

# Minnesota's



# AgEd Advocate

MAELC

Spring/Summer 2024

Kari Schwab, Editor

## What's Inside:



### From the Desk of the Executive Director

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Join us to help define the future of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (AFNR) Education across Minnesota!



### Grant Spotlight - Sustainable Food Products and Biotechnology

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Harley Braun, agriculture teacher at Highland Park High School, showcases the new hands-on activities implemented through their MAELC Strategic Initiative grant, including maple syrup tapping and DNA extraction labs.



### Educating with Excellence

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Minnesota State's two Agricultural Centers of Excellence have been hard at work promoting agricultural careers, building partnerships and much more!



### 2024 Agricultural Education Interns

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Meet the six Agricultural Education interns for Summer 2024.



## Celebrating 25 Years of Supporting Agricultural Education Students

Believing that education is the key to a successful future, MAELC supports students through scholarships. This year, we celebrate the 25th year of investing in future educators and helping students achieve their collegiate goals. More than 630 scholarships have been awarded to students studying Agricultural Education, totaling \$837,000 in financial support.

MAELC's scholarship program began with an incoming freshmen award given to those majoring in Agricultural Education at two or four-year Minnesota institutions. Over the years, the scholarship program has changed and evolved to our current offerings – Undergraduate, Graduate, and Diversity scholarships.

*"Scholarship dollars from MAELC helped me begin my career in Agricultural Education and their continued partnership has proven to be incredibly valuable as a classroom teacher."* - Kayla Brune, Agriculture Teacher (Willmar High School)

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## Upcoming Events

AFNR Listening Sessions  
June 2024  
[z.umn.edu/AFNRListeningSessions](https://z.umn.edu/AFNRListeningSessions)

Diversity Scholarship  
Applications Due  
July 1, 2024

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MAELC is a 16-member legislative council that provides leadership to promote and expand agricultural education in Minnesota.



## From the Desk of Sarah Dornink MAELC Executive Director

In 2017, there was a presidential inauguration, Taylor Swift released the *reputation* album, and there was a solar eclipse. It was also the year MAELC last completed the Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (AFNR) Education Listening Sessions and committee work that led to our statewide strategic plan, the 2025 Minnesota AFNR Education Blueprint.

It is once again time for us to come together to reflect on our past work, review current trends, and determine aspirations for the future of AFNR Education. MAELC is hosting six listening sessions across Minnesota this June. The information gathered at this year's sessions will be the base for the development of the 2030 Minnesota AFNR Education Blueprint. Participants will develop visions and strategies for implementation within Agricultural Literacy, School-Based Agricultural Education and FFA, Post-Secondary AFNR Education, Agriculture Teacher Preparation, and Farm Business Management.

## AFNR EDUCATION LISTENING SESSIONS

JUNE 18

**ST. PAUL**  
University of Minnesota

JUNE 25

**BRAINERD**  
Central Lakes College

JUNE 20

**MANKATO**  
South Central College

JUNE 26

**DETROIT LAKES**  
M State

JUNE 21

**MARSHALL**  
Southwest Minnesota State University

JUNE 27

**WILLMAR**  
Ridgewater College

Depending on when you read this newsletter, we invite you to attend one of the upcoming listening sessions! The meetings are free to attend and open to the public. Each will be held from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm, with lunch provided. Register at [z.umn.edu/AFNRlisteningessions](https://z.umn.edu/AFNRlisteningessions).

Now it is 2024. We have a presidential election, Taylor Swift is playing her worldwide Eras Tour, and your Facebook feeds are full of solar eclipse pictures. Once again, the signs are pointing to it being time to evaluate our statewide plan for AFNR Education. MAELC needs your input at this critical step to strategize, and we hope you will share your thoughts and experiences with us to help define the future of AFNR Education across Minnesota!

# Celebrating 25 Years of Supporting Agricultural Education Students

(continued from front page)

The Undergraduate scholarship began in the 2005-2006 school year. In 2012, the Graduate scholarship was added, and the newest addition to MAELC's offerings is the Diversity scholarship, with the first award in 2019.

