



Frequently Asked Questions about The Agricultural Leadership Development Program

1. What is the purpose of the Ag Leadership Program?

In 1988, the need was seen to develop more leaders to address Louisiana agricultural issues. Dr. Robert Soileau, an LSU AgCenter professor, was asked to develop a curriculum and direct a program to accomplish three goals:

- Develop leaders who understand and prepare for global influences and opportunities;
- Develop leadership skills and awareness in participants so they become confident, effective communicators; and
- Develop participant understanding and involvement in the social, economic and political systems in order to improve their enterprises and communities.

These goals remain the basis for the program.

2. How long is each class?

Each class lasts for two years, beginning in January of even-numbered years. During this time, class members participate in seven two-and-a-half day seminars on the LSU campus (January, February, October and December the first year; January, February and October the second year). The other three seminars are study tours - a tour to Washington, D.C. (June of year one), an agricultural tour within the continental United States (June of year two), and an international tour (January following year two). Previous classes have traveled to Europe, Southeast Asia and South America.

3. How much does the class cost?

Tuition is \$2,000. Participants are responsible for their transportation to and from the seminars in addition to some meals during the seminars and on a portion of the trips. The Ag Leadership Program pays for lodging (double occupancy) at Lod Cook Hotel located on the LSU campus during the seminars, as well as breakfast and lunch for the days in Baton Rouge. During the national trips, the program pays for transportation and lodging. On the international study tour, the program pays for transportation, lodging and many meals.

4. Who pays the expenses above the tuition?

The LSU AgCenter pays the salaries of the director, his assistant and the office expenses. Costs incurred for the class are paid by earnings from endowments: The Chalkley Chair, established by the Chalkley family of Lake Charles; The H. Rouse Caffey Endowment, established upon the retirement of Chancellor Emeritus H. Rouse Caffey; The Ag Leaders of Louisiana Endowment, established by alumni of the program; and the Robert Soileau Scholarship, established upon the retirement of and named for the first director of the program. The program is also sustained by financial gifts to each class by the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation.

5. What do the classroom seminars cover?

Seminars are intense, lecture-oriented programs built around a theme such as the environment, technology or critical issues in Louisiana. These sessions expose participants to a wide range of speakers and ideas including experts in leadership, ethics, government, the environment, biotechnology, communication, commodities, economics, trade, state government, demographics and other areas important to understanding current issues. Occasionally, the seminars include short trips to a local agricultural enterprise such as a sugar mill or a cotton gin. A critical element of the seminars is the participants' interaction with the speakers.

6. What are the attendance requirements?

To be accepted into the program, participants must commit to attending every seminar. Permission for an absence is rare and only for emergencies. Unexcused absences and/or excessive excused absences jeopardize the class member's continued participation in the program.

7. Who is accepted into the program?

First, participants must be working in some part of the agribusiness community in Louisiana. This may include farming, livestock, forestry, nurseries, aquaculture and commercial fisheries. In addition, classes may include individuals working in allied industries such as farm equipment sales, seed and fertilizer sales, agricultural consulting, commodity sales and marketing, banking, media and law if the work is closely related to agriculture.

Participants should be committed to learning about and engaging in the issues facing their industries and their communities. While there are no age limitations, it is hoped the participants will be old enough and will have enough world experience to get the full benefit of the program, yet be young enough to use what they learn for many years.

8. Where can I learn more about the Ag Leadership Program?

The best way to learn more about the program is to call the Ag Leadership office and talk to either the director, Dr. Bobby Soileau, or his assistant, Ms. Jenne Farr. Their contact information is listed below.

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