

**TITLE:** An Assessment of the Leadership Practices used by Agricultural Education Department Executive Officers (DEOs)

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**OBJECTIVE:** To identify existing and needed leadership practices of department executive officers (DEOs) in agricultural education.

**METHODOLOGY:** The sample consisted of all DEOs of agricultural education departments in the United States with at least one faculty member (other than the DEO) (N=90) according to the Directory of Teacher Educators in Agriculture (1989-90). Forty-eight (88%) of the subsequent 56 eligible DEOs completed the LPI-Self and forty-one faculty members in these departments completed the LPI-Other (89% response rate). Internal reliabilities for this study ranged between .79 and .90. Analyses included only matched pairs of DEOs and their faculty (N=41).

About half of the DEOs were in the 41-50 age bracket, 44 percent had less than six years of experience as a DEO, and teaching and administrative responsibilities comprised the bulk of their job duties. Two-thirds did not identify leadership responsibilities specifically as part of their job. Faculty members were distributed across academic rank and most had worked with their current DEO less than six years.

**KEY FINDINGS:** The LPI scores of DEOs and faculty members were relatively similar, with statistical difference found on only one leadership practice. DEOs viewed themselves as enabling more than their faculty colleagues (although this practice was rated most frequently on the LPI-Other).

Few statistically significant differences were found between DEOs by the percentage of their time allocated to teaching or research responsibilities. DEOs who reported being more involved in administration had significantly higher scores on Inspiring and Encouraging than those with less administrative duties. DEOs more involved with teaching responsibilities reported significantly less Inspiring behavior than those with less teaching responsibilities.

Few meaningful differences were reported in leadership practices by DEOs when analyzed by faculty member rank, number of professional staff supervised, years of DEO service, geographic region, or DEO demographic characteristics (e.g., age and previous administrative experience). While attendance at either administrative or leadership workshops failed to yield significant differences, DEOs who reported collegiate coursework in leadership engaged in the various leadership practices more than those without such education (significantly more so for Enabling and Encouraging).

No significant differences were found between faculty member's perception of DEOs' leadership practices and the faculty member's rank, years of service, or tenure with the DEO. Except for Inspiring, faculty perceived that a high percentage of the DEOs fell

into the low category on all of the leadership practices, compared to the normative sample.