

# Extended Dialogue: Extending Leadership

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## SPEAKERS

Scott Angle, Ricky Telg, Phillip Stokes

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### R Ricky Telg 00:04

This is Science by the Slice, a podcast from the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Center for Public Issues Education. In this podcast, experts discuss the science of issues affecting our daily lives revealed the motivations behind the decisions people make, and ultimately provide insight to solutions for our lives.

### P Phillip Stokes 00:30

Welcome to Science by the Slice, I'm Phillip Stokes education coordinator at the PIE Center. This is our final episode in the extended dialogue series. Hopefully you've had a chance to listen to the previous three episodes in this series. Through the extended dialogue series, we wanted to host conversations about the history and connections between science and institutions of higher education and social topics such as diversity, equity, inclusion and justice. We spoke with University of Florida historian Carl Van Ness, UF/IFAS extension Dean Andra Johnson, UF Agricultural Education and Communication faculty member John Diaz, and now Scott Angle, Vice President of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Florida. Dr. Angles career includes positions in academia, government, and nonprofit International Development. His experiences have led him to approach leadership based on service partnership, and a drive for impact. In today's episode titled extending leadership, I speak with Dr. Angle about how UF IFAS is aiming to become more inclusive to meet the needs of Floridians throughout the entire state. And we also discuss his vision to enhance and improve inclusion, diversity, equity and access within IFAS will now join in on my conversation with Dr. Angle where he's introducing himself and the steps that brought him to the University of Florida. All right, well, Dr. Scott Angle, I want to thank you for being a guest on Science by the Slice and talking with me here today. First, I just want to give you an opportunity to introduce yourself and some of the steps that brought you here to the University of Florida.

### S Scott Angle 02:17

Well, I'm the Senior Vice President for IFAS. This is the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. Most recently, I was with the US Department of Agriculture, I was the director of NIFA. That's the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. That's the primary research organization for the USDA. That's the organization that funds a lot of research and teaching to a lesser extent, at land grant universities. So as the director of that in Washington, DC. Prior to that, I spent an awful lot of my time in Africa and Asia, I was the vice president and CEO of a nonprofit called IFDC, which is an organization that helps very poor farmers, smallholder farmers grow more food, particularly in Africa, I spent three years there. I was the dean of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at the University of Georgia for a decade prior to that, and then before that, I was at the University of Maryland, where I was a professor and administrator, I was a soil scientist, they're taught and research and delivered information around the state. I'm from Maryland, the Baltimore DC area. Originally, I got into all of this because I wanted to be a golf course superintendent, I had no agricultural background at all. But I love golf. And in Maryland, well, I wanted to be a golf course Pro, but that was not going to happen. And so my next best choice was to be a superintendent on a golf course. And that was taught in the College of Agriculture at the University of Maryland. So that's how I got into the college of agriculture. And I eventually just drifted over to soil science loved what I was doing there. And it just, the rest just kind of went on from there.

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Phillip Stokes 04:04

You know, it seems like a lot of your career, of course, you've been a part of a variety of sciences and leading science organizations, and also service oriented organizations and helping those. So you know, I think that kind of transitions us a little bit to the roles of land grant universities. And so I just want to hear just kind of briefly, what do you see as the role of land grant universities, obviously, the University of Florida is one, and how have things changed over time? And where do you see their purpose in society?

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Scott Angle 04:37

Yes, some things have changed. And some haven't. I am a product of land grant universities. I've worked most of my career, either at one or I was in an organization that was supporting land grants across the country. They were started right after the Civil War. It was a growing nation. People realized that there was a need for Advanced Training. If we were going to continue our march forward, the focus of the Land Grant system was teach people to do things that were important for a growing nation. At the time, it was reported to be agriculture, the industrial arts, which was what we called engineering at the time, and the military arts, which ultimately grew into things like ROTC on campuses. So that's how these land grant universities started. They were meant to be comprehensive. They weren't. Because early on women were not admitted, certainly African Americans are not admitted into land grant universities. The 1894 system of universities was meant at that time to train African American students who were still denied admission into the first wave of the land grant universities, things have obviously changed and evolved over that time. But what hasn't changed has been the focus on providing graduates who are ready to become part of the economy of the country. So making sure that people are trained and things that are practical, they are needed, and they are forward looking. So that was that was important in 1862. It's I don't think the need as diminished at all, in 2022, and I think in 100 years, there will still be a need to be training people, for things that matter to an economy that maybe it won't be growing in 100 years from

now, maybe it'll be changing. But we still need people with practical knowledge, who can help lead the growth lead to change, whatever it might be. And so that's the strength of the land grant system. It's something I believe in as a as a product and a recipient and a beneficiary of the training. I think our country owes a lot of its success to the fact that we understood that education was important for everyone, not just the land of gentry. But if we were going to be successful, everyone had to have access to higher education. And so that's, that's what the land grant system did.

