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Organizational Climate of the American Association for Agricultural Education

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Monitoring and evaluating programs and outcomes is common practice in educational arenas; less frequent in professional societies and organizations. A clear understanding of the climate of an organization is important, potentially providing leadership with an understanding of how to improve the functionality of an organization. The purpose of this study was to describe how individual members of the American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE) perceived working together and to describe the level of support within the profession for the 2007–2010 version of the National Research Agenda (NRA). Overall, AAAE members' perceptions varied greatly. Most members agreed to some extent that the AAAE organization allowed members to be involved in the sharing of ideas and information in a nonthreatening, supportive environment. Additionally, most members indicated that within the organization there was an expectation and support of new ideas and practices. However, results indicated AAAE members held mixed beliefs regarding the collective accountability for excellence in performance of shared outcomes within the organization. The NRA priorities were well-understood, useful, and worthwhile to a majority of the membership. Data suggested that the average member believed others in the profession were less supportive than they were of the NRA priorities.

Keywords: american association for agricultural education, national research agenda of agricultural education and communication, organization, team climate

Introduction and Literature Review

Basic organizational principles suggest that the effectiveness and efficiency of any group or organization requires frequent and continuous monitoring for the greatest impact (Senge, 2006). Monitoring and evaluating programs and outcomes is common practice in educational arenas; less frequent in professional societies and organizations. By definition, professional organizations are groups of people working together to accomplish a set of goals and objectives that serve the profession. The American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE) is such an organization.

In recent years, several changes have been implemented seeking to advance desired outcomes for the profession. One such change was the development and adoption of the *National Research Agenda of Agricultural Education and Communication* (NRA; Osborne, 2007). The NRA was created in response to a need for prioritizing research areas to create opportunities for securing research funding from numerous state and national agencies. The NRA was the first national research agenda to be developed and formally embraced by the broader discipline of agricultural education and communication. The NRA is organized into five broad disciplinary dimensions: agricultural communications, agricultural leadership, Extension and outreach education, agricultural education in university and postsecondary

settings, and school-based agricultural education (Osborne, 2007).

University faculty members build relationships and develop professionally through voluntary membership in professional associations. As dues-paying members, the level of participation and the acquired benefits are controlled by the individual through the formalized agreement (Gruen, Summers, & Acito, 2000). Because membership in these associations is voluntary, it is important for the members to be involved in organizational knowledge and socialization. "Comprehension of the organization's goals and values help link the membership to the mission as a whole" (Gruen et al., p. 39). Research in organizational behavior posits that organizational knowledge has a positive effect because members understand how the organization affects the industry and increases members' comfort and competence in their roles.

Change is subject to organizational climate and culture. The shared beliefs and perceptions of an organization define its climate. Organizational climate is a feeling by the members; how they perceive something should be done at that moment. The climate of the organization is developed through the commonly accepted policies, practices, and procedures (Anderson & West, 1998). In contrast, culture is the deeply rooted nature of the organization as a result of long-held formal and informal structures, expectations, and traditions. Culture is created through an evolution of a system, with research presenting a detailed description and analysis of the social structure in a holistic manner (Denison, 1996). Whereas the climate of an organization can be relatively easy to change, change in culture takes the full commitment of every leader within the organization for a sustained period of time (Hofstede, 1997).

According to Loo (2003), three conditions must be present for a shared climate to exist: "Individuals must interact, must have some common goal which predisposes individuals toward collective action, and sufficient task interdependence" (p. 512). Academic associations meet these criteria on many levels: department, university, region, and national affiliations. Members interact within and outside of their respective departments and universities. The common affiliation with the association is based on interest in a common goal, and potentially, collective action. Finally, the common interest and affiliation create an interdependence that yields a shared understanding.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Social Exchange Theory (SET; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) served as the theoretical framework for this study. SET is considered to be "among the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding workplace behavior" (p. 874). SET can be used to explain the interactions of people that lead to commitments and relationships. The defining characteristics of SET are interdependence and reciprocity. Interdependence is created when two or more people work toward a common goal, such as priorities in an organization. This interaction results in a reciprocal relationship of give-and-take; for example a faculty member pays dues to an association and in exchange expects scholarly journals and access to member-only events. The reciprocal exchange does not have to be of equal perceived or economic value. It is valuable to assess the shared organizational climate through the interaction of members and specific organizational goals.