*"Being a recipient of the MAELC Graduate scholarship was financially needed. Even more so, receiving the scholarship was so emotionally and mentally rewarding that it made me feel good about the support I have come to know and lean on in so many ways. I love how the agriculture community supports one another in so many facets."* - Pat Tax, Agriculture Teacher (Pierz Healy High School)

A recent survey of previous scholarship recipients found that over 70% of respondents were somewhat or greatly influenced to stay in the Agricultural Education major because they received a MAELC scholarship. Over half of those respondents also said it had an impact on their decision to become an agriculture teacher.

*"If not for receiving MAELC scholarships while a student at the University of Minnesota, I would not be an agriculture teacher today. In the end, the scholarship opportunities I received through MAELC allowed me to expose urban students to the world of agriculture, CTE, and the abundant opportunities through the FFA and Summer Youth programs"* - Joshua Muñoz, Agriculture Teacher (Como Park High School, St. Paul Public Schools)

For the 2024-2025 school year, \$25,000 has been awarded through the scholarship programs to students studying Agricultural Education in Minnesota. We are proud of the support provided to students over the past 25 years and look forward to continuing that commitment for many years to come.

## Congratulations to the 2024-2025 MAELC Scholarship Recipients!

### Undergraduate Scholarship

Applications due February 1 each year

This scholarship supports students currently enrolled in Agricultural Education at one of Minnesota's institutions that offers Agricultural Education: Southwest Minnesota State University, the University of Minnesota-Crookston, and the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.

### Graduate Scholarship

Applications due November 1 each year

The purpose of this scholarship is to support students completing a graduate level program to become an agriculture teacher. Students are eligible to receive this scholarship during their student teaching experience.

### Diversity Scholarship

Applications due February 1, July 1, November 1 each year

The Diversity Scholarship seeks to provide financial support for both undergraduate and graduate students from underrepresented groups in the agriculture teacher field.



**Brooke Converse**

University of Minnesota,  
Crookston



**Lily Krona**

University of Minnesota,  
Crookston



**Hailee Eidelbes**

University of Minnesota,  
Crookston



**Amara Livingston**

University of Minnesota,  
Twin Cities



**Noah Erickson**

University of Minnesota,  
Twin Cities



**Rebecca Meger**

University of Minnesota,  
Twin Cities



**Hally Frandrup**

University of Minnesota,  
Twin Cities



**Allison Offerdahl**

University of Minnesota,  
Crookston



**Rena Johnson**

University of Minnesota,  
Twin Cities



**Morgan Pickett**

University of Minnesota,  
Twin Cities



**Kirsten Koerth**

University of Minnesota,  
Twin Cities



**Kaylee Rudolph**

University of Minnesota,  
Crookston



**Taber Sheldrup**

University of Minnesota,  
Twin Cities



# New Leaders in Minnesota Agricultural Education



**Natasha Mortenson** is the new Minnesota FFA Career and Alumni Program Coordinator. She spent 14 years in the classroom as an agriculture teacher and eight and a half years working in the agricultural industry. In Natasha's new role, two-thirds of her time will be spent helping coordinate the career-related work of the Minnesota FFA Association, including Career Development Events (CDEs) and Leadership Development Events (LDES), as well as adding more opportunities for students and teachers to access career-related experiences. The other third of her time will be spent helping direct the work of the Minnesota FFA Alumni and Supporters. Natasha is excited to reconnect with Minnesota Agricultural Education!



**Courtney Spence** joined the Minnesota State Southern Agricultural Center of Excellence as the new Outreach and Recruitment Coordinator. In this role, Courtney will primarily focus on targeted outreach initiatives and strategic recruitment efforts, aiming to bridge the gap between academia and industry, empowering young talents to make a meaningful impact in the field.

Courtney grew up on a Century Farm near LaSalle, MN. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Minnesota State Mankato. Over the past 20 years, Courtney has developed leadership skills through programs such as Leadership Minnesota, Blandin Leadership Program, Cooperative Communicators Association and most recently, Elizabeth Kearney Women's Leadership Program.

Outside of work, you can find Courtney behind the lens of a camera, parenting two amazing young men, traveling, and spending time with family and friends. Courtney looks forward to empowering the next generation of agricultural leaders, building lasting relationships with industry partners, and helping to create a sustainable future for agriculture.

# MAELC Awards Over \$123,000 in Grants

This past fall, MAELC awarded Strategic Initiative grants to high schools, post-secondary institutions and organizations that work to improve agricultural education across the state.

