

Reaching out to K-12 Students with Agronomy

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Abstract

As each generation of young people drift further away from a farming heritage, there is a need to re-engage with K-12 students about the opportunities and responsibilities of using our natural resources to produce agricultural products. Several members of the Texas A&M University's Department of Soil and Crop Sciences connect with K-12 students in a wide range of activities. We arrange and host tours of the campus and the nearby Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension farm for students of diverse backgrounds. For FFA and 4-H youth, our soils faculty members conduct land, soil, and home site evaluation contests at state and regional levels as well as teach workshops to prepare contestants. We regularly deliver programs for local packs and dens of the Boys Scouts and Cub Scouts of America. Students in the undergraduate Agronomy Society operate an informational booth at the State 4-H Roundup, routinely present information about seeds and soils at elementary schools, and most notably grow a corn maze that attracts thousands of K-12 students each year. As a result of these efforts, we have recruited talented students into our Department, raised awareness about our Department's mission, and given our students the opportunity to learn how to relate to the non-farming community and educate them about the importance of soils and crops to society.

Kindergarten classes



Each fall we host kindergarten classes at our research farm. While there, students learn about production and research agriculture. Highlights of the field trip include climbing on tractors and picking cotton.



Boy Scouts of America

Faculty members and the students with the Agronomy society regularly provide programming for local Boy Scout and Cub Scout Dens and Packs. These programs are instrumental in helping the boys advance and earn badges.



First College Experience



In the Fall 2016 Semester, almost a quarter of all students at Texas A&M University were first generation college students. In order to help facilitate their transition, we host student groups to familiarize them with housing, financial aid, academics, and general student life on campus.

World Food Prize – Youth Institute



Each year 200 exceptional high school students from the U.S. and Mexico are selected to participate in the World Food Prize Youth Institute in Des Moines, Iowa. Faculty members of the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences at Texas A&M University serve as judges and mentors for students competing to be selected as representatives from Texas.

4-H and FFA Soils Judging



Dr. Cristine Morgan's program annually hosts regional and state 4-H and FFA soils judging contests. Hundreds of students have competed and not only learned more about soil, but also about the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences at Texas A&M University. It has proven to be an invaluable student recruitment strategy.

Corn Maze

The undergraduate Agronomy Society annually constructs and operates a corn maze that caters to K-12 youth. They have upwards of 10,000 visitors each year and interest is growing. Complementary activities include a pumpkin patch, cotton picking and general information about agriculture. The event has been featured in local, regional, and even national news media.

