

# **Run Your Race**

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## **Montana FFA State Officer Candidate Guide**



Dear State Officer Candidate,

Congratulations on your decision to run for a position on the 2017-2018 State Officer Team. This venture is different for everyone, and that's what makes it both unique and dynamic. For some, running for State Office may be something decided this year, and for others it may be a dream you've had for as long as you can remember. As you study about agriculture and FFA, remember one very important thing... **know yourself!**

- Know why you desire to serve over 5,000 FFA members in Montana, not why you think your advisor, parents, or even the nominating committee wants you to serve.
- Know why you want to spend a year of your life traveling around the state, communicating a message of agriculture and youth leadership to thousands.
- Search your heart, know its desires, and be passionate about your yearning to truly serve.
- Your life up to this point has been your true preparation for these few days at State FFA Convention: your experiences have shaped who you are today.

Your life, what you do and say, will be the message people hear after that week is over, no matter what the outcome of State Office. Now it's time to "Run Your Race!"

## **Introduction:**

### **What is a Montana FFA State Officer?**

A Montana FFA state officer might best be described as someone who "facilitates member success". As defined by the Montana FFA Association website, "The Montana FFA Association is represented by 8 state officers who, during their year of service travel across the state to interact with members and promote premier leadership, personal growth, and career success. They can also be found meeting with stakeholders and agriculture education teachers.

State officers:

- Attend executive meetings and play a role in the advancement of the Montana FFA Association
- Motivate members across the state, provide leadership workshops and retreats
- Participate in business and industry tours
- Promote FFA, agricultural education, and agriculture whenever possible
- Articulate the value of FFA, agricultural education, and agriculture in Montana and the United States
- Plan and carry out activities for state convention
- Attend statewide contests and events
- Provide current information on agriculture, agriculture issues, and state FFA activities to members and others in a written format, a minimum of 4 times per year (Reporter duty).

### **Is there a difference in officer duties on the local and state levels?**

Duties of the state officers are defined in the by-laws of the Montana FFA Association. While the by-laws define each office, there are other duties assigned during the year. As a team, state officers will decide what responsibilities they will share and which they will carry as individuals. Each state officer

must be able to effectively work with people of all ages and in all walks of life. All state officers, even though they have different duties described in the constitution, are not ranked and expected to be able to perform the duties of any other officer.

## **State Convention as a Candidate**

### **Overview:**

Those few days at convention will change your life, whether you receive an office or not. Traditionally, the process is made up of three main parts: the multiple-choice exam, written activity and the interviews. When you arrive as a state officer candidate Wednesday morning, you will “hit the ground running.” Everyone will start by taking the written test. That afternoon, you will meet all of the candidates, nominating committee, and advisor chair. Coordinators will also talk to you about the interview process and functions that you will attend. The current state officer team may also come to speak with the candidates. These events are described in detail below.

### **Multiple-Choice Exam:**

The exam is comprised of 4 areas:

- FFA History and Knowledge
- FFA Actual Workings (Difference between Alumni and Foundation, State Association Role vs. National FFA Role, etc.)
- Agricultural Issues and Knowledge
- Parliamentary Procedure

Be familiar with:

- Official FFA Manual
- FFA Student Handbook
- FFA New Horizons
- Robert’s Rules of Order

It’s almost impossible to know it all, so it’s important to understand the basics first—history and people. Know the essentials of a typical FFA meeting. Put yourself in the place of an FFA member, agriculturist, or someone who has never heard of FFA asking a state officer a question. Focus most of your energy on the FFA timeline, current FFA events, and common knowledge of agriculture issues. Know basic parliamentary procedure skills, and let the remaining knowledge fill up extra time you have.

### **Written Activity:**

You will be given a scenario and asked to write something (letter, thank you card, social media post, etc.) in response. You will be given a time limit in which to create your written assignment. A scenario might be something like this:

“You are writing a letter to thank a Representative for supporting FFA during the past year. He was instrumental in helping FFA advance with the state government.” In the letter, you want to thank him for his time and talk about things you feel are important in agricultural education and FFA.”

