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Transforming AAFCS: A New Era of Action

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Proposed

Recommendations for Action

May 2006

2006

Transforming AAFCS: A New Era of Action

Introduction

Following the Future Search Summit in Atlanta, GA, the Governance Redesign Task Force convened February 3-5, 2006, to craft a vision for AAFCS' future, based on input from the past 18 months of surveys, Conversation Cafés, member communications, and the Summit. The strongest message from all the input was a clear mandate for AAFCS to take action now. There was also consensus to open our membership to embrace those who share a belief in our mission but may not hold a degree in our discipline(s).

Members of the Task Force included the AAFCS senior staff and the following AAFCS Board members and leaders:

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It was an intense weekend of knowledge-based planning and consensus-building around recommendations to propose for Senate consideration at the 2006 Annual Conference and beyond. This group proposed and dissected *sixteen* possible organizational models for the future of AAFCS. For details on the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making Process and the discussion at the meeting, see the **Governance Redesign Report** by Tecker Consultants.

The sixteen organizational models reviewed were (not in priority order):

1. Focus on the expansion of primary member prospects – graduates of FCS programs and sub-disciplines that are not current members (continuation of current association).
2. Open membership to individuals and organizations involved in the work of FCS professionals.
3. Open membership to individuals and groups that have a passion for the Association’s mission. Become a “super” cause-related organization.
4. Focus membership on family and consumer sciences educators in the middle and high school levels.
5. Focus membership on those conducting research in traditional FCS positions.
6. Form a separate umbrella organization to support larger FCS mission and continue AAFCS as a professional society within the larger umbrella.
7. Create a global organization or federation of other AAFCS related associations.
8. Expand AAFCS to be an international organization.
9. Focus on becoming an advocacy organization focused on programs – higher education and high school.
10. Focus on creating revenue (all programs generate revenue).
11. Focus on accreditation and certification.
12. Become a completely open membership organization.
13. Become a federation of regional/global affiliates.
14. A professional society focused on FCS professionals (change services/retain current membership emphasis, and focus on profession).
15. Become a foundation and disseminate funds.
16. Become a coalition of member organizations.

Each option was carefully analyzed for its implications in membership, finances, programs, and compatibility with the AAFCS mission. Based on these analyses, the Task Force recommends the following:

- **Open membership** in the Association beyond FCS-degreed professionals to those who share our belief in and are working toward our mission, while retaining a professional component (a combination of #2 and #14 from the list).
- **Organizational restructure** including revisions in committees, units, sections, and divisions, to allow formation of Communities of Interest/Practice.
- **Streamlined AAFCS governance** with new term lengths and positions designed to make the Board and Finance & Properties Committee more nimble and effective in accomplishing the goals of the Association.
- **Revised mission statement** to more accurately reflect the new AAFCS.

The Task Force then established work groups to further define the details of these recommendations, including the rationale, financial implications, and implementation timelines, for presentation to the Board of Directors at its March 25-26, 2006, meeting. The Board approved the recommendations for presentation to the Senate.

These recommendations have been proposed in one form or another by numerous studies and member surveys over the last decade and longer. It is time for action. While our current structure served us well 35 years ago, it is less suited to our current and future membership.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the Governance Redesign Task Force, we urge you to carefully review the four proposed recommendations, and discuss them with your colleagues, your affiliate presidents, and your Senate representatives. The Senate will vote on these recommendations on June 24, 2006, in Charlotte.

In addition, we invite you to attend the Open Forum discussion of the four recommendations on June 23, 2006, during the AAFCS 97th Annual Conference, and be a part of **Transforming AAFCS: A New Era of Action!**



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Transforming AAFCS: New Era of Action

Membership Recommendations for Action

Proposed Membership Categories

Approved and Recommended by the
AAFCS Board of Directors at their meeting March 25-26, 2006

Background:

Based on input from current AAFCS members and leaders, internal and external stakeholders, an environmental scan, other associations and AAFCS membership trends, it is important for AAFCS to become an organization that embraces any individual or group of individuals desiring to further the AAFCS mission. Therefore, the Board has approved a recommendation that membership be open to any individual who or organization that supports and works toward our mission, and that new categories of membership be adopted.

In support of this recommendation for action, a Philosophical Framework for AAFCS Open Membership and Revised Mission was developed on behalf of the Governance Redesign Task Force.

