

1996



1997



1998



1999

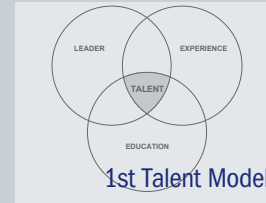


2000

Mission: create partnerships that identify, encourage and support outstanding college men and women preparing for careers in the agriculture and food industry.



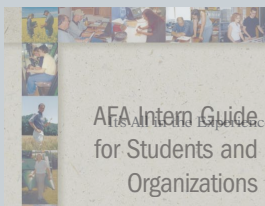
2001



2003



2004

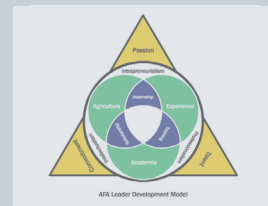


2017 Annual Review

2006



2007



2008



2009



2007



2010



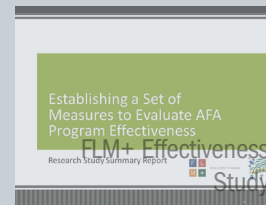
2011



2012



2013



2014



2015



2016



Revised mission: Build bridges for young leaders to foster engagement and innovation in food and agriculture.





Founding CEO, Russ Weathers, welcoming students to the first AFA Leaders Conference and to the twentieth.

Celebrating an AFA Anniversary

Twenty years may not seem like a big deal now, but in 1996 it would have been a dream for the brand new Agriculture Future of America. A dream probably only held by a select few.

Perhaps you've heard the story about how founding CEO, Russ Weathers, laughed while reading his morning paper when he saw R. Crosby Kemper Jr's plans for AFA. Maybe you know AFA's first office was a UMB conference room that was regularly booked for other meetings. Weathers had a few folders, a rolling cart and a plug in phone, which he moved into the hallway to accommodate other meetings. In those first years, speeches were written almost as they were delivered, and many watched, perhaps at first doubtfully and then fully engaged, as something magical happened.

What happened took root because of the inspiring call to be a bridge builder for young people. While Weathers laughed at first, he was soon inspired and captivated by Kemper's vision to give young people a leg up — to make a difference in the lives of young leaders. Not only did Weathers capture this vision, he also helped the rest of agriculture believe in it and made it grow.

Kemper's son Alexander (Sandy) fondly remembers the first time he heard about the idea of AFA.

"When my father started the company, he called me up and said we're doing this. I was sitting in the driveway of my home with my wife, Christine. He was telling me about this great idea, this AFA, then he paused and he said 'Your mother and I want you to run it.' I thought we'd better find someone really good, really fast," Sandy said.

When the young Kemper asked his friends and colleagues who might be suited for this task, they all recommended one man — Weathers.

Founding board members, Chuck Schroeder, now at the University of Nebraska Lincoln, and L. Josh Sosland of Sosland Publishing Company remember the first years of AFA as well.

"AFA in its very beginning stages was only an idea, and not a very well formed idea. It was a big idea — perhaps several big ideas that were joined together. But it wasn't rational," said Schroeder. "We bring Russ Weathers on board as the executive director. Russ is a pretty quiet guy, understated. I'm watching him and thinking, 'Man this is a start up. It's complicated. Why isn't this guy running around with his hair on fire all of the time? Why isn't he more frantic?'"

"He never was. I watched Russ day by day, week by week and then year by year, take those big ideas and in his very strategic, wise manner, build an organization that is today internationally respected as one of the finest leader development organizations for young people in agriculture anywhere on the planet."

Sosland remembers this same intentionality and wisdom in Russ' leadership. In fact, Sosland says the environment of agriculture made what Russ accomplished so much more extraordinary.

"When AFA was established and was really trying to find its way, the agriculture industry was struggling in two different directions. One was that prices were depressed. It wasn't a prosperous time. Against that backdrop, the dot-com boom was in full swing. Companies were

really worried about how to attract a new generation of leaders that were going to lead a mature agriculture industry,” Sosland said.

