Introduction
The agriculture industry is seeing a decrease in the number of beginning farms, operations that have been in existence for 10 years or less, across the United States. According to the most recent Census of Agriculture by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), beginning farms make up approximately a quarter of the 2.1 million total farms across the country. This is a 20 percent drop between the 2007 and the 2012 censuses (2012 Census Highlights, Beginning Farmer, 2017). At the same time, the average age of the U.S. farmer is increasing and is now at 58 (Williamson, J. & Williams, R., 2017). In order to ensure food security in the future, the younger generation needs to step into the production agriculture industry. However, young farmers face many challenges with costs of farming on the rise. 61 percent of U.S. farmers work some days off the farm, and 52.2 percent have a non-farm job (USDA, 2012). In order to ensure food security in the future, the younger generation needs to step into the production agriculture industry. However, young farmers face many challenges with costs of farming on the rise. 61 percent of U.S. farmers work some days off the farm, and 52.2 percent have a non-farm job (USDA, 2012). In order to ensure food security in the future, the younger generation needs to step into the production agriculture industry. However, young farmers face many challenges with costs of farming on the rise. 61 percent of U.S. farmers work some days off the farm, and 52.2 percent have a non-farm job (USDA, 2012).

Methodology
In order to accomplish this project, the author partnered with Cal Poly’s Brock Center for Agricultural Communication for this project so together, they planned the logistics of the event. A date, time, and location were all set through Cal Poly’s University Scheduling and Office of the Registrar. The event could be held on Cal Poly’s campus in order to best accommodate students and faculty, the target audience. Next, the author began contacting potential sponsors for the documentary screening. The goal was to have the majority of the refreshments for the event covered without incurring costs to the screening. To encourage attendance and promote ticket reservations, the author chose to include a giveaway for the first 50 people to register online. After networking and contacting several companies and individuals, the author received donations of $60. 12 oz milks from Alexandra Family Eco Dairy Farms to be used for the giveaway. Popcorn from Scott Brownell for all attendees. Kerbels from Masa Sushi & Grill and Whitfield Kombecha for all attendees. In addition to these items, the Agricultural Education & Communication Department provided cookies, plates, napkins, cups, and decorations.

The next step in planning the documentary screening was setting up ticket reservations and advertising. The author selected Eventbrite, a website that allows users to set up events and sell tickets. Although attendees were not charged for the event, the author set up ticket reservations in order to keep track of approximate attendance to expect, which assisted in planning refreshments. Additionally, the gathered information email was added to the Brock Center’s e-newsletter list for future events, activities, and agricultural education opportunities.

To advertise, the author designed a flyer that was printed out and hung throughout the Agricultural Education & Communication Building (Building 10) at Cal Poly. The flyer was also sent to the Agriculture Department and distributed to their staff, students, and faculty. The College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFS) Dean’s office administration sent the flyer to all CAFES students, staff, and faculty. The students who work at the Brock Center’s e-newsletter list for future events, activities, and agricultural education opportunities.

The last steps to planning the event included outlining the day of event schedule, setting up refreshments, running operations, sending out a survey after the event to get feedback from attendees, and writing a blog post about the screening for the Brock Center.

Background
The Farmers For America documentary addresses the connection between producers and consumers, changing market demands, and challenges that young farmers face while thriving in the stories of innovative young farmers. The documentary was produced by Masa Sushi & Grill, a nonprofit, mikewhaleWORKS Foundation (Farmers For America, 2018).

The farmer partnered with Cal Poly’s Brock Center for Agricultural Communication for this project so together, they could use this opportunity to raise awareness about the Brock Center’s mission. The Brock Center’s mission is to “create a bridge of communication between the agricultural industry, the media and the public” (Brock Center for Agricultural Communication, 2018).

Results
Although 168 people registered online and reserved tickets, a total of 52 people actually attended the Farmers For America documentary screening. This was one of the most significant challenges faced with planning this event because it showed the number of people reserving refreshments and event space. The free ticket reservation meant that signing-up came with low investment, so there were no repercussions for those who reserved a spot and then decided not to attend.

Survey results included the following: 97% of survey respondents said they were likely to attend a similar event in the future. 71% of survey respondents would have liked to see a film representative present for a discussion. It was an eye opening to realize that there are big issues present and alive in the farming world and really the solution to many of those issues was coming together as a community and being conscientious about the decisions we make.”- Cal Poly Career Counselor

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References


Recommended survey questions and answers included the following: 97% of survey respondents said they were likely to attend a similar event in the future. 71% of survey respondents would have liked to see a film representative present for a discussion. It was an eye opening to realize that there are big issues present and alive in the farming world and really the solution to many of those issues was coming together as a community and being conscientious about the decisions we make.”- Cal Poly Career Counselor

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