

President's Message: Taking Advantage of Professional Development Opportunities, a Key to My Professional Success

By Ron Dvergsten, 2024-25 NFRBMEA President

February 1, 2025

This past weekend I had the opportunity to attend the Minnesota Ag Technology Conference, one of two annual professional development conferences sponsored by the Minnesota Agriculture Educators Association. I like to think of attending any professional development activity as an opportunity. After all, we as FBM Instructors are in the business of delivering adult continuing education which is professional development that the farm is paying for. Most of our FBM students, I believe, feel that being enrolled in a Farm Business Management program is a business opportunity for them, and a competitive advantage they have over their neighbors that are not in an FBM program.

Reflecting back on a 40-year career in ag education with 35 of them in FBM, I figure I have spent approximately 15 work days a year attending professional development opportunities, and the National Farm Business Management Conference has been my most impactful professional development opportunity of them all. The knowledge I have gained from my attending 25 National FBM conferences is hard to quantify. Even with all the professional development I have taken in, I realize that I need to do so just to stay current on all of the changes occurring in the vast agriculture industry. One of my favorite quote's years after "The Internet" was created, was "I am drowning in information, but begging for knowledge!" That is where our professional organization's conferences can concentrate the vast information available and condense it into useable knowledge as an end product.

That ties directly to the mission statement of the NFRBMEA. Our mission is to promote and support farm and ranch management education. We accomplish this by providing in-service education (professional development opportunities) to our

members and by communicating and cooperating with others.

With the NFRBMEA Board's commitment to the value of professional development provided through attending the National Farm Business Management Conference, last fall the NFRBMEA Board approved offering three \$1,000 scholarships for the 2025 National Farm Business Management scheduled for June 9-12th in Fort Worth, Texas. These scholarships will be awarded to early career FBM instructors who have never attended a National FBM Conference. To apply, see the application in this newsletter, visit our website at NFRBMEA.org, or keep an eye out for an upcoming announcement to be emailed to our members. Be sure to check out conference costs for registration and lodging, as well as all of the conference details on our website.

I hope to see many new early career FBM instructors at the 2025 National FBM Conference!



Image by Kirill on Pixabay

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Build Your Brand! An FBM Conference Update

By Brent Roiger, NFRBMEA Conference Planning Committee

Welcome to 2025! Planning for the annual conference to be held in Fort Worth, Texas in June is in full swing. The agenda is taking shape and we are looking forward to a great conference.

As mentioned in a prior newsletter issue, the conference rate is staying at \$500 for this year. Room rates appear to be approximately \$219/night, so plan accordingly. The location is the Sheraton Fort Worth Downtown Hotel. Conference dates are still June 9-12. If you are renting a car the hotel has valet only parking for \$15/day. Figure \$45-\$65 if you use a rideshare type app. The most economical option is the TexRail from Terminal B at DFW airport to the T&P stop which is one block from the hotel. The cost of this service is \$7/round trip and only about 20 minutes longer than driving. For getting around the downtown hotel area use Molly the Trolley which travels the circuit every 15 minutes. Also, there is an orange line bus that heads to the Stockyards every 15 minutes as well. There is a stop right at the Sheraton Hotel. It all seems really convenient!

Reminder, tours have been moved to Monday based on feedback provided after the previous conference (see we do listen!). There are two options: Weatherford for Crown Ranch Cutting Horses and Superior Livestock Auctions or Decatur for NRS World and a possible deer farm tour. We all head back to the hotel for a reception and treats across the street at the Water Gardens about 5:00 pm. The Early Career dinner will happen that evening as well.

The conference meetings begin on Tuesday with our keynote address from Holly Spangler, Prairie Farmer in the morning. On Tuesday afternoon we begin our two track focus with track 1 being in-depth tax topics while track 2 is some lighter tax topics and technology related presentations

Tuesday night will also feature our Family Night. We will hit the Stock Yards for the Cattle Drive at 4:00 and there is much to do in that area. We will also be having a BBQ meal that evening. Check out shopping, have a brew, see the Cowboy Hall of Fame and much more at the Stock Yards!