Here are additional situations that might occur:

- Declining an invitation to a banquet
- Sending a thank-you letter to a sponsor
- Writing an end-of-convention greeting as if you were state president to be featured in the newsletter
- Responding to an email of a member

Also, make sure and read the directions of the scenario. Sometimes, a word count can limit what you say, but it makes the practicum fair to all candidates so make sure and check for this! Most importantly, make it personal, make it sincere and let them see YOU!

## **Interviews:**

The interviews conducted by the members of the nominating committee is the most significant and laborious aspect of your time as at convention as a state officer candidate. This is where the committee is really able to get to know you; so as always, don't forget to be authentic. Remember, the members of the committee are people too; treat them like it! The interview process is completely up to the nominating committee, so don't be surprised when something you weren't planning for comes up. The committee will adjust the process as they see fit throughout convention, depending on the candidates. Different rounds may be added or removed, and you can't truly know what to expect until that day. There are a few basic rounds that are usually conducted, including one-on-one rounds, stand and deliver, group facilitation rounds, and others. Possible rounds are listed below, organized into different areas.

### One-on-One Round:

Think speed dating! In this round, you rotate in quick intervals to tables with nominating committee members. They ask a series of questions that could pertain to your SAE, State FFA Degree application, as well as personal questions. Be sure that you can give information about yourself in short but informative answers, as the time limit does not allow you to ramble. Think concise and memorable! This can be the committee's first impression of you, and starting out strong is helpful.

### Personal Interviews:

There will be individual rounds where you will interview with the entire committee. These rounds may be on agriculture issues, agricultural education and FFA issues or personal questions about your FFA career and other leadership activities and involvement. There are examples of personal questions later in this guidebook. In preparing for this round, keep up to date on current agriculture issues and be informed. There is no way you can know every fact about every agriculture issue. The nominating committee doesn't expect that either. Pick out a few agricultural issues and know them well. Write down facts on each issue and summarize what your perspective is on those topics. Then, seek out new information about those particular issues. It's better to know a lot about a few things than to know little or nothing about everything.

### Group Rounds:

Group rounds may involve a theme such as agricultural issues or agricultural education and FFA. Basically, this is a situation in which you'll work with a group to plan and present an idea to the nominating committee. It's important to know what you're talking about, present your idea clearly, and to insert facts to make yourself credible in your presentation. Most importantly, this is a round where

the nominating committee wants to see how well you interact with a group. As long as you get along well with others on a day-to-day basis, there is little preparation for this round. Participate and make sure your back is not to any nominating committee members. Speak clearly and so that the committee and your teammates can hear you. You do not want to have long explanations, but providing short rationale is acceptable. Bring others and their ideas into the planning process and make sure all take part in presenting. Work together. Present together. Be a team player. Essentially, show them that you're a team!

Here are a few examples:

- Present the basics of FFA to a group of people who have never heard of it
- You have to present a workshop on national and international FFA opportunities using one sheet of poster board.
- Motivate a chapter officer team with a presentation including duties of officers and ways to become more involved.
- Prepare a skit having to do with goal-setting for a leadership camp.
- You have just landed on a strange planet, your mission: explain FFA to the aliens
- Inform the Montana Legislature about FFA and the National FFA Convention.
- Convince a school board to implement an agriculture education and FFA program in your local school system.
- Explain the benefits of FFA to a state government who wants to cut the funding for the program.

The groups usually consist of 4-6 people, but that decision is up to the committee. It's important that you communicate the basics of FFA into your workshop/presentation scenario. As a state officer, this would be a common duty. Teamwork and bringing out the best in others is the key to success with this activity.

#### Committee's Choice (Call Back):

This round is completely open, usually done on an individual basis. However, it is up to the committee if they need this round. These are generally very open-ended questions asked to see more of you as an individual if that wasn't apparent in the previous interviews. This is your last chance to tell them what you've wanted to tell them but haven't had the chance to yet. This is your final impression. Don't leave this round without laying it all on the line. Don't leave without the committee knowing exactly who you are and why you desire to serve. This round is not guaranteed, call backs do not always occur.