Following is a grid of AAFCS' current membership structure, benefits and dues, along with the corresponding proposed new category, benefits and dues. Under a new open membership structure, the proposed category would supplant the current one(s).

Current Policy	Proposed Recommendations	Implications/Rationale
<p>ACTIVE \$135*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two years professional experience. • Bachelor's or advanced degree related to family and consumer sciences from an accredited college/university. <p>*Annual dues in CA, OH \$140; TX, KS, NE \$145; IA \$150</p> <p>ASSOCIATE \$135*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employed in the field less than 20 hours per week. • Associate degree related to family and consumer sciences from an accredited college/university. • After 2 years continuous membership, Associates may advance to Active status thereby having the opportunity to serve as an elected officer. <p>*Annual dues in CA, OH \$140; TX, KS \$145; IA \$150</p>	<p>ACTIVE \$135*</p> <p><i>Criteria for membership category</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional with a degree in family and consumer sciences or related field OR any individual working toward or supporting the vision and mission of AAFCS. <p><i>Member benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible to vote and hold office. • Annual subscription to the <i>Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences</i>. • Includes all member benefits, as well as discounts on publications and event registrations. • Special introductory rate for the first year of Active Membership (one-year only) \$100 <p>*Annual dues in CA, OH \$140; TX, KS, NE \$145; IA \$150.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opens up membership opportunities to potential supporters, parents, and other like-minded persons, while retaining a professional component. • Simplifies by incorporating three categories (Active, Associate, and New Professional) into one Active. • Provides a first-year, one-year-only discount rate to attract prospective members.

<p>NEW PROFESSIONAL \$100*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to individuals during the first two years following receipt of a bachelor's degree related to family and consumer sciences from an accredited college/university. <p>*Annual dues in CA, OH \$105; TX, KS \$110; IA \$115</p>		
<p>RETIRED \$65*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has been an active member of AAFCS for at least ten years • Has reached 60 or more years of age. <p>*Annual dues in CA, OH \$70; KS, TX \$75; IA \$80</p>	<p>EMERITUS \$95*</p> <p><i>Criteria for membership category</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any individual who is retired and at least 60 years of age and has been a member of AAFCS for at least 10 years. <p><i>Member benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible to vote. • Annual subscription to the <i>Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences</i>. • Includes all member benefits, discounts on publications, event registrations, etc. <p>*Annual dues in CA, OH \$70; KS, TX \$75; IA \$80.</p> <p>*NOTE: These affiliates would need to adjust their membership fees for this category.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a 30% discount off full active membership dues; the new dues rate more accurately reflects the discounts offered to seniors by AARP and most other organizations/businesses across the U.S. (The norm is 10-20%). This recommendation also more accurately reflects the costs to the Association for services and publications.
<p>UNDERGRADUATE/GRADUATE STUDENT \$60*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolled full-time as an undergraduate student (or part-time progressing toward a graduate degree) in one or more areas of the profession at an accredited college/university. <p>*Annual dues in TX \$70</p>	<p>STUDENT Collegiate/Post-Secondary \$60*</p> <p><i>Criteria for membership category</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolled full-time as an undergraduate or graduate student. • Completion of Student Status Statement* <p><i>Member benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible to vote and hold office in the AAFCS Student Unit. • Annual subscription to the <i>Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences</i>. • Includes all member benefits, discounts on publications, event registrations, etc. <p>*Annual dues in TX \$70.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledges all students. • Embraces secondary school students to begin cultivating members at a younger age. • Utilizes a commonly-accepted form of student validation. This recommendation came from the student section of AAFCS. <p>NOTE: all membership categories are self-selected. AAFCS relies on the honor system, as we do not have the resources to confirm membership category eligibility.</p>