Wednesday will focus on Succession & Transition



Planning and continue the two Track format in the afternoon. Wednesday late afternoon will wrap with each organization's business meeting. Thursday morning will focus on Ag and the Current Economy and will adjourn by noon to allow for travel back home later that day if you wish. Our closing address will be from James D. Egelston, from EKD Law who is helping to coordinate some of our speakers and tours and such. He has many connections in that area and has been super excited to meet us all and assist us in putting on an awesome conference! I'm looking forward to it and so should you! Registration should be open soon so set aside the dates and start monitoring your airlines for flights. See ya'll in Texas! Yee haw!!

Membership Update

By Kelly McAdam, NFRBMEA Communications Director

Here is our latest membership enrollments for 2024-25, compared to last year's membership.

Welcome back out our renewing members, and a big welcome to those who are new to the organization!

If you have not sent in your membership renewal, please consider joining us! And be sure to share the good work of the organization within your network.

	2024-25	2023-24
Active	79	86
Affiliate	7	9
Honorary Lifetime	2	-
Total	88	95

How Can Farmers and Farm Management Instructors Use Their Balance Sheets Effectively?

By Josh Tjosaas, MN State Farm Business Management Database Leader & Farm Business Management Instructor

I had the honor of being a guest on the “Cultivating Farm Business” podcast recorded in December 2024 hosted by Niki Brixius from Central Lakes College in Minnesota. The topic we discussed for the podcast was balance sheets and how to effectively use them in your operation, and she was provided with some excellent questions from her students regarding using balance sheets. I thought I would share a couple thoughts on a few of the questions that were asked.

How frequently should I update my balance sheet, and how do I incorporate this into my management routine?

At a minimum a farmer should be updating their balance sheet once a year, typically at the start of their farm financial year. Most of the farms that I work with have January 1st as their start of the financial year. A better way to incorporate updating your balance sheet would be to update quarterly to keep an eye on your financials and record major changes to the balance sheet assets and liabilities in a more efficient timeframe. Many of my students will send me certain balance sheet updates throughout the year to make sure we have the correct information on January 1st. The biggest items that we focus on for those quick updates are major asset purchases along with any corresponding liabilities. Many times, when a farmer buys a piece of equipment from a dealership, there are details regarding any trades made for the purchase along with all the relevant additional expenses. Plus, most loan details are included with the purchase agreement to help enter in the details on the balance sheet.

What role does equity play in securing additional financing for my farm, and how can I improve it?

Equity is crucial part of securing additional financing for farms especially in tougher farm economic times. In conversations I have had in the past 6 months with lenders, while we are heading into some potentially lower financial times for farms, the farms with good equity on the balance sheets will be considered a lower risk compared to farms with less or no equity on the balance sheet. My concern is for many beginning farmers with limited resources and farm equity on the balance sheet that it will be increasingly difficult for lenders to finance a farm like that without a positive cash flow and even in some cases, some additional collateral. Also, many of my farms have used equity on their balance sheets to help finance

additional purchases as the equity has served as collateral for the new purchase to allow the farmer to finance a significant portion of the purchase.

Do you recommend comparing my balance sheet to benchmarks from similar farm operations, and how do I find reliable benchmarks?

While I am a strong proponent of benchmarking farm financials, I do think farmers need to be careful to benchmark certain items on a farm balance sheet compared to others even those that may be a similar operation. Working Capital (Current Assets-Current Liabilities) is one number that can range widely from farm to farm depending on the type of farm or the size of operation along with years of experience. However, ratios like Working Capital to Gross Revenues or my preferred ratio of Working Capital to Expenses is a good comparison for farmers to evaluate the “safety net” that their farm has from year to year. While working capital can be seen as a “safety net” in tougher financial times, the exact number matters less than the ability for the “safety net” to cover expenses in a lower revenue year. [FINBIN](#) is a great resource for farm benchmarking, but I would encourage farmers to look at ratios in a similar benchmark group rather than just specific numbers such as Net Worth or Assets or Liabilities. Your local lender can also be a resource for additional benchmarks as well.



