public Service (Illinois only)</b>	Adrianna Cottrell, Prairie Central
<b>Manufacturing, Engineering, and Trades (Illinois only)</b>	Grayson Sobkowich, Seneca



**Local AFNR programs** develop student **leadership** through FFA programs at the **local, state,** and **national** levels. FFA members focus on skill development through Leadership Development Events (LDE). **Career Development Events (CDE)** are team-based challenges for FFA members that focus on **skill development** and **career preparation**.

LDE	Participation	State Winner
Conduct of Chapter Meetings	17%	Olney
Creed Speaking (Grades 7-9)	46%	Morgan Crouch, Maroa-Forsyth
Spanish Creed Speaking		Andres Salcido, Streator
Prepared Public Speaking	52%	Conley Schick, Clinton
Extemporaneous Public Speaking		Sidney Stiers, Williamsfield
Parliamentary Procedure	24%	Olney

**Local programs** promote **leadership** and **personal growth** through conferences held at the **local, state,** and **national** levels.

Conference	Audience	Host(s)	Participation
Greenhand	New Students	LLCC, SIUC, UIUC, WIU	Regional Events
Ground Zero	Grades 9-10	SIUC, WIU, JJC	1,276
COLT	Chapter Officers	SIUC	Regional Event
BUILD	Grades 11-12	ISU	579
STAR	Section Officers	BHC, JJC, JWCC, LLC, and SIU	145
Premier 20	Student Leaders in FFA	Illinois Farm Bureau, Bloomington	9
Washington Leadership Conference	FFA Members Across the Nation	National FFA	29
Fall Middle School	Grades 7-8	Southeastern, ICC	169
Spring Middle School	Grades 7-8	LLCC, Sauk Valley, Rend Lake	306



National Finalist



National Champion

CDE	Participation	State Winner
Agricultural Business Management	34%	Prairie Central
Agricultural Communications	6%	Prairie Central
Agricultural Education	24%	Amanda Niemann, Litchfield
Agricultural Issues	3%	Streator
Agricultural Mechanics	51%	Newton
Agricultural Sales	31%	Neoga 🏆
Agronomy	63%	Olney
Dairy Cattle Evaluation - Reasons		Vandalia
Dairy Cattle Evaluation - Non Reasons (Middle School)	36%	Prairie Central
Dairy Cattle Handlers	2%	Alaina Dinderman, Orangeville
Environmental & Natural Resources (Envirothon)	23%	Olney
Food Science Technology	32%	Prairie Central
Forestry		Olney
Forestry (Middle School)	35%	Liberty
Horse Evaluation - Non-Reasons		Mercer County
Horse Evaluation - Non-Reasons (Middle School)	65%	Byron
Horse Evaluation - Reasons		Prairie Central
Horticulture	49%	Paxton Buckley Loda
Job Interview (Employment Skills)	49%	Sidney Stiers, Williamsfield
Land Use	49%	St. Elmo
Land Use (Middle School)	5%	Mahomet Seymour
Livestock Evaluation - Non-Reasons		Mt. Vernon
Livestock Evaluation - Reasons	73%	Newton
Marketing Plan (Ag Sales 2nd Place)	2%	Geneseo
Meats Evaluation & Technology	33%	Midland
Milk Quality & Products		Prairie Central
Milk Quality & Products (Middle School)	63%	Prairie Central
Poultry Evaluation	41%	Olney 🏆
Quizbowl	46%	River Ridge
Veterinary Science	35%	Prairie Central



The **National Chapter Award (NCA) program** is designed to recognize FFA chapters that **actively implement the mission and strategies of the organization**. The **2024 State Premier Chapter** is **Cambridge FFA chapter** in Cambridge, Illinois.

Cambridge FFA received the highest overall score on the NCA program in Illinois, a direct result of students' hard work and dedication along with the leadership of quality agricultural education teachers. Student officers are responsible for planning and implementing the annual Program of Activities, which this year included several innovative activities.

