

Agricultural Communications CDE

2010 – 2011 Chairperson: Melanie Bloom, Sioux Rapids

I. Overview

Agricultural communications is a key to establishing partnerships, providing information, and bringing the agricultural community together. Through this event, students will have the opportunity to prepare for careers in communications by participating in a wide range of activities oriented around the total communications process.

II. General Rules

1. The Iowa FFA Agricultural Communications Career Development Event will be limited to one team per chapter.
2. The event will include both written as well as oral communications presentations.
3. The Iowa Board of Directors will be in charge of this event.
4. The judges will be selected from print and broadcast media, agriculture producers and other members of the agriculture communications community.
5. Each school shall enter a team composed of four participants. A fifth team member may be added for the Team Presentation Only. Team members must all be members of the same FFA chapter.
6. Official FFA dress is required for all participants.
7. Each participant will participate in three phases of the event: an individual test, a team communications project and proposal, and an individual practicum.
8. The team shall mail four copies of the communications project proposal to the Department of Education by April 1. Items should be placed in four separate manila envelopes (not file folders). The students' names and school post office should appear on the outside of the envelope.
9. Schedule – the Iowa Ag Agricultural Communications CDE will take place during the State Leadership Conference. Participants must report to the event site between 2:00 and 2:30 on the first day of the State Convention. At this time, the team must turn in all proposal materials for the judges (item nine). If proposal items are not turned in at this time, the team may still compete but will receive only a participation rating. The team must also sign up for a presentation block for the following day.

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Registration (2:00 - 2:30 pm First Day of Convention) | 30 minutes |
| Objective Test (2:30 - 3:30 pm First Day of Convention) | 30 minutes |
| Press Conference (7:00-8:00 am Second Day of Convention) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker 20 minutes • Questions from news writers 10 minutes | 30 minutes |
| Practicums (8:15-9:00 am Second Day of Convention) 45 minutes | 45 minutes |
| Team Presentations (9:15am-1:45pm) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set-up (5 minutes) • Presentation (15 minutes)* • Questioning period for judges (5 minutes) • Tear-down (5 minutes) | 45 minute block |
| * For every minute OVER 15 minutes of presentation, a deduction of 5 points will be made. | |
| Awards Presentation (4th General Session) | |

EQUIPMENT

- a. For individual practicums, students must provide: notebooks, pens, pencils, highlighters, 3 laptop computers (newswriter, press release writer *and graphic designer*) and storage device to transfer electronic files to printer (USB port preferred), *digital/tape recorder to turn in with audio recording*
- b. Event personnel will provide:
 - i. **For team presentation** - projection screen
 - ii. **Practicums-** Mac- and PC-compatible printer(s), white paper
- c. Note: Teams may bring additional equipment for project presentation as long as they are able to set up and tear down equipment in the time allowed for the presentation.

TEAM ACTIVITIES

- a. Communications Project Proposal and Presentation - Each team will prepare a communications project proposal for their chapter. The proposal will explain the communications activities planned to publicize an event/issue. Guidance on the event/issue is presented below. The team shall mail four copies of the communications project proposal to the Department of Education by April 1. Items should be placed in four separate manila envelopes (not file folders). The students' names and school post office should appear on the outside of the envelope. At the State FFA Career Development Event, the team will make an oral presentation of the proposal.
- b. A guideline for proposal - The key to producing a good communications project proposal is to select a project that is specific enough that you will be able to do a good job with it.
 - i. **Length** - the proposal should be a maximum of 12 double-spaced typed pages on 8.5" X 11" white bond paper using 1" margins and 12-point Time New Roman or Times as the font.
 - ii. **Staple** the proposal in upper-left hand corner. DO NOT bind or place in folders, special binders, or covers.
 - iii. **Style** - follow style established in the Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual.
 - iv. **Cover page** - include the title of the communications proposal, state, chapter name, team member names, and date.
 - v. **Communications project proposal** - include the following sections:
 - Rationale for selecting the project, including background information that helps provide judges with an understanding of the project and the situation or locale where it will be implemented.
 - Objectives of the project (what is the project to accomplish).
 - Audiences to be targeted with this project.
 - Key messages or themes to communicate to the audiences.
 - Media (brochures, newspapers, signage, radio, etc.) selected to accomplish the project.
 - Budget to produce and place communications materials.
 - Evaluation criteria - these criteria should result in some indication of how well the project accomplishes the stated objectives.
 - vi. **Topic for communications project proposal and presentation** – both the proposal and presentation will be based on the same topic. The topic will be chosen by the team from a theme of possible topics provided by National FFA. The themes of topics will rotate from year to year (see table).