Understanding the climate of a team or organization can provide those in leadership roles with a better picture of how a team is operating. Based on that knowledge, changes can be implemented to improve functionality of the team or organization. However, clearly identifying the climate and its influences on an organization can be difficult. For the purposes of this study, the Team Climate Inventory (TCI; Anderson & West, 1996) provided a conceptual framework for measuring organizational climate.

The TCI is a multidimensional measure of work climate inventory based on four factors identified by West (1990): vision, participative safety, task orientation, and support for innovation. By definition, vision is the valued outcome that can serve as a motivating factor; participative safety represents the ability of group members to be involved in the sharing of ideas and information in a nonthreatening, supportive environment; and task orientation is the collective accountability for excellence in performance of shared outcomes. Finally, support for innovation is expressed through the

expectation and support of new ideas and practices.

The TCI is a useful diagnostic tool to identify team and organizational development. For example, a low team climate score in one factor, such as task orientation, would provide an organization with the opportunity to seek additional information about quality measures and shared information between group members. Denison (1996) identified quantitative research methods as the best measurement of organization climate because "generalization across social settings not only was warranted but was also the primary objective of the research" (p. 621). Climate research emphasizes the impact of organizational systems on members and organizations rather than social evolution. Researchers must assess member perceptions of organizational goals, vision, and practices in order to draw conclusions about an organization's climate.

As an organization, the AAAE serves educators, communicators, and leaders in agriculture through research and application of its principles. Three goals guide the organization, "(a) provide an approach to identifying, prioritizing, and organizing research in teaching and learning; (b) provide opportunities for collaboration within and outside of agricultural education; and (c) provide opportunities for individual and organizational growth, development, and renewal" (AAAE, 2010, p. 2). Its active members create a formal agreement, through the payment of dues, for access to a scholarly journal, voting rights, committee and leadership participation, regional and national conference participation, and listserv access.

In 2007, the AAAE entered into a formal agreement with its membership with the publication of a national research agenda (Osborne, 2007). The *National Research Agenda of Agricultural Education and Communication* (Osborne, 2007) was developed to coordinate the research efforts within agricultural education. Osborne proposed that the NRA was

> … the first national research agenda to be developed and formally embraced by the broader discipline of agricultural education and communication. Members of the profession have long recognized the value of such a document for effectively communicating research priorities to numerous state and national interests… (p. 2)

Furthermore, the *National Research Agenda* of the AAAE is intended to serve as a document that is to

- convey the research priorities of the AAAE to various stakeholders,
- provide focus toward the most pressing issues facing the discipline,
- facilitate coordination of research efforts between research parties, and
- enhance the perception of the profession as a whole (Doerfert, 2009, p. 1).

The NRA specifically addresses one of the organizational goals: identify, prioritize, and organize research. As the expiration date of the NRA approaches, it is important that the organization determine the members' perceptions of this agreement, and assess the organizational climate.

Purpose and Research Objectives

A clear understanding of the climate of an organization is important, potentially providing those in leadership roles with an understanding of how to improve the functionality of an organization. Furthermore, the inaugural edition of the *National Research Agenda* is set to expire in 2010. Hence, the need to determine the climate of the AAAE membership and the acceptance of the *National Research Agenda* is apparent and timely. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe how the AAAE membership perceived working together, and to describe the level of support of the profession for the 2007-2010 edition of the NRA. The study was guided by three research objectives:

1. Describe selected professional characteristics—academic position, Research Priority Area focus, regional affiliation, AAAE membership status, frequency of attendance at regional and national AAAE meetings—of AAAE members.
2. Describe members' perceptions of the organizational climate of the AAAE.