**National Chapter Finalists**

NCA Strengthening Ag Finalist	<b>Cambridge Middle</b>
NCA Building Communities Finalist	<b>Cambridge</b>
NCA Growing Leaders Finalist	<b>Cambridge</b> 🏆
NCA Growing Leaders Finalist	<b>Streator</b>
NCA Model of Excellence Finalist	<b>Cambridge</b>
NCA Model of Excellence Finalist	<b>Normal</b>
Middle School NCA Model of Excellence Finalist	<b>Cambridge</b>

**Premier Chapters by Section**

1	Scales Mound
2	Rochelle
3	Cambridge
4	Knoxville
5	Midland
6	Marengo
7	Streator
8	Chicago Ag Sciences
9	Normal
10	Tri-Point
11	Rushville-Industry
12	Canton
13	Pittsfield
14	Athens
15	Staunton
16	Blue Ridge
17	Paxton-Buckley-Loda
18	Salt Fork
19	Nokomis
20	Neoga
21	Mount Vernon
22	Freeburg
23	Edwards County
24	Goreville
25	Gallatin County



National Finalist



National Champion



At the national level, the **Cambridge FFA chapter** was also named the **National Champion** for their **National Chapter Award** application in the area of **Growing Leaders**. Twenty-four FFA members led the **“Día de la Agricultura”** initiative, actively informing youth, and emphasizing how you can become a **life-long learner** by appreciating and learning languages and cultures.

The FFA members collaborated with the high school Spanish teacher and seniors enrolled in the Spanish program to develop five agriculture storybooks created and read by FFA members to 120 elementary students. Through storytelling, students were exposed to 56 common Spanish vocabulary words with an agricultural connection. However, the elementary students were not the only ones to learn from this experience. Fourteen members who were not previously familiar with Spanish also gained skills in reading and learning a new language. All members gained cultural appreciation by integrating language skills with agricultural experiences from a variety of topics, including animal feeds. You can imagine the excitement of the elementary classes (and high schoolers alike), when students were presented with the opportunity to hit the cow piñata when they successfully answered questions correctly from the lessons previously taught by the FFA members!



### National FFA Band - representing Illinois

William Berning, Galena FFA

Alaina Franklin, Pontiac FFA

Preston Cooper, South Central FFA



**FFA membership** is an investment in a student’s future. **Participation** can be an **uplifting** and **community-building** experience that contributes positively to **personal growth**, including mental and emotional well-being.

In addition to personal gains, FFA membership also builds career skills and professional success for students as they:

- ✔ Network with industry professionals.
- ✔ Explore options for careers.
- ✔ Develop essential skills like public speaking, interviewing, and networking.

FFA also makes a positive difference in communities. Strong chapters are built by strong members, and strong members who come together can have a greater impact on their school and community than they could ever have had independently. These are the primary returns on investing in FFA members — premier leadership, personal growth, and career success.

### **The Value of Leadership in FFA**

There are many positive aspects of FFA membership. Ask any former member what they remember most about their time in the FFA, and you will likely get a different answer inspired by their unique experiences. FFA members take ownership in their experiences — all of which develop leadership and teamwork skills. Competitive events, such as public speaking, parliamentary procedure, and agricultural issues, give members a voice in discussing important topics with their local chapter or the agricultural industry. These experiences give members confidence in handling real-world situations by sharing opinions, analyzing problems, or working with a team to make decisions.

Conferences are perhaps the most memorable, especially for new members. Meeting others from different backgrounds and communities teaches students to respect others’ ideas and perspectives. Serving as an officer is perhaps the most demanding and rewarding experience for a student. The variety of roles and responsibilities often puts student officers in charge of tasks such as leading meetings, tracking chapter finances, managing public relations, coordinating service projects, and mentoring new students. These responsibilities enable members to develop confidence that you don’t often experience through other youth programs, and that is because FFA truly is a student-led organization.



### **National FFA Chorus - representing Illinois**

Kelei Leab, Bushnell-Prairie City FFA  
Karson Leab, Bushnell-Prairie City FFA  
Jacob McCauley, Stark County FFA

## Illinois FFA Alumni

Interested in supporting your local agriculture program and FFA chapter? Former FFA members and interested adults are a natural, supportive resource for FFA advisors and their students. A local FFA alumni chapter helps to rally the community around agricultural education and FFA activities. FFA alumni chapters also provide a helping hand to FFA advisors in coordinating activities for the local FFA chapter.

**16,500** Alumni Members in Illinois  
**66.40%** of FFA chapters with Active Alumni

## Alumni and Advisory Councils

Quality programs have close ties with their local agricultural industry. An advisory council is a group of stakeholders that may include representatives from local businesses, school administrators, faculty, and staff who advise the program on development, implementation, and evaluation of the program. As most FFA alumni chapter members fit these same roles, teachers commonly use the local alumni in place of a separate advisory council. This can be an effective structure as FFA alumni meetings can also serve as program advisory meetings.

