



National Farm & Ranch Business Management Education Association, Inc.

... Teachers delivering knowledge that works to North America's Farm and Ranch Families

# NUTS & BOLTS

## President's Message:

By Pauline Van Nurden, 2020-21 NFRBMEA President

April 27, 2021



As I reflect on the current state of our world, it strikes me that we are currently in a *season of change*. Now this could be interpreted many ways. I'll let you reflect on what these changes mean to you. More broadly, the obvious change we are experiencing currently is season related. Mother Nature is trying to move to spring, but it seems as though "old man winter" is having a difficult time letting go this year. As I write this, it is snowing again. The weather has certainly had many ups and downs as of late. Here's hoping to a change of season to spring and a smooth planting season for our nation's farmers.

Another change we experiencing it seems is the easing of the pandemic. With the number of adults vaccinated and the hopeful decrease in COVID numbers, it seems as though life may be getting back to "normal". Yet, I fully recognize this comfort level is a very personal situation for everyone. That's why I'm very excited folks will have the opportunity to attend the National Farm Management Conference in the manner that best meets their needs, either in person or virtually.

I encourage everyone to attend this year's conference. As a reminder, the dates are June 14-17 in Hilton Head, South Carolina. There are a number of timely topics, sure to meet your professional development needs. I hope you've been receiving communications from the conference planners. If not, please let me know and I'd be happy to share additional information with you. Also, remember the [conference website](#) has all the details you need to know as well. I hope you will take the time out of your busy schedule to attend whichever way makes sense to you. This conference is a "must attend" event for many FBM instructors. It is always a great event with targeted professional development programming related to farm business management education and your daily work with producers. I personally look forward to the conference each year.

Stay safe and well.

— Pauline

## Professional Development Needs

By Pauline Van Nurden

The annual National Farm Management Conference offers many great professional development opportunities targeted to your day to day job. The goal of this annual conference to provide timely, relevant professional development topics for all instructors. But, we recognize time is sometimes limited at these events as well.

If you have topics you'd like to see discussed in future conferences or you feel would be worthy of their own seminar let your NFRBMEA officer team know. We'd be happy to try and provide the professional development you need, when you need it.



## Refill, Refresh, Recharge

By Myron Oftedahl, NFRBMEA President Elect

Hello from the Back Forty! Mother Nature has given us some time to relax, and with the showers last week and a little sun promised, things are going to grow in a hurry. As I look out my window, I see the Blue Jays and Downy Woodpeckers sitting in the tree looking at the empty suet feeder.

Just as the bird feeder needs refilling periodically, so do we. We need refilling physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Like the birds, we all like to eat and drink, and exercise. Each of us has their own way of refilling ourselves emotionally, and hopefully it includes family, friends, and loved ones. We each also have our own way to refill ourselves spiritually-- maybe with daily devotions, going to church, or sitting in a quiet spot in your yard and enjoying nature. It is all in the spirit of taking care of ourselves and our loved ones.

You can refill yourself mentally by taking part in professional development activities offered by your college, Extension, or by attending the National Conference. The National Farm Management Conference will be held on June 14-17 at Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. The focus of the Conference this year is Farm Transitions, with Ron Hanson from Nebraska presenting two days. An afternoon session will highlight South Carolina Ag Extension or tax topics.

You may attend in person or by connecting via internet. Hopefully by June, we can all be vaccinated and travel without the additional worry of COVID. If you choose not to travel, I hope that you will connect over the internet and refill your mental bucket.

If your college is like mine, you are still waiting for out of state travel permission. While we can certainly travel out of state on our own time, the approval from the college is necessary for the college to reimburse our

expenses, without approval, the college will not pay us.

As the saying goes, you are never too old to learn. I always look at it that if I can come away with one new idea or become more comfortable with a given set of information, it was worth it. Sometimes I need to hear a topic presented 3 or 4 times before it starts making sense. The first time I struggle to keep up with the flow of information and figuring out how it all works together. By the third or fourth time it is sounding familiar and then I can see how all the pieces fit together. This was true for me with Farm Transitions and Estate Planning. Kind of like when you see the light bulb go on with one of your farm families, and they get it! While I am nowhere near an expert, I feel comfortable with the information now, but I still need that brushing up and getting reacquainted.

I truly hope that we can all be together in June and connect with each other and work on refilling our buckets, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Additionally, put June 13-16, 2022 on your calendars for *next year's* NFBM Conference in Fort Collins, Colorado and enjoy the scenery of the Rocky Mountains.