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Phillip Stokes 07:07

You mentioned training to meet the needs of a growing nation. And, you know, it seems like today, looking at the state of Florida and thinking about IFAS, the state of Florida is obviously growing exponentially just at a very fast rate. And you know, that phrase, you know, growing or training to meet the needs of a growing nation, that's probably more as true now, if not more true now than it's ever been. So thinking about Florida and some of the needs of the state, I mean, how is IFAS? How's life is meeting the needs of all communities throughout the state?

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Scott Angle 07:39

Let me talk let me separate this into different sections. Agriculture, agriculture is tough in Florida, we have a growing population we're adding 1000 people a day to the state, we have lots of environmental problems that some of which are partially related to agriculture, we're losing land at a rapid rate. On the other hand, we need to produce more food in Florida. And so how do we how do we juxtapose or how do we compare and contrast that need to grow more food in the state where there is less, there's less land every day, and there's going to be less water as urban populations demand more of that water as we're worried about water pollution. If we don't grow more food, this, this planet's in trouble, we've got double food production globally, a lot of the world is not gonna be able to grow more food, it could be due to climate change, lack of water pollution, policies, even there are areas that can simply not grow more food, it's too hot, or it's too dry, or it's too cold. A lot of the food production for the world is going to come from the southeastern part of the US, particularly as California dries up and begins to run out of water like we see every year. So we gotta grow more food. But it isn't just, it isn't just agriculture and food. So natural resources, we all understand that we need to protect our natural resources for all kinds of reasons. Some of them are that it's just the right thing to do. Some of that natural natural resources are appropriately protected, can actually improve the environment. So we know that farmer's fields now can be used to clean up water. So we can take polluted water, run it through a field and water coming out of that field is cleaner than the water going into that field. We don't want to lose our endangered species, whether they're plants or animals or even microbes that could be living in the soil. They all need to be protected. We need to protect our estuaries and our coastal areas. Agriculture is the second largest industry in the state but tourism is the number one industry and so if we have polluted waters in our bays, red tides, for examples, there are other toxic materials that are going to be in water. If that starts tearing away the tourists. Now we are also in big trouble. So all of these things are coming together, its agriculture, the environment and natural resources, they are becoming almost impossible to separate from each other. But if we're going to keep them positioned so that they are supportive of one another, that's going to be because of good technology, which is the that's the point of the spear for IFAS. That's what we do better than just about anyone else in the world. Now, having said that, IFAS is not just about agriculture,

the land natural resources, we're about people too. So we have departments that focus on healthy families, healthy living, good nutrition, food safety. These are issues that affect everyone in Florida. So when we have a food safety recall or food safety problem in Florida, that is exactly what IFAS is meant to either prevent from happening, or when it does, what can we do about it to remediate and so there we affect everyone in the state 100% of the population is impacted by a lot of what IFAS does. We teach financial literacy. In each county of the state, we have a county extension office in every every county that can deliver information all the way from Key West to Pensacola. We've got offices, we manage the the youth program called 4H that's it's one of the largest youth programs in the country, certainly in Florida. And that's a program of IFAS. And so we're in many schools, we have camps throughout the state we have after school programs, 4H is known traditionally for showing cattle and lambs and sheep. But for he has so much more than that. And an awful lot of kids and young people awful a lot of people in Florida, either currently a 4Her or have been through the 4H program. So it has huge impact on everyone the state. So give me an overview of what we do. But yes, our roots I don't mean that as a pun our roots are in agriculture. But we do so much more than that. Just one more example, telemedicine, there are a lot of places in Florida where it's hard to get to a medical center, particularly if you're not feeling well. We are putting telehealth medicine facilities in a number of our extension offices now. So you may be able to go to your county extension office connect remotely with a live doctor, talk to them, see them on the screen there, there is some capacity for actually looking in your ears and looking in your eyes and looking in your throat and taking your temperature and your blood pressure. So doctors can do a lot remotely, but mostly just talk to the patients, how are they doing? If they're going, you know, chemotherapy treatment, you got to check in regularly. Now flow can be done there too. So it's traditional work. But it's all of these new areas that we've been growing in extension and through life as for the last couple of years. It's a powerful organization for the state.