National Council for Agriculture Education Update

By Jeremy Daberkow, National Council Representative

The National Council for Agricultural Education (NCAE) has been busy ensuring the future of agricultural education and the voice of NFRBMEA is essential to the continued success of our adult learners. Recently, we have begun the process of updating our bylaws to reflect the organizations operations, and below are some the major work efforts.

The Council has become the home for [the Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education \(CASE\)](#). The CASE program equips teachers with the curriculum and content to design inquiry-based agricultural education, offers lifetime certification, training and support for teachers; and prepares students for college and career readiness. CASE has recently launched a course entitled Agricultural Business Foundations that begins the preparations for a strong foundation in Agribusiness.

NCAE has worked diligently to ensure that the [Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources \(AFNR\) career cluster](#), as presented by the advanced STE Frameworks aligns with the skills that students need to succeed in agriculture careers.

NCAE has developed [National Quality Program Standards](#) to guide agricultural education programs. These standards focus on curriculum design, student engagement, instructor development, and outcome tracking. They ensure programs deliver both technical skills and business acumen, creating a comprehensive learning experience that prepares students for real-world farm management challenges.

To support program administration, we are developing a School Administrators Guide for Ag education programs. This guide offers strategies for recruiting, implementing flexible curricula, managing program logistics, and securing resources. It provides best practices for measuring program success and ensuring sustainability, helping administrators and educators run effective, high-quality programs.

It has been a very productive year in the role as a Council representative and I look forward to carrying the voice of farm business management educators and students for the next year.



Check Out Our Careers Page!

Are you looking for a new career opportunity, or do you have a job opening in farm business management education in your institution?

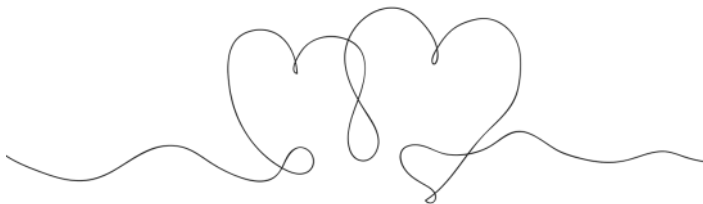
Farm & Ranch teaching (and related) position listings for non-profit and public institutions are posted on the NFRBMEA website free of charge, and posted to our social media.



Email your posting to communications-director@nfrbmea.org

With Gratitude

Thank you to Deb Pike, former NFRBMEA Communications Director, for her many years of service to the organization!



To UNSUBSCRIBE, [click here](#).

Questions or comments? E-mail us at comments@nfrbmea.org

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2025 National Farm Business Management
Scholarship Application
Fort Worth, TX June 9-12, 2025

NFRBMEA is pleased to offer three, \$1,000 scholarships for early career members to attend the 2025 National Farm Business Management Conference.

Applications are due April 21, 2025
Recipients will be notified by May 1, 2025

Eligibility:

- Current NFRBMEA Member
- Early Career defined as in first five years of farm business management career
- First time attendee at this year's 2025 Conference

Visit nfrbmea.org to view conference details, including associated costs. Priority will be given so as to distribute awards across multiple states. **Email completed application to Ron Dvergsten, President NFRBMEA at ron.dvergsten@northlandcollege.edu**

Name:			
Mailing Address:			
Email Address			
Phone #:		Preferred Method of Contact:	
Please respond to the following:			
Describe your current role as a farm business management educator.			

What do you hope to take away from your experience at the 2025 National Farm Business Management Conference?

Send completed application by mail or email to Ron Dvergsten, President of NFRBMEA at ron.dvergsten@northlandcollege.edu

2024-25 Board of Directors

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