**44.30%** of Programs with Advisory Councils



**Join your local chapter to reap the full benefits of our wonderful organization!**

**206**

**Alumni Chapters in Illinois**

*\*Includes three corporate chapters.*

**16,500**

**Alumni Members in Illinois**



2024 Illinois FFA Alumni & Supporters Council



## National FFA Talent - representing Illinois

Garrett Morris, Quincy FFA  
Owen Knap, St. Joseph Ogden FFA

## Exploring Agricultural Careers in Grades 5-8

Perkins V allows for federal Career and Technical Education (CTE) funds to provide career exploration and development activities in Grades 5-8, while state CTE funds can support these activities in Grades K-8. Agricultural education in Illinois has included middle school students since 2009. AFNR courses available to students before ninth grade include Career Exploration – a general careers course that includes exploration of all CTE clusters – and Exploratory Agricultural Science. In Exploratory Agricultural Science, students learn fundamental concepts to serve as a foundation for future courses in high school. Topics include, but are not limited to, animal and plant science, agribusiness, horticultural science, agricultural mechanics, and food science.

## Models of Agricultural Career Exploration in Grades 5-8

Agricultural education is delivered in Grades 5-8 using different models. Some programs utilize one teacher who instructs both middle and high school students while others utilize a teacher dedicated to just middle school instruction. Ninety-seven local programs (27 percent statewide) report offering AFNR courses to students in Grades 5-8. Approved AFNR courses for middle school include Career Exploration and Exploratory Agricultural Science. Middle school courses offered in AFNR are often implemented in a quarterly rotation with other electives, but may also be offered as a semester- or year-long experience. Course descriptions, recommended outlines, and standards-aligned curricular resources can be accessed on the Illinois Agricultural Education website.

Seventy-three percent of programs offering middle school AFNR courses report using a shared classroom/laboratory space for both middle and high school students. Nine programs reported engaging middle school students in career exploration activities like leadership conferences, college open houses, and the Farm Progress Show. Nineteen programs reported hosting guest speakers in middle school courses, and 30 programs engaged middle school students in career development events like horticulture, livestock evaluation, and veterinary science. See more information on middle school agricultural education below.

**97** Programs offering MS Courses equivalent to 10-25% local full-time equivalent (FTE)

**17** Programs offering MS Courses equivalent to 26-50% local FTE

**2** Programs offering MS Courses equivalent to 51-74% local FTE

**34** Programs offering MS Courses equivalent to 75% or more of local FTE

**65** Programs include MS AFNR Activities in local Annual Report

## Middle School FFA Membership

Students in Grades 7 and 8 are eligible for FFA membership in Illinois. Opportunities for these members include career and leadership development, participation in SAE programs, and achievement of the FFA Discovery Degree. Middle school students are eligible for all FFA activities, including Career Development Events (CDE) and Leadership Development Events (LDE), with the exception of those specifically age-restricted in the rules.

**6,279** FFA Members in Grades 7-8\*

**82** FFA Chapters awarding Discovery FFA Degrees to MS Students

**21** FFA Chapters where MS member participated in LDEs and CDEs

*\*Includes FFA members from stand-alone middle school programs and combined middle and high school programs.*



# AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM

**634,314**

PreK-8 Students Reached

**80**

Ag Literacy County Coalitions

**\$646,968**

Dollars Awarded for County Grants

**\$8,179**

Average Dollars Awarded  
per Coalition

**48,380**

PreK-8 Teachers Engaged in AITC

**2,604**

Schools in IL Engaged in AITC

**93,820**

Community Members Engaged in  
Ag Literacy Through AITC

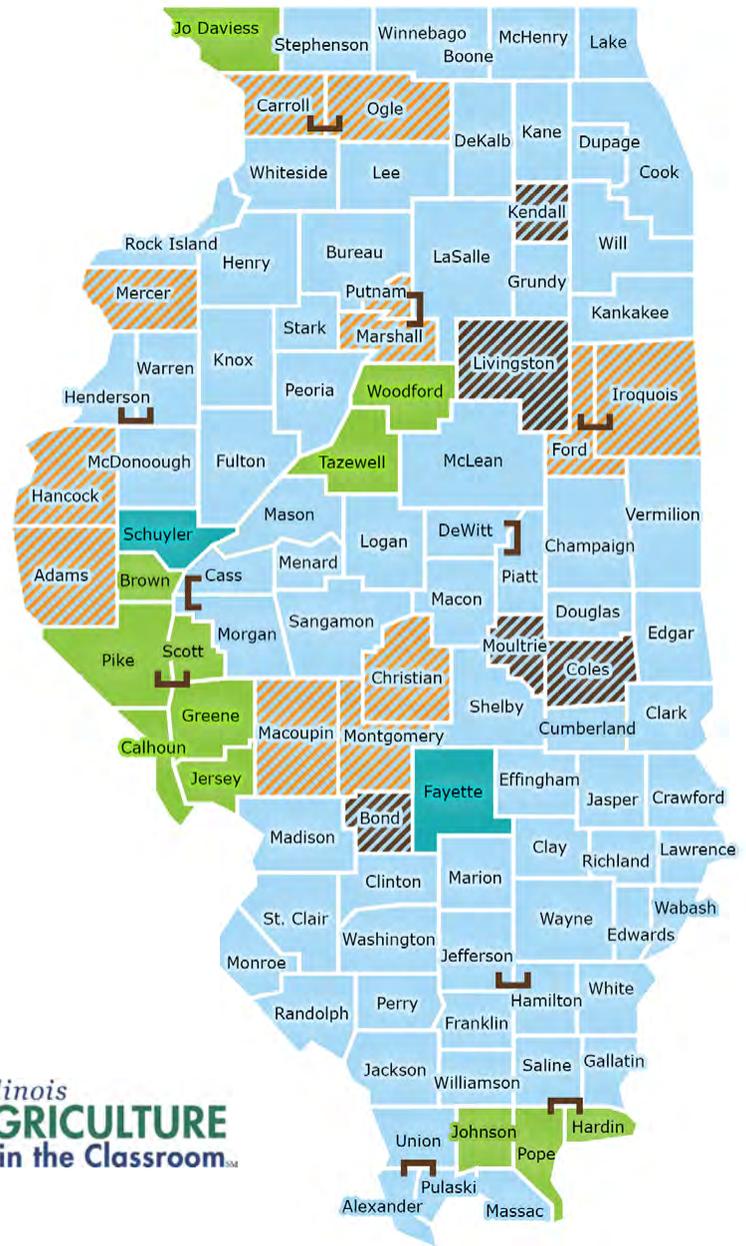
**\$1,843,012**

State and Local Dollars Invested  
for AITC Statewide

**4,849**

Volunteers

The **Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC)** program provides **accurate, standards-based agricultural classroom materials** and **resources to preK-12 teachers** across the state.



- County Farm Bureaus
- Counties with Active Ag Literacy Programs Coordinated by Volunteers
- Counties Funded by County Money
- U of I Extension
- SWCD



AGRICULTURE PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

**386**

Programs offered SY 2023-24

**372**

Programs offered SY 2022-23

**359**

Programs offered SY 2021-22

- 17** Average AFNR Class Size
- 86** Programs with Two or More Teachers
- 72** Programs with College Articulation Agreements
- 121** Programs with Dual Credit AFNR Courses
- 100%** Programs that Utilize Illinois Core AFNR Curriculum
- 166** Programs with Advisory Councils
- 248** Programs with Alumni Group
- 150** Programs with AFNR Courses in Grades 5-8

**Requirements Fulfilled by AFNR**

- 71%** (265) Programs offering Science Credit
- 37%** (141) Programs offering Consumer Education Credit
- 5.50%** (20) Programs offering Math Credit
- 3%** (11) Programs offering Language Arts Credit
- 2.50%** (9) Programs offering Social Studies Credit

**Ag Program Facilities**

- 90%** with 1:1 School Technology
- 77%** with Mechanics Facilities
- 75%** with a Greenhouse
- 61.5%** with >10 Computers/Laptops
- 51%** with Instructional Landscaping
- 46.50%** with Land/Plant Facilities
- 36.50%** with a Garden
- 30%** with Small Animal/Veterinary Science Facilities
- 29.20%** with Aquaculture Facilities
- 26%** with Food Science Facilities
- 16.50%** with a Nursery
- 8.30%** with Large Animal Facilities



State-approved curriculum and teaching resources are available to all Illinois teachers, funded by the Illinois Agricultural Education line item in the state budget.

