



6060 FFA DRIVE
Indianapolis, IN 46278

P 317-802-6060
F 317-802-6090
FFA.ORG

Chairman Jason Smith, Committee on Ways and Means
Co-Chair Tracey Mann, FFA Caucus
Chairman David Schweikert, Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Oversight
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Smith, Congressman Mann, Chairman Schweikert,

We appreciate your concern for the National FFA Organization (“National FFA or FFA”). This letter is respectfully submitted in response to your February 3, 2026 request for information on the direction and operations of the National FFA. We hope that we have sufficiently responded to each of your inquiries. If you need additional information, please contact me directly, and we will cooperate to provide that additional information as expeditiously as possible.

I. FFA MISSION AND PURPOSE

The National FFA’s unique mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education. For 98 years, FFA has been an integral part of agricultural education. Since its establishment in 1928, FFA has worked in partnership with local schools, educators, and state education systems to help students transform academic learning into everyday practical skills, leadership capabilities, and real-world career readiness through agriculture. This approach has enabled millions of students to discover their potential, build confidence, and pursue meaningful careers. FFA prepares students to be globally conscious citizens of their community, their state, their country, and the world. Former members include President Jimmy Carter, Josh Allen, Trace Adkins and thousands of local, state, and national leaders and policymakers.¹

At the core of the organization’s purpose is agricultural education, delivered through a three-component instructional framework: classroom and laboratory instruction, work-based learning via Supervised Agricultural Experiences, and leadership development. In classrooms nationwide, agriculture educators teach science, applied mathematics, business, and technology of agricultural, natural resources, environmental, and food systems. Agricultural courses align

¹ A list of notable former members can be found at <https://ffa.app.box.com/file/329179970115?s=6pe6an7rgm9c042tbkbbobqc8tuu0o1hz>.

with state academic standards as well as career and technical education requirements, ensuring that students receive rigorous, relevant instruction while developing problem-solving, critical thinking, and technical competencies.

Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAEs) extend learning beyond the classroom by connecting instruction to hands-on experiences that offer students opportunities to apply their knowledge in real-life settings. Through SAEs, students design and manage projects, such as operating small businesses, conducting research, working in agricultural enterprises, or developing innovative solutions to local and global challenges. These work-based learning experiences help students build strong American values, including responsibility, a strong work ethic, financial literacy and employability skills.

Leadership development is a defining, foundational feature of the organization's agricultural education model. Through classroom-connected activities, career and leadership development events, public speaking opportunities, team-based problem-solving, and service-learning, students learn how to communicate effectively, lead collaboratively, and contribute positively to their communities.

The organization operates in alignment and in compliance with the purposes codified in its [Federal Charter \(36 U.S. Code Chapter 709\)](#). In 1950, the 81st Congress of the United States, recognizing the importance of FFA as an integral part of the program of vocational agriculture, granted a Federal Charter to FFA via Public Law 81-740. In 1998, the 105th Congress reviewed and passed technical amendments to the Federal Charter as part of Public Law 105-225. In 2019, the 116th Congress reviewed and passed additional amendments to the Federal Charter as Public Law 116-7, specifying the integral nature of FFA to the instruction of agricultural education in the United States. President Donald Trump signed the act during his first presidential term.

As listed in the Federal Charter, the purposes of FFA are:

1. To be an integral component of instruction in agricultural education, including instruction relating to agriculture, food, and natural resources.
2. To advance comprehensive agricultural education in the United States, including in public schools, by supporting contextual classroom and laboratory instruction and work-based experiential learning.
3. To prepare students for successful entry into productive careers in fields relating to agriculture, food, and natural resources, including by connecting students to relevant postsecondary educational pathways and focusing on the complete delivery of classroom and laboratory instruction, work-based experiential learning, and leadership development.
4. To be a resource and support organization that does not select, control, or supervise State associations, local chapters, or individual member activities.

5. To develop educational materials, programs, services, and events as a service to State and local agricultural education agencies.
6. To seek and promote inclusion and diversity in its membership, leadership, and staff to reflect the belief of the FFA in the value of all human beings.
7. To create, foster, and assist subsidiary chapters and associations of those chapters in the States, territories, and possessions of the United States as such chapters and associations carry out agricultural education programs that are approved by States, territories, or possessions.
8. To build character and develop competent and assertive agricultural leadership.
9. To increase awareness of the global and technological importance of agriculture, food, and natural resources, and the way agriculture contributes to our well-being.
10. To promote the intelligent choice and establishment of a career in fields relating to agriculture, food, and natural resources.
11. To make available to State associations, local chapters, and members all official supplies, programs, services, and equipment of the FFA.
12. To cooperate with others, including State boards and officials for career and technical education, in accomplishing these purposes.
13. To engage in other activities, consistent with these purposes, determined by the governing body to be for the best interests of the FFA.