Institution	Amount	Project Description
Battle Lake Public School	\$12,584	Precision Preparation: The Future of Agriculture
Blooming Prairie High School	\$14,800	Wood Shop Improvement
BOLD High School	\$3,000	Food Chemistry Science Upgrade
Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart High School	\$7,000	BLHS Welding Shop Upgrade
Central Lakes College	\$8,395	Enhanced FBM Education through Online Course Modules
Farmamerica	\$5,370	Accessible Learning Experiences at Farmamerica
Farmington High School	\$6,000	Floral Design Materials
Highland Park Senior High (St. Paul)	\$5,895	Highland Park AFNR Improvements
Isle High School	\$5,809	Isle Agriculture Program Flex Farm
Lake City High School	\$4,650	Cultivating Futures in Lake City Plant Systems Classes
Lake Crystal-Wellcome-Memorial High School	\$1,683	Teacher Work-Life Balance - Greenhouse
Northfield High School	\$15,801	AFNR Program Support
Ogilvie High School	\$6,250	Ogilvie Animal & Vet Science Expansion
Red Rock Central Schools	\$10,000	New Food Science Lab Equipment
Rochester Community & Technical College	\$2,758	Signs of Sustainability: Outdoor Kiosk at Native Interpretive Garden
Sleepy Eye Public Schools	\$3,406	Sleepy Eye Shop Equipment Needs
Tri City United High School	\$10,000	Welding Certification in Secondary Education

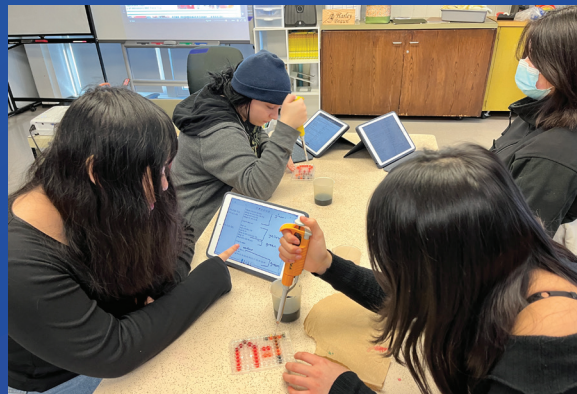
# Grant Spotlight - Sustainable Food Production & Biotechnology



*Written by Harley Braun, Agriculture Teacher - Highland Park High School*

The Highland Park Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (AFNR) Department at Highland Park Senior High School (HPSH) is one of seven high schools in the Saint Paul Public Schools District. HPSH enrolls approximately 1,500 students. In 2022, the Highland Park AFNR Department received a MAELC Strategic Initiative grant to improve equipment and enhance career exploration related to food processing and biotechnology. This equipment supported the implementation of hands-on labs by purchasing supplies for maple syrup tapping, DNA extraction, gel electrophoresis, PCR labs, and general kitchen supplies.

With the purchase of new equipment and supplies, new class activities and labs were implemented into multiple classes. In the Biotechnology class, students completed gel electrophoresis and CRISPR labs with micropipettes and miniPCR Blue gel electrophoresis systems.



*Students completed a "Pipetting by Design" lab to practice their micro pipetting techniques by creating a design in their well-plates using dye.*



*Students inserted a spile into a maple tree to collect maple sap, which was boiled down to syrup. They learned about Indigenous peoples contributions to discovering maple syrup production and compared traditional and contemporary maple production methods.*

In the Sustainable Food Production class, students practiced knife skills and made pico de gallo, practiced measuring skills with a baking lab, and dehydrated beef jerky using a traditional Lao recipe. New equipment was necessary to implement the foods labs, many of which tied to culturally relevant teaching while reading the book, *What We Hunger For: Refugee and Immigrant Stories about Food and Family*.

Finally, in the Introduction to Agriculture course, a unit on Indigenous foods in Minnesota was completed. Trees were tapped in the spring to make our own maple syrup. All of these activities increased students' hands-on experiences and engagement with content along with improving cultural literacy.

## MAELC Common Fund Projects

In its seventeenth year, MAELC again provided agricultural education grants for statewide projects in Minnesota through the Common Fund grant program.