	<p>Secondary School \$30*</p> <p><i>Criteria for membership category</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolled full-time as a middle or high school student. • Completion of Student Status Statement* <p><i>Member benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible to vote in AAFCS Student Unit. • Includes all member benefits, discounts on publications, event registrations, etc. <p>*STUDENT STATUS STATEMENT</p> <p>I am currently enrolled <u>on a full-time basis</u> as a(n) (check one):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> middle/high school student <input type="checkbox"/> postsecondary student <input type="checkbox"/> undergraduate student <input type="checkbox"/> graduate student</p> <p>My anticipated date of completion is: _____.</p> <p>Full name of school/college/university/institution (do not list acronyms): _____ _____</p> <p>Student signature: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Faculty/Teacher confirmation: I confirm that the applicant is a full-time student at my school/college/university/institution. Faculty/Teacher signature: _____ Date: _____</p>	
<p>ORGANIZATIONAL Corporate/Business \$750 Non-Profit Organization \$500</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized group, agency, or business • Purpose in common with AAFCS, resulting in mutual benefits to both. <p><i>(Includes one subscription to the Journal of Family & Consumer</i></p>	<p>ORGANIZATIONAL Corporate/Business \$750 Non-Profit Organization \$500</p> <p><i>Criteria for membership category</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized group, agency, or business. • Purpose in common with AAFCS, resulting in mutual benefits to both. 	<p>Reflects added benefits appropriate to the dues fees. The types of benefits added were identified through feedback over the past year from prospective organizational members.</p>

<p><i>Sciences, 5% discount on exhibitor booths, and members-only discount on registration for two Organization representatives to attend the Annual Conference & Expo)</i></p>	<p><i>Member benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three subscriptions to the <i>Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences (JFCS)</i>. • 5% discount on exhibit booths at Annual Conference & Exposition. • Members-only discount on registration for two representatives to attend the Annual Conference & Exposition. • Acknowledgment on AAFCS website with a link. • One free half-page black & white inside ad in the <i>JFCS</i> OR 25% off 4-color inside full-page ad. • One free sponsorship and link of monthly E-newsletter to all members (one issue). 	
<p>ELLEN H. RICHARDS SUSTAINING \$250</p> <p><i>Criteria for membership category</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any individual who is eligible for membership as defined under the ACTIVE category and is interested in furthering the purposes of AAFCS through additional contribution, according to dues structure. <p>(1) with a bachelor's or advanced degree from an accredited college or university in the United States, Canada, or other countries, with a major in one or more of the knowledge-based areas of the profession; or</p> <p>(2) with a bachelor's or advanced degree with a major in a specialized subject matter area related to one or more of the knowledge-based areas of the profession from an accredited college or university in the United States, Canada, or other countries, and with a minimum of two years of experience in that area.</p> <p><i>Member benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes all member benefits of ACTIVE member. 	<p>ELLEN H. RICHARDS SUSTAINING \$250</p> <p><i>Criteria for membership category</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any individual who is eligible for membership as defined under the ACTIVE category and is interested in furthering the purposes of AAFCS through additional contribution, according to dues structure. <p><i>Member benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes all member benefits of ACTIVE member. • Includes listing in the Honor Roll of Donors in Annual Conference Program Book and in <i>Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences</i>. 	<p>Reflects the criteria for membership in the proposed Active category and the addition of a new level of recognition.</p>

Transforming AAFCS: New Era of Action

Structure Recommendations for Action

Proposed Communities of Interest and/or Practice

Approved and Recommended by the
AAFCS Board of Directors at their meeting March 25-26, 2006

Background:

In connection with the overall transformation of AAFCS to become a more streamlined, nimble and effective organization, the Board approved a recommendation for a new process allowing members to form like-minded Communities of Interest/Practice. Following is a grid of AAFCS' current sections and divisions structure, along with the proposed recommendations for new Communities of Interest/Practice.

Communities of Interest/Practice are defined as *“Networks of people – small and large – who come together to share ideas with and learn from one another in physical and virtual space. These communities are held together by a common purpose or mission. They are sustained by a desire to share experiences, insights, and best practices.”*

Under the new program, the proposed recommendations would supplant the current structure.

Current Policy	Proposed Recommendations	Implications/Rationale
<p>Members of AAFCS (upon completion of the membership application form or renewal form) must self-identify their employment settings in one or more of the following sections, in which they remain unless they advise headquarters of changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • Human Services • Home and Community • Colleges, Universities, and Research • Elementary, Secondary, and Adult Education • Extension • Preprofessional/Graduate Student <p>Members also choose one or more divisions that most closely match their primary area(s) of expertise or interest(s) from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apparel and Textiles • Art and Design • Communication • Education and Technology • Nutrition, Health, and Food Management • Family Economics and Resource Management 	<p>1. Eliminate current structure of sections and divisions.</p> <hr/> <p>2. Rename the Preprofessional/ Graduate Student Section to the <i>Student Unit</i>.</p>	<p>1.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminates confusing and cumbersome current structure, which involves significant staff time and support. • Removes limitations of current structure, which does not promote collaboration. • Clears the way for a more inclusive approach to replace the current structure, which focuses primarily on members who are able to attend the Annual Conference, where they meet and plan with other members of their section/division. <hr/> <p>2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes student members as a distinct category, requiring special cultivation and activities. • Clears up confusion about the term “preprofessional.” • Allows all students under the new

