

FCAE Final Report  
Research Grant - "Needs of the IACCAI"

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Introduction

This is the final report regarding the awarded research grant entitled "Determining the Needs of the Illinois Association of Community College Agriculture Instructors Organization". The project was completed on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2001. I was approached by Mr. Bill Johnson last spring to conduct a research similar to the inservice study I completed with IAVAT that same year. He felt a similar study would benefit the IACCAI to provide some guidance in the future. I agreed to conduct the project as long as it was funded. I submitted a proposal for the Mini-Research Project through FCAE. It was approved for funding later in the year. Before the project was funded, the groundwork had already been laid. I attended the IACCAI meeting during the IAVAT Teachers' Conference in June. I presented the idea to the group and we developed the six open-ended questions to be used in the first survey instrument.

Objectives

The objectives for the research study are as follows:

- 1) Determine the current needs of the IACCAI.
- 2) Rank and prioritize the current needs of the IACCAI.
- 3) Group the current needs into categories to ease implementation.

Methods & Procedures

The project was designed to determine the needs of the IACCAI through a Delphi research design. This means a selected group of individuals were selected to participate in this study. These individuals were considered leaders within the organization and had ample knowledge of the needs of the organization. A Delphi study is designed, so that the respondents determine the list of items needing the greatest attention and not the researcher. The study developed 3 different surveys to complete the study. The first survey served as an exploratory instrument to extrapolate information from the respondents on the needs of the organization. The second survey consisted of all of the responses from the first survey. The second survey then asked the respondents to rate each of the items on their importance. The second survey was also used to eliminate the items of least importance. Sixty-six percent of the respondents had to rate an item as "important" or "very important" in order for that item to be included into the final survey. Once these items were determined, the final survey was constructed. The final survey included an importance rating as well as a priority rating. The respondents had to rate each of the items on their importance and priority. The Borich (1980) model was used to rank each of the items based upon a high importance rating and a high priority rating.

Round 1 Survey:

The first round instrument included some demographic information from each respondent as well as six open-ended questions. The first round survey instrument was distributed at the annual fall IACCAI meeting at Joliet Junior College in October. There were 34 initial surveys received at that meeting. The demographic data included years of teaching experience at the community college level, years of teaching experience at the high school level, annual salary, number of

credit hours taught each semester, and the highest educational degree obtained. The six open-ended questions were designed to elicit responses to determine the current needs of this organization. The questions were constructed at the IACCAI meeting at the IAVAT June conference. Once the first round of data collected was completed, the second instrument was constructed based upon the data collected in the first round.

### Round 2 Survey

All of the responses collected in the first round were included in the second round survey instrument. The second round instrument was a 5 point Likert-type survey asking the respondents to select the importance rating for each item. The instrument was mailed to the initial respondents for completion during the month of January. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was included with the mailing to elicit a quick response. Reminders were sent every week for 3 weeks via telephone calls or through email messages. Four respondents dropped out of the study, because they failed to return the second round instrument. The remaining 30 respondents completed the study, by returning the second and third round surveys. Items receiving an "important" or "very important" rating among 66% of the respondents (N=30) made it to the third round survey instrument. The items not receiving an "important" rating among 66% of the respondents (N=30) were eliminated from the third round instrument. At this time, the list of respondents was sent to a predominant member of the organization to classify each respondent into a category. The respondents were categorized in the following groups: chairpersons, coordinators, and faculty. This activity was a request from the IACCAI organization.

### Round 3 Survey:

The third round survey instrument consisted of two 5 point Likert-type rating scales. The rating scale asked for an importance rating and the other scale was a priority rating. The respondents were asked to rate each item on its importance and priority. The respondents selected a 1 if the item was "not important" and selected a 5 if the item was "very important". The respondents selected a 1 if the item was "high priority" and selected a 5 if the item was "low priority". The instrument was designed in manner to fit the objectives of the Borich (1980) model. The survey was mailed to the respondents along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a quick response. The third round data collection occurred in the month of March. All 30 surveys were collected for data analysis.

### Data Analysis:

The Borich (1980) model was used to rank each of the items in the third round survey instrument. The first calculation was the *discrepancy score*. This score is figured by taking the importance rating minus the priority rating for each respondent. The *weighted discrepancy score* was the second calculation. This score was figured by multiplying the discrepancy score by the mean importance rating for each respondent. The final calculation was the *mean weighted discrepancy score* or (MWDS). This score was figured by taking the sum of the weighted discrepancy scores and dividing by the number of respondents (N=30) for each item. The items in the third round survey instrument were then ranked from highest need to lowest need by the MWDS. This procedure was conducted on each of the four categories: Document #1 "The Overall Group (N=30), Document #2 "Coordinators" (N=6), Document #3 "Chairs" (N=6), and Document #4 "Faculty" (N=18).

## Findings

The MWDS rankings can be observed in Documents 1-4. The number one need that is consisted with all four groups is "Attracting Students/Recruitment". The items at the top of the list are the items needing the greatest attention at this present time. The items at the bottom of the list are

items that still need to be addressed, but at a later timeframe. Recruitment is by far the item needing the most attention from the IACCAI organization. Once the data was analyzed further, indications showed that 50%, 60%, and 90% of the items ranked in the top ten of the Chairs, Coordinators, and Faculty respectively were included in the top ten ranked by the overall group. Further analysis indicates that 80%, 60%, and 87% of the items ranked in the top fifteen of the Chairs, Coordinators, and Faculty respectively were included in the top fifteen ranked by the overall group. This indicates the consistency among the groups. By ranking the items, the IACCAI can now develop a plan and a timeline in which to address these items.

### Conclusions/Recommendations

This research project helped prioritize the needs of the IACCAI organization. These needs have to be addressed in the near future in order to keep the organization progressing in the right direction. Data collection is the first step in developing a strategic plan to address the needs of the organization. It is recommended that the IACCAI develop standing committees to address these issues. The items have already been categorized into specific areas, so that they can be addressed in smaller quantities. It is now up to the leadership of IACCAI to develop a plan to confront these issues. This plan must be developed soon, so that the motivation and the enthusiasm do not parish.

### Resources

Borich, G. D. (1980). A needs assessment model for conducting follow-up studies. The Journal of Teacher Education. 31(3), 39-42.