**Scan to access teaching materials.**





**33,221**

Multiple Courses/  
Pathways



**2,741**

Power, Structural,  
and Technical



**2,427**

Plant



**1,736**

Animal



**446**

Agribusiness



**382**

Food  
Science



**221**

Natural  
Resources



**193**

Environmental  
Science



**8**

Biotechnology

Our **Illinois teachers** are **certified to teach 489 CASE-specific curriculums.**

### Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education (CASE) in Illinois

CASE is a curriculum and professional development initiative of the National Council for Agricultural Education that is managed by the National Association of Agricultural Educators. CASE courses are developed using elements from pedagogical approaches that are recognized in educational literature. CASE curriculum is available to educators who complete certification through a CASE institute, which is an immersive professional learning experience in a specified course. Illinois teachers have taken on leadership roles within the CASE organization, and many have become certified in CASE curriculum based on local program needs.



### Illinois Core Curriculum for AFNR

The Illinois Core Curriculum for AFNR is free and accessible to Illinois teachers and administrators at [www.ilaged.org](http://www.ilaged.org). Curriculum libraries are complete, with full lesson plans aligned to Illinois Learning Standards. Each lesson includes a digital textbook (eUnit), presentation slides, related labs and activities, and assessments.

**11** Number of Curriculum Libraries

**927** Lessons

### Teacher Credentials

Illinois teachers continually seek professional credentials in various AFNR career pathways to enhance learning for their students. Credentials sought by teachers include:

- AWS Weld Inspector, Educator, and Welder
- Anhydrous Ammonia Applicator and Transportation License
- Briggs and Stratton Small Engine Basic Engine Theory Certification
- Illinois DNR Hunter Safety Certified Instructor
- Introduction to OSHA, OSHA 10, and OSHA 30
- Illinois Department of Agriculture Certified Pesticide Applicator
- SERVSafe Certified Food Handler
- Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Pilot License



**Illinois AFNR teachers** are eligible to become members in Illinois’ agriculture teacher organization – the Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers (IAVAT). **IAVAT offers professional learning, teacher leadership, and advocacy for agricultural education.**

Teachers are professionals, and membership in IAVAT has significant returns on investment. In addition to teacher benefits, students of teacher-members are eligible for discounted registration costs for in state-level competitive events aligned to agricultural careers. Dues for membership are often covered by the members’ schools because of this benefit.

**Teacher Licensure Demographics**

Teachers in Illinois are licensed to teach AFNR in three main ways. Traditional licensure through an approved university teacher preparation program results in a Professional Educator License (PEL). Alternative means of licensure includes seeking an Educator License with Stipulations (ELS), which requires 60 college credit hours and 2,000 hours of professional experience in AFNR. Another alternative means of licensure includes seeking a CTE-Provisional (CTEP), which requires 8,000 hours of professional experience in AFNR.

**73%** Teachers with Professional Educator License  
**27%** Educator License with Stipulations:

**Teacher Salaries**

**\$68,014** Average Teacher Salary in FY 2024  
**\$54,801.87** Average Starting Teacher Salary in FY 2024



32 2024-2025 Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers Board of Directors

**Building Illinois’ AFNR Teaching Corps**

Agricultural education in Illinois benefits from a growing, diverse corps of professional educators. Illinois’ Team Ag Ed is implementing several initiatives to continue to grow the number and diversity of AFNR teachers. The Growing Agriculture Science Teachers (GAST) Grant for universities and colleges distributes annual funds to empower students to major in agriscience education. The Joint Board of Directors (IAVAT and FFA) oversees a statewide diversity and inclusion task force to develop initiatives to increase access to agricultural education among diverse students. FCAE initiated a pilot program for school districts to start Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences junior chapters at Illinois high schools. FCAE and the IAVAT Recruitment and Retention Committee implement annual initiatives to increase students majoring in agricultural education.

**Demographics of Illinois AFNR Teachers**

Male	<b>42%</b>
Female	<b>58%</b>
Didn't Grow Up on a Farm	<b>40%</b>
Member of IAVAT	<b>90%</b>
Under Age 30	<b>35%</b>
Over Age 50	<b>16%</b>
Early Career (Less than five years)	<b>41%</b>
Late Career (More than 25 years)	<b>8%</b>



**Total Number of Agriculture Teachers in Illinois**





**The Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers is proud to partner with Nationwide Insurance, Illinois Association FFA, Farm Credit Illinois, and Compeer Financial to offer the Golden Owl Award.**

The Golden Owl Award® allows these organizations to also extend their support to agricultural educators who devote countless hours – and often their own resources – to positively impact the lives of their students. The Golden Owl Award program allows students, fellow teachers, and other supporters to nominate their favorite agricultural teacher and summarize what makes them the best in their state. Nominees can win the distinction of being their state’s Agricultural Educator of the Year.