3. Describe the level of the profession's support for the 2007-2010 edition of the *National Research Agenda*.

Procedures

As part of a larger study, the research design of this quantitative study was descriptive in nature. In the fall of 2009, the on-line *Directory of the American Association for Agricultural Education* included a total of 593 faculty, student, or associate members at the time that the Directory was accessed; of which, 317 were noted as dues paying members who were considered the population for this study. A census of dues paying AAAE members (N = 317) was taken to more accurately describe the characteristics of the population and control potential errors associated with subject selection and sampling.

A four-section electronic data collection instrument was researcher developed by modifying the Team Climate Inventory (TCI) developed by Anderson and West (1996). The modifications to the design and format of the data collection instrument were guided by Dillman's (2007) recommendations for using web-hosted software. In the first three sections, subjects were asked to respond to 45 statements or questions using a five-point summated rating scale to reflect levels of agreement. The first section consisted of 24 statements representing communication and innovation behaviors within the AAAE. The second section consisted of 13 questions regarding the objectives of the AAAE and the NRA. The third section consisted of eight questions related to the task style of members of the AAAE. The fourth section sought to identify subjects' characteristics: academic position, research priority area focus, regional affiliation, AAAE membership status, length of membership in AAAE, frequency of attendance at regional and national AAAE meetings, and length of employment.

Face validity of the data collection instrument was determined by a panel of eight experts, all of whom are considered experts in the areas of agricultural education, instrument development, and research methods. Construct validity was assessed in several previous studies (Anderson, Hardy, & West, 1990; Anderson & West, 1996, 1998; Loo & Loewen, 2002; Mathison, Einarsen, Jorstad, & Bronnick, 2004; West & Farr, 1989) through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Development of constructs and testing of construct validity of the TCI were outlined by West and Anderson (1996), who reported a series of studies that began in 1989 and resulted in the commercial TCI data collection instrument published by Assessment Services for Employment in 1996. Because the items used in this study were based upon the items and constructs previously determined to be valid, the constructs were considered valid.

Reliability of the instrument was previously reported in a series of studies (Anderson, et al., 1990; West & Anderson, 1992; West & Farr, 1989) and outlined by West and Anderson (1996), who reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the five constructs—participative safety, support for innovation, vision, task orientation, social desirability—that ranged from .64 to .95 (n = 717). None of the previous studies were conducted in the United States or used a population that was reasonably comparable to the AAAE. Furthermore, the data collection instrument used in previous studies contained several sources of measurement error (e.g., multiple-component or double-barreled items), which required expanding the instrument to 51 single-component competencies. Therefore, a pilot test was conducted to estimate the reliability of the modified instrument. Members of an agricultural education department at a Land-Grant University served as the pilot study sample. The sample included individuals engaged in teaching and research in each of the research priority areas (n = 30). To minimize testing bias during the pilot study, all references in the data collection instrument referring to the AAAE were changed to the department, and references made to the NRA were changed to departmental goals and objectives.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for the five scales (West & Anderson, 1998)—participative safety, support for innovation, vision, task orientation, and social desirability—yielding coefficient estimates of reliability of .88, .90, .87, .84, and .51 respectively (n = 30). Due to the low reliability estimate associated with social desirability, all items associated with that construct were eliminated from the questionnaire. This reduced the total number of items from 51 to 45, and

yielded an overall reliability coefficient for the revised instrument of .95. No reliability indices were generated for the static information reflected in section four of the data collection instrument.

This study followed the data collection protocol suggested by Dillman (2007); however, the researchers deviated by attempting four points of contact, rather than five. Prior to sending the first invitation message, a brief prenotice e-mail message was sent to the AAAE membership by the President of the AAAE via the AAAE listserv. The prenotice indicated the need to determine the profession's level of support for the NRA and noted the president's support for the study. Three personalized e-mail invitations followed the prenotice in approximately five-day intervals; each was signed by a different researcher who was affiliated with a different NRA research focus area to appeal to the various interest groups. E-mail invitations were sent to each of the AAAE members' e-mail addresses indicated in the on-line *Directory of the American Association for Agricultural Education.* Each e-mail invitation invited AAAE members to share their experiences and opinions about the AAAE and the *National Research Agenda*, and included a personalized link to the web-based electronic questionnaire. As electronic questionnaires were completed, the names of the individuals who had responded were removed from the correspondence list of AAAE members. A final response rate of 77.6% (n = 246) was obtained.

