

If we bring them, they will come

High school seniors can have trouble finding their way after graduation. At Oklahoma State University, one student organization is committed to giving them direction and bringing them to OSU.

Thirteen OSU students make up the Ag Ambassadors, an organization established by the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources to recruit potential students to the college.

"The Ag Ambassadors are highly qualified students whom I am proud to have representing OSU," said CASNR Associate Dean Ed Miller.

Typical tasks of an ambassador include hosting students who visit CASNR, helping with alumni events, traveling to high schools to promote the college and attending the National FFA Association convention in November to recruit students. The ambassadors also call recently-admitted freshmen each spring to answer any questions they have concerning starting college. But the group's greatest responsibility is hosting the annual Future Agricultural Leaders Conference each fall.

The FAL Conference is designed to help potential college students learn about agricultural job possibilities and enhance their knowledge of the college experience. The con-

ference goal is to show students the signs that lead to academic success and a professional career.

"The conference provides an opportunity for students to take the next step," said Chas Robbins, Ag Ambassador

and 2001 FAL Conference executive chair. "We want the students to learn as much as possible while they're here. The purpose of the conference is for students to become confident in their future."

The ambassadors invite the top 50 applicants

from high school juniors and seniors nationwide to come to OSU for three days of seminars and activities.

Participants are accepted on the basis of academic achievement, involvement in extracurricular activities and interest in careers related to agriculture, agribusiness, foods and natural resources. The deadline to apply is mid-October each year. The cost of the conference is \$25, which includes housing at the Student Union Hotel, meals and a conference T-shirt. The Oklahoma Farm Bureau and CASNR are sponsors of the FAL Conference, which covers the remaining cost of the conference.

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*Louann Waldner
Director, CASNR Student Services*

"The Ag Ambassadors organize the whole conference," said Louann Waldner, CASNR director of student services and adviser for the Ag Ambassadors. "They conduct a very creative, educational and innovative three-day program for high school students."

The ambassadors center the conference around the theme "Get a Clue," which allows students to tour the campus, learn more about the careers in agriculture and further define their career interests. They also meet with professors, review the admission process and get a head start on enrollment.

In the past, sessions have included getting familiar with the countless opportunities and careers in agricul-



Future Agricultural Leaders Conference participants Lesleigh Hagwood (left), Tonya Brown, Whitney Baumann, Chris Dorsey and Taylor Miller share the same dream of attending OSU. (Photo courtesy of Ag Ambassadors)

ture and natural resources, learning about individual strengths and weaknesses and becoming organized and expanding personal management skills.

“The FAL Conference was an awesome experience,” said Laura Bible, horticulture sophomore at OSU. “In reality, it was the deciding factor for me coming to OSU.”

Regardless of their future plans, all participants get a glimpse of what every day college life will be like.

“I learned so much at the 2000 FAL Conference,” said Leah Dillsaver, landscape architecture sophomore. “I met current college students who answered questions that wouldn’t have been answered before moving to college.”

In addition to the sessions, introductions to professors and other activities at the conference, students also build relationships with fellow participants.

“I met so many new friends at the conference and when school started, I saw them in my classes,” said Bible. “It was so exciting.”

Ag Ambassadors and college officials said they expect these friendships and ambitions to grow when participants come back as students.

“The FAL Conference is not just about recruiting for OSU,” said Waldner. “It’s about recruiting for agriculture’s future. What better way to do that than having 13 top CASNR students role modeling, saying ‘I’ve done it, you can too.’”

If you or anyone you know is interested in the FAL Conference, please contact Louann Waldner or visit the Ag Ambassadors Web site at <http://www.agambassadors.com>.

◆ *By Reba McDonald, Canby, Ore.*



Thirteen students served as Ag Ambassadors in 2001-2002: (front row) Ryan Luter (left), Deborah Solie, Amy Hoyle, Cathy Herren, Marcy Grundmann, Robyn Sites, Josh Fuller; (second row) Jamie Glover (left), Bart Fischer, Jeremy Unruh, Rusty Roush, Chas Robbins; (third row) Carrie Trentham (left), Laneha Beard; (back row) Coleman Smith. (Photo by Todd Johnson)