On February 23, 2026, Representative Tracey Mann and Representative Jimmy Panetta introduced House Resolution 1073, and on February 26, 2026, with unanimous consent, the United States Senate passed Senate Resolution 622. Among other things, these resolutions recognized “the important role of the National FFA in developing the next generation of globally conscious leaders who will change the world.”²

² **HOUSE:**

H. Res. 1073 – 2026. Authored by Rep. Tracey Mann (R-KS) and Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-CA). 69 Co-Sponsors – 55 Republicans, 14 Democrats. Co-Sponsors: **Mann, Panetta**, Tenney, Cloud, **Flood, Wagner**, Sessions, Smith of Nebraska, **Finstad**, Feenstra, Estes, **Moolenaar, Fitzpatrick, Bishop, Newhouse, Miller-Meeks**, Issa, **Cleaver, Hageman**, Aderholt, **Thompson** of Pennsylvania, **Smith** of Missouri, **Vasquez, Scott Franklin** of Florida, **Graves**, Van Orden, **Moore** of Alabama, Zinke, Bergman, Rulli, **Downing, Bacon**, Rouzer, Nunn of Iowa, **Bost, Hurd** of Colorado, **Cline, Lee** of Florida, Moore of North Carolina, Fry, **Bentz, Costa, Grothman**,

Neither the National FFA nor its fundraising entity, the National FFA Foundation, receive federal appropriations or federal program funding to operate their programs, initiatives, or activities. Both entities are independent nonprofit organizations funded primarily through membership dues, private philanthropy, corporate sponsorships, individual donors and program revenues.

No federal tax dollars are directed to the National FFA or the National FFA Foundation to support operations, programming, staffing, or governance. While agricultural education programs in local school districts may receive federal education funding through programs such as the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, those funds are administered by state and local education systems and do not flow to or fund the National FFA Organization or the National FFA Foundation. As a result, the National FFA Organization operates independently of federal funding streams, relying instead on voluntary private support to advance its mission of developing leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education.

II. FFA RESPONDS TO ORGANIZATIONAL AND MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

The National FFA has experienced many membership changes over the past century, but its mission has never wavered: to make a positive difference in students' lives by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education.

As required by the Federal Charter, a fundamental purpose of the National FFA is “to seek and promote inclusion and diversity in its membership, leadership, and staff to reflect the belief of the FFA in the value of all human beings.” As reiterated in both House Resolution 1073 and Senate Resolution 622, “FFA welcomes all students.” This has not always been true. For much of its history, FFA was an organization of white males, but through new laws and changes in American culture, it has evolved into one that welcomes and treats all students equally and fairly.

Meuser, Austin Scott of Georgia, **Gottheimer**, **Miller** of Illinois, Babin, **Valadao**, Hinson, **Craig**, **Budzinski**, Rose, McDowell, **Cammack**, **Fischbach**, **McCaul**, Kelly of Pennsylvania, **Davis** of North Carolina, Bonamicci, **Alford**, **Davids** of Kansas, **Fong**, and Fedorchak. [FFA Caucus Members are in Bold]. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-resolution/1073?h=hres+1073&s=1&r=1>

S. Res. 622 – 2026. Authored by Sen. Todd Young (R-IN) and Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE). 53 Co-Sponsors - 20 Democrats, 32 Republicans, 1 Independent. Co-Sponsors on the FFA Caucus: Moran, Hyde-Smith, Boozman, Capito, Daines, Durbin, Grassley, Klobuchar, Lujan, Lummis, Risch, Rounds, Young, Coons. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-resolution/622?hl=sres622&s=5&r=1> Co-Sponsors on the FFA Caucus: Hyde-Smith, Boozman, Capito, Daines, Durbin, Grassley, Klobuchar, Lujan, Lummis, Risch, Rounds, Young, Coons. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-resolution/89?hl=sres89+in+119th&s=6&r=1>. [Senate Resolutions pass on what is referred to as a Hotline. Simply put, this is a form of unanimous consent. The members listed on the resolution will only update as action on the bill takes place. Therefore, more individuals may have signed on, but that information isn't publicly available].