Nonresponse error was a concern; therefore, procedures for handling response bias were followed as outlined as *Method 1* in Lindner, Murphy, and Briers (2001). Respondents were dichotomously split into early (n = 123) and late (n = 123) respondent groups (Miller & Smith, 1983), and served as the independent variable. The scales—participative safety, support for innovation, vision, and task orientation—were used as the dependent variables. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to compare the variables of interest. A MANOVA is the appropriate analysis when "multiple independent and/or dependent variables and the measured variables are likely to be dependent on each other (i.e., to correlate)…. Thus, multivariate analysis allows for the examination of two variables while simultaneously controlling for the influence of the other variables on each of them" (Newton & Rudestam, 1999, p. 137).

Box's test of equality of covariance was not significant (p = .06), which was an indicator that the assumption of equality of covariance was not violated (Field, 2009). Hence, "the Hotelling's T^2 is robust in the two-group situation when sample sizes are equal" (Field, p. 604). Thus, the results of the MANOVA were interpreted using Hotelling's T^2—Hotelling's trace statistic—because of the robustness of the test. Using Hotelling's trace statistic, there was not a significant effect of respondent group (early or late response) on the scales, T = .01, $F(1, 281)$ = .84, p = .50. Therefore, external validity in the form of response bias did not threaten the generalizability of the findings of this study to the population (Lindner, et al., 2001; Radhakrishna & Doamekpor, 2008).

Data were analyzed using SPSS® version 17.0 for Windows™ platform computers. Research objective one sought to describe selected professional characteristics of AAAE members. Therefore, frequencies and percentages for academic position, research priority area focus, regional affiliation, AAAE membership status, and frequency of attendance at regional and national AAAE meetings were reported. The mean and standard deviation were reported for length of membership in AAAE, and length of employment at current institution. Research objective two sought to describe AAAE members' perceptions of the organizational climate of the AAAE. Subjects were asked to respond to 24 statements representing communication and innovation behaviors within the AAAE, and eight questions related to the task style of members of the AAAE, using a five-point summated rating scale to reflect levels of agreement. Mean, median, and standard deviation were reported. Research objective three sought to describe the level of the profession's support 2007-2010 version of the NRA. Subjects were asked to respond to 13 questions regarding the objectives of the AAAE and the NRA using a five-point summated rating scale to reflect levels of agreement. Mean, median, and standard deviation were reported.

Findings

Research objective one sought to describe selected professional characteristics of AAAE

members. Each subject was asked to describe his or her academic position, research priority area focus, AAAE regional affiliation, and membership status, frequency of attendance at regional and national AAAE meetings. The results are summarized in Table 1. Length of membership in AAAE and length of employment at current institution are noted in Table 2.

Table 1
Professional Characteristics of AAAE Membership (n = 245)

Professional Characteristic	*f*	%
Academic Position		
Master's Graduate Student	3	1.2
Doctoral Graduate Student	36	14.7
Lecturer	10	4.1
Assistant Professor	57	23.3
Associate Professor	37	15.1
Professor	75	30.6
Professor Emeritus	4	1.6
Other	23	9.4
Research Priority Area Focus[a]		
Agricultural Communications	28	7.6
Agricultural Leadership	39	10.6
Agricultural Education in Domestic and International Settings: Extension and Outreach	53	14.4
Agricultural Education in University and Postsecondary Settings	111	30.2
Agricultural Education in Schools	136	37.1
AAAE Regional affiliation		
North Central	78	31.8
Southern	110	44.9
Western	57	23.3
Attendance at regional AAAE meeting		
Every year	105	44.1
Most Years	64	26.9
Occasionally	50	21.0
Never	19	8.0
Attendance at national AAAE meeting		
Every year	87	36.6
Most Years	62	26.1
Occasionally	58	24.4
Never	31	13.0

Note: [a] data does not equal 100% because of members with multiple focus areas

Table 2
Professional Characteristics of AAAE Membership (n = 245)

Characteristic	*M*	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*
Length of membership in AAAE	11.38	10.05	1	48
Length of employment at current institution	9.29	9.16	0	46

Research objective two sought to describe members' perceptions of the AAAE organizational climate. Findings are presented by construct: participative safety (see Table 3), support for innovation (see Table 4), and task orientation (see Table 5). Items in Tables 3 – 5

were ordered by descending mean score, then by standard deviation.