“It’s a complicated industry and needed real talent going forward in a time when talent was being sucked away by what people thought of as the industries of the future. The agriculture industry turned to Russ and to AFA for help. He stepped forward in a powerful way to build out the vision of the organization.”

And what a vision it is! Not that Weathers would ever take credit for all of these accomplishments. AFA, from the beginning, was always about building partnerships. It was about agriculture working collectively to build a brighter and stronger future. At the end of the day, everyone was on the same team.

Over the past twenty years, AFA has evolved and changed in methodology but the heart of the mission has never changed. It’s always been about investing in young people. It has always been about working together for the good of everyone involved. Really, everyone who reads this is part of AFA’s history and is most certainly invited to be a part of the future.

It was because of the dynamic partnerships AFA is built on that there was so much to celebrate in 2016. From leader development experiences to scholarships, the number of life-changing moments have been numerous and diverse.

Over 1,200 students and industry professionals celebrated these twenty years with AFA on Friday, Nov. 4, at the AFA Leader in Agriculture Award Dinner. In true AFA fashion, the focus was not on the past, but on the future. Even this year’s AFA Leaders Conference theme — History Starts Now — carried the message that for AFA, the best is yet to come.

During dinner, Mark Stewart, AFA President and CEO as of March 1, 2017, shared the organization’s strategic plan for the future. Weathers was recognized for his service to the organization and to agriculture with the 2016 AFA Leader in Agriculture Award. No one could have chosen a better candidate.

Schroeder shared, “I will always consider Russ’ leadership in building AFA to be one of the finest examples of leadership over a long period of time that I have ever seen in my life.” ■



20th AFA Leaders Conference Opening Session

A Letter from our CEO



Just over twenty years ago, on January 7, 1997, Kansas City Mayor Emanuel Cleaver (now U.S. Congressman Cleaver) led the public announcement that AFA was open for business. At a media conference hosted at the Kansas City Board of Trade by Michael Braude, Board of Trade President, a number of area business, civic and government leaders pledged support to R. Crosby Kemper’s goal to establish a new Kansas City based agricultural youth career and leader development initiative. It was a time of celebration. Kemper’s vision had garnered the support of a community of investors who were willing to financially invest in the development of an unproven idea. AFA was launched.

From that moment until now, there are hundreds of stories of individuals who volunteered time and resources to support the fledgling organization. For me, some of the most memorable are the individuals from rural communities who rallied their neighbors to raise funds and establish an AFA Leader and Academic Scholarship. AFA matched the local community funds, dollar for dollar. The AFA match was supported by generosity from the Kemper family, individuals and corporate investors who embraced the AFA vision. There are no words to appropriately acknowledge how significant those community volunteers were, and continue to be, in helping make AFA a viable organization. Looking back, I’m amazed at how quickly 20 years passes.

Today, this AFA idea is no longer unproven. The vision has taken root, grown and blossomed. The investor base continues to expand and the number of students engaged in AFA experiences is growing annually.

Since we started this journey, we’ve provided over 13,000 leader development experiences to college students and young professionals. Over \$9 million has been awarded in AFA Leader and Academic scholarships — both locally and nationally. While the original footprint only included 8 states, we now have served students from over 200 universities in 43 states.

In keeping with our vision, we have made intentional changes in our methodology along the way. If an organization is to remain relevant it must be ready to change, especially if the organization’s focus is to serve young men and women.

As AFA’s journey continues, the role of individuals joining with AFA to share their talent and to support the organization’s vision continues. Not unlike 20 years ago, the future of AFA is rooted in commitment of individuals who embrace AFA’s vision and become partners. This is just as it should be. ■



Rhett Laubach presents his training “Authenticity Rules” to Track 2 at AFA Leaders Conference.

20 Years of Quality

All organizations have governing values. Agriculture Future of America is no different, of course. AFA’s values point to strengthening the competitiveness of global agriculture and food, students and young professionals as leaders, lifelong learning, networking as a personal asset and others. Then there is the unwritten value that drives AFA’s programming – quality, quality, quality.