| Years | Project Theme | Potential Topics |
|--------------|---|--|
| 2008, 2012 | Safety Issues | Tractor safety, pesticide/fertilizer applicator safety, livestock handling safety, ag mechanics safety, hunter safety, controlling noxious plants, ATV safety. |
| 2009, 2013 | FFA Community Involvement | Building local community support, publicizing community service projects, publicizing community and educational value of SAEs, FFA-sponsored community events. |
| 2010 | Local Environmental Issues | Responsible production practices, environmentally friendly lawn, landscape and gardening practices, hazardous household waste management, use of pesticides and fertilizers, soil testing by homeowners and producers. |
| 2011 | FFA Recruiting and Educational Activities | Chapter recruitment campaigns, promotion of community of school-sponsored activities, promotion of chapter educational activities, alumni recruitment. |

c. Communications project presentation - The team will present their communications project to a panel of judges. When making the presentation to the judges, the team should present based on the following:

i. **Proposal Guidelines** - The presentation should follow and cover all of the items listed in the guidelines for the proposal.

ii. **Sample Materials** - Include examples of materials prepared during the execution of the proposal (ex. brochures, newsletters, news releases, photos, graphics, videos, radio tapes, etc.)

| Communication Project Proposal | Points Possible |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Rationale | 25 |
| Objectives of Project | 25 |
| Target Audience to Address | 20 |
| Key Messages | 15 |
| Media Selection | 20 |
| Budget | 10 |
| Evaluation | 15 |
| Grammar, punctuation, spelling, style | 20 |
| Total Points: | 150 |

iii. **Notes** - team members should not rely solely on equipment. Each team member must participate in the presentation.

iv. **Audience** – Advisors and guests will be allowed to view presentations; Teams that have already presented may view other presentations.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES

a. Tests

i. **Editing exercises** - Because editing is a critical skill for all communicators, each team member will complete an editing exercise. They will be given a printed document that contains *25 items; this number includes correct items and mistakes*. In correcting the mistakes, team members will be required to use correct proofreader's marks (see Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual). Style, grammar, punctuation and spelling mistakes will be included. Team members will NOT be able to use the style manual or a dictionary during this exercise.

- ii. **Communications quiz** - Each team member will complete a quiz that covers basic elements important to the skill areas of journalistic writing and broadcasting, public relations writing, and graphic design. Five questions will be written for each segment, which includes broadcast, public relations, news, visuals, and ethics of communication. Team members will NOT be able to use the style manual or a dictionary during this exercise.

Tests

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Communications Quiz | (25 points per team member) | 100 points |
| <u>Editing Exercise</u> | <u>(25 points per team member)</u> | <u>100 points</u> |
| Total Possible: | | 200 points |

- b. **Practicums** - The practicums will consist of four individual events. Each team should assign a member to one of the following activities PRIOR to arriving at the state event: 1) Organizing and writing news story; 2) Organizing and writing a press release; 3) Developing and carrying out a broadcast; or 4) Preparing a graphic and photo editing for a news story.

Press Conference and Question Period - All teams will meet in a central location for an orientation and press conference. Teams will be divided so that all broadcasters sit together, all news writers sit together, all press release writers sit together and all graphic designers sit together. All team members will be given an orientation at the beginning of the practicums to last no more than 10 minutes. Following the orientation, the press conference will be held. Each team member will receive a press packet with background information on the agricultural topic and expert to use during the event. An expert will speak on a timely agricultural topic for 20 minutes. Students will be provided with paper to take notes if they wish. After the 20-minute presentation, the broadcasters and graphic designers will be dismissed to a different area to complete their assigned tasks. The news writers and press release writers will then be involved in a 10-minute question and answer period with the expert (speaker). Only the news writers will be allowed to ask the questions. Each news writer will stand to be recognized before asking a question. News writers may ask more than one question however, the expert will attempt to address questions from as many different contestants as possible. All news writers and press release writers may take notes during the question and answer period, but only news writers will be allowed to ask questions of the expert. Tape recorders will not be allowed during this portion of the event. Upon completion of the 10-minute question and answer session, the news writers and press release writers will be dismissed to a computer room to complete their assigned tasks.