Mark Steber was chosen as the 2024 Illinois Agricultural Educator of the year for his extraordinary work as an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor at Richland County High School in Olney. One colleague shared that “His dedication to providing his teams with the best resources, practicing with them for hours on end, and actively seeking more knowledge of each CDE is what creates a successful impact on all of his students.” Congratulations, Mr. Steber!

District I Winner  
**Rod Main**

District II Winner  
**Joe Steffen**

District III Winner  
**Steve Sargeant**

District IV Winner  
**Justin Howard**

District V Winner  
**Mark Steber  
(state winner)**



Instructors of agriculture at Illinois' **community colleges** and **universities** are eligible for membership in the **Illinois Association of Community College Agriculture Instructors (IACCAI)**. IACCAI **provides members** with opportunities for **professional learning, networking,** and **advocacy** for community college agricultural education programs.



**Community College Enrollment Data**

Male	<b>1,731</b>
Female	<b>1,288</b>
Gender Withheld	<b>16</b>
Transfer Program	<b>705</b>
Associate in Applied Science Program	<b>1,516</b>
Certificate Program	<b>935</b>



**Total Community College Enrollments**

**Community College Data**

Full-Time Faculty in AFNR	<b>108</b>
Part-Time Faculty in AFNR	<b>140</b>
Average Full-Time Salary	<b>\$68,198.17</b>
Average Faculty Age	<b>41</b>

**Additional University Enrollment Data**

Freshman Students	<b>874</b>
Transfer Students	<b>309</b>
Graduate Students	<b>944</b>
University Faculty	<b>362</b>

**Early College Credit Data**

Students Offered Articulated Credit in FY 2023	<b>351</b>
Students Received Dual Credit in FY 2023	<b>1,045</b>

\*Data is self-reported.

**Agriculture Enrollment Data by University**

University of Illinois Urbana Champaign	<b>2,738</b>
Loyola University Chicago	<b>432</b>
Southern Illinois University Carbondale	<b>423</b>
Illinois State University	<b>431</b>
Western Illinois University	<b>192</b>
Illinois College	<b>53</b>
Greenville University	<b>23</b>



**Total Undergraduate Students at Illinois Universities Majoring in Agriculture**

**Universities Offering Agriculture Education Teacher Preparation Courses**



Western Illinois University



University of Illinois

# COLLEGES WITH AFNR PROGRAMS

Black Hawk College  
Carl Sandburg College  
College of DuPage  
College of Lake County  
Danville Area Community College  
Heartland Community College  
Highland Community College  
Illinois Central College  
Illinois Valley Community College  
John A. Logan College  
John Wood Community College  
Joliet Junior College  
Kankakee Community College  
Kaskaskia College  
Kishwaukee College  
Lake Land College  
Lincoln Land Community College  
McHenry County College  
Parkland College  
Rend Lake College  
Richland Community College  
Sauk Valley Community College  
Shawnee Community College  
Southeastern Illinois College  
Southwestern Illinois College  
Spoon River College  
Triton College  
Wabash Valley College



Illinois State University



Southern Illinois University



The **Professional Agricultural Students (PAS)** organization prepares students from two- and four-year colleges for the workplace by **building student skills** through **annual competitions** and **real-life learning** applications.



**16** PAS Chapters  
**313** PAS Members

**PAS Student Officers**

**President**  
**Talena Sprecher,**  
Illinois Central

**1st VP Blake Twenhafel,**  
Kaskaskia

**2nd VP Carter Hitchings,**  
Richland

Public Speaking	Name and College	
Prepared Public Speaking	Jonwin Ayres, BHC	
Impromptu Speaking	Kyle Bird, ICC	
Special Events	Individual and College	Team
Ag Education	Sara Johnson, Highland	
Ag Promotion & Marketing	Callie Meserole, WVCC	WVCC
Agribusiness Sales	Landon Niehaus, WVCC	
Animal Health/ Vet Tech	Hannah Visel, Highland	
Beef Cattle	Sydney Sanders, LLC	LLC
Conservation & Natural Resources	Kyle Sterling, JJC	WVCC
Crop	Conner Eversole, ICC	ICC
Dairy	Savannah Rice, Kaskaskia	KC
Equine	Hannah Visel, Highland	LLC
Farm Business Management	Sydney Donoho, KC	KC
Greenhouse	Sophia Wagner, LLC	LLC
Landscape	Kaylin Turner, ICC	ICC
Poultry	Dalton Phelps, WVCC	WVCC
Precision	Kyle Bird, ICC	
Sheep/Goat	Lauren Mohr, ICC	ICC
Soil	Gabriella Burkett, SIUC	SIUC
Swine	Halie Kohl, ISU	LLC



President



1st VP



2nd VP

In 2024, Lincoln Land Community College and Illinois PAS were excited to host the National PAS Conference, where over 500 individuals from eight various states were in attendance.