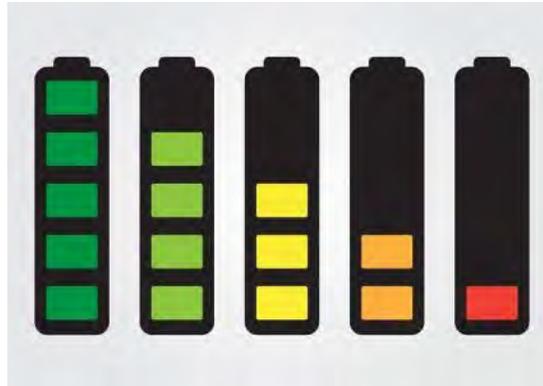


Photo: Deb Pike

## Developing Financial Statements & Measures

By Pauline Van Nurden

In the last newsletter, I reminded everyone of the Interpreting Financial Statements and Measures website. You can use this free website and the videos it contains to help teach about farm financial statements and ratios. This online 'course' is meant to help producers improve farm decision making.

But, what if a producer doesn't know where to begin? That is common and expected, especially for beginning farmers. Therefore, CFFM has added the online 'course' Developing Financial Statements and Measures. This 'course' helps producers get started with recordkeeping and discusses how to prepare the common farm financial statements and calculate the ratios used in farm financial management.



Both components of this series can be accessed at <https://ifsam.cffm.umn.edu/>. Feel free to share this resource with the producers you work with or use it as a tool to help brush up your professional development skills if needed. A case farm approach is utilized throughout to help explain the concepts and both basic and advanced topics are tackled.

## Farm Management Education in the Virtual Setting

By Tina LeBrun, FBM Instructor, South Central College

For those of you who know me, it should be no surprise that I relate to the world of education best on a virtual platform. I have been educating through Zoom or Adobe Connect well before it was cool or at least the new norm of today's professional settings. I found as a working mom and farm wife, Zoom made me a more efficient employee and more checked-in parent and producer. I needed to depend on the virtual platform of education to survive the demands Farm Management Education has at certain times of the year. My students grew accustomed to the idea of Zoom usage November through April and were more prepared than others when March 2020 hit. However, even my well attuned Zoom students weren't so thrilled at the idea of a whole year of virtual education and even my positive position on Zoom needed some fine tuning when it became apparent face-to-face education was going to have to wait for another year. Here are some tips I implemented to make the best of what the pandemic threw on my educator door step.

**Find a permanent workstation that fits your needs.** Pre-pandemic I used to set up on my dining room table and have my littles crawling around at my feet or plugged into the tv while I worked. Seems legit, but not the appropriate environment for crunching numbers or constructive conversation. My students always enjoyed seeing my babies, but I didn't realize till I was forced to stay home how ineffective my work day was.

I set out to design a workstation that I knew would create a more productive work setting. I got a table that fit my laptop, docking station, second monitor, and a lamp. My laptop was set on a riser that allows me to sit or stand while working and of course plenty of room for punching numbers with my calculator and notepad. I intentionally placed my copy/prINTER/scanner at the opposite end of the house which forces me to get up and move through out the day when I choose. I also added a nice desk lamp for early morning or late-night work that provides me with a more welcoming, warm experience at my desk. Seems maybe odd, or even simple, however it has given me a greater appeal to walk away from home demands and step into my own quiet, inviting work atmosphere.

**The power of the virtual background.** I decided early fall that I needed to recreate a relationship building experience on my zoom meetings since my students and I were faced with a lack of face-to-face time. The first thing I came up with was using a virtual background picture. I thought about some of the things that my students appreciate about me and why they feel comfortable working with me, and of course top of the list was the fact that my husband and I are also producers just like them. I dug through all the pictures I had taken on the farm the past year and put together pictures to load on the background of my meetings. I decided to do an evolution of parallel work references. For example, we began at the end of the year with a picture of a load of hay parked next to a bale conveyor ready to unload and I just wrapped the month of March up with a picture of double rainbows over cows grazing in the pasture. I think you get the gist, but these pictures promoted some great opening conversations

with my producers. Then the next time we would connect, they would have their own background or pictures to share with me. The power of an image not only adds a real touch to a virtual educational moment, but can also provide a more humbling experience for all participants.

**Take time to dress for how you want to feel.** It might sound a little silly, but there is something to taking time in the morning before for you sit in front of a computer all day to dress like you want to feel. Don't get me wrong, I still maintained a comfort level when dressing for a day of Zoom meetings, however instead of t-shirts and sweatshirts as my go to, jeans and a nice sweater keep me feeling professional through out the day and gives my students the sense that I still care about why they hire me as their educator.