Today, FFA includes over one million student members across the country, from small rural communities to metropolitan cities.

FFA, initially called the Future Farmers of America, was founded by 33 young farmers in 1928 in Kansas City, Missouri, to support vocational agriculture students, following the passage of the Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act of 1917, which brought agricultural education into public schools. Their ambitious mission was to prepare future generations for the challenges of feeding a growing population.

FFA has a rich history of evolving alongside societal and agricultural advancements, always adapting to meet the needs of its members and the changing world. As the years went by, the organization began providing services to support its expanding membership. Following the granting of its Federal Charter in 1950, the organization entered a period of significant transformation. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 mandated the end of segregation, leading to the historic merger of Future Farmers of America with its African-American counterpart, New Farmers of America, on July 1, 1965. Just a few years later, in 1969, FFA took another groundbreaking step by officially welcoming women as full members.

What started as opening a door to membership quickly turned into women stepping up, leading chapters, winning competitions, and taking on officer roles. By 1982, with the first female national officer, it was clear this wasn't a moment—it was a shift. And from there, it just kept building. Today, in many places, women make up the majority of FFA membership and are leading at every level. The inclusion of African Americans into the National FFA evolved more slowly. In 1994, Corey Flournoy from Chicago became the first African American and the first urban-area member to serve as National FFA President.

In 1988, reflecting the expanding scope of agriculture to include science, business, and technology, the organization changed its name from Future Farmers of America to the National FFA Organization, signaling its commitment to preparing students for the future in agricultural-related business and industries. Today, “agriculture” has expanded to support more than 350 career choices through agricultural education. These changes have promoted the growth and diversity of the organization's membership. From the 33 farm boys in 1928 to more than a million members, the organization's members come from many backgrounds. Today's National FFA includes members from all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. FFA boasts members and chapters in some of the largest cities, suburban areas, as well as rural areas and towns. FFA membership is open to students from every culture, race, ethnicity, and gender. In some measure, FFA reflects the growth and diversity of the United States. For example, where prior to 1969 women were not allowed in FFA, today approximately 50% of FFA members and state FFA officers are women.

Along the way, National FFA has recognized its expansion of membership. For example, in 2009, National FFA celebrated 40 years of female participation in the National FFA. Similarly,

FFA has recognized membership participation by other groups, including African-American, Hispanic, and Native-American members.

The organization's goal remains steadfast—to recruit as many students as possible to explore and excel in the vast opportunities in agriculture. FFA promotes collaboration individually and in groups. It does not elevate one individual or one group of students at the expense of another individual or group. FFA is deeply determined to maintain the organization as a welcoming place for every student who chooses to participate. FFA desires that every participating student should be a part of the team and always feel like they belong to FFA and that FFA belongs to them. To FFA, creating a welcoming, supportive, engaging, and growth-focused environment is not just a commitment but a responsibility to all FFA members.

III. CORPORATE SPONSOR SUPPORT FOR THE FFA MISSION

The National FFA Foundation was created in 1944 to provide funding and support for FFA and agricultural education programs. For decades, many companies have directed support for FFA through the foundation—some for more than 80 years. Donors include a diverse group of companies, including equipment manufacturers, seed companies, fertilizer companies, tech companies, wholesale and retail establishments, financial institutions, retail food companies, private foundations, the U.S. Army, the U.S. Air Force, and others. These donors not only benefit indirectly from the growth and stabilization in the agricultural community to which FFA contributes, but they often seek out FFA members to provide a reliable workforce for their individual companies.

The National FFA Foundation Sponsors' Board is composed of 41 executives and leaders from donor companies that provide a high level of support for National FFA. The sponsors' board advises and provides feedback on topics that impact FFA programs. These industry leaders share their tremendous insight into the future of agricultural systems, methodologies, products and services, career pathways, skill development, and practical workforce development issues.

The sponsors' board has no responsibility for governing or directing the work of the National FFA Foundation or the National FFA. Governance and programmatic authority rest solely with the National FFA Board of Directors. Corporate sponsors provide information, encouragement, and philanthropic support to advance the organization's educational mission, but they do not control how FFA programs are designed, implemented or delivered.