## **Preparing for State Convention:**

Throughout the process of running for state office, you will be tested in a variety of ways. The nominating committee wants to get a good idea of who you are and where your strengths lie. This is why there is so many different aspects of the process, and it is important to be prepared for all of them. Some questions you will be asked (both in the written exam and in the interviews) will have a right or wrong answer, such as "Who is the current Montana State FFA Advisor?" and some that are up to you, such as "Why did you join FFA?" This next section of the guide is divided into these two areas: facts and feelings.

### **Facts:**

The following are categories of knowledge that you should become familiar with. These are some long lists, but don't get overwhelmed! You probably know quite a few of these already. It might be helpful to create a Quizlet ([quizlet.com](http://quizlet.com)) or flashcards.

Acronyms:

ALD	Advanced Leadership Development Conference
AAAE	American Association for Agricultural Education
BLAST Off	Building Leaders and Strong Teams of Officers
CDE	Career Development Event
EDGE	Experiencing Discovery, Growth and Excellence
ILSSO	International Leadership Seminar for State Officers
LPS	Local Program Success
MFE	Made For Excellence
MAAE	Montana Association of Agricultural Educators
NAAE	National Association of Agricultural Educators
NASAE	National Association of Supervisors of Agricultural Education
NLC SO	National Leadership Conference for State Officers
The Council	National Council for Agricultural Education
PAS	National Postsecondary Agricultural Student Organization
NCF	New Century Farmers
NFA	New Farmers of America
PALS	Partners in Active Learning Support
SPC	State Presidents' Conference
SAE	Supervised Agricultural Experience
WLC	Washington Leadership Conference
WEA	World Experience in Agriculture
ALC	Alumni Leadership Camp (Montana)
DLS	District Leadership Seminar

People:

Tom Vilsack	Secretary of Agriculture, USDA
Dr. Steve Brown	National FFA Advisor
Ron De Yong	Director, Montana Department of Agriculture
Jim Rose	Montana State FFA Advisor
Curt Robbins	Montana FFA Foundation President
Jaime Edmundson	Montana FFA Foundation Executive Director
Kristen Swenson	Montana FFA Alumni President
Henry Groseclose	Father of FFA
Gus Litner	Inventor of the FFA Jacket
E. M. Tiffany	Author of the FFA Creed
David Townsend	National FFA President
Victoria Harris	National FFA Secretary
DeShawn Blanding	National FFA Southern Region Vice President
Valerie Earley	National FFA Central Region Vice President
Ashley Willits	National FFA Eastern Region Vice President
Trey Elizondo	National FFA Western Region Vice President
Albert Koenig	Montana State FFA President
CJ Stevenson	Montana State FFA 1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President

Jon Andres	Montana State FFA 2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President
Ashley Koenig	Montana State FFA Secretary
Josh Meyer	Montana State FFA Treasurer
Kacie Cummings	Montana State FFA Reporter
Brock Reiner	Montana State FFA Sentinel
Jake Michels	Montana State FFA Parliamentarian

### Cities & Places:

Mt. Vernon	Past Home of the National FFA Center
Hotel Baltimore	Place where FFA began
Indianapolis	Current site of National Convention
Indianapolis	Location of National FFA Center
Kansas City, Missouri	City where FFA was founded
Alexandria, Virginia	Original home of FFA
Indianapolis, Indiana	Current home of FFA
Bozeman, Montana	Montana FFA Association Office
Helena, Montana	Montana Department of Agriculture
Helena, Montana	Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI)

### General FFA Knowledge: (can be found in the Official FFA handbook)

- Official colors
- FFA Motto
- Mission statement of FFA
- When was FFA founded?
- When was the FFA Creed adopted?
- When was the National FFA Foundation started?
- In what year was FFA granted a federal charter?
- When did FFA and NFA merge?
- When were females admitted to membership?
- When was the National FFA Alumni established?
- When did FFA change its name?
- What is the web address of the National FFA Organization?
- What is the web address of the Montana FFA Organization?
- What are the parts of the FFA emblem?
- What is the official publication for FFA members?

### Agricultural Education:

- What did the Smith-Hughes National Vocational Education Act first establish?
- What year did the Smith-Hughes Act come into existence?
- What are the 3 major components of agricultural education?
- What are the 4 areas that an SAE might cover?
- What are the current Montana CDE's for judging & leadership?