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Relations and Human Development • Housing and Environment • International Family Affairs 	<hr/> <p>3. Encourage Communities of Interest/Practice to form, utilizing the member management system via the new online data bank technology.</p> <hr/> <p>4. Encourage the Communities to self-form online, based on interests selected by members in their data profiles; they may select from a variety of special projects, policy issues, research projects, or a desire/ need for action on current issues that promote the mission of AAFCS. Communities would exist only as long as interest exists or until project is completed.</p>	<p>proposed plan (including high school students) to participate.</p> <hr/> <p>3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates more nimble and flexible groups – easier to address needs and issues. • Encourages working across disciplines. • Encourages collaborative efforts. • Encourages involvement of more members including those who cannot attend Annual Conference. • Encourages partnering with internal as well as external stakeholders. <hr/> <p>4.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizes new technology with members managing their own data profiles and choosing as many Interest Communities as they wish.
<p>Each section and division has its own separate officers, election process and management structure. The nominating, balloting and voting process for each section and division is supported by headquarters staff. Many sections and divisions require extensive staff assistance in recruiting officers and in managing their activities.</p>	<p>5. Encourage Communities' leaders to emerge naturally; team members change as needed. Communities would function under the purview of the Board of Directors.</p> <hr/> <p>6. Encourage those who wish to take on leadership roles to access the data bank to identify "communities or networks" with similar interests and contact members who have expressed similar interests.</p>	<p>5-6.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows self-identified leaders of Communities of Interest/Practice to manage the groups and/or their initiatives. • Encourages group participation in any and all AAFCS activities, including Annual Conference. Groups may continue to present honors luncheons and showcases; groups may submit proposals, including research-based sessions with professional updates; groups may participate in the new Research to Practice Rounds introduced in 2006.

* Until 2002, a portion of membership dues was tracked by section and division, and an additional annual allotment was earmarked for each section and division. These funds are managed by AAFCS, and used in support of grants funded by the BOD to sections and divisions. Presently, section and divisions may submit plans of work to request annual funding.

** Current section and division officers would be given the opportunity to develop a proposal by February 15, 2007, on how they wish their existing funds to be used: (1) To fund a special project; (2) to be transferred to a pool of funds for new Communities of Interest/ Practice potential projects; (3) to be donated to an existing Scholarship, Fellowship, or Endowment fund; or (4) to be donated to the Archives Campaign, or (5) the Centennial Campaign. NOTE: Project proposals would meet guidelines set forth by the Board of Directors and projects must be completed no later than June 2009. In the absence of any proposal from a section or division, whatever funds remain will automatically be donated to the Centennial Campaign.*

7. Encourage new Communities of Interest/Practice to create funding pools for their work.

Provide the opportunity for new Communities of Interest/ Practice to submit funding proposals for special projects.

7.

- Encourages efficient and effective use of the Association's financial resources.
- Develops entrepreneurial spirit among Communities of Interest/ Practice in initiating project(s) requiring financial resources.

Transforming AAFCS: New Era of Action

Governance Recommendations for Action

Proposed Board Reorganization

Approved and Recommended by the
AAFCS Board of Directors at their meeting March 25-26, 2006

Background:

In keeping with the findings of the AAFCS organizational future search activities over the past 18 months, a redesign of governance is the next step toward a more streamlined and nimble Association. To that end, the Board has approved a recommendation that it be reorganized with regard to composition and terms. Under a new Board organization, the proposed recommendation(s) would supplant the current one(s), and candidates being interviewed by the AAFCS Nominating Committee in 2006 would be apprised of proposed changes in Board organization and length of terms to be served.