The National FFA Foundation documents all philanthropic gifts through a structured process designed to ensure transparency, alignment, and stewardship. The National FFA Foundation works closely with our largest sponsors to understand their goals and areas of interest, identifying how their investment can best support the mission of developing the next generation of leaders in agriculture.

Once goal alignment is established, the foundation formalizes the commitment through a written gift agreement signed by the corporate partner. These agreements document the total level of support and confirm the gift direction. In recognition of their investment, sponsoring companies receive visibility and engagement opportunities across National FFA programs and platforms, with the level of recognition aligned to the overall size of their giving.

Most donor contributions are unrestricted, meaning they are not directed to support a specific program. The actual use of the unrestricted funds is determined by the National FFA Foundation, which maintains programmatic flexibility for FFA. Donors are provided visibility for their donations in ways that generally align with the company’s brand and philanthropic goals. A small percentage of donations are restricted to specific programs or events, but even in these situations, the gifts are not conditioned on any program control or influence. The role of any sponsor is to support, not to manage or control, the organization’s policies, curriculum, or strategic decisions. At all times, management and control remain with the National FFA Board of Directors or the National FFA Foundation Board of Trustees, as applicable.

The organization’s engagement with external advisors and philanthropic sponsors has been transparent, time-limited, and advisory in nature, with all governance and programmatic authority retained by the National FFA Board of Directors or the National FFA Foundation Board of Trustees, as applicable.

IV. SYNGENTA NORTH AMERICA AND FFA RELATIONSHIP

Syngenta North America, and its predecessor organizations—Novartis, AstraZeneca, Ciba-Geigy, and Sandoz—have supported the National FFA Organization and the National FFA Foundation for more than 63 years. During that time, Syngenta company leaders have served in volunteer and advisory capacities on a variety of FFA boards and committees, including the National FFA Foundation Sponsors’ Board, helping to provide industry perspective, while supporting the organization’s mission of premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education. This sponsorship has extended beyond the national level, with Syngenta North America employees and representatives engaging with state³ FFA associations and foundations and local chapters through events, mentorship, and support for agricultural education initiatives in communities across the country.

³ “FFA” is composed of local FFA chapters, state FFA associations, and the National FFA Organization. The National FFA has responsibility for and governs the national organization, including the National FFA Convention & Expo and national leadership programs, student recognition, and scholarships. The FFA activities of each state are governed by the state FFA association, many of which are 501(C)(3) not-for-profit organizations. The chapter level activities are led and managed by the local agriculture teacher/FFA advisor, who is an employee of the local school district.

Contrary to public statements, while Syngenta North America has been a significant and meaningful donor, it is not, nor has it ever been, the organization's largest donor.⁴ Historically, Syngenta North America's support has generally been provided as unrestricted giving to the National FFA Foundation, consistent with the foundation's model in which corporate sponsors invest broadly in the mission of FFA, while the foundation determines the use of the donated funds. In return, Syngenta North America's support is recognized in visibility through connection to awards, participation at the Washington Leadership Conference, and in the agribusiness career systems pathway, AgExplorer, and the rodeo at the 97th and 98th National FFA Convention & Expo. Syngenta North America's total unrestricted support for 2025 was \$292,000.

A small part of Syngenta North America's contributions is restricted to the following programs: \$50,000 for the Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education's biotech course development; \$15,000 for belonging and engagement activities (including the Chapter Connect program and state collaborative cohorts),⁵ \$5,000 for Supervised Agricultural Experience Grants, and \$30,000 for expo booth space at the 97th National FFA Convention & Expo. Syngenta North America's most recent support is consistent with past support.

The leadership of the National FFA was aware that Syngenta North America was acquired by ChemChina in 2017. However, that change in corporate ownership did not change in any way the nature of Syngenta North America's long-standing support of the National FFA Foundation. Syngenta North America's engagement with FFA continued under the same sponsorship model and philanthropic structure that has guided corporate support of the National FFA for decades. As with all corporate supporters of the National FFA Foundation, Syngenta North America's role has been limited to providing financial support aligned with agricultural education and youth leadership development, without directing or influencing FFA governance, programming, or curriculum.