### General FFA:

- What is the place of FFA within the program of agricultural education?
- Why was FFA organized?
- What are your responsibilities as a state FFA officer?
- What is a POA and how is it developed?
- As you look back over your experiences in FFA, why did you join the organization and how does this reason compare to what it has meant to you?
- If a sponsor of FFA who was also a supporter of the 4-H asks you, "What is the difference between FFA and the 4-H," how will you respond?
- What is the purpose of the National Chapter Award program?
- What is the difference between FFA & 4-H?
- Why did FFA change to the National FFA Organization?
- Name a National Scholarship sponsor? State Scholarship sponsor?

#### Alumni:

- When was the FFA alumni chartered?
- Why was the FFA alumni organized?
- How do you organize or charter a local FFA alumni affiliate?
- Do you have to be a former FFA member to be a member of the Alumni?
- What does the alumni do?
- What does the "shield" in the Alumni emblem represent?

#### **Feelings:**

#### Personal FFA:

- How did you become involved in FFA?
- Who has been your biggest inspiration as an FFA member?
- What is the hardest challenge you face as a FFA member at your high school?
- Have you ever thought about not being a FFA member?
- What is your biggest personal achievement in FFA?
- FFA is just for someone who wants to be a farmer isn't it?
- What do you feel is the biggest challenge facing Montana agricultural education programs?
- How can the state officers better inform the public about agricultural education and what it has to offer?
- Why do you think agricultural education belongs in the public school system?
- Aside from FFA, what was the best experience you have had in your agricultural education classes?
- Where do you think agricultural education is headed in the future?

#### General FFA and Agriculture:

- What is the FFA? FFA means Future Farmers of America, right?
- What's in FFA for me?
- What are some of the topics covered in the Farm Bill?
- What are Genetically Modified Organisms?
- Do cloning and genetic engineering benefit agriculture?
- Are disease such as Foot and Mouth, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, and Chronic-Wasting Disease a concern to agriculturists?



- What impact do the prices of crops or livestock have on the agricultural economy?
- What is food safety? Is the U.S. food supply safe?
- What does PETA stand for? How does PETA impact the agricultural industry?

#### Montana Agriculture:

- How does the wolf reintroduction affect ranchers in Montana?
- Many people are moving to Montana from non-rural or non-agricultural lifestyles, does this affect Montana agriculture? Why?
- Which industry is more important to Montana, agriculture or tourism?
- How will forest fires, lack of moisture, and other environmental factors affect Montana agriculture?
- What are some of Montana's top crops? Where are they grown?
- What agriculture industries can be found where you live?
- How are you involved in Montana agriculture?

#### FFA/Ag Ed Issues:

- Will there be a future for agricultural education?
- What is the Local Program of Success?
- Is there a place for home-schooled students in agricultural education? If yes, how can we include this group?
- What are three top issues facing our education system and what can we do to combat these issues?
- How can a strong local program be built?
- How would you develop strong relationships with local alumni and business and industry people as an Ag educator?
- Explain what the Perkins Act is and how it affects agricultural education and FFA.
- What is the total program?
- How can we encourage students to pursue degrees in agriculture education?
- What benefits are there to being enrolled in agricultural education classes?
- Currently, what are some of the issues facing agricultural education in Montana?
- Does agricultural literacy or illiteracy play a role in the perception of agricultural education? Is there a future for agricultural education in Montana?
- What role do state officers play in promoting education?

#### State Officer Issues:

- How can officers develop more interest and enthusiasm among members?
- How can a member develop self-confidence?
- How can a chapter/state increase membership?
- How do you have an SAE in an urban area?
- What advice would you give a Greenhand who wants to become a state FFA officer?
- What are chapters doing for fundraising activities?
- How is FFA financed?
- A member has just been defeated in running for chapter office; what advice would you give him/her?
- How can a team who is spread out in different areas of the state maintain communication?

## Behavioral Questions:

Here are some questions to ask yourself along the journey. Some may get asked, some may not. They are meant to make you think and evaluate who you are. They'll give you a deeper understanding of yourself and why you are running to serve thousands of FFA members. Journal about them. Answer them in front of a mirror. Know yourself so that you can answer in clear concise answers. Practice with someone else so that you can get more comfortable.

