

January 2015

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Recommended Citation

ARNETT-HARTWICK, Sally E. (2015) "Self-Career Promotion Behaviors of Family and Consumer Sciences Teachers," *Online Journal for Workforce Education and Development*. Vol. 8: Iss. 1, Article 10.

Available at: <https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/ojwed/vol8/iss1/10>

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SELF-CAREER PROMOTION BEHAVIORS OF FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES TEACHERS

Introduction

Nationally the number of students who major in family and consumer sciences (FCS) teacher education has declined in recent years (Lee, 2011). Specifically, in [State] the FCS teacher education programs collectively have experienced a 40% decline in enrollment in the past three years of students majoring in FCS teacher education (Arnett-Hartwick, 2012). Low enrollment threatens to reduce higher education programs available and the supply of newly licensed FCS teachers to fill vacancies, and gives potential students and their parents the perception that FCS teacher education is not a thriving job market.

The most common solution for increasing enrollment is recruitment. However, questions arise with recruitment in FCS teacher education – Who is responsible for recruiting? What is the most effective means for recruitment? What recruitment tactics are being done now? Where should recruitment take place and how? Who is the target audience? These questions posed have limited answers in the existing literature related to FCS.

Several researchers found that FACS secondary teachers are the most prominent reason students decide to study FCS teacher education (Arnett & Freeburg, 2011; Jensen, Rowley, Skidmore & Hyom-Parker, 2003). Furthermore, research has confirmed that secondary FCS teachers are the best source for recruitment into FCS teacher education as a career (Mimbs, 2002). Given these findings, the secondary FCS teacher is the catalyst for increasing potential FCS teachers.

While it is known of the significant role secondary FCS teachers play, there is a lack of knowledge of their self-career promotion behaviors to students. Self-career promotion in this study refers to thoughts and actions being done to market FCS teaching as a career option. Therefore, understanding the extent of self-career promotion efforts need to be examined at the secondary level as an initial development piece for FCS teacher education programs recruitment process.

Conceptual Framework

The primary reason students decide to become a FCS teacher is based on the influence of their secondary FCS teacher (Arnett & Freeburg, 2011). Quimby and DeSantis (2006) noted a relationship between role model influence and career choice. The social cognitive career theory (SCCT) posits that role models serve as contextual supports that have a direct effect on career choice (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994); this is because the encouragement and stimulation from role models inspire students to be inquisitive about careers, which in turns elevates students' career aspirations (Asli, 2012). In fact, Chen (2006) and Ma and Yeh (2010) confirmed the SCCT position that role models, such as FCS teachers, can entice students' plans to go to college and their career choice.

According to the SCCT, role models may provide vicarious learning experiences that increase the likelihood of students choosing a certain career. For example, a FCS teacher communicates to students his/her passion for working with children and food and FCS teaching provided an opportunity to do both. Or engaging students in the curriculum such as lesson planning and teaching to Pre-K students provides a snapshot of what it is like to be a teacher. Asli (2012) determined role models boost students' confidence in their own abilities to perform. Successful outcomes, such as teaching a Pre-K lesson that went really well, could prove positively in career consideration and persistence.

Secondary FCS teachers are role models for fostering career development (orientation) among students. Jensen, Rowley, Skidmore and Hyom-Parker (2003) found that FCS teachers are perhaps the most critical component in attracting students into the teaching profession. Bull, Uerz, and Yoakum (2000) stated, "Teacher involvement in student recruitment was crucial among secondary students choosing FCS careers" (p. 33). Similar, in Mimbs's (2002) FCS recruitment study, FCS teachers in middle and high school were the best resource for recruiting. Furthermore, Mimbs (2002) suggested marketing one's own career to others is a key responsibility of FCS teachers. Thus, concluding from previous research, the FCS teacher at the local level is the pipeline to future FCS teachers and university FCS teacher education sustainability yet do they know they are marketers for the profession?

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to determine secondary family and consumer sciences (FCS) teachers self-career promotion behaviors to their students. The following research objectives guided the study:

1. What is the perception among secondary FCS teachers of who is responsible for promoting FCS teaching as a career to students?
2. How do secondary FCS teachers promote FCS teaching as a career to students?

