



## **The Importance and Impact of Mentorship**

*By Jackie Reding, AFA Marketing and Communications Intern*

Amanda Spoo mentored Amy Wampler through Agriculture Future of America's Leader Fellowship. They graduated the program after four years of participation. Spoo is starting a new position as Director of Communications for Pack West Lobby Group. Amy recently graduated from Pennsylvania State University and plans to work on master's degree in Agriculture Communication at Oklahoma State University.

AFA interviewed Spoo and Wampler to discuss their experience in the AFA Leader Fellowship. They shared about their roles, benefits and challenges of the program, and how to connect with a mentor/mentee.

### **How did you become or connect with a mentor?**

**Spoo:** "AFA had an immense impact on my life, so joining the Fellowship was a natural transition for me. I have always had mentors in my life. It is important to recognize what areas of your life you need leadership in and seek a mentor from there."

**Wampler:** "I heard about the Fellowship at my first AFA Leaders Conference. I knew I wanted to join, and eventually was handed a long list of potential mentors. I picked Amanda because her career path was similar to the path I planned to take at the time."

### **What are your roles as a mentor/mentee?**

**Spoo:** "It's most important for a mentor to provide a space to listen. It's a learning experience on both ends! At first, I thought I might not be able to give Amy outstanding advice since I am only ten years out of my undergraduate program, but I was able to relate to her in a lot of ways that someone who is twenty to thirty years out of their undergraduate program could not."

**Wampler:** "A mentorship is a student driven program. I reached out to Amanda and initiated our meetings. At the beginning of every meeting, I shared my ideas. Amy listened to me and offered insight on my career path."

### **Why should I have a mentor?**

**Spoo:** "Mentoring Amy brought my experience in AFA to a full circle; it was the next step in my involvement. It was very rewarding to watch her succeed. Amy had a change of direction throughout our time in AFA Leader Fellowship. Seeing her discover her confidence was a cool experience to facilitate. Secondly, having an objective and professional relationship is valuable. For example, talking to a parent or academic advisor as a student is great; however, they know you personally and professionally. All I

know about Amy is what she wants to tell me, which helps her be completely candid in our conversations.”

**Wampler:** “The benefits outweigh the challenges. I came to college planning to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in animal science. With the help of my mentor, I changed my degree to agriculture communications and plan to obtain my master’s degree. If it weren’t for AFA Leader Fellowship, I would not have had the confidence to completely redirect my career path. I also learned how to set substantial goals which will stay with me throughout the next steps of my life, and experienced self-growth.”

**What was challenging in your experience as a mentor/mentee?**

**Spoo:** “Prioritizing the student you are mentoring and managing your time can be a challenge. I encourage those who are considering mentorship to make sure they have enough time for their mentee.”

**Wampler:** “Before starting the mentorship, students take a personality test. Using the results to set goals was very challenging. But without the Fellowship, I would not have had the confidence to redirect my career path.”

To learn more about AFA’s Fellowship visit [agfuture.org/experiences](https://agfuture.org/experiences)