Current Policy	Proposed Recommendations	Implications/Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President serves one year as President-Elect and one year as President. • Board members serve two-year terms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The President-Elect should serve one year as President-Elect, followed by one year as President, followed by one year as Past President. • Board members serve three-year terms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases continuity on the Board. More continuity on the Board increases stability for the Association and allows more effective implementation of program strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board consists of 10 members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board consists of nine members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates an odd number of voting members so that a majority vote can always be reached.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P/GS representative to the Board serves a one-year term. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The P/GS representative should be elected annually to serve a one-year term. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continues current practice, which is satisfactory to the current student leaders.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Affiliate Presidents Unit (APU) representative to the Board serves a length of term to be determined by APU. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The APU representative should be elected to serve length of term to be determined by APU. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continues current practice, which is satisfactory to the current APU members.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members are elected to specific positions, i.e., V.P. Development, V.P. Programs, V.P. Services, V.P. Finance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Board members should be elected as At-Large members, with the exception of President-Elect, student representative, Treasurer and APU representative. The Board will elect a Secretary annually from among its members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses Board members on the Association, encouraging decision-making for the good of all members instead of particular constituencies. • Provides more flexibility in assignments currently filled by the Vice Presidents and Secretary.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Board member may serve two consecutive terms as a Director. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Board member may not serve two consecutive terms as a Director. S/he may serve a second 3-year term in another office (President-Elect, Treasurer, or APU rep) immediately following her/his term as Director, or s/he could serve again as a Director after a break in Board service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides opportunity to more members to participate in Association leadership, by limiting Directors At-Large to one three-year term (without a break in service). • Assures a specified number of new members on the Board each year.
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Transforming AAFCS: New Era of Action

Governance Recommendations for Action

Proposed Finance Committee Redesign

Approved and Recommended by the
AAFCS Board of Directors at their meeting March 25-26, 2006

Background:

Based on analysis of the current structure of the Board of Directors and Finance and Properties Committee, AAFCS is not operating in the most nimble and effective capacity. The present structure of the committee is too large to be effective.

Therefore, the Board approved a recommendation that the committee be re named the Finance Committee and be reorganized, so as to be more effective in serving the Association’s governance and financial oversight needs. Following are the elements of the recommended reorganization.

Current Policy	Proposed Recommendations	Implications/Rationale
<p>The Finance and Properties Committee has 12 members: All of the members of the Board of Directors, plus two Association Members At-Large.</p>	<p>The Finance Committee should be comprised of the following five members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>President of the Association</i> • <i>Treasurer of the Association</i> • <i>President-elect of the Association</i> • <i>Two Association Members At-Large</i> <p>Qualifications for serving on the Finance Committee: <i>The Treasurer, Board member and Members At-Large shall have a sound background in accounting, as well as budget procedures and accountability.</i></p> <p>Terms of service on the Finance Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>President – Same as Board of Directors</i> • <i>Treasurer – Same as Board of Directors</i> • <i>President-Elect – Same as Board of Directors</i> • <i>Members At-Large – Three-year terms, then rotating off the Committee; terms are staggered</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects the more common relationship between association finance committees and their BODs. • Allows for more involvement by each member of the committee, at the same time allowing the committee to do its job of analyzing finances and making recommendations to the BOD, saving the BOD time otherwise spent in performing the analysis themselves.

Transforming AAFCS: New Era of Action

Mission Recommendation for Action

Proposed Revised AAFCS Mission

Approved and Recommended by the
AAFCS Board of Directors at their meeting March 25-26, 2006

Background:

To accomplish reshaping AAFCS to meet the demands of the 21st Century, the Governance Redesign Task Force developed recommendations for open membership; organizational restructure including revisions in committees, units, sections, and divisions; and streamlined AAFCS governance.

In regard to and in preparation for these new initiatives, a Philosophical Framework for AAFCS Open Membership and Revised Mission was developed on behalf of the Governance Redesign Task Force. From this document, which addresses the changes and shifts in FCS over the years, emerged a need for a new mission to reflect the new AAFCS philosophy.