Method and Procedure

A qualitative research design with an online survey method was used for this study. The researcher developed the questionnaire using existing literature and identifying tailored questions to answer the research purpose. The questionnaire was pilot tested with secondary career and technical education teachers (n=6) to determine internal consistency. The questionnaire was modified and revised to reflect the comments of the pilot test group then was placed online using surveymonkey.com. The respondent sampling frame was established using the [State] Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher Association (XFCSTSA) membership list during the 2012-13 year, and the entire population (N = 152) was studied.

A cover letter that included the questionnaire link was emailed to the population. After three collection attempts, 94 respondents (62%) completed the questionnaire. Data analysis was divided into three stages (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, Sorensen, 2006). In stage one, the primary investigator transcribed the data, established response categories, and placed responses in categories. In stage two, the questionnaire, coding rubric, and final results of the coding were independently reviewed by an expert panel and recorded to establish reliability and validity. In stage three, the data were summarized and interpreted.

Findings

The data collected yielded information about the self-career promotion behaviors of secondary FCS teachers in [State]. The majority of respondents indicated that secondary FCS teachers (50%) are responsible for promoting FCS teaching as a career followed by guidance counselors (31%) and universities/FCS teacher education programs (13%). Approximately six percent reported parents and FCS-related organizations (such as 4-H) are responsible.

When asked how promote FCS teaching as a career to students, the most given response from respondents was through discussion about careers during career lessons however the second most common response was "I don't do anything or I don't do a good job at it." Other responses included: (a) by example (talk up their jobs and how much they enjoy their job), (b) encourage students who show interest to pursue a FCS teaching career, and (c) involve students in the

curriculum such as working with Pre-Kindergarten, catering events, or participating in the FCS student organization, Family, Career, Community Leaders of America (FCCLA).

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to determine secondary FCS teachers self-career promotion behaviors to their students. From the findings, FCS teachers do believe they are responsible for promoting FCS teaching as a career as suggested by Mimbs (2002) yet promotion actions are refined for discussion during career lessons or even more troublesome, not communicated at all to students. This lack in knowledge of implicitly advertising FCS teaching as a career may cause possible interested students to not consider this as a career and infers promotion education is needed for FCS teachers.

Attention to career promotion teaching strategies needs to be communicated with current teachers as well as pre-service teachers. FCS teacher educators should have discussions on the topic to ensure when pre-service teachers leave the program they are fully aware that recruitment is a part of their teaching duties. Pre-service teachers, during their practicum, can be assigned a recruitment campaign project that is planned, implemented, and reflected on the functionality and success of the project to have experience with the process prior to their actual role in the classroom. Then for those that are currently teaching, the state FCS leader or/with university teacher educators could provide postcards of ideas or posters with easily adaptable ideas and/or provide workshops during state events/conferences. Without saying, FCS teachers need to be a walking billboard (via example, discussions, lab and event involvement) to promote FCS teacher education as a career option.

Consistent with previous research (Arnett & Freeburg, 2011; Jensen, Rowley, Skidmore & Hyom-Parker, 2003), secondary FCS teachers need to be aware that they are a role model that can influence a student's career decision. The responses of the promotion activities described vicarious learning experiences as defined by the social cognitive learning theory; that is students observed or heard about FCS teaching as a career possibility from the FCS teacher. Again, it needs to be communicated to current FCS teachers of their influential status of career development with their students; specifically, that they are the most cited reason for becoming a FCS teacher and promoting their career as a possibility, as well as a duty to the overall FCS teacher education profession.

Conclusion

In order to increase the pool of licensed FCS teachers, students need to be aware of FCS teacher education as a career option. While each FCS teacher education program in [State] is vying for students, as a State we all share in the same concern of upping enrollment numbers. Although the study findings are specific to [State], implications are relatable to other states due to a national decline (Lee, 2011).

A few of the questions posed at the beginning are answered as a result of this study but further relatable recruitment research needs to be completed, such as What is the most effective means for recruitment or Who is the target audience? FCS teachers continue to be the profession's best source of recruitment but self-career promotion strategies need to be developed and communicated otherwise this career option will continue to be best kept secret.

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