Syngenta North America currently has representation on the National FFA Board of Directors. The National FFA Board of Directors consists of 13 board members: the National FFA advisor/board chair, executive secretary, treasurer, four state supervisors of agricultural education, one United States Department of Agriculture/Education representative, two agricultural education teachers, two agriculture teacher educators, and one agricultural business

⁴ Syngenta's annual gifts to FFA from 2017-2025 averaged \$480,000, which represent less than 1% of FFA's annual operating budget. The total annual gifts for 2025 was \$392,000. Details of their giving and where FFA provided visibility are shown in the documents produced for the Committee. Syngenta's represent less than 1% of FFA's total operating budget.

⁵ Belonging and Engagement activities support collaborations and networking opportunities for geographically diverse groups. For example, in 2025, a group of Florida students was paired with a group of Alaska students, and a group of Washington, D.C., students was paired with a group of Missouri students. The pairings were done to allow general interaction, but also to allow the students to discuss the similarities and differences in agricultural applications and programs in the different venues.

and industry representative. The National FFA Board of Directors plays a pivotal role in shaping the organization’s vision and impact, with its composition reflecting a broad range of expertise and perspectives in agriculture and agricultural education.

The National FFA Constitution and Bylaws provide for how each of the board members is selected. To ensure well-rounded leadership, the existing board members select three key roles to represent critical areas of influence—the executive secretary, the treasurer, and a business and industry position. The business and industry position on the board of directors started in 2014 and was intended to provide nonacademic input from an industry perspective. The process for selecting the business and industry representative, set out in the National FFA Constitution and Bylaws, provides that the National FFA Foundation staff identify, vet, and elevate potential candidates to the nominating committee, which is a subcommittee of the National FFA Board of Directors. The nominating committee selects one of the identified candidates to recommend to the National FFA Board of Directors, which makes the final decision to invite an individual to serve a three-year term as agricultural business and industry representative.

In 2024, the National FFA Foundation staff identified and recommended three candidates to the nominating committee to consider for the business and industry board position for a term from 2025-27. One of those candidates was CaSandra Carter, a senior human resources generalist at Syngenta North America. Carter had graduated from the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences, where she was an FFA member. She earned a graduate degree in plant sciences from the Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Carter had served on career panels at the National Agricultural Education Inservice where she was well-received as an intelligent inspiring speaker. After due consideration, the National FFA Board of Directors unanimously selected Carter over the other candidates.

V. FFA TAKES ACTION ON RACIAL AND BEHAVIORAL 2021 NATIONAL CONVENTION ISSUES

2020-2021 was a period of great consternation in the United States. The country was emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic and experienced extended school disruptions, while public discourse across the United States was marked by heightened racial tensions, widespread social unrest, and an increasingly polarized political environment. Youth-serving organizations, including the National FFA, were experiencing the same unrest and grappled with how best to support students navigating complex societal pressures while maintaining safe, respectful learning environments. In 2020, the National FFA faced a highly publicized situation in which a national officer was removed from his position due to social media posts that left FFA Alumni sharply divided, with each side claiming the discipline was either too harsh or not harsh enough.

Partially in response to these events and other less prominent incidents, the National FFA created the EDI (equity, diversity and inclusion) Committee in January 2021 to study and recommend policies that would align with historical FFA policies and values and be consistent

with then-current trends in the United States. This was not the first time that the National FFA had addressed diversity and inclusion issues. In 2016-2017, FFA had undertaken a study of demographics to determine how FFA could broaden its membership across geographic areas, but no formal EDI policies were adopted at that time. In 2017, EDI was identified as a top priority for the organization by CEO Mark Poeschl. The issues were studied, and a proposed EDI Roadmap to guide FFA was created in 2020, but it was never discussed or approved by the National FFA Board of Directors, and it was never implemented by FFA. The proposed EDI Roadmap was posted to invite discussion of the issues, which led some to mistakenly believe that it represented official FFA policy. However, the proposed EDI Roadmap was never adopted, and the posted material has since been removed.

Meanwhile, amid national tensions, FFA experienced racial and behavioral incidents, including on-stage actions, at the 2021 National FFA Convention & Expo, that violated the National FFA's Code of Ethics. Reaction to the incidents was vocal and pronounced. National FFA needed to address the situation promptly and in a meaningful way.

In response to the incidents and the public reaction that followed, members of the National FFA Foundation Sponsors' Board emphasized the importance of reaffirming the organization's long-standing commitment to maintaining an environment rooted in respect, leadership, and ensuring equal opportunity for every student who chooses to participate in agricultural education. Several donor companies expressed strong support for efforts designed to reinforce these principles and to ensure that FFA programming and student experiences reflected the organization's mission of premier leadership, personal growth, and career success.

