



FFA runs deep in Scott Stump's blood. It started in Lagrange County, Ind., where his father, Ned Stump, was the agriculture teacher at Prairie Heights High School for 37 years. Later, Scott Stump was an agriculture teacher himself. Then he moved on to work for the National FFA Organization. Today, he's the assistant secretary for career, technical, and adult education at the U.S. Department of Education, serving as a principal advisor to Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. We recently asked him about his background in FFA and how it serves him yet today.

On the RECORD

“ SAY ‘YES’ TO ALL OPPORTUNITIES THAT AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND FFA OFFER. ”

Scott STUMP

Q: WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT YOUR FFA EXPERIENCE?

A: My supervised agricultural experience (SAE) was ownership of a small flock of breeding ewes. For placement experience, I milked cows for neighbors and worked at a local equipment dealership. FFA drove our family calendar like the seasons.

It led me to Purdue University and serving with the 1986-87 Indiana FFA state officer team. I found that building people and building systems that build people is my purpose in life.

I began my professional career as the agriscience teacher at Manchester High School in North Manchester, Ind. We expanded enrollment in the program from 30 to 137 students.

Q: WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT YOUR CURRENT JOB AT THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION?

A: I was sworn in on July 30, 2018, and on my second day on the job, President Trump signed the Strengthening Career and Technical Education Act. It invests \$1.3 billion in career and technical education. The best part of my job is helping states leverage the flexibilities in this new law.

There is a current skills gap in this nation that can be fixed by engaging students earlier in career-based pathways like those offered in agricultural education and FFA.

Q: WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE FOR MEMBERS CONTEMPLATING A CAREER IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE?

A: Say “yes” to all opportunities that agricultural education and FFA offer. When your agriculture instructor says, “You should consider the extemporaneous speaking contest,” say, “Yes, I will give that a try.” Or, “You are ready to expand your SAE to true entrepreneurship,” say, “I will give it a shot!” In each case, you’re advancing toward a better future.

The experiences I had in the blue and gold jacket (it’s still in my office at the Department of Education!) prepared me to make a positive difference in the role in which I serve today.

— By Gene Johnston