### **University of Minnesota, 4-H Plant Sciences - \$20,160**

*Minnesota 4-H: Nurturing Agriculture Educators for a Sustainable Future*

This initiative empowers students to explore educational careers by teaching younger peers and cultivating agricultural literacy in grades K-6. Through the establishment of a sustainable statewide program, the goal is to inspire participants to pursue rewarding careers in Agricultural Education as teachers or extension educators.

### **University of Minnesota, Agricultural Education - \$11,180**

*Food Security Education: Unlocking Individual, Program and Community Potential*

This project facilitates innovative professional development for Minnesota agriculture teachers and provides experiential learning opportunities for their students through purposefully designed and curated curriculum to promote food security. In collaboration with the Global TeachAg Network, the work and outreach activities will equip educators to address Food Security at the individual, program and community levels specific to Minnesota.



# New Name, Refreshed Programming!



The Agricultural Education, Communication and Marketing (AECM) program at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities recently launched

a new and improved Master of Science degree, "Agricultural Education and Communication, M.S." This degree continues the program's long-standing history of providing high-quality instruction for teacher licensure and as well as advanced education for both new and current agriculture teachers, embracing a hands-on, interdisciplinary approach to learning theory, technical skill development, and professional growth.

The newly named graduate program offers two specializations – Initial Licensure and Advanced Studies and Research. The Initial Licensure specialization fulfills all requirements for a Minnesota teacher license in 5-12 Agricultural Education and a 9-12 Teacher Coordinator of Work-based Learning endorsement. Advanced Studies and Research is designed for current professionals interested in career advancement and skill development, including those in agricultural education, Extension education, and agricultural communication. For full-time students, either specialization may be completed in four semesters, with course instruction offered in-person, hybrid and/or remotely. The program requirements may also be spread across a longer span of time for those seeking part-time student status. A variety of financial support is available through program scholarships and fellowships, in addition to teacher loan forgiveness programs. Those enrolled in the Initial Licensure program may also be eligible for two MAELC scholarship programs – the Diversity Scholarship and the Graduate Agricultural Education Licensure Scholarship.

Through the guidance of experienced faculty members who are committed to supporting student growth and success, the Master of Science in Agricultural Education and Communication program will guide professionals using innovative teaching methods and communication strategies tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities within agriculture, natural resources, and life sciences. Interested in learning more?

Visit [www.ag-ed.cfans.umn.edu](http://www.ag-ed.cfans.umn.edu)

# Meet Minnesota's New PAS Executive Director - Curt Yoose

The Minnesota Professional Agricultural Student Organization (PAS) recently hired Curt Yoose as their new Executive Director. Let's get to know Curt and learn more about PAS!

**What is PAS?** - The National Professional Agricultural Student Organization (PAS) is a college-student led organization started in 1980 that allows members to build and sharpen their skills so that they are ready for the workplace. Through competitive-style learning and real-life application, members become skilled professionals and are prepared to work in all areas of the agricultural industry.



## Tell us about yourself and your new role.

- I have been an agricultural education instructor at Ridgewater College for 26 years. My primary teaching responsibilities include Crop Science and Precision Agriculture courses. My passion for PAS stems from my involvement in the organization when I attended

college. I have held many roles within PAS. I was elected as National President in 1995, then later served as Chairman of the National Board of Directors from 2008-2011. Throughout my career, I have also served as a local advisor.

In the role as Executive Director, my responsibilities include engaging in strategic planning with the board of directors, facilitating leadership and competitive event conferences, training State Officers, and coordinating state-level activities with the national organization. I sought out this role to give back to an organization that has given so much to others. I relish the challenge of carrying the organization forward, including maintaining the great traditions and implementing new and innovative ideas.

## What are you most excited for in your new role?

- The possibility for growth! There are many potential chapters throughout the Minnesota system. Colleges that offer programming such as Horticulture, Natural Resources, Veterinary Technology, and Culinary Sciences could participate and gain real value from membership. The other part of this role that excites me is working with the State Officer team. Whenever you can work with motivated and inspired people you can't help but be inspired yourself!

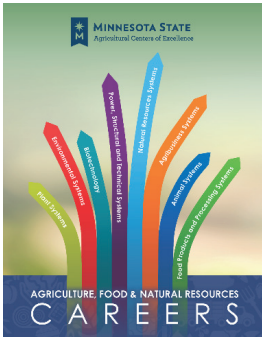


# Educating with Excellence

Written by Judy Barka (Assistant Director, AgCentric) & Nathan Hanel (Program Coordinator, SACE)



The Minnesota State Agricultural Centers of Excellence, which are two of eight Minnesota State Centers of Excellence, focus on promoting agricultural career pathways. Our primary goal is to foster partnerships between industry and educational institutions to meet workforce demands and training needs.