Some of the National FFA Sponsors offered their internal staff as volunteers to collaborate on a committee with National FFA on how best to address the issues. In February 2022, at the suggestion of David Hollinrake, head of Global Seeds Strategy and Portfolio at Syngenta North America (who departed the company in 2024) and a member of the National FFA Foundation Sponsors' Board, the National FFA engaged a part-time executive-in-residence, Brandon Bell. The National FFA Board of Directors had previously worked with Bell and trusted his professional judgment. The position was provided pro bono by Syngenta North America and was intended to offer advisory input on potential EDI strategy considerations.

During this advisory period, several internal frameworks and concepts were explored, including the development of bias and incident protocols and a proposed EDI State Collaborative model, in which state FFA associations create solutions to remove barriers to participation in FFA. This work also coincided with the development of the National FFA Value Statements, which were designed by the National FFA Board of Directors and ultimately were approved by the student delegate body at the 2021 National FFA Convention & Expo through the organization's established governance process. The FFA Value Statements provided:

- We respect and embrace every individual's culture and experiences.

- We welcome every individual’s contribution to advance our communities and the industry of agriculture.
- We cultivate an environment that allows every individual to recognize and explore their differences.
- We create leadership opportunities for every individual to enhance their personal and professional endeavors.

When Brandon Bell’s eighteen-month engagement ended in 2023, Syngenta North America ended its direct involvement with the executive-in-residence program. In 2023, FFA began to turn back from the EDI efforts. The National FFA turned to Corey Flournoy to fill a part-time executive-in-residence for the position of Belonging and Engagement. Flournoy brought more than three decades of direct experience in FFA and agricultural education, including service as a national and state FFA officer, agriculture educator, state foundation director, and global leadership development advisor.

Upon assuming the role in the spring of 2023, Flournoy conducted a comprehensive internal review of existing programs, policies, and practices. Based on that assessment, he recommended a strategic shift away from demographic-based EDI frameworks and toward a belonging and engagement model that focused on expanding student access, increasing participation, and strengthening educational outcomes. This approach emphasizes ensuring that all students who choose to participate in agricultural education and FFA have access to programs and opportunities, while maintaining full compliance with applicable employment and nondiscrimination laws and supporting state associations in serving their members.

Flournoy’s recommendations were presented to, reviewed and ultimately approved by the National FFA Board of Directors in May of 2024. The board also approved a Statement of Belonging:

“The National FFA Organization is committed to fostering a welcoming, supportive, engaging, and growth-focused environment for all students. We prioritize the well-being of our members and actively challenge prejudice while promoting a culture of inclusivity where every individual is respected, treated with dignity, and valued for their unique identities.

As FFA members, agriculture teachers, supporters and employees, let’s hold each other accountable, take care of one another, and be kind.”

This statement of belonging guides the organization’s work today. The National FFA’s belonging and engagement efforts are not a rebranding of EDI, nor are they focused on identity-based classification of students.

Instead, the approach is centered on:

- Providing access and opportunity for all students.
- Supporting varied educational and career interests.
- Ensuring participation is not limited by geography, finances, or institutional barriers.

No National FFA programs are designed or restricted based on race, gender or ethnicity.

Consistent with these recommendations, in June 2024, the National FFA Board Governing Committee—under the leadership of board chair Dr. Travis Park—renamed, refocused, and recharged the former EDI Committee to become the Belonging and Engagement Committee. Because of her human resources background, FFA Board member CaSandra Carter joined the Belonging and Engagement Committee. In January 2026, to reflect additional evolution of the need to enhance the well-being and safety of our FFA members, the committee was renamed and recharged to become the Belonging, Engagement and Safety Committee.

Additional significant operational changes based on the recommendations included:

- The elimination of race and ethnicity-based measures from the 2022-2025 strategic and operational plans.
- The removal of “nonbinary” as an option in the gender category in the FFA roster system.
- The discontinuance of certain programs, such as the FFA for All Experience at national convention and the piloting of a Chapter Connect Program that is rooted in the Statement of Belonging.⁶
- Revised curriculum for all national leadership programs (State Belonging and Engagement Collaborative, Washington Leadership Conference, State Officer Programs, etc.) to reflect the new strategic direction.
- Updated training for staff, boards and facilitators to ensure consistent new expectations across all programs.