The overall construct mean for participative safety was 3.39 (*SD* = 0.64). Six items related to participative safety had median scores of four, indicating agreement with each statement (see Table 3). The other seven items related to participative safety had associated median scores of three, indicating that members did not agree nor disagree with seven of the 13 statements.

Table 3
Members' Perceptions of Items Related to Participative Safety (n = 245)

Item	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*
We influence each other.	4.02	4	0.73
We generally share information in the profession, rather than keeping it to ourselves.	3.83	4	0.85
We keep in regular contact with each other.	3.50	4	0.88
There are real attempts to share information throughout the AAAE.	3.49	4	0.95
We keep in touch with others in the association.	3.45	4	0.91
We have a 'we are in it together' attitude.	3.40	4	1.00
We interact frequently.	3.32	4	0.96
In the AAAE, people feel understood.	3.29	3	0.92
In the AAAE, people feel accepted.	3.29	4	1.06
Members of the AAAE meet frequently to talk *formally*.	3.28	3	0.99
People keep each other informed about work-related issues in the AAAE.	3.25	3	0.94
There is a lot of give-and-take.	3.22	3	0.94
Members of the AAAE meet frequently to talk *informally*.	3.18	3	1.03
Overall construct mean	3.39	–	0.64

Note: Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

Support for innovation had an overall construct mean of 3.15 (*SD* = 0.77). Three items related to participative safety had median scores of four, indicating agreement with each statement (see Table 4). The other eight items related to support for innovation had associated median scores of three, indicating that members did not agree nor disagree with eight of the 11 statements.

Table 4
Members' Perceptions of Items Related to Support for Innovation (n = 245)

Item	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*
People in the AAAE cooperate in order to help develop new ideas.	3.49	4	0.90
Assistance in developing new ideas is readily available.	3.45	4	0.93
Members of the AAAE *share* resources to help apply new ideas.	3.34	4	0.95
AAAE members provide practical support for new ideas and their application.	3.20	3	0.94
Members of the AAAE *provide* resources to help apply new ideas.	3.19	3	0.96
People in the AAAE are always searching for new ways of looking at problems.	3.15	3	0.97
Everyone's view is listened to, even if it is in a minority.	3.09	3	1.01
The AAAE is always moving toward the development of new answers.	3.07	3	1.00
In the AAAE, we take the time needed to develop new ideas.	3.03	3	1.00
The AAAE is open to change.	2.96	3	1.09
The AAAE is responsive to change.	2.96	3	1.07
Overall construct mean	3.15	--	0.77

Note: Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

The overall construct mean for task orientation was 3.05 (*SD* = 0.77). One item, related to task orientation, *there is a real concern among AAAE members that the AAAE should achieve the highest standards of performance,* had a median score of four, indicating agreement with the statement (see Table 5). The other items related to task orientation had associated median scores of 3, indicating that members did not agree nor disagree with the statements.

Table 5
Members' Perceptions of Items Related to Task Orientation (n = 245)

Item	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*
Is there a real concern among AAAE members that the AAAE should achieve the highest standards of performance?	3.42	4	0.98
Do your AAAE colleagues provide *useful ideas* to enable you to do the job to the best of your ability?	3.26	3	0.97
Do members of the AAAE build on each other's ideas in order to achieve the best possible outcome?	3.18	3	0.96
Do your AAAE colleagues provide *practical help* to enable you to do the job to the best of your ability?	3.16	3	1.03
Does the AAAE provide a clear criterion that members try to meet in order to achieve excellence as an association?	2.98	3	1.02
Are AAAE members prepared to question what the AAAE is doing?	2.95	3	1.08
Do you and your AAAE colleagues monitor each other so as to maintain a higher standard of work?	2.88	3	1.10
Does the AAAE critically appraise potential weaknesses in what it is doing in order to achieve the best possible outcome?	2.75	3	1.01
Overall construct mean	3.05	--	0.77