- * **FFA Advisors may view this portion of the event; other FFA members, parents, and guests will NOT be allowed.**

- i. **News writer practicum** - Students are to write a news story based on information gathered at the news conference. It should be written for an agriculture publication (agriculture producer) audience. The story should have a minimum of 250 words and follow news or inverted pyramid style. It should have a strong focus and lead (opening paragraph). The story should provide answers to who, what, when, where and why. Students also should write a headline for their story. Each writer can use notes from the press conference, the Q&A session and from information in the press packet. After writers arrive in their designated room, they will have 45 minutes to complete their task. The story will be word processed by the student on a computer, printed out and turned in to be scored.

| News Writer Practicum | Points |
|---|---------------|
| Lead/Focus | 20 |
| Organization, brevity, conciseness, clarity | 15 |
| Correct Style | 10 |
| Accuracy of Information and quotes | 20 |
| Creativity | 10 |
| Headline | 10 |
| Grammar, spelling, punctuation, word choice | 15 |
| Total Points Possible: | 100 |

- ii. **Press release writers** - Each press release writer will use the press packet and the information gathered in the press conference to write a 200-300- word press release excluding the words in the header. The release should be written as if the expert's company or organization was distributing it. The release will be word processed on a computer, printed out and turned in to be scored. Once the press release writers arrive in the computer room, they will have 45 minutes to complete the task.

| Press Release Practicum | Points |
|---|---------------|
| Lead/Focus | 20 |
| Organization, brevity, conciseness, clarity | 15 |
| Correct Style | 10 |
| Accuracy of information and quotes | 15 |
| Creativity | 10 |
| Header/headline | 10 |
| Grammar, spelling, punctuation, word choice | 10 |
| Company or product information | 10 |
| Total Points Possible: | 100 |

iii. **Broadcasters-** Each broadcaster will use the press packet and information that was gathered in the press conference to write and carry out a two-minute radio broadcast. The message should be suitable to be aired on a radio station or radio network. After the contestant has developed the story, he or she will use a standard cassette and tape recorder to broadcast the story. The cassette with the recorded broadcast will be turned in to be evaluated. Students will be able to listen to their recording prior to turning in the cassette if time allows. All tape recorders will be the same; therefore, recording quality will not be a factor in the evaluation process. Broadcasters will also develop and turn in five written questions that he or she would have asked the expert if they were given the opportunity to interview the expert after the press conference. These written questions will be turned in along with the cassette once the student has completed the tasks. After the broadcasters arrive in their designated room, they will have 45 minutes to complete their tasks.

| Broadcaster's Recording Practicum | Points |
|---|---------------|
| Voice Quality | 10 |
| Power of expression | 10 |
| Lead/focus | 15 |
| Clarity of communication | 10 |
| Organization, conciseness and brevity | 10 |
| Creativity | 10 |
| Accuracy of information and quotes | 15 |
| Quality of five written follow-up questions | 20 |
| Total Points Possible: | 100 |

4. **Graphic Designers** - Each graphic designer will complete a graphic art, photo editing and photo caption writing exercise. Effective communication or information sharing through visual tools is the objective. After graphic designers arrive in their designated room, they will have 45 minutes to complete their two tasks. Each of these tasks is described below.

- **Graphic art exercise**--Each student *creates a chart or table on a computer* that illustrates numeric data from the press conference. A press packet (including news release and data) is provided for each artist. Students are judged on their graphic art skill, understanding and use of statistics and creativity. Students will receive 11x17 blue-line graph paper to layout their final design. The design should be constructed as a front-page newspaper layout.
- **Photo editing exercise**--Students will receive a variety of black & white photos or color photos (5x7 prints) and will be asked to select the best photo to use in a story based on the news conference. Each student should make photocropping suggestions by marking the photo borders with a wax pencil. Each student is to give oral reasons on why they selected a particular photo. These reasons should include the photo's best qualities, its visual appeal to readers, and how it helps communicate the story's message.
- **Photo caption writing exercise**--Students are to write a two-line caption (approximately 25 words) for their selected photo. Students will be judged on accuracy of information, grammar, brevity, clarity and creativity of captions.