These significant changes have ensured that all National FFA programs and operations are structured to provide equal access, consistent standards, and broad participation opportunities for all students, while maintaining a focus on leadership development, agricultural education, and student success.

VI. FOUR AREAS OF CURRENT AND FUTURE BELONGING AND ENGAGEMENT FOCUS

As the National FFA expands opportunities across agriculture, food, and natural resources, we remain focused on ensuring every member can engage, grow as a leader, and benefit from

⁶ The FFA for All Experience focused on inviting people of color to speak. As indicated earlier, the Chapter Connect Program focuses on connecting geographic communities.

agricultural education and FFA. Our approach prioritizes student engagement, participation, and outcomes, strengthening systems and programs that support meaningful experiences for students across all backgrounds and regions.

Four priority areas guide this work to strengthen belonging and engagement across the organization.

1. Programmatic Focus

Actions included: (1) Shift from demographic or percentage-based diversity goals to student engagement, participation, and retention outcomes, (2) focus on whether students experience connection, support, and access to opportunities, regardless of background, and (3) broad support of state FFA associations.

2. Hiring and Employment Practices

Actions taken: (1) Ongoing review of hiring practices to identify gaps in professional experience, lived experience, and functional expertise needed to serve a national, geographically diverse student population, and (2) maintaining compliance with all applicable employment and nondiscrimination laws.

3. Student Access and Participation

Actions include: (1) Reexamination of programs to increase cross-geographic, cross-cultural, and cross-demographic interaction among members, and (2) suggested programming to identify and address systemic barriers to participation, including: financial limitations, travel constraints, teacher availability and support, and regional access to programming.

4. Addressing Challenges to Student Engagement

Working to identify and address: (1) Gaps between total membership and active engagement, (2) declining participation in leadership pathways, (3) shortages of certified agricultural education teachers, and (4) uneven access to state and national programming, particularly in urban and suburban districts.

VII. FFA AND THE FUTURE

FFA contracted with [Schunk Moreland Strategies](#) in 2025 to consult on the development of its strategic plan for 2027-2031. Consistent with a strategic planning process, Schunk Moreland has conducted a significant number of interviews and focus group discussions with internal and external audiences. Over 500 individuals across the agricultural education ecosystem have engaged with the strategic planning process. The themes resulting from Schunk Moreland's fieldwork have been grouped into three larger draft goals, which will serve as the pillars upon

which the success of the strategic plan will be measured, pending approval in October 2026 by the National FFA Board of Directors.

DRAFT GOALS:

Goal 1: Expand Member Experiences in Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources and Career Pathways

Outcome Focus: Members see themselves in agriculture and are prepared to lead, innovate, and contribute across the agriculture, food, and natural resources workforce.

Goal 2: Strengthen Mission-Delivery Excellence Through Alignment, Innovation, and Resources

Outcome Focus: Members engage in clear, connected, and innovative FFA pathways that are intentionally aligned across all levels of the organization, driving sustained engagement and measurable leadership and career readiness outcomes over time.

Goal 3: Leverage data insights to enhance member experience and expand impact.

Outcome Focus: Shared data and common enterprise metrics align strategy, guide resource allocation, and demonstrate measurable impact across national, state, and chapter levels. This clarity strengthens programs and ensures FFA delivers high-quality, member-centered experiences that help individuals grow, lead, and succeed in a changing world.

While the strategic plan process is still ongoing, FFA is confident that the goals and priorities identified for the next five years will guide FFA in delivering on its mission.

VIII. CONCLUSION

For nearly a century, the National FFA has operated with a singular purpose: to advance agricultural education by developing premier leadership, personal growth, and career success for students. That mission, delivered through agricultural education classrooms in public and private schools across the United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, remains the sole focus of the organization's work. The National FFA does not engage in activities outside of this educational mission. All programs, initiatives, partnerships, and sponsorships are reviewed and approved through the organization's established governance process to ensure they are directly aligned with the organization's statutory and educational purposes.

Corporate sponsorships do not govern the National FFA's educational programming, curriculum, or operational decision-making. Companies and philanthropic sponsors, including Syngenta North America and many other longstanding supporters, provide financial

contributions through the National FFA Foundation to support the mission of agricultural education and youth leadership development. These sponsors do not determine policy, direct programmatic priorities, or shape curriculum in any way. All programmatic and educational decisions are made solely by the National FFA under the authority of its Board of Directors.