Note: Scale: 1 = To a very little extent ; 3 = To some extent; 5 = To a very great extent

Research objective three sought to describe the level of the membership's support of the 2007-2010 version of the NRA. The construct *vision* was used to assess the level of the

profession's support 2007-2010 version of the NRA. Based on the overall construct mean of 3.41 (*SD* = 0.73), members were at least somewhat supportive of the NRA, but did not completely support the NRA (see Table 6). Based on median scores, members were somewhat clear about the NRA, but not completely. Furthermore, members believed the NRA was somewhat useful, appropriate, realistic, attainable, and achievable, but not completely.

Table 6
Members' Support for the 2007-2010 Version of the National Research Agenda of the AAAE (n = 245)

Item	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*
How worthwhile do you think the *National Research Agenda* priorities are to the AAAE?	3.78	4	0.91
How clear are you about the *National Research Agenda Priorities*?	3.65	4	0.95
To what extent do you think the *National Research Agenda* priorities are useful priorities?	3.64	4	0.96
To what extent do you think the *National Research Agenda* priorities are appropriate priorities?	3.60	4	0.90
To what extent are you in agreement with the *National Research Agenda* priorities?	3.60	4	0.88
To what extent do you think the *National Research Agenda* priorities are realistic?	3.50	4	0.93
How worthwhile do you think the *National Research Agenda* priorities are to you?	3.49	4	1.06
To what extent do you think the *National Research Agenda* priorities can be attained?	3.42	4	0.92
To what extent do you think the *National Research Agenda* priorities can actually be achieved?	3.37	3	0.86
To what extent do you think other AAAE members agree with the *National Research Agenda* priorities?	3.37	3	0.76
How worthwhile do you think the *National Research Agenda* priorities are to the wider society?	3.24	3	1.08
To what extent do you think the *National Research Agenda* priorities are clearly understood by other members of the AAAE?	3.18	3	0.85
To what extent do you think members of the AAAE are committed to the *National Research Agenda* priorities?	3.08	3	0.85
Overall construct mean	3.41	--	0.73

Note: Scale: 1 = Not at all ; 3 = Somewhat; 5 = Completely

Conclusions, Implications, Recommendations

Research objective one sought to describe selected professional characteristics of AAAE members. The AAAE membership was balanced between organizational continuity, stability, and potential to change. One-half of the membership provided stability, holding positions as Associate Professor or Professor. Nearly one-third of the members were very experienced, holding Professor or Professor Emeritus titles and providing for organizational continuity. Nearly 25% of the organization's members provided potential for change, holding positions as Assistant Professors. Each of the research focus areas in the profession were well represented. Although a majority of members described their research focus area as agricultural education in schools, university, and postsecondary settings, all research areas had sufficient faculty participation to achieve critical mass. The Southern region was the largest region, representing nearly one-half of the total membership, followed by North Central and Western regions. Both the regional and national meetings were relevant and important to the membership, with two-thirds of the members attending the regional meetings, and nearly two-

thirds attending the national meeting, every year or most years.

Research objective two sought to describe members' perceptions of the AAAE organizational climate. Overall, AAAE members varied greatly when considering their responses to individual items related to participative safety, support for innovation, and task orientation. Members reported that they influenced each other, shared information, and frequently interacted. However, members' beliefs varied greatly regarding levels of acceptance and whether the AAAE had a 'we are in it together' attitude—indicators that individuals may be concerned that the AAAE is not a safe or supportive environment to express their ideas without risk of appearing foolish or facing ridicule (Anderson & West, 1996). If AAAE members want to provide opportunities for individual and organizational growth, development, and renewal, then they must create an environment where members are willing to try out new ideas without fear of feeling foolish.