Following is a grid of AAFCS' current mission, along with the corresponding proposed new mission:

Current Policy	Proposed Recommendations	Implications/Rationale
<p>The mission of AAFCS, as established in 1995, is "to effect the optimal well-being of families and individuals by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • empowering members to act on continuing and emerging concerns; • focusing the expertise of members for action on critical issues; and • assuming leadership among organizations with mutual purposes." 	<p>The mission of AAFCS is:</p> <p>"to provide leadership and support to people whose work is to assist individuals, families and communities in making informed decisions about their health, relationships and use of resources to improve their quality of life."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides more focus on how members actually seek to improve quality of life (by assisting in making informed decisions). • Supports AAFCS' acknowledgment that it does not "own" the profession and does not have the resources to intensively promote or advance the profession. • Refocuses AAFCS more on advancing and promoting the Association and less on the profession. • Reflects the proposed new open membership philosophy by including all who work toward improving quality of life.

Philosophical Framework for AAFCS Open Membership and Revised Mission

**Compiled by Jim Moran
On behalf of the Governance Redesign Task Force**

The Board of Directors approved the following recommended philosophical framework for AAFCS open membership and revised mission at its March 25-26, 2006 meeting:

Throughout the past several years AAFCS has been engaged in serious study about future directions of the Association and how we might enhance our mission. Efforts began several years ago with the development and approval of a Strategic Plan by the AAFCS Senate. In December 2004, over 400 members responded to a survey designed to gather information on their thoughts about our future. Then, in January 2005 a group of leaders came together to discuss and consider the future in light of the survey responses. A restructuring taskforce gathered in April 2005 and presented to the open forum the concepts and issues that had been identified from the membership surveys and group leaders meeting earlier that year. During the fall of 2005, members across the nation participated in “Conversation Cafes” to provide input for the Future Search Summit held in December 2005. All of this information was considered, as the Governance Redesign Taskforce reconvened in February 2006.

What emerges is a complex picture of the field, but one consistently focused on a mission directed toward improving the quality of life. We discovered that there is no simple definition of a “family and consumer sciences professional,” and that this term means different things to AAFCS members and to those who work with us. We discovered that we need to recognize the changes that have emerged over the past twenty years, as evidenced in the discussions on strategic planning in the late 1980s and the deliberations in Scottsdale in 1993, as well as in the evolution of the standards for certification, competency-testing, and accreditation over the past 15 years. What emerges is a concept that professionals in family and consumer sciences assist individuals, families and communities in making informed decisions about their health, relationships and use of resources to improve their quality of life. Informed decisions are research-based and recognize the interconnectedness of complex systems.

Toward that end, our mission really should be as follows: *The American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences provides leadership and support to people whose work is to assist individuals, families and communities in making informed decisions about their health, relationships and use of resources to improve their quality of life.*

To better accomplish our mission, we need to define ourselves by the nature of our work. Spanier (2001) has posited that our collective soul “resides in us through the application of our work.” If we want to increase the opportunities for AAFCS to make a difference in the quality of life, we need to embrace all of those working towards similar ends.

Forty years ago, over half of the enrollments in higher education units were in Home Economics Education or in General Home Economics. Today only 3,526 (or 7.4%) of the 47,687 FCS-related baccalaureate students reported in the 2004 Food and Agricultural Education Information System (FAEIS) Enrollment Survey are majoring in the FCS Education or General FCS options. As more specialized fields emerged from the “core discipline,” the nature of the Association has changed and made it more complex to define who we are and what constitutes our common “body of knowledge” (Baugher, et al 2000; Anderson and Nickols, 2001). Predominant majors have shifted from general degree programs to specialized programs.

This transition does not necessarily mean abandonment of the basic tenets of interdisciplinary and ecological study but rather that the unit of focus is changed. Our interdisciplinary work has shifted to incorporate as many interactions with disciplines outside what has traditionally been considered part of FCS as with those within our field. A mission focused on quality of living, however, remains “timeless and foundational to human experience” (McFall & Mitstifer, 2005).

AAFCS has a history of adapting to change and change is part of the evolutionary path of our profession. Wild (2004) notes that the current national standards for FCS Education document the shift in family and consumer sciences to addressing “critical life skills needed by 21st century youth” from “technical homemaking skills.”