Equally clear, the National FFA does not implement or operate a political or ideological “agenda.” The organization’s current belonging and engagement efforts are focused exclusively on ensuring that students who choose to participate in agricultural education and FFA have access to meaningful leadership and career development opportunities. These efforts do not classify students by identity, establish quotas, or advance political objectives. Instead, they focus on strengthening participation, removing barriers to engagement in agricultural education programs, and supporting student success within the classroom-based model that has defined FFA for nearly one hundred years.

The National FFA remains firmly committed to its educational mission, to lawful and independent governance of its programs, and to serving students through agricultural education. That commitment has guided the organization for generations and continues to guide its work today.

FFA membership remains strong and continues to grow, as more than a million students across the country annually choose to participate in agricultural education and leadership development. Each year, FFA helps young people build skills, confidence, and career pathways that prepare them for success in their communities and the workforce. The National FFA remains committed to its mission of developing the next generation of leaders and continues to change the lives of students nationwide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott A. Stump". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Scott A. Stump
CEO National FFA

RESOURCES:

1. **National FFA Organization Legal Status**

The National FFA Organization is recognized as a tax-exempt nonprofit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. See *26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3)*; see also *Treas. Reg. § 1.501(c)(3)-1* (organizational and operational tests).

2. **Operational Exclusivity Requirement**

To qualify as tax-exempt, an organization must be operated “exclusively” for exempt purposes, meaning that no more than an insubstantial part of its activities may be non-exempt. See *Better Business Bureau v. United States*, 326 U.S. 279, 283 (1945); *Treas. Reg. § 1.501(c)(3)-1(c)(1)*.

3. **Public Education Context**

FFA operates as an intracurricular component of agricultural education programs delivered through public schools and state education systems. See *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006*, 20 U.S.C. § 2301 et seq. (supporting career and technical education pathways integrated with academic instruction).

4. **Equal Protection Framework**

Government-affiliated educational programs, including those embedded within public schools, are subject to the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. See *U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 1*; *Parents Involved in Cmty. Schs. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1*, 551 U.S. 701 (2007).

5. **Race-Neutral Access and Participation**

Federal law permits and encourages race-neutral strategies to expand educational access and opportunity, provided programs do not impose classifications or quotas based on protected characteristics. See *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President & Fellows of Harvard College*, 600 U.S. ____ (2023).

6. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

ESSA emphasizes equitable access to educational opportunity, academic achievement, and student engagement without mandating demographic quotas. See *20 U.S.C. § 6301* (purpose of ESSA); *20 U.S.C. § 6311(g)(1)(B)* (state accountability systems).

7. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA establishes requirements for equal access, participation, and appropriate educational opportunities for students with disabilities within public education programs. See *20 U.S.C. § 1400(d)(1)(A)*.

8. Federal Employment and Nondiscrimination Compliance

FFA employment and participation policies are subject to applicable federal nondiscrimination laws, including Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. See *42 U.S.C. § 2000d* (Title VI); *42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2* (Title VII).

9. Advisory vs. Governance Authority

Advisory bodies and external consultants do not exercise governance authority over nonprofit organizations unless formally vested by governing documents. See *IRS Exempt Organizations Technical Instruction Program*, Topic K (Governance and Management); see also *Treas. Reg. § 1.501(c)(3)-1(b)(1)(iv)* (control by private interests).

10. Private Benefit and Corporate Influence Limitations

A 501(c)(3) organization may not operate for the benefit of private interests, including corporate sponsors. See *26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3)*; *Treas. Reg. § 1.501(c)(3)-1(d)(1)(ii)*.

11. Student Safety and Dignity Obligations

Educational organizations operating within public school systems maintain obligations to ensure safe and nondiscriminatory environments for students. See *Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972*, 20 U.S.C. § 1681; *Davis v. Monroe County Bd. of Educ.*, 526 U.S. 629 (1999).

12. Access-Focused Financial Assistance

Providing financial assistance to reduce barriers to participation is a recognized, lawful method of expanding educational opportunity when administered without impermissible classifications. See *U.S. Dep't of Educ., Office for Civil Rights, Race-Neutral Alternatives Guidance* (various iterations).