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Phillip Stokes 13:03

Yeah, no, that's great. And you mentioned, I mean, just so many strong, just components of IFAS. And, you know, the the thing I'm thinking about, of course, I'm a part of IFAS as well. And I'm thinking, you know, we need people in the state of Florida and beyond to have an imagination that's big enough to, to meet the challenges to adapt to some of these challenges, but also allow us to thrive, right. And I think I think scientists can do that as well as other people. But you know, people that are really looking for ways to find solutions and adapt. So thinking about how we do all of these things, how IFAS can do all of these things, and how land grant universities can do all these things, but also account for diversity, equity, inclusion and justice. That's one of the topics that we're, you know, talking a little bit about today on this podcast. So, you know, what does that mean to you? What does diversity, equity, inclusion and justice mean to you and your job and how IFAS responds to some of the challenges of, of the current times and the future?

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Scott Angle 14:07

Let's be honest about our profession. I think we all understand that IFAS is an Agricultural Organization first, agriculture has had a very difficult history with African Americans in particular, going back to slavery, and after that, sharecropping, but when I would be in schools, where there were primarily students of color African American students in particular, trying to try and recruit them into into the College of Agriculture, whether it was in Georgia or Maryland,

or, or Florida, and I would have these young people tell me, I love what you're saying, I see the opportunities, but I can't go home and tell my father or my mother that I want to go to a college of agriculture there. You know, that the family is trying to get away from that. We don't want to go you know, reverse direct family direction. And so we have a history we are not at nearly as diverse as we need to be, because of our history, the opportunities that have existed in agriculture have not been widely available to people of color. And so we have our challenges, we have more challenges than most other industries. And it's just, it is what it is. And I see this, I tried to look at things positively. And I see this actually as an opportunity to make future progress. So we're not diverse, we have not been inclusive, you all know, the access has not been there. But that is the history and that that that's our challenge. And that's, I think, what keeps IFAS moving forward in ways that we probably all talk about now the things that we can do, to actually change the situation. First of all, we all understand that have that we have an obligation as a state agency to make sure we serve all the citizens of the state and that access is equal. So I approach us as a manager, you know, my job is, you know, I'm not a thought police, I can't change or nor do I desire to change people's thinking. But I do lead an organization where I have the responsibility for making sure that we meet our mission of service to everyone in the state, that we offer opportunities equally to everyone in Florida and beyond. And that we find ways to make sure that we are serving all of the citizens of the state in a way that everyone deserves to have that access in the light of our history where we are coming from a place of where problems have existed. And so again, we have more to do than many other colleges, businesses, probably even universities, we acknowledge that but that's what drives us to make these changes. And we also understand that a diverse organization is a stronger organization. So we will be better when we are more diverse when we are not we're making progress. Our student body here at in IFAS and the College of Agriculture looks like the rest of the campus. Now, that's not nearly good enough. So the bar is pretty low in some ways. But we're at least not as bad as we were a decade ago, and trying to mimic what the rest of the state looks like. So progress has been made. But we have to make a whole lot more progress. And so one of the things I've asked every unit of IFAS to do, and we have over 50 units, their academic unit, their departments, they are research centers, they are support centers. But after the murder of George Floyd last year, and with the awareness of, I guess consciousness is the best way to put it. But really the call to action, both at the University and in IFAS, I challenged every unit to do better. And I didn't set up, I didn't say here are the 10 things everyone needs to do each. And if you check off these boxes, and you're done. But I realize that every unit is different. Every unit has different opportunities, different problems, different challenges. And so I said come back to me with a plan a concrete definite plan of how you are going to make your unit more responsive to the citizens of the state. You're going to be fairer and how you deliver those programs or not fairer, you'll be equally fair for everyone. And how you will, quote make your organization better and more reflective of our society and our and what we need to be doing as a public organization. Some of our units are in areas where the diversity is different. They didn't mimic the diversity but there are parts in their areas Northwest Florida, where the African American population is very low. But the population of immigrants is very high. And so the challenges were all different. And the solutions were all different. We are we are into that process. Now. We just went through a oh a coming together, right before Christmas, where we we shared our what what has worked, what hasn't worked, so that we can all learn from one another. We have made a lot of progress. And I feel good about our ability to hire more inclusively. It's a very targeted approach to do that. But we are making progress. We are we've got lots of programs now that are being used to help encourage African American students in particular to look at agriculture, the opportunities that exist in this industry. So Agricultural and Natural Resources, forestry fisheries, we've got programs targeting underrepresented minorities in all of those areas now. So progress has been made. We are far from where we need to be I first to acknowledge that but I do feel like we're on the

right road and that we are we know where we want to go. I wish we were getting there faster, but at least we're on the road and least we are mostly of all goodwill, and want to get to where we need to be and get there as quickly as possible.

