



THE GOLDEN SLATE

The official newsletter of the California
Agricultural Teachers' Association

What Makes Your Program Special?

By Gene Lieb, California FFA National Chapter Committee

Every year, it seems like the calendar gets fuller and fuller, while somehow the hours become fewer. In a time where the last thing people want is one more thing, I'm going to share one more thing that all of you should think about: The National Chapter Application. When you hear about the National Chapter Application and think of the glorious eighteen pages that encompass this application, you may want to run away, but I ask you to stick with me.

In 2019, I had my first opportunity to immerse myself in the National Chapter Application. I had the chance to travel to Indianapolis in the summer for a week. I had no idea what to expect, but I ended up gaining insight and friendships that have lasted since that week. The challenging part was sitting in a hotel conference room for eight-plus hours a day for four consecutive days. I never read about so many fruit sales and corn donation events in my life. During that event, I learned what creative activities really look like and the difference between an amazing application and an average application.

If you're still reading, you're either hooked or just bored. Either way—keep going! The National Chapter Application is the only application that measures your chapter strictly against the rubric. As long as you complete the fifteen different activities and write to the rubric, your chapter can be a three-star chapter. Firebaugh FFA added something this year to encourage staff to keep going during the long month of October, which for us has no holidays. We took the idea to the officer team from Summer Conference and Gerry Brooks. It fits nicely into the Human Resources division, which is where activities that improve the well-being of people belong.

If you're just starting, don't worry about getting too fancy—focus on completing the application with your students. They will most likely need some support getting started, but once you help with writing the first one, give them the reins and allow them to get to work and make it happen. This application is not one you can “toss” together; you have to give it time to grow in your understanding of the rubric and allow time to write and review all parts of the application.

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If you have been around the block a time or two with this application, let's build to the next level and start working on being creative. I implore you to score applications if you have interest in upping your game. I promise you almost everything has been done, but how you complete it and how you write it can provide the creativity that makes people gravitate toward the activities.

I want to spend a little time shaping the application process for California FFA and National FFA. California FFA will score all applications and grade them as Gold, Silver, or Bronze programs based on the scores needed to be a 1-Star, 2-Star, or 3-Star chapter at the national level. The applications are rescored at Nationals, and you can be a Gold at the state level and a 2-Star at the national level—each organization judges the applications independently. All Gold, Silver, and Bronze chapters are recognized on stage at the California State FFA Leadership Conference. This year, applications are due at 5:00 p.m. on January 23. Revisions are due by June 29 to ensure they're pushed to National FFA by July 1.

The second layer of this is that California FFA will select four activities in each of the three pillars—Strengthening Agriculture, Building Communities, and Growing Leaders—to interview at the State FFA Leadership Conference. This process is the exact same as last year. If you look at the Premier Chapter Scorecards on FFA.org, those are the same ones we use for the state. For the state conference, 25% of your score comes from the application score and 75% from the interview and questions. The presentation and questions are completed by delegates. A very similar process happens at National FFA, but they select 10 finalists in each of the three pillars, and the interviews are done by supporters and sponsors. National FFA also has another award area, “Model of Excellence,” for both high school and middle school. These are separate categories, in which they select 10 high school finalists and five middle school finalists. These represent the highest overall scoring applications as a whole.

This application is rewarding for students, advisors, and community members. It celebrates well-rounded and balanced programs. On your mark, get set, GO! It is now time for you to complete the application—log in to theaet.com, pull the application, and complete it. It is due by January 23 at 5:00 p.m.

Finally, I want to take a moment to share that you can participate in committees at both the state and national levels. National FFA usually opens committee applications in January, and you will complete a Zoom training. This is a fabulous opportunity for anyone wanting to learn more about the National Chapter Award Program. Secondly, with the support of state staff, California FFA created a state committee last year that has two representatives per region. The regional supervisors supported the



selection of the committee. My sincere hope is that we continue to rotate these individuals as teachers grow in understanding and engagement in this award area. The list of members is below, along with the region they represent and where they teach. Please take time to reach out to the teachers in your area for additional help and support.

Name	Region	School
Gene Lieb (Chair)	San Joaquin	Firebaugh High School
Josh Aguilar	Central	Grace Davis High School
Stefanie Kuhr	Central	Merced High School
Amanda Ehnat	North Coast	Vacaville High School
Maria Torres	North Coast	Dixon High School
Brenda Lacey	San Joaquin	Lone Pine High School
Amanda Boyer	San Joaquin	VTEC High School
Lauren Peterson	South Coast	King City High School
Amanda Rodriguez	South Coast	Santa Maria High School
Audrey Lent	Southern	Lakeside Middle School
Alicyn Monita	Southern	Brawley High School
Allison Gross	Superior	Palo Cedro - Foothill
Kathleen Marsh	Superior	Arbuckle High School

