

AAFCS Webinars: A Way to Weave Professional Connections into a College Classroom

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In the Department of Family Consumer Science (FCS) at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MSU), we believe that all students, not just the education majors, need a strong, professional skill-set when teaching others. Therefore, the majority of students in our four programs offered (Child Development and Family Studies; Dietetics; FCS Education; and Foods and Nutrition), take the Adult and Technical Education in FCS course. In teaching the course, I have often used quotations to elicit critical thinking. One quote that generally guarantees lively discussion on meaning and application to FCS educational theory is: “Some people drink from the fountain of knowledge, others just gargle” (Dr. Robert Anthony).

The students usually end up agreeing that the quote reflects the desire in all FCS professionals to *engage* learners with information for personal empowerment. My personal thoughts focus on this, too. “How can I, continue to engage my students to ‘drink from the fountain?’” I have found that professional collaboration is important in fostering this engagement and one way this can be accomplished is by incorporating AAFCS webinars into my courses.

As I received email notices of the AAFCS webinars, I noticed that the topics were applicable

to many of our classes. I was attracted to the bundling price for three webinars and felt the site license fee was manageable. I was able to secure funding through an MSU program that supports the use of technology in classes. I shared this opportunity with my Department and we selected three webinars for three different classes. This is how they aligned: “Advancing Reasoning Skills in Adolescents: New Ideas to Engage Developing Brains” webinar for our Parent Education course; “The Marriage Garden: A New Approach to Cultivating Strong, Stable Relationships” webinar for our Romantic Relationships Course; and “Best Practices for New FCS Teachers: Panel Presentation on Lessons Learned by FCS Education Professionals” webinar for our Program Development in FCS course. We were excited that these AAFCS webinars would connect more than 100 of our students with other FCS professionals from across the United States.

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I teach the Program Development course and found that my students liked the panel format.

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I appreciated the archived capability as I could show the webinar when and where it best fit into my class content. The downloadable handouts provided prior to showing the webinar were valuable. Copies were made for students and they appreciated having the information to refer to during the webinar and to save for future use. Additionally, I used them in a classroom activity as a springboard from which to generate their own ideas. My students commented that they valued the connection with other FCS professionals and the information.

The flexibility of the webinars was evident as my colleagues all used the webinars differently in

their classes. In fact, this experience led one of our faculty members to develop their own webinar for AAFCS.

I plan to continue using AAFCS webinars. I hope other members share their expertise and submit proposals for future webinars. (To do so, watch for the call for webinar proposals via email or contact Daila Boufford at dboufford@aafcs.org.) This professional connection was valuable to our “thirsty” faculty and students!

To view the AAFCS Webinar Archives and sign up to receive email alerts of new webinars (if you are not an AAFCS member) visit www.aafcs.org/DevelopmentCenter/index.asp.