Career Planning			Career Progress		
Retail Agribusiness Systems	Tyler Townsend	JJC	Agribusiness Systems	Baylie Nickel	ISU
Plant Systems	Meagan Davis	JJC	Agricultural Education Systems	Lanie Woods	ISU
Power, Structural and Technical Systems	Chris Corrigan	JJC	Animal Systems	Hannah Visel	
Agricultural Education Systems	Taylor Robinson		Biotechnology Systems	Natalie Toedte	KC
Food Products and Processing Systems	Lacie Backert	KC	Power, Structural, and Technical Systems	Brock Beimann	KC
Natural Resource Systems	Chris Rhein	JJC			
Agribusiness Systems	Blake Twenhafel	KC			

**College Bowl Winning Team**

Illinois Central

**Employment Interview State Winners**

Agriculture Equipment and Machinery	Alex Sidener, LLCC
Agribusiness Administration	Elizabeth Lee, WIU
Agricultural Education	Julianna Berg, SIU
Agricultural Sales	Zorie McNamara, Highland
Agronomic Services	Carter Hitchings, RCC
Agronomic Production	Blake Twenhafel, KC
Livestock and Dairy Production	Libby Sharer, KC
Livestock and Dairy Services	Brandon Jochimsen, ICC
Forestry and Natural Resources	Jordan Countryman, JJC
Specialty Crop Production	Ariana McCann, Heartland
Floriculture, Landscaping, and Nursery	Connor Eversole, ICC



# BELONGING & ENGAGEMENT

Illinois agricultural education values the **diverse perspectives** of all members. The differences and similarities of each member are what bring **growth** and **opportunities** to our organization. We encourage all members to **embrace** this **diversity** that makes up our organization so that Illinois agricultural education may continue to **grow and prosper**.

## Illinois Junior MANRRS

Illinois Junior Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources & Related Sciences (MANRRS), is pleased to assist in funding the dues payment for seven chapters in Illinois this year. These schools include Carbondale, Chicago HS of Ag Sciences, Decatur Andreas Ag Academy, Freeport, Gary Comer Youth Center, Rich Township, and Urbana.



The 2024 conference was held in conjunction with the National MANRRS Conference in Chicago.

## Illinois Ag Skills Showcase

All students in Grades 7-12 were invited to participate in FFA in a way they were never before able to - by highlighting their skills at their individual educational level. While the program is available to all students, an emphasis is placed on individuals with an intellectual disability, Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.

In 2024, the program's second year, 25 students exhibited 33 projects. Staunton High School Agriculture instructor Maggie McCalla said, **"I have found that it truly empowers students, especially those with intellectual disabilities, IEPs, or 504 Plans to shine in a supportive environment. I believe that the Ag Skills Showcase highlights the best aspects of premier leadership and personal growth as we work to provide opportunities for all students, ensuring EVERY student has the chance to succeed!"** This event was recognized at the National Agricultural Mechanics Blue Ribbon Research Conference.



## Exchange and Engage Grant

This year we had the unique opportunity to provide experiences for non-traditional students who were not previously actively engaged.” to “to provide experiences for students from chapters which did not previously have resources to be actively engaged



- Welcoming reception at Illinois FFA State Convention for 6 schools and transportation from Chicago provided for 3 schools that had not previously attended convention.
- National FFA Convention overnight bus trip for 18 students from 3 schools
- Purchasing official dress & jackets for all members
- Illinois FFA Chapter Exchange Program for Student Engagement.

## Cultivating Conversations at the Illinois FFA State Convention

While the Illinois FFA State Convention has always been a time to celebrate the achievements of our members, this past year we aimed to elevate the experience further by bringing members together and enriching their convention experience in the Cultivating Conversations Room. This space allowed students to share their experiences and connect in meaningful ways. These events sparked conversations extending beyond the convention and into the new school year, fostering a greater sense of community and connection among participants.





Looking for more information? Contact [collegiate@ifb.org](mailto:collegiate@ifb.org).

**Collegiate Farm Bureau** unites students as the **voice of agriculture** on their campuses and in their communities, **empowering** them to be **powerful assets** for the **agriculture industry**.