Early on, the AFA Board of Directors issued the mandate that AFA’s focus would be on quality. While the organization didn’t have the capacity of other national youth programs, it did have the opportunity to make a significant impact by focusing on quality participants, quality programs and quality partnerships.

Co-founder, Sandy Kemper, often states that a “rising tide floats all boats.” If you can make a difference in the development of young leaders, who are motivated and positioned to take on new challenges, then you can make a difference for those who will follow them. This ideology and the focus on quality are fundamental to AFA’s programming.

The organization’s early talent model and today’s leader development model, graphically express exactly what this means to AFA. The leader development model, developed in 2007, shows how the intersection of agriculture, experience and academia, through AFA’s programs, create desirable characteristics in students who already possess talent, passion and commitment. Through this model, AFA continues to create new, relevant programs today. The timeline that runs throughout this newsletter shows the evolution of the leader development program through the last 20 years. AFA Leaders Conference has grown from 1 Track and 76 participants in 1997, to 4 Tracks with over 700 participants in 2016.

Because the concept of lifelong learning was so closely held by the graduates of our collegiate program, they spurred the creation of the AFA Alliance to continue their development. Today this program is open to all young professionals in agriculture and food careers and includes regional seminars, online resources and the annual Forum, which is held in conjunction with AFA Leaders Conference, allowing members to give back through volunteering in the collegiate program.

AFA’s relationships with a wide variety of businesses in all sectors of agriculture and food uniquely positions it to offer specific career exploration experiences. While a student can only have so many internships throughout his or her collegiate career, the addition of the AFA Leader Institute series allows students to explore a specific area of the industry. While the Institutes are specific to part of the industry, such as animal or food, AFA makes sure a student’s exposure is broad within that sector. For instance, most Institutes include business tours that range from marketing and communications to production lines and relevant associations.

As AFA has evolved, the focus on AFA Leaders Conference has shifted. While it is still considered the flagship event, it’s certainly not the only one. With this growth has come a shift. Today, AFA truly desires to be the go-to source for skill development and verification for young leaders in agriculture. Part of this focus includes the AFA Leader Fellowship™, a new coaching experience unveiled at the 2016 AFA Leaders Conference. The Fellowship pairs students with trained coaches. Together these coaches and students develop and work through a personal development plan to prepare and verify the student’s career readiness.

AFA's focus on quality and leader development has made a difference in the lives of thousands of young people. Not only do they tell us this, but they volunteer to give back because of the difference the program has made in their careers. Over the next few years, AFA will continue to bring a focus of quality to its programs while it also pursues participant and program content diversity and expansion. AFA staff and board are committed to ensuring the right amount of growth happens at the right time for the right reasons. ■



Fellowship Feedback Fun!

In November, the AFA Leader Fellowship™ was formally introduced. This robust coaching and personal development journey is designed to present motivated students with an individualized path to enhance personal and professional skills and showcase their value to potential employers. It is a great way for coaches to not only give back to the next generation but also hone and shape their coaching skills.

Since the launch, 16 sets of coaches and Fellows have been paired. Students involved in the program may interview trained coaches until they find one that fits their development needs. Amy Crippen, who leads AFA's Fellowship efforts, says one of the most beneficial aspects of this early period of the experience is the feedback the students are receiving.

"After selecting a coach that will partner with them through the remainder of their academic career, the fun starts; a 360° assessment," Crippen said.

For this experience, the student picks up to five reviewers who will comment on nine of the 21 competencies the program develops: time management, interpersonal communication, valuing differences and diversity, critical thinking, decision making, change management, conflict management, innovation and team leadership. During this process, Crippen says she wants to help coaching pairs see the value of feedback.

Once these areas are identified, the coach is available to support the student as they look for ways to grow through assessment and observation, activities available on campus or through national organizations and continued self-reflection.

One of these coaching pairs is Jacob Sukalski and Madison Erickson. Sukalski is a sales representative for Dow AgroSciences' Mycogen Seeds business. He has been active with AFA since he was a community-selected AFA Leader and Academic Scholar as a college freshman and has served on both the Student Advisory Team and Alliance Planning Committee. Erickson also received an AFA Leader and Academic Scholarship from her community to support the pursuit of a degree in agricultural business at Dordt College.