The Agricultural Centers of Excellence actively serve Minnesota, working independently and collaboratively to inspire students, engage industry professionals, and enhance educational offerings. Since July 1, 2023 we have participated in over 150 events, interacting with nearly 15,000 students, parents, industry leaders, and other influencers. Moreover, the Agricultural Centers of Excellence take a leadership role in the statewide Farm Business Management Program.

Our Agriculture Food and Natural Resources (AFNR) Career Pathways Brochure stands out as the most effective tool for promoting AFNR career literacy. Originating from a national career pathways conference, this innovative and unique brochure visually outlines career paths, showcases career examples, and provides current online salary listings, as compiled by our partner Real Time Talent. Updated annually, the brochure is available in English, Spanish, Hmong and Somali. For more information, visit [www.centerofagriculture.org/students/career-pathways](http://www.centerofagriculture.org/students/career-pathways)

AgCentric, the Northern Ag Center of Excellence, is celebrating a “Decade of Doing” this year. Led by Executive Director Keith Olander and his team of Judy Barka, Tyler Grunewald and Melody Weber, AgCentric’s initiatives include the technology trailer, developing new curriculum with partners, conducting classroom visits, providing professional development for early-career partners, and attending various career events. Leveraging these partnerships is crucial for amplifying our impact and achieving more collectively than we could individually.



Under the leadership of Executive Director Tina LeBrun, the Southern Ag Center of Excellence and her team of Nathan Hanel, Courtney Spence and Shelly Kitzberger, drives engagement with Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, connecting with middle and high schools and industry stakeholders. Through classroom presentations, participation in career fairs, special events, and industry conferences, the team is dedicated to highlighting the diverse opportunities within AFNR programs and careers.

Overall, the eight Minnesota State College and University Centers of Excellence address industries facing significant workforce challenges. These centers collaborate with industry and educators to attract and prepare students for success in high-demand careers.



Minnesota FFA members participate in the Career Connections during the State Convention



A student tests out the combine simulator

**AgCentric**  
Northern Agricultural  
Center of Excellence  
[www.agcentric.org](http://www.agcentric.org)



**MINNESOTA STATE**  
Agricultural Centers of Excellence

**SACE**  
Southern Agricultural  
Center of Excellence  
[www.centerofagriculture.org](http://www.centerofagriculture.org)



# 2024 Agricultural Education Interns

In its tenth year, Minnesota is again offering an Agricultural Education Internship as part of a State Teach Ag Results (STAR) program initiative, which is coordinated by MAELC. Six students majoring in Agricultural Education at Southwest Minnesota State University, the University of Minnesota-Crookston, the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, South Dakota State University, and the University of Wisconsin-River Falls have been selected and paired with current Minnesota agriculture teachers for the summer.

## Intern

Brooke Converse (UMN-Crookston)

Garett Johnson (SDSU)

Hannah Meyer (SMSU)

Morgan Pickett (UMN-Twin Cities)

Taber Sheldrup (UMN-Twin Cities)

Gabi Wills (UW-River Falls)

## Supervising Teacher & High School

Seena Glessing (Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted)

Stacy Fritz (Chatfield)

Caitlin Oeltjenbruns (Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton) & McKinsey Rew (St. Clair)

Robin Tidd (Mankato), Stephanie Brandt & Spencer Roeglin (Sibley East)

Emily Ziemer (Lake Crystal-Wellcome-Memorial)

Cassidy Wiethoff & Jill Grams (Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart)

The purpose of the Agricultural Education Internship is to spark an interest in current undergraduate students to consider entering the teaching profession and to provide hands-on experience as an agriculture teacher. The experience will focus on summer programming, such as Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) visits, curriculum development, community events, and FFA leadership trainings. One week will also be spent at the Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators (MAAE) summer conference, providing opportunities for professional development and networking. This internship was made possible by generous donations from AgCountry Farm Credit Services, CHS Foundation, Christensen Farms, Compeer Financial, and MAELC.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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