On average, members did not believe the AAAE is open or responsive to change. Members neither agree nor disagree that the AAAE is moving toward the development of new answers. Members further indicated mixed beliefs regarding the collective accountability for excellence in performance of shared outcomes within the AAAE. Members, on average, agreed that they influence one another—the only item to achieve a mean value above 4.0 (Agree). One might question how members can influence one another, yet believe the AAAE is not open and responsive to change? Should AAAE members not hold themselves accountable for being closed-minded or resistant to change? Is it everyone else's problem? Could it be indicative of the culture within the AAAE? It is likely that members' definition of influence differs because members' responses to items in the task orientation construct do not necessarily support that concept. For example, items with the highest mean scores indicate that members believe that the AAAE, as an organization, should achieve the highest standards of performance, and that their colleagues provide useful ideas and practical help. Nonetheless, items with the lowest mean scores in the task orientation construct indicate that members do not perceive their AAAE colleagues monitor one another, or critically appraise potential weaknesses, to achieve the best possible outcome. However, it is important to remain cognizant that the respective mean scores varied by minimal amounts. Therefore, is greater or more critical monitoring of standards necessary? If so, who should monitor standards and to what extent?

The AAAE's elected leadership should reconsider the standards of achievement, and the process of monitoring these standards. Also, the AAAE's elected leadership should consult with the editors and editorial review boards of the *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *Journal of Applied Communications*, *Journal of Extension, Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education,* and *Journal of Leadership Education*—the most common outlets for research conducted by AAAE members—to determine what standards are universally needed for publications related to agricultural education.

Research objective three sought to describe the level of the membership's support of the 2007-2010 version of the NRA. The NRA priorities are somewhat understood, useful, and worthwhile to a majority of the AAAE membership. The data suggested that members on average thought that others in the profession were somewhat less supportive than they were of the NRA priorities. How will this misperception, that others in the profession are less supportive of the priorities, impact the revision and/or adoption of the next version of the NRA? The elected leadership of the AAAE must be proactive by assessing the general membership's level of acceptance and willingness to adopt the new version of the NRA. The elected leadership of the AAAE must be transparent in their assessment efforts and disseminate the results to the general membership in timely fashion.

Most members support the NRA, however, questions remain about the role of the NRA. Does the NRA serve as the primary directing or guiding document for the AAAE? Does the scope of the NRA extend beyond research? Additional questions arise when considering the statement, *the AAAE provides a clear criterion that members try to meet in order to achieve excellence as an association*—the average member's agreement lies somewhere between very little and to some extent. Does this indicate that members do not view the NRA as the benchmark criterion for the AAAE, or that they

discount the efficacy of the document to guide the AAAE? Perhaps guidance, in addition to the NRA, is necessary to guide the AAAE in developing a reciprocal relationship of give-and-take among members.

The results of this study indicate that most AAAE members agreed to some extent with the priorities established in the 2007–2010 NRA, and found them somewhat useful and appropriate. To a lesser extent, they believed the research priorities could be attained. The authors believe that this is due in part to a lack of communication, and recommend that the AAAE systematically collect and report progress on each of the research priority areas.

It is important that more inclusive and participative methods be employed in the current effort to amend and adjust the NRA priorities, and that the outcome of the second initiative be evaluated in a more timely fashion to prevent misperceptions from developing within the AAAE. Further research is necessary to determine whether members support the NRA in its entirety or only portions of the document. It is recommended that the second initiative, currently underway, include efforts to ascertain and communicate the purposes of the research agenda in the AAAE.

The climate of an organization can be relatively easy to change. Nonetheless, based on the organizational climate of the AAAE, the leadership of the AAAE should develop a long-term written plan to improve the functionality of the AAAE, and to serve as a guide for the future development of the organization—a plan that addresses issues beyond conducting research and the NRA (e.g., development of new answers, disseminating agricultural education research to practitioners, and professional development goals). Development of such a plan should include member input, to critically appraise and address potential weaknesses of the AAAE, and to achieve the best possible outcome. Lastly, it is suggested that the modified version of the TCI used in this study should be used to measure change in the organizational climate of the AAAE over time, to provide the AAAE leadership with information that may better allow them to improve the functionality of the organization.

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