"So far, I have found an awesome coach," Erickson said. "Jacob is in the same part of agriculture that I would like to pursue. It will be such a great asset to me, because as an active employee and participant, he knows exactly what the industry wants."

Agreeing, Sukalski said the pairing process makes for good coaching matches. The simple enrollment form a coach fills out after completing training allows students to search for a coach based on interests, geographical areas and career goals. ■

Partnering to Build the Bench



Interacting with students through AFA Leaders Conference sessions is just one way AFA partners give back beyond a monetary commitment. Above: Karen Wishart, Monsanto, answers a question.

From the beginning, AFA was focused on the betterment of all agriculture. The late 90's were a time when agriculture needed some help attracting bright, new minds to take the lead. AFA set out to meet this challenge by creating partnerships with agribusinesses and industry leaders. The use of the word partnership versus the word sponsor was deliberate. Even today, while dollars allow the program to continue, the deliberate investment of partner time is what sets AFA's training and resources apart.

Industry partners invest time in AFA in a variety of ways. From program planning to delivery, partners are an important part of the process. AFA always seeks feedback from industry leaders as well as campuses before creating a new program. In doing this, AFA uniquely positioned itself between universities and industry for the betterment of all of agriculture and food. By providing training that would make students more employable but might not be offered on a college campus, AFA provided a solution the industry needed. Together these partnerships play a role in building a strong talent bench for agriculture and food.

As a partner, AFA believes in providing value both ways. Perhaps, one of the greatest accomplishments of the young organization was helping partner companies establish internship programs. Internships were not as common at that point. The internships that did exist didn't provide the same level of development experience that they do today. AFA worked with partner organizations such as Archer Daniels Midland Company, Monsanto and John Deere to increase the benefit of these internship relationships through the Intern Program Guide. Today, AFA works with partners to connect them to student talent for internships and full-time positions.

The heart of AFA's partnerships were always about the betterment of agriculture. Today, AFA provides value to its partners through skill development and verification. Together these partnerships provide the catalyst for the next generation of agriculture leaders. ■



Chillicothe's Salute to Agriculture breakfast is one way the community celebrates youth and agriculture each year.

Shared Vision

Some of the first Agriculture Future of America partners were rural communities that supported scholarships for students in their areas. While the organization's structure and philosophy have evolved over the last twenty years, these first partners of AFA are still an important part of the organization's operation. In fact, one of AFA's very first community scholarship partners is still actively investing in its students. In 1997, Chillicothe, Missouri, selected its first group of scholars. In 2016, one of those first scholars led the selection of the twentieth group of scholars.

Former community coordinator, Rusty Black, remembers participating in the first meeting between AFA and the community.

"By the time we walked out of that first meeting, we had about 75 percent of the money that needed to be raised. We got the rest of the money together and got those scholarships done," Black said.

He added that agriculture and youth development were always a matter of pride for Chillicothe, so AFA was a natural fit.

"Personally, the reason why I decided to keep it going was so many of our kids, after the very first AFA Leaders Conference, came back and felt like they were treated like adults," he said. "It really helped them step into that next part of their life."

Current community coordinator and 1997 scholar, Leda Schreiner, agrees. Of course, she also has a personal reason to keep the AFA scholarship program alive in Chillicothe. Both she and her husband, Anthony, were part of the first scholar group from Chillicothe. Because of the personal value they received from the program, they are committed to keeping the opportunity open for future students.