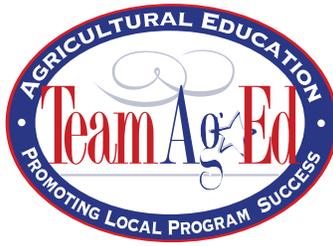
#### **Chapters**

Highland Community College  
Heartland Community College (**NEW in 2024-25**)  
Illinois Central College  
Illinois State University  
Joliet Junior College  
Kaskaskia College  
Lake Land College  
Lincoln Land Community College  
Southern Illinois University  
University of Illinois  
Wabash Valley College  
Western Illinois University

#### **2024-25 Highlights**

**500** Collegiate Farm Bureau Students located at 11 Chapters  
**44** Collegiate Students Attended the 2023 IAA Annual Meeting in Chicago  
**80** Collegiate Students Attended the 2024 Young Leader Conference  
**22** Collegiate Students Attended the 2024 Governmental Affairs Leadership Conference  
**21** Collegiate Leaders from 9 Chapters Attended Collegiate Leadership Training





Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is the state agency responsible for preK-12 education, including Career and Technical Education. Principal consultants serve in a supervisory, administrative capacity related to program approval, funding, and regulatory requirements.

**Board Chair, Dr. Steven Isoye • State Superintendent, Dr. Tony Sanders**



Illinois Department of Agriculture is the state agency responsible for advocating for Illinois' agricultural industry and providing the necessary regulatory functions to benefit consumers, agriculturalists, and the state's natural resources. The agency also promotes agribusiness in Illinois and throughout the world.

**Director, Jerry Costello II**



Illinois Committee for Agricultural Education is a 13-member committee established by legislation and appointed by the governor to advise both the governor and State Board of Education concerning agricultural education for K-12 students.

**Chair, Erika Allen**



Illinois Leadership Council for Agricultural Education is a voluntary, grassroots agricultural industry group focused on the expansion and improvement of agricultural education programs at all levels. ILCAE is primarily an advocacy group focused on legislation that impacts agricultural education.

**Chair, Allyn Buhrow**



Illinois Farm Bureau is a grassroots, statewide organization of farmers and agricultural professionals dedicated to enhancing the people, progress, and pride of Illinois and its farming community.

**President, Brian Duncan**



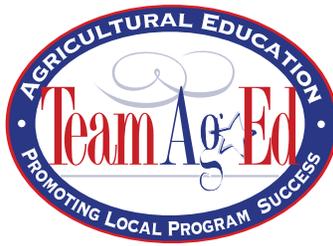
Facilitating Coordination in Agricultural Education (FCAE) is a state project administered through ISBE in cooperation with and advised by the Illinois Committee for Agricultural Education. FCAE addresses the aims of Public Act 84-1452 involving the implementation of identified goals for improving education in and about agriculture in Illinois.

**Coordinator, Jennifer Waters**



Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom program combines the efforts of the Illinois Farm Bureau, FCAE, University of Illinois Extension, Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Illinois Agricultural Commodity organizations, various agribusinesses, and others to provide agricultural literacy for all students in preK-8. Education

**Director, Kevin Daugherty**



University Council consists of the agricultural teacher education faculty from the four Illinois universities offering teacher education programs in agriculture, ISBE, FCAE, FFA, and IAVAT. The focus of this group is to maintain high-quality preservice agricultural education programs and to identify research priorities.

**Chair, Gary Ochs**



Illinois Association of Community College Agriculture Instructors is a professional organization for postsecondary agricultural education teachers at all levels.

**President, Charlie Mitsdarfer**



Illinois Professional Agriculture Students organization is a career and technical student organization for students enrolled in agricultural programs at the postsecondary level. PAS provides students with professional development opportunities, helping them get an edge in today's job market.

**President, Talena Sprecher**



Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers is a grassroots professional organization for Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resource education teachers at all levels.

**President, Kirsten Wyatt**



Illinois Association FFA is a career and technical student organization for students enrolled in agricultural education programs at the middle school, high school, and collegiate levels. This organization promotes premier leadership, personal growth, and career success for all agricultural education student members.

**President, Trenton Payne**



Illinois FFA Alumni Association supports and promotes the FFA organization and its activities and agricultural education at every level. The focus of the association is the local chapter affiliate.

**President, Bill Kittinger**



Illinois Foundation FFA was established to receive and disburse funds to support quality agricultural education programs and FFA chapters across Illinois.

**Chair, Karen Schieler**



