

Impacts of Changes to County Educator Position Descriptions on Gender and Educational Diversity

Abstract

For the purposes of more accurately reflecting job duties and increasing diversity, Ohio county agriculture and natural resources educator position descriptions were changed in 2013 to include natural resources as an educational qualification. We examined applicant and hiring data from 3 years before and 3 years after the position description change. Results indicate that the numbers of women applicants and applicants with natural resources degrees increased following the position description change. However, although the percentage of hires with natural resources backgrounds increased, the percentage of female hires decreased sharply. Factors influencing the hiring of county agriculture and natural resources educators need to be examined.

Keywords: [hiring](#), [diversity](#), [agriculture](#), [natural resources](#), [gender](#)

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Introduction

The original intent of the county agriculture educator was to extend knowledge developed at land-grant universities to the individual farmer (Baker, 1939). Historically, the county agriculture educator was male, held an agricultural degree from a respected institution, and had at least 2 years of on-farm experience (Baker, 1939). Today, the job duties for the county agriculture educator have expanded to include supplying information on natural resources to farmers, landowners, gardeners, and businesses in rural and urban areas in addition to information on what are considered traditional agricultural topics (Spiegel & Breece, 2014; West, Drake, & Londo 2009).

Leaders in university extension, like those in other organizations, want to learn how to attract the best applicants (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005). One predictor for attracting the best applicants is perceived person-organization fit, a factor mentioned by both recruiters and applicants (Arnold & Place, 2010; Cable & Judge, 1997; Kristof, 1996). In 2013 Extension leaders at Ohio State University (OSU) updated county agriculture and natural resources (ANR) educator position descriptions to include degrees in natural resources and related fields as acceptable academic credentials for the job. The reasons

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