"I benefited from the AFA scholarship. To be a part of it on the other end, to make sure other students get to experience this, is great," she said. "Agriculture is important to both Anthony and me, and being part of AFA was always a worthwhile thing for both of us. It is something we want to keep supporting." ■

2017 Financial Statement

ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	\$	2,333,689
Assets whose use is limited	\$	2,255,571
Pledges Receivable	\$	87,933
Inventory	\$	3,359
Prepaid expenses	\$	41,724
Property and equipment — net	\$	127,722
Total Assets	\$	4,850,048

LIABILITIES

Accounts payable	\$	58,968
Accrued liabilities	\$	50,997
Total Liabilities	\$	109,965

NET ASSETS

Unrestricted net assets		
Board designated	\$	2,105,748
Undesignated	\$	2,097,044
Total Unrestricted Net Assets	\$	4,202,792
Temporarily restricted net assets	\$	428,741
Permanently restricted net assets	\$	108,550
Total Net Assets	\$	4,740,083
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$	4,850,048

CHANGES IN UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Support		
Contributions	\$	1,332,046
Net assets released from restriction	\$	196,383
Total Support	\$	1,528,429
Revenues		
Conferences	\$	1,294,107
Loss on disposal of fixed assets	\$	(1,006)
Investment income	\$	286,211
Total Revenues	\$	1,579,312
Total Support and Revenues	\$	3,107,741
Operating Expenses		
Program	\$	2,539,512
General and administrative	\$	417,155
Fundraising	\$	183,820
Total Operating Expenses	\$	3,140,487
Increase in Unrestricted Net Assets	\$	(32,746)

CHANGES IN TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Contributed scholarships	\$	218,090
Net assets released from restrictions	\$	(196,383)
Increase in Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	\$	21,707
Increase in Net Assets	\$	(11,039)

Allocation of Expenses



2016-17 Board of Directors

								
Kevin Eye WinField Solutions Land O'Lakes, Inc.	Pete Goetzmann Archer Daniels Midland	Jamey Graffing CHS, Inc.	Geraldyn F. Hayes Bunge North America	Ben Kaehler Dow AgroSciences	Carol Keiser-Long C-ARC Enterprises, Inc. C-BAR Cattle Company	Sandy Kemper C2FO	J. Mariner Kemper UMB Financial Corporation	Ruth Kimmelshue Cargill, Inc.
								
Greg Kressek Kansas Corn	Dr. Thomas L. Payne University of Missouri	Steve Reno DuPont Pioneer	Gwyn Schramm Monsanto Company	L. Joshua Sosland Sosland Publishing Company	Bob Timmons John Deere	K. Russell Weathers Agriculture Future of America		

AFA Partners

Agriculture Future of America appreciates the generosity of hundreds of individuals, corporations, foundations and educational institutions that partner with AFA to provide career development and scholarship programs for the next generation of agricultural leaders. The following recognizes AFA's partners for the 2017 Fiscal Year, which was March 1, 2016 to February 28, 2017.

Investments \$200,000 and Above



Investments \$100,000 to \$199,999



R.C. Kemper Charitable Trust
Enid and Crosby Kemper Foundation

William T. Kemper Trust

Investments \$25,000 to \$49,999



LEWMAR Foundation

Investments \$50,000 to \$99,999



Arvin Gottlieb Charitable Foundation

Investments \$10,000 to \$24,999

American Royal Association	Ohio Corn & Wheat
Belles of the American Royal	Bob and Georgia Richter
California Cotton Alliance	Roderick J. and Jo Anne Cyr
Central Missouri Agriculture Club	Foundation
Cerner Corporation	Seaboard Foods
Dairy Farmers of America, Inc.	Smithfield Foods
Lansing Trade Group, LLC	St. Joseph Area Chamber of
National Crop Insurance	Commerce
Services	The Mennel Milling Company
National FFA Organization	The Scoular Company
National Pork Board	The Sosland Foundation
Nationwide Mutual Insurance	The Stanley H. Durwood
Company	Foundation
Nebraska Corn Board	Stone Family Foundation
Nufarm Americans Inc.	

A complete list of all partners is available at www.agfuture.org/industrypartners.

K. Russell Weathers
CEO

Nancy Barcus
Chief Operating Officer

Mark Stewart
President

Agriculture Future of America
P.O. Box 414838, Kansas City, MO 64141
Phone: 816-472-4232
Fax: 816-472-4239

www.agfuture.org
www.afaalliance.com



Mission: Build bridges for young leaders to foster engagement and innovation in food and agriculture.