For some, the definition of a professional in family and consumer sciences has remained limited to those who use the integrated approach to teach “skills for living.” This model was proposed at the 2005 Annual Conference Open Forum and was considered by many to be too narrowly focused. For others, the definition of a professional in family consumer sciences is limited to those who have earned degrees in a FCS higher education unit. The complexity of restructuring within the higher education community has made this a moving target. Some “FCS” units now include “non-traditional” majors such as health, criminal justice, exercise science, or social work. Kappa Omicron Nu has adapted to these changes by using the term “human sciences” and welcoming these students into its honor society. Other cases of restructuring make using such a definition of a profession in family and consumer sciences more difficult. As a Nutrition Department moves from a College of Human Ecology to a College of Agriculture or a College of Health, do the faculty and students suddenly no longer qualify? Some, in their definition, return to the “traditional” fields as described in criteria 6.2 in the original accreditation documents of 1970: family studies, human development, apparel/textiles, housing/design, family resource management, nutrition/foods. Even within these disciplines, however, the changes in scope have been drastic – institutional food service morphing into hospitality administration; apparel and textiles into fashion merchandising into consumer merchandising or retailing; housing into property management.

Changes are reflected throughout the organization. The Association added the notion of serving “*individuals*” to the focus on family in the late 80’s. This scope was further expanded in Scottsdale by adding the term “*community*” such that use of the now familiar “*individuals, families, and communities*” serves as recognition of the complexity of the multiple systems in which we operate.

During that time, accreditation documents were revised to reflect the evolution into specializations with Family and Consumer Education identified as but one specialization. More recently, accreditation has shifted to the recognition of program quality regardless of the unit in which these programs are housed. The development of specialized competency tests emerging from the Council on Certification acknowledges that competency in the field can be measured without regard to a restricted definition of eligibility.

One of the strong messages that emerged from the Future Search Summit was that AAFCS does not “own” family and consumer sciences. We also need to recognize that we do not own the “family” or “interdisciplinary study” or the “integrated approach.” The latter has become part and parcel of most disciplines. Biology, for example, has been using an ecosystem approach as a foundation to the discipline at least since the late 1960s. Moreover, even within our “traditional fields,” the nature of interdisciplinary studies has changed. Nutrition scientists and practitioners often interact with the fields of biochemistry, genetics, public health or exercise science more than they do with interior design. Each of us, to improve quality of life, must look beyond our traditional borders. We need to develop concepts of our “body of knowledge” beyond a descriptive narrative of what we do or what we teach.

Throughout all these changes, one comes back to the enduring phrase “to improve the quality of life.” The phrase identifies the mission of our work and places the emphasis on the *work that we do* rather than on the *preparation of professionals* doing that work. We also identify with key phrases from Scottsdale that include “empower” and “enable.” What emerged for the restructuring committee was the concept that professionals in family and consumer sciences *assist individuals, families, and communities in making informed decisions about their health, relationships, and use of resources to improve their quality of life.*

Such a concept focuses on decision-making as a core concept, perhaps not surprisingly, harkening back to family resource management. It recognizes that improving the quality of life with respect to nutrition, fitness, consumer purchases, parenting, design, etc., relies on the everyday decisions made by individuals, by groups, or by policy makers. Indeed one of the most critical skills for living is the ability to make decisions in a world of ever-expanding alternatives and options. *Informed* decisions are ones that are research-based, and we rely on our higher education community to provide the relevant data including basic research to guide decisions and research on the decision-making process itself. Informed decision-making requires the evaluative skills of sorting relevant from irrelevant information. It requires an understanding that decisions have primary, secondary and tertiary effects, as the implications wind their way through each of the systems in which we reside. Making informed decisions requires an understanding of conceptual context and recognition that contextual variables play an important role in determining the effects and impact of any decision. Informed decision-making utilizes multiple perspectives and multiple sources to analyze and evaluate information. Informed decisions are based in critical thinking strategies that guide action. Such is the nature of our work – integrative, holistic, and relevant to the everyday experiences of individuals, families and communities – whether it is accomplished in the role of an Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) agent, or an FCS middle school teacher, or a Director of Big Brothers/Big Sisters, or a United Way volunteer, or a child-care worker with a CDA credential, or a clothing consultant or a financial planner or a personal trainer.

The last chapter of Margaret Mead’s (1928) *Coming of Age in Samoa* is fascinating to look back upon. Let’s put aside, for now, issues related to the accuracy of her depiction of Samoan life. In her last chapter she suggests that American adolescents are confronted with an overwhelming number of choices and are ill-prepared to handle such complexity. If such was the case in 1928, what is the situation today?

AAFCS is now prepared to welcome anyone actively working toward our common mission of improving the quality of life through assisting individuals, families, and communities in making informed decisions about their health, relationships, and use of resources. We are the work we do and the lives we touch.

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