



THE GOLDEN SLATE

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Agricultural Teachers' Association

The Essential Role of CATA Committees

By John Williams, CATA President

As I reflect on our summer conference, I am encouraged to begin my year as your state president. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve this organization during my career.

One thing about this year's summer conference that really sticks out in my mind was the Wednesday morning business session. We had the opportunity to honor our retiring teachers who have served the students, teachers, and communities throughout their careers. While that was indeed remarkable, what truly left a mark was the discussion surrounding the changes proposed during the Operations Division report.

After the division report was read, teachers who coach parli-pro moved to change a curricular code item that was discussed and voted on previously during Tuesday's curricular code meeting. It was discussed with the general membership, and the change passed during the general session. After the voting took place, a teacher on the second balcony posed a question. I was incredibly happy for two reasons: first, I could hear the question despite my hearing loss (I use hearing aids), and second, his question was referring to why members can make a change on the meeting floor even though the committee voted differently in the curricular code meeting. Kudos to the young member who asked the question to seek clarification. To answer this, it is essential to understand the role of committees. In short, no changes can be made to our bylaws without the approval of the general membership.

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Our bylaws, which consist of the organizational structure, can only be altered through the resolution process, which takes a year to complete. One part of the bylaws that can be changed without a resolution is the Curricular Code. The Curricular Code contains all of our rules for contests, fairs/shows, and conferences/FFA events. These rules are monitored through a committee in the Operations Division. Committees are the venues where much of the business of the CATA is conducted. We have many committees that are used for members to discuss issues, recommend changes, and allow for business to take place outside of general sessions. There are three divisions within our organization: Operations, Secondary and Post-Secondary. Each division has four committee chairs/officers elected by the general membership.

This article is going to focus on the Operations Division, while future articles will delve into the roles of the Secondary and Post-Secondary divisions. The Operations Division encompasses all parts of membership and the role of this division is to aid in the organization and implementation of CATA's policies and processes. The current Operations Division has four officers: Jordana Faria, Chair; Amanda Ferguson, Chair-Elect; Martin Castro, Vice-Chair; and Amanda Galan, Secretary. To become an Operations Division officer, one must be a CATA member for at least three years and be willing to serve as an officer for four years. Each year the officer will rotate through the "chairs" of each office and will also chair the same committee(s) at the CATA summer conference. Upon becoming the Chair-Elect, you will also gain voting rights on the governing board, and as the Chair of the division, you will serve as a member of the executive committee.

Confused yet? Here's the recap: a three-year membership is required before one can be elected. It's a four year commitment, and you will chair up to two committees within the division.

So, what's the purpose of the Operations Division? To manage the business side of the CATA is the easiest way to answer that question. Every year at least three committees will open at summer conference on Monday afternoon. The committees guaranteed to open each year are:

- **Budget/Audit:** This committee reviews the proposed annual budget, makes appropriate changes as needed, and sends recommendations regarding the annual budget to the general membership.



- **Curricular Code:** This group of committees is charged with updating and correcting contests within the Curricular Code, which governs all FFA contests. One-third of the contests are reviewed annually by the membership, with provisions to open other contests as needed. The proposed changes are discussed in committee, posted for member review, and voted on at the general session.
- **Nominations/Bylaws/Awards:** The mission of this committee is to review the qualifications of candidates running for state office and approve the submitted applications, discuss and recommend proposed changes to the CATA Bylaws, prepare the ballot, and review the criteria and qualifications for professional awards within the CATA organization.

The following committees are also within the Operations Division, but will only open based on needs of the general membership:

- **Membership Services:** The mission of this committee is to formulate, evaluate, and recommend policies involving: classes of membership, dues and conference fees, recruitment of members, educational exhibits, the Golden Slate newsletter, and other services that benefit CATA members and their agricultural programs.
- **Professional Ethics:** The goal of the professional ethics committee is to establish and evaluate the CATA's Code of Ethics, mediate and arbitrate unethical situations, and to educate new and continuing CATA members regarding ethical practices within our profession.
- **Articulation/Certification:** This committee's mission is to provide information on parallel and independent curriculum projects for junior high, high school, and community colleges. It also communicates and educates regarding certification developments and provides guidance to instructors and schools regarding articulation procedures.
- **Teacher Recruitment:** The mission of this committee is to formulate and recommend strategies to recruit prospective agriculture teachers into our profession, coordinate scholarship fundraising efforts, judge the scholarship applications at summer conference, and provide updates on the scholarship fund's balance.
- **Ag Issues:** This committee deals with concerns facing the agricultural education profession, including issues involving fairs and expositions and other activities.



I would be lying if I said that members do all the work outlined in the above committees. In reality, many of the committee responsibilities are carried out by Matt, Kerry, and Cari. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated team in our CATA office that handles many aspects of our work. Looking ahead, we should take on more responsibility for these committees and find a way to open them up at summer conference or at our region meetings as needed.

Returning to the role of the committees, a common theme within all the committee responsibilities is the word “recommend.” Essentially, we handle business in these committees, but the committees recommend changes and address needs to the general membership. Please keep in mind that the recommendations require approval by the general membership at a general session at summer conference. Traditionally, this session takes place during the Wednesday morning general session when division reports are presented. It is important to have these committees—they allow for the dissemination of information and organization of concepts, enabling our members to focus on other things like Hall of Fame inductees, awards, and retiring members during our general sessions. The committees play a crucial role in our organizational structure and allow for more members to be involved in discussions that typically do not happen during general sessions of conference.

Any paid member can be part of an Operations Division Committee, all you need to do is show up to the committee meeting on Monday afternoon of conference. Operations Division Committees are open to all paid members, although some regions will assign a person from their region to attend a specific meeting. This shouldn't limit your participation in the committee. I have personally seen the positive changes made to our organization through the committee process. It is a great way to learn about the organization. I know this was a long read, but I hope you are able to learn something from it. My next article will address the role the Secondary Division plays within the CATA organization.