- Describe a situation in which you persuaded someone to see things your way.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation and how you dealt with it.
- Give a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem. Additionally, poor logic/judgement.
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to achieve it.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Tell me about a time in which you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
- What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
- Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split-second decision.
- Tell me about a difficult person you've met in the last year.
- Give me an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something and failed.
- Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
- Give me an example of a time when you motivated other people
- Tell me about a time in which you made an unpopular decision.
- Describe a time when you set your sights too high or too low.
- Describe a time in which you felt it was necessary to modify or change your actions in order to respond to the needs of another person.
- Describe a situation in which you were able to positively influence the actions of others in a desired direction.
- Tell me about a time when you took a public stance on an issue and then had to change your position.
- Describe a really tough time and what you learned from the situation.
- Relate a personal story in which you persuaded someone to do something that initially did not appeal to them.
- Tell me about a time when, if it hadn't been for teamwork, your goal might not have been achieved.
- Describe a time in which you took initiative rather than waiting to be told what to do.
- Describe a project or goal that has caused you frustration.
- Who are you? (Your likes/dislikes, morals/values, faith)
- What do you stand for? (How do you feel about alcohol, sex, drugs, abortion, death penalty, education, the future, diversity, etc.)
- Where did you come from? (Family, community, farm/non-farm, college, high school, friends, activities)

- What makes you happy? What makes you sad?
- What do you enjoy?
- What are your strengths and talents? What are your weaknesses?
- What has been your most traumatic/sad/worst experience and how did you react? What has been your happiest// best experience and how did you react?
- What is your favorite quote and why?
- How would you describe yourself?
- If you could describe yourself in only 3 words, what would they be?
- What do you want to accomplish in your life?
- Who and/or what do you credit for your success?
- Why do you want to run for state office?
- Who is your biggest role model and why?
- What is your best and worst memory in FFA?
- What makes you unique when compared with the other candidates?
- Describe your SAE.
- How has your SAE helped you in your life?
- What is one thing you would change about Montana FFA?
- How can you help members?
- What will you be remembered for?
- What is your purpose in life?
- What concerns you most about this world?
- What is the most pressing problem with youth today? What is the solution?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- What is your passion?
- What will you do if you are elected? What will you do if you aren't elected?
- Why did you join FFA?
- Name two things you are passionate about.
- Which of your strengths do you think will help you the most this year?
- What are your hopes for the year?

### What Would You Do?

- If you were to have a song written about your FFA career, what would the title be?
- What do you feel is the most important attribute a state officer can possess?
- If you had the opportunity to create a new CDE, what would it be and why?
- National FFA wants state officers to come up with the criteria for a new award for members, what would you suggest and why?
- If you could come up with a new program that would address an issue facing agricultural education in Montana, what would it be and why?
- During a chapter visit, a couple of students help themselves to all of the candy that you have brought for prizes and rewards. How do you handle this situation?
- While flying to National Convention your luggage is lost, what do you do?
- You are on your way to speak at a chapter banquet when your car breaks down and there is no way that you will make it on time, what do you do?
- You get to your first chapter visit, while dressing that morning you find that your tie/scarf is missing, what do you do?

- You arrive at a chapter visit, however the ag teacher forgot that today was an in-service day. There are no students at school. What do you do?
- An FFA member asks you to attend prom with them. How would you handle this?
- You haven't been home in a week, your homework is piled up, and you get a phone call asking you to come to a FFA function for a chapter that is across the state. What do you do?
- At the State Fair you are working in the animal barn when you notice a group of fair-goers making a loud scene near one of the animals. They are claiming FFA is cruel to animals. How will you deal with this?
- At state convention, you notice several members using tobacco products during the conference. What can you do about this?
- A blind person approaches you to give a description of a CDE at State Convention. They have never seen any of it before, which contest do you tell them about, and what do you say?
- Wild land and forest fires have become a common occurrence, do you think that federal and state governments should be responsible for helping those who have lost homes in such fires rebuild?
- If you had the choice to live one day as a. A) National Officer, B) A Chapter Advisor, or C) a Greenhand member, which would you choose and why?
- What is your biggest FFA related pet peeve, and why?
- Describe the perfect: -Saturday -bus ride -ag teacher
- Who is a sponsor of the National FFA Organization?
- Who is your biggest role model and why?
- If you could be anyone for a day, who would you be and why?
- Who has been the most influential person in your FFA career?
- Do you think a state officer should have boyfriend or girlfriend for their term in office?
- What is your best/worst quality?
- Who is a state officer's biggest fan?
- What do you hope to accomplish as state officer if you are elected?
- How will you spend your free time while you are a state officer?
- What roles do state officers play in the eyes of members?