| Graphic Designer Practicum | Points Possible |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Graphic Art Skill | 20 |
| Understanding and use of statistics | 15 |
| Creativity | 15 |
| Photo Editing | 20 |
| Reasons (critical thinking) | 15 |
| Photo caption writing | 15 |
| Total Possible: | 100 |

FINAL SCORING

| Team Scorecard | Points Possible |
|--|-----------------|
| Practicum scores (100 per member) | 400 |
| Communications Project Proposal | 150 |
| Communications Project Presentation | 150 |
| Test Scores <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Communications Quiz (25 points per team member=100)</i> • <i>Editing Exercise (25 points per member=100)</i> | 200 |
| Total Points: | 900 |

III. Resource Information

This list of references is not intended to be inclusive. Other sources may be utilized and teachers are encouraged to make use of the very best instructional materials available. The following list contains references that may prove helpful during event preparation.

- Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual Calver, P. (editor).
- The Communicator's Handbook. 4th edition. Maupin House, Gainesville, FL 32607
<http://www.maupinhouse.com>
- Strunk and White (1979), The Elements of Style, Allyn & Bacon.
- Word processing and spreadsheet software

IV. Awards

Awards listed below are at the discretion of the sponsor and pending availability of sponsorship. It is vitally important that participants write thank you letters to sponsors in order to retain their support. A thank you list naming current sponsors will be provided to each participating chapter at the event site.

| Awards Sponsored through the National FFA Foundation | |
|---|--|
| Champion Team | State Winning Plaque |
| Awards Sponsored through the Iowa FFA Foundation | |
| Champion Team | Cash Award for travel to National Convention |
| Reserve Champion Team | Plaque |
| Top 10 Teams | Rosettes |
| Members of Top 10 Teams | Rosettes |
| Top 10 Individuals | Rosettes |
| 1 st and 2 nd Place Individuals | Plaques |
| Test Top Team/Individual | Plaques |
| Project Proposal/Presentation Top Team/Individual | Plaques |
| Practicums Top Team/Individual | Plaques |
| All Teams/Individuals | Certificates |

All awards subject to available sponsorship through the Iowa FFA Foundation.

Broadcaster Practicum

Student Name:

School PO:

| |
|--|
| |
| |

| Category | Points Possible | Points Awarded |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| Voice Quality | 10 | |
| Power of expression | 10 | |
| Lead/focus | 15 | |
| Clarity of communication | 10 | |
| Organization, conciseness and brevity | 10 | |
| Creativity | 10 | |
| Accuracy of information and quotes | 15 | |
| Quality of five written follow-up questions | 20 | |
| Total Points Possible: | 100 | |

Graphic Designer Practicum

Student Name:

School PO:

| |
|--|
| |
| |

| Category | Points Possible | Points Awarded |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Graphic Art Skill | 20 | |
| Understanding and use of statistics | 15 | |
| Creativity | 15 | |
| Photo Editing | 20 | |
| Reasons (critical thinking) | 15 | |
| Photo caption writing | 15 | |
| Total Possible: | 100 | |

News Writer Practicum

Student Name:

School PO:

| |
|--|
| |
| |

| Category | Points Possible | Points Awarded |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| Lead/Focus | 20 | |
| Organization, brevity, conciseness, clarity | 15 | |
| Correct Style | 10 | |
| Accuracy of Information and quotes | 20 | |
| Creativity | 10 | |
| Headline | 10 | |
| Grammar, spelling, punctuation, word choice | 15 | |
| Total Points Possible: | 100 | |

Press Release Practicum

Student Name:

School PO:

| Press Release Practicum | Points | Points Awarded |
|---|------------|----------------|
| Lead/Focus | 20 | |
| Organization, brevity, conciseness, clarity | 15 | |
| Correct Style | 10 | |
| Accuracy of information and quotes | 15 | |
| Creativity | 10 | |
| Header/headline | 10 | |
| Grammar, spelling, punctuation, word choice | 10 | |
| Company or product information | 10 | |
| Total Points Possible: | 100 | |