

## **SAE Alumni Grant Process Guide**

Masters of Arts Project Defense

By  
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Zoom meeting: <https://msu.zoom.us/j/2322586553>

### **Abstract**

This resource was designed with the intent to help Alumni Chapters across the state of Michigan establish a structural way to give back to their Chapter's FFA members. I wrote the guide for alumnus across the state to have a place to start, and walk through the process of raising the funds, and creating an application that is unique to them that will work for their members. FFA members across the nation have the opportunity to be recognized at both the state and national level for the time and money they invest in their SAE projects, so it is crucial that we start investing in our own students SAE projects at a younger age so that they have more time to develop in their SAE projects. This paper will also highlight the pros that supervised agricultural experiences have on students and teachers, the experiences we learned along the way, and the need that we had in our program for this application and guide.

### **Committee Members:**

Dr. Buddy McKendree (Chairperson), Assistant Professor - CSUS  
Dr. Aaron McKim, Associate Professor - CSUS

## **Chapter 1: Project Overview**

This resource was designed with the intent to help Alumni Chapters across the state of Michigan establish a structural way to give back to their Chapter's FFA members. Lots of times alumni raise money to help buy concrete items for the chapter that stay with the chapter, like gates or tractors. While this is essential for the progression of the FFA chapters, it is also key to build those connections between the FFA members and the alumni through conversations rather than material things. The intent behind alumni creating SAE grants is to give the members the opportunity to start something they're passionate about where they are, and where they can continue to contribute to it over the years. The demographics of students in ag classes has significantly transitioned over the years from being dominated by kids born on a farm, to now kids that have never set foot on a farm. This doesn't mean that their passion for agriculture is any less, it just means that they in turn lack the resources to know how and where to start their own contributions. With the SAE grants, alumni can help those members get their projects started, and grow over their time in the program with us.

## **Chapter 2: What is the importance of enforcing SAE development?**

For advisors that don't know where to start with teaching about SAE's, or can't come up with examples for SAE projects, the National FFA Organization teamed up with The Council to create a website: <https://saeforall.org/educator-resources/> this website highlights "SAE for ALL, evolving the essentials" when you get to the main page, there are two avenues to choose from, the Teacher Edition or the Student Edition. This website also includes independent learning guides for grades ranging from 6th all the way through 12th for them to work through identifying SAE projects in their daily life. Giving students the opportunity to create their own SAE project

leaves a lasting impact on them, especially as they continue in their FFA career. FFA members across the nation have the opportunity to be recognized at both the state and national level for the time and money they invest in their SAE projects. The NAAE produced an article about Career Exploration and Planning Sample Activities related to Foundational SAE stating that “Eventually, nearly everyone completes a personal career development journey. SAE for All suggests that it is far more powerful for students to start their trip through the career development cycle during middle and high school alongside a trusted and caring teacher rather than waiting until college or by happenstance. We prepare students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resource systems. SAE for All can help us be even more effective in our ability to make individualized, meaningful and lasting differences in the lives of young people. Let’s be intentional in doing that for all our students.” When it comes to SAE’s, our goal as AFNR Educators should be instilling the importance of SAE’s not just for receiving an award at the state or national level, but to gain life long skills that will equip them to be better leaders in the world of agriculture in the years to come.

### **Chapter 3: How did we come up with the Idea?**

Due to fundraising efforts by our Alumni and with the amazing support from our community, the Corunna FFA Alumni & Friends Chapter is very fortunate to have a plethora of financial resources. At their summer meeting, they were bouncing ideas around about things that needed to be updated for the chapter or ways to give back and connect with the FFA members. I shared out about an idea that I had witnessed during my time as a student teacher at North Huron which was an alumni SAE grant. The Corunna FFA Alumni & Friends liked the initial idea but decided that it would take some time to develop, so they created a committee of 4 alumni to

create the application and bring it back to the group for approval at the next meeting. We started off by looking at the North Huron Alumni SAE Grant application, taking things that we liked and highlighted things to be changed. We also had an alumni member that was selected to judge the SAE Grant Applications at the national level, so she offered input on things like rubrics and questions on the national application that we tried to mimic as well. I spent a few weeks compiling the two applications, and then met with the committee to review the application I had created, and continued to talk through the application process until we developed an application that we were confident in giving out. Since the grant process started because of a plethora of money, we did not have to fundraise, but upon reviewing applications in the winter we came up with an alternative idea. Every year the Corunna FFA Alumni & Friends host a scholarship dinner for the seniors of the FFA chapter. They rent out the Knights of Columbus, hire a caterer, get donated auction items from the community, and invite parents and supporters of the FFA to attend to raise money for the seniors. This year we raised a record amount of money which was truly amazing, but we only had 3 seniors fill out a scholarship application. With this realization, the alumni decided that this event could also be used to raise funds for the grant applications, so that in years to come, they continue to give back more than what they save for the next year.

#### **Chapter 4: Project Results**

The application that the Corunna FFA Alumni & Friends created was inspired by an existing application from the North Huron FFA Chapter. I had completed my student teaching year there and found the idea of the alumni giving back in that way was a remarkable idea. I got to see first hand the impacts, both positive and negative, that it had on their students. Based on the knowledge I acquired in that year's application process I was able to voice opinions to the

Corunna FFA Alumni on areas I saw work for them and areas I thought they could improve in. I then let the Corunna FFA Alumni SAE Grant committee take their time to read through both the North Huron SAE Grant Application, and the National FFA SAE application to combine ideas for essay questions and formatting options. I wrote the guide for alumnus across the state to have a place to start, and walk through the process of raising the funds, and creating an application that is unique to them that will work for their members. The most important thing to keep in mind is not to rush this process. You need to be sure that the alumni has the funds, and that you have an application that clearly spells everything out. If you have both of those items then every year all you have to do is take notes and improve it where you can to cover every situation that occurs.

## **Chapter 5: Reflection**

When creating the alumni SAE grant application for Corunna, I had two major things to highlight that I had witness occur while watching the application run in North Huron. They had a senior apply for a grant to buy feed for his 4-H steer. This student had shown steers for roughly 9 years, had a job, and had money saved up from years prior. The alumni at North Huron decided not to grant this applicant any of the money he requested, which is understandable, however; they had never spelled out in the application anything that covered this concept. When the Corunna FFA Alumni & Friends created their application, I suggested then that they add “You can only apply for a second grant if you are expanding your SAE or starting a new SAE. You cannot apply for the same exact grant item twice if awarded in years prior.” to the application to cover themselves had an applicant chose to question their decision. This verbiage allows for students to still fill out an application for the same project, but in this example the student would

not have been able to apply the grant for feed. The other situation I watched unfold was a student that had received a grant the year prior, used some of the money to build what she had applied for, but then it burnt down so she used the money to start something else. Since the North Huron application never stated what was to occur if a student wrongfully uses the funds, or doesn't use all of the funds they really had no ground to stand on so they just decided not to grant her any money the following year. On our application we then chose to add "If you don't give us an end of the year summary by the November Alumni Meeting, proving that you have used the full amount of money to its true intent, you will be required to pay back the unused amount in full by December 31st of the current calendar year to the Alumni." This verbiage serves to cover two scenarios, one being a situation where the applicant uses the money for something other than what they wrote the application for, and the other being if they only used part of the money and not all of it, both situations would require them to give either all or part of the money back.