#### Open Ended/Vague Questions:

- Name the three things you value the most in order of importance, without an explanation.
- How can you influence students' lives without youth organizations?
- What does FFA mean to you?
- Who are you?
- You have 3 minutes to tell us whatever you want us to know. Go!
- Why do you serve?
- Who do you serve?

#### **Study Strategies:**

- Notecards
- Speaking with informed agriculturalists
- Writing facts down until they're in your mind for good
- Speaking in front of a mirror
- Practice presenting workshops to FFA members
- Taking a journal with you everywhere and writing down thoughts/feelings
- Mock-interviews

- Talking with current and past State Officers (Contact Info on Last Page!)
- Ask your Ag Teacher for areas that you should focus on
- Keep a notebook of ideas that you could potentially use in workshops
- Talk to members—Listening to the stories of others can be inspirational and give you a larger bank of knowledge to speak from

## **Additional Resources:**

- Montana FFA Association: [montanaffa.org](http://montanaffa.org)
- National FFA Organization: [ffa.org](http://ffa.org)
- Northern Ag Network: [northernag.net](http://northernag.net)
- American Farm Bureau: [fb.org](http://fb.org)
- Montana Farm Bureau: [mfbf.org](http://mfbf.org)
- National Cattlemen’s Beef Association: [beefusa.org](http://beefusa.org)
- National Corn Growers Association: [ncga.com](http://ncga.com)
- United States Department of Agriculture: [usda.gov](http://usda.gov)
- United States Department of Education: [usde.gov](http://usde.gov)
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy: [iatp.org](http://iatp.org)
- National Agriculture Statistics Service: [nass.usda.gov](http://nass.usda.gov)
- Foreign Agricultural Service: [fas.usda.gov](http://fas.usda.gov)
- Ag Youth Magazine: [agyouth.com](http://agyouth.com)
- Farm Journal: [farmjournal.com](http://farmjournal.com)
- The Old Farmers Almanac: [almanac.com](http://almanac.com)
- Successful Farming: [agriculture.com](http://agriculture.com)
- Progressive Farmer: [progressivefarmer.com](http://progressivefarmer.com)
- Pro Farmer: [profarmer.com](http://profarmer.com)
- The Western Producer: [producer.com](http://producer.com)
- CNN News: [cnn.com](http://cnn.com)
- U.S. House of Representatives: [house.gov](http://house.gov)
- U.S. Senate: [senate.gov](http://senate.gov)

## **Other Things to Keep in Mind:**

### **Official Dress:**

- Official FFA jacket zipped to the top (displaying only 3 medals: the highest degree earned, the highest office held and the highest award earned)
- Official FFA blue scarf or tie
- Black dress shoes (closed heel and toe)
- Black skirt (knee length, without embellishments) or pants
- White collared shirt
- Black nylons, not tights (female candidates)
- Use perfume/cologne with moderation
- Hairstyles and makeup should complement the candidate, not distract from the process

## Interview Tips:

The interview process you will experience as a State Officer Candidate will probably be the most rigorous you will ever encounter. The nominating committee understands that you may not be a well-versed interviewee, but it is important to gain as much practice as possible before convention. Pretend that you are at a job interview. The members of the nominating committee are basically "screening" you for the position of a state officer which is comparable to a full or part-time job. The following are important tips to remember when preparing for an interview:

- ALWAYS be yourself! This is the most important part of the interview, even more so than the knowledge portion itself.
- Use the question in your answer. This way you are giving a more complete and grammatically correct answer. For example: If your question is "Who is your biggest role model and why?" Your answer should sound something like this: "My biggest role model is my grandmother, because..."
- At the end of your entire interview, please make sure to say thank you, and shake hands when appropriate.
- Don't be afraid to ask the interviewer to repeat the question, this not only gives you more time to craft an answer, but also helps to make sure you know what is being asked. However, make sure you are listening carefully! This tactic can get frustrating to an interviewer if used frequently.
- Confidence is key! However, there are times when it's okay to be unsure, just remain composed and give it your best effort!
- If you cannot think of an answer and feel that you need to say something DO NOT say that you are "having a huge brain fart" –the Nom Com might laugh for a minute, but after a while they will see the inappropriateness of your answer. This shows immaturity and detracts from your qualities. Instead, show them how tactful you are by simply smiling and expressing the truth—the committee will respect you for it.
- Don't get too stressed out. Maintain a positive attitude; the members of the committee are looking for someone who is at ease under pressure. Take a few deep breaths every once in a while, especially before entering the room.
- When you prepare your Official Dress, remember to have your jacket dry-cleaned if needed, have your blouse/shirt, skirt/slacks ironed, shoes polished, and the correct number of pins on your jacket, black pantyhose/nylons or socks. This is the time when you are extremely close to the committee. They will notice if your skirt is too short, if your jacket is dirty, or if you are violating the rules of proper Official Dress. Also, keep jewelry to a minimum. One watch/ ring/ bracelet is acceptable, and typically pearl or diamond stud earrings are recommended.
- Smile and have good eye contact with all members of the committee. Let them see that although you may be nervous, you are friendly and excited to share your personality with them. Greet the committee by introducing yourself to them or saying "Good morning/afternoon/evening." Remember, this is a job interview—would you shake your prospective boss' hand? If so, then shake their hands and then sit—when THEY tell you to have a seat, or ask them if you may have a seat—either is acceptable. Greet the committee members by their names if you know them. This shows your attention to detail and dedication to remembering their names.
- Don't fidget. It is best if you sit somewhat at an angle, and cross your feet at your ankles. It is a more comfortable position than keeping your feet directly in front of you. Place your hands in

your lap comfortably, and when appropriate use them to aid in fluid gestures. Sit up straight and keep eye contact with the committee to show interest.

- Have a sense of humor, but remember to not go overboard.

## **Managing Your Nerves:**

This year at State Convention will no doubt be a very stressful one for you. The pressures of being a state officer candidate, possibly in CDE's, and just being at State Convention can be especially tough on your confidence and ability to concentrate. The most effective way to conquer these jitters is to prepare beforehand. Here are a few tips on managing your nerves:

- Keep in mind that members of the committee are real people. If you are hit with the shakes, sweaty palms, and rapid breathing, remember to relax and treat them as regular folks. It is just a conversation with people. This will be your time in the spotlight. Why be nervous? Let it be fun! If you have your mental attitude right, you will be able to control your nerves.
- Take a few deep breaths, count to 10, and remember why you are here.

Keep your composure! The unexpected can occur: a candidate trips walking into the room, knocks over the table as they sit down, or calls a Nom Com member by the wrong name. Mishaps do happen, but no disaster is so awful that you can't handle it with poise. Always keep your composure. When the unexpected occurs, turn it to your advantage with honesty, humor, wit, or humility. Everyone makes mistakes, how you handle them is what truly matters!

## **Preparation and Practice = Strong Performance**

The more you practice for State Convention and especially the interview process, the more comfortable and successful you will be. Here are some brief things to keep in mind during your study process:

### *Check your motive*

Ask yourself, "What is my motive for saying or writing this?" If your motive isn't positive or productive, you cannot expect any other response.

### *Get to the point*

If you cannot summarize your message in 60 seconds or less, you may not understand it well enough to communicate it in more detail. The interviews are very short, make what you say matter.

### *Stick to the point*

Make it clear where you are going with your communication and stay with it. Clear and concise is always nice!

### *Remember that your body speaks volumes*

Up to ninety percent of communication is visual. When you speak, your listeners are watching to be sure that your facial expressions and body language match what you are saying.