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Phillip Stokes 20:11

You know, another thing I'm thinking about is, you know, we talked about diversity, equity, inclusion and justice. And you mentioned the murder of George Floyd, but I'm just thinking of justice in a way that it's not righting wrongs, it's preventing wrongs from happening ever again. And, and of course, you know, that's kind of an extreme example, very unfortunate one, but what are some of the things that IFAS can do to just improve the landscape and make things a bit more accessible and inclusive?

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Scott Angle 20:43

First of all, making sure that our workforce looks like the state, represents all the various demographics of the state, so that we are sensitive to those issues, that people of color, in particular face in Florida and throughout the rest of the country. So we need to do more hiring of people who better reflect those that we are serving, and we, we understand that that's, you know, we're doing everything we can to try to send sensitize our own employees to many of these issues, in you know, it's reading books and giving lectures. But really, you need to be working side by side with individuals who have experience, whether it's persecution or discrimination or other things directly. And that's, that's the best way to sensitize those people who are to who, who would look like me, for example, but then make sure that because of the individuals that we're bringing into the organization, they actually are, they're already there, they have the sensitivity, they have the connections, they know what the needs are, for the most part know, or at least certainly better than the rest of us would. And so just making the organization more diverse is probably the first thing to do. Then secondly, I mentioned sensitivity, we don't call this sensitivity training. But rather, just make sure that everyone understands what these issues are, and what various communities of Florida have to face, because our job is to get that information to them. And if we don't understand what the issues are, how can we do that? How can we deliver information to people that we don't understand? We don't know what they need. And we don't know how they receive that information. I'll give you one good example here, we've gone through some of our curriculum within our classes here in IFAS College of Agriculture. And we've tried to look at it from someone else's perspective, in what messages were in, could be a science class. But what messages were in that were in the science? Was it showing that, you know, in agronomy, for example, it wasn't just all white males who made contributions to the improvement of crop growth in this country. There were a number of African Americans who made significant contributions, so or the words that we use that they turn off people, and maybe because they were couched in, you know, old rhetoric, that just doesn't work anymore. So we've even looked at some of the words that we use to make sure that, that we weren't turning off people, because when we start turning off people, then that's when they decide they don't want to be part of our college, our industry, our IFAS, the university, or when we do turn off people. And so we are we're really looking at thinking about are we going to look like the rest of the state? But also, are we going to talk to the people the state in ways that they can identify with and will appreciate?



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Phillip Stokes 23:48

So, you know, what are some of the current initiatives or I'll pair that with current initiatives or future ideas, things that that you're looking to do now and in the future, on this topic?

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Scott Angle 24:01

Well, as I said, every one, every one of our units will be different. Because the challenges and the opportunities are all different. The communities that you work with are different, even your own employees, or they may be more or less diverse, we're trying to go in and more diverse direction, but that, you know, that takes time. We can't make all of these changes immediate. They so I mentioned one where we're looking at our classes and the words that we use in our classes to make sure we're not turning off people to the opportunities exist in this great it's the number two industry in the state agriculture. We don't want to turn people off to the great paying jobs that are are found here. We have some of our research centers, for example, are in areas that are not very diverse, but there in some of them. We tend to have we actually have we actually have more diversity at our research center than we do in the community. So here we're trying to flip it over little bit and trying to showcase the diversity that we have with the community to help not just change our own organization, but also help change some of the communities that we work in. In particular, we have just tremendous. I think IFAS has more national diversity than any similar college of agriculture around the country, we've got people from all over the world. And when we look at our diversity, that is one area where we do shine and diversity is having international faculty, staff and students. And so we'd like to show that off when we can, because it helps people who may be living in communities where they've never known someone from another country, to see that they're new, these are brilliant scientists that are living and working right next to them, that are making differences in their community. They're bringing new technologies and helping the economy of that community. And so it just it lifts up the entire community, we win, we can showcase those areas of diversity where that we are proud of. So that'd be that'd be another example of where we are where we're working hard 4H as it's been traditionally known as a rural program, here in Florida, but also nationally. And so we're trying to integrate 4H and its curriculums of schools, whether it's in class or after school or summer camps, and ways that are culturally appropriate for cities, primarily suburban and urban areas, we're not going to have kids in four h who are out of Tampa showing cattle. You know, that just doesn't work in the city. But there are plenty of other things. You need a you need a focal area, you need a focal project, it can be an environmental project, it can be public speaking, it can be understanding civics and politics. So we're helping young people also focus on those things that are appropriate for their communities and will work within our community. So we're growing 4H right now. As a result of that, it sure it grew out of a very rural traditional program. And we still do an awful lot of that. And it's a great program, by the way. But we are expanding. We're not taking away from anything else that we're doing. But we're expanding into other areas now, other areas using tactics that are different, you know, like environmental education.