Photo Source: [technofaq.org](http://technofaq.org)

### **Limit pet or child interruptions.**

If you know me a little, you know I love animals and children. With that being said, one of the best pros to working though Zoom should be a lack of interruptions versus being on the farm for a visit. This does not mean I dislike dogs and kids, I simply understand the momentum that can be lost due to these finer things in life interrupting a meeting. During closeout season, interruptions can make a farm visit inefficient and ineffective. My kids are still little so I have to resort to verbal clarifications/warnings

ahead of my meetings and when all else fails I keep a drawer full of tootsie rolls to buy them off while wrapping up a Zoom meeting. If they are chewing they aren't talking!

**Recognize face-to-face meetings as essential but limited.** As many today are annoyed with overuse of Zoom, I too have come to the appreciation of a face-to-face connection with my students. However, these face-to-face meetings don't need to occur every time we need to get some work done. In fact, I almost get annoyed with always having to meet face-to-face which tends to make people slack on their promised follow-through. Working though Zoom keeps me more efficient, but I do need to be face-to-face with my students at least one to two times a year to maintain our established, working relationship.

Virtual education is certainly a hot topic conversation and maybe not for everybody. However, farmers today almost have a need for instant feedback or response to often heavy issues. By having Zoom at my fingertips, I find myself much more available to my students and my family. I know I appreciate instant feedback as a producer and as a parent I need to be efficient for both my kids and my employer. I find many positives from my students on the use of Zoom that maybe would not have surfaced if we weren't forced to use the virtual setting this past year. I feel very confident that if we can find a more normal in our society, my students will still find value in Zoom connections throughout the closeout season. However, I will continue to challenge myself on how to make Zoom more personal as an educator. If not for the better of my students, but for the better of my own employee morale.

## NCAE Update

By Lori Tonak, NFRBMEA Rep on the National Council for Agriculture Education

Yesterday I spent another three and a half hours on my favorite platform, Zoom, to work with the National Council of Agriculture Education. Yesterday the task was to finalize the vision statement, finish the by-laws revisions and approvals, and discuss the needs of the agriculture education world.

The four main over-arching areas of the vision statement are:

1. Recruiting, preparing, retaining, and supporting agriculture teachers.
2. Including all people, diversifying Ag Ed & globalizing our perspective.
3. Preparing, credentialing, & transitioning students to careers in AFNR.
4. Developing partnership across Ag Ed, with AFNR industries, and with educational institutions.

By-law revisions were necessary due to the removal of an Agriculture Education individual being an employee of the US Dept of Education. The position was a part of many of the Articles so a major revision was done throughout the last year, with a law firm doing the final review before approval.

The Council may also change as MANNRS (Minorities in Ag, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences) and HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) have been

asked to become Council members. The FFA Alumni structure has changed and will no longer be part of the Council along with the NYFEA (National Young Farmers Education Association). Both groups made the decision not to participate at this time.

My time on the Council will be coming to an end this year and I want to thank everyone for the opportunity to serve this organization by serving a term with the NCAE. It has been a great experience and has led to many new friendships.



## Ready to become involved?

By Pauline Van Nurden, NFRBMEA President

NFRBMEA is always looking for interested members to become more involved. Is the time right for you to become an officer? Do you have knowledge on a topic that you'd be willing to share with membership? Do you have a gift for writing articles to help your colleagues out?

Whatever it is, we'd love your help. Contact a member of the officer team today to get the ball rolling and take the next step in your organizational involvement.

# GET INVOLVED!



Image by [Karen Arnold](#) from [Pixabay](#).  
Adapted by [Deb Pike](#).

## NFBM Conference Registration Reminder

By Bailee Peters, Conference Registration Administrator



National Farm Business  
Management Conference

We are officially only seven weeks away from seeing many of you on Hilton Head Island for the 2021 National Farm Business Management Conference! We are very excited it is getting so close. This is just a friendly reminder if you have not already registered, please do so at <https://cvent.me/eb5bWP>.

If you are hoping to attend but are still waiting on permissions to travel, you are welcome to register for the virtual conference an upgrade your registration to in-person attendance at a later time.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to [Kylie Abbenhaus](mailto:kylie@nfbi.net), [kylie@nfbi.net](mailto:kylie@nfbi.net), or me at [bailee@nfbi.net](mailto:bailee@nfbi.net) with any questions regarding registration or hotel reservations.

See you soon!

To UNSUBSCRIBE, [click here](#).

Questions or comments? E-mail us at [comments@nfrbmea.org](mailto:comments@nfrbmea.org)

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