### *Check your tone*

The written word, in particular, is often much harsher than intended. Think of the way text messages can be misinterpreted. Let your words sit for a while before sending. Be especially sure to utilize this method in the written communications sections!

*Say what you mean and mean what you say*

People, while trusting by nature, are very perceptive and can find any hint of insincerity or lack of credibility.

*Listen first for understanding. Practice active listening and really care.*

Concentrate—focus on the speaker

Acknowledge—through body language, nod your head to acknowledge the speaker and question.

Respond—ask questions for clarification and interest, and be comfortable taking a quick second to think before you respond.

Empathize—share in their emotions and feelings

*Practice, practice; practice*

Writing and speaking improve with study and practice.

*Ask for help and be willing to accept feedback*

Bounce your ideas off your advisor, friends and, family members. They can provide a clarifying perspective for you.

*Speak from the heart*

Give answers that have meaning, show your passions, and exhibit your character.

## **Packing List Suggestion:**

We suggest bringing a backpack containing the following items:

- Pens/pencils (bring extras to share, you will be a hero)
- Notebook and loose leaf paper
- Bottle of water or water bottle that you can refill (you will be in the hotbox forever)
- “Healthy” snacks like granola bars, fruit, or pretzels (sometimes there will be snacks available to you but don’t count on them)
- Breath mints, breath strips, small disposable toothbrushes (you’ll want fresh breath for interviews, but don’t chew gum, in case you forget to take it out)
- Your study resources: feel free to put together a binder with important information
- FFA Manual
- Simple materials that might be useful for a workshop: markers, colored paper, index cards (think small and light)
- Extra pantyhose (for the girls) and hairspray or nail polish to stop runs
- Advil or Ibuprofen, especially if you are prone to headaches
- Copy of your application
- Phone numbers for advisor, chapter chaperones, fellow chapter members, etc.



- Hairbrush or comb
- Baby wipes (clean your shoes, face, quick wipe of minor spills, etc.)
- Games, book, something to do in the Hot Box that's meaningful or relaxing to you
- Laptop and charger

## **After State Convention:**

Preparing for state FFA office is an incredible journey in which you get to know who you truly are, what you believe in, and what's really important to you. It's a time of preparation that goes far beyond studying facts. It's a reflection of your life.

While it's easy to get caught up in the "right things to say" and the "best way to dress and appear," it's not about that.

The selection process is a time of emotional interviews, thoughts, and questions about yourself. It doesn't matter if you answer the questions perfectly or if your shirt is without a wrinkle at all times.

What matters is that you are yourself: a person defined not by a state officer jacket but by a heart full of love and a desire to help others.

It's a stressful time for everyone; don't be afraid to reach out to state officers, your advisor(s), family and friends to seek advice.

It's something you've worked extremely hard for. You have to put forth your very all in order to hopefully achieve a goal. You're there with many other amazing people who are there to achieve the same goal. Get to know them. Get to know people at convention, just as you would any other year.

Don't smile and be positive because you think you have to. Do it all because you want to. There's only one you, and it's not worth it to try to be a carbon-copy of someone else, because you never will be.

Through interviews, tests, and observation, the nominating committee will nominate a team to dedicate a year of their life to FFA. Many more than those eight are well qualified. All you can do is your very best. It may be your purpose to spend a year meeting with FFA members across the state, sharing hopes, dreams, passions, and growth. On the other hand, you may be needed elsewhere to share that same love for life and people. There are people everywhere that need help, and if that's your reason for running, then no matter what the results are, you're in the right place upon the announcement.

You won't leave from convention the same person. It's a week of incredible growth. There will be great times and there will be a few disappointments along the way, but whatever happens, happens for a reason. Remember that.

You'll meet friends to last a lifetime.

You'll learn more about yourself than you ever thought possible.

And you'll risk so much, with so much gained in return. Live it up, and be content knowing the best is yet to be. Remember all that FFA has given you and take joy in knowing that all things happen for a reason.

Good Luck!

If you have questions or would like to talk about what State Office entails, please feel free to contact any of the current State Officers by email:

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