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Phillip Stokes 27:31

Yeah. So I have one more question. And then I'll open it up to if you have any closing thoughts. You know, when I spoke with Dr. Andre Johnson, of course, our new dean of extension, one of the things he mentioned is that, you know, he wants to see extension, just being a service oriented organization, and, and really meeting the needs of the community. And so, do you

foresee IFAS becoming even more ingrained in kind of everyday life for Floridians? And, you know, you mentioned of, you know, some of the great minds and some of the, I think I might have said problem solvers or something, but the people that are doing research, that are doing incredible things, to better to better life in ag and other industries. Do you think that will become a little more mainstream, if this will be a little more in the minds of of everyday Floridians in the future?

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Scott Angle 28:27

I hope so. Um, that's why we hired Dr. Johnson. He came in with that proposal and goal, let me say, first of all, we're not going to walk away from the ag community, it's still the second largest industry in the state. There plenty of challenges in agriculture, whether it's bad national trade policy, environmental considerations, low commodity prices, we're, we're challenged in agriculture, yet, we still have to grow more food. So you know, farmers can sell out and make a lot of money these days. But then we just lose the ability to grow more food. And I think in the long run, that's a bad, you know, it's not appropriate. So we will grow our programs who will grow our programs to serve more citizens of Florida, the telemedicine areas, one area, there's a lot of financial support for those programs. They're not it's not taking away from anything. It is only adding to but when we start talking about nutritional programs, helping people understand and in more urban areas about the the need for appropriate food consumption. That ties right back to agriculture, too, because we need to grow the food we need to be making sure we're growing food that is more nutritious and safer. And so you can't even separate whether it's teaching nutrition in downtown Orlando, or what goes on north of Okeechobee where we're growing tomatoes. In some ways, it's all the same goal. Make sure that people are healthy and happy and that's really the bottom line for IFAS. That's it It's agriculture's are history, we're now doing a lot of other things. But it's really to make sure that the people of Florida are both healthy and happy. And when I say happy, that means, number one, they can make a good living, and be able to support themselves and their family, but also being well fed, and you know, having good programs for your youth and helping people when they retire, understand financial literacy and how they can better plan for retirement and better live in retirement. So I do believe it's the largest organization of its kind in the United States. We serve an awful lot of people, but hopefully in the future will serve even more.

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Phillip Stokes 30:43

Any last thoughts you want to add? Before we close out the interview and the conversation?

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Scott Angle 30:49

Well, we have plenty of challenges in Florida, I moved to Florida, by the way, because I knew of the many problems that the state has, but also the many opportunities that Florida has. And I will say that having lived in Washington, DC and Maryland and Georgia and Missouri and few other states, I've never seen a state where there's a belief that the future will be better. I've lived in the Northeast, and in some states, there's just this pessimism that things aren't gonna be any better in the future, maybe worse. Here in Florida, maybe it's just because of the sunshine. But people tend to think that it's pretty good today, but it's going to be better in the future. And we acknowledge our problems. We acknowledge our, our shortcomings, but that's



the first step into making things better. So there is a there's there's vibrant discussion about the problems that we have in Florida. But what that leads to, is a consensus that we're going to make things better IFAS is gonna be a big part of that because of our, our support we have around the state and the fact that we do have influence on so many people. But I'm here I see it every day that it's a state that believes that we have challenges, but we're going to overcome them and things will get better. And so I've only been here a year and a half. But I wake up every day just being happy that grateful that I'm in a state that has a view of the future that is positive.

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Phillip Stokes 32:25

That concludes today's episode, which is our final episode in the extended dialogue series. I want to thank Dr. Scott Angle for being a guest on science by the slice. If you'd like to learn more about some of the efforts of UF/IFAS to improve inclusion, diversity, equity and access, check out the show notes of this episode. I'll provide web links there. Be sure to subscribe to Science by the Slice on your preferred podcast app. If you have any questions about the podcast or if you'd like to share any feedback, you can email us at [piecenter@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:piecenter@ifas.ufl.edu). That is piecenter, all one word, at i f a s.ufl.edu. I want to thank everyone involved with Science by the Slice, Valentina Castano, Michaela Kandzer, Rachel Rabon, Sidney Honeycutt, Ricky Telg, Ashley McLeod-Morin and Alena Poulin. I'm Phillip Stokes. Thanks for listening to Science by the Slice.