

# **PREPARING FOR CHALLENGE AND CHANGE: A LONG-RANGE PLAN TO GUIDE THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA EXTENSION'S JOURNEY INTO THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY**

Howard Ladewig<sup>1</sup>

October, 2002

## **Introduction**

Long-range planning is a process by which an organization envisions its future and develops the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future. The future, however, often begins with a look to the past. By reflecting on its purpose, vision, and strategies for carrying out its mission, an organization can better determine how well-prepared it is to cope with the changing world.

In preparation for the journey into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, University of Florida (UF) Extension is calling upon stakeholders, targeted audiences (current and potential), community leaders, county Extension Advisory Committees and Extension faculty to become involved in UF Extension's long-range planning process. The valued perspectives that result when stakeholders, targeted audiences and Extension faculty come together should provide the foundation from which UF Extension can address the needs and issues of those Extension is charged to serve. In addition, the richness of the ideas resulting from such interaction should enable Extension to think broadly in addressing the economic, environmental and life quality issues that face all communities.

## **Involving People in Long-range Planning**

As UF Extension undertakes a long-range planning process that covers the period 2004-2007, a series of listening sessions will be conducted with a variety of individuals and groups. Participants of these listening sessions will be asked to help translate Extension's purpose, vision and strategy into tangible future results. In support of that task, listening sessions will be conducted with the following groups:

1. Target audiences of Extension programs (both current and potential). This group of ultimate users must find relevance in our products and services or they will not use them. One way to insure relevance of purpose and direction of our educational programs is to ask those for whom such programs are targeted.

---

<sup>1</sup> Extension Program Leader, Program Development and Evaluation and Professor, Agricultural Education and Communication, University of Florida

2. Extension advisory committees. Individual committee members who understand both the Extension program development process and the needs and concerns of their community can be a most valuable asset. In addition, their involvement in planning can foster greater commitment to programs they help develop.
3. Research, Teaching and Extension faculty. One of the long-standing missions of the land-grant university is to enhance economic well-being and quality of life of those the university is charged to serve. Keeping people abreast of current and emerging research and the educational experiences resulting from adaptations of that research is crucial to this mission.
4. Stakeholders of local, state and national priorities. Stakeholders (external and internal) play a key role in providing financial and other support for Extension programs. Listening sessions provide an opportunity to both obtain their input and make them aware of effective programs and changes/challenges that may impact Extension.

## **County Listening Sessions**

The input from targeted audiences, stakeholders and County Extension Advisory Committees will be collected through listening sessions conducted within each county and sponsored by the County Extension Advisory Committee. Local citizens who are knowledgeable of the community—its important features, changes impacting it and what the community values—will be invited to participate in their county's listening session. The purpose of each listening session is to develop a community vision<sup>2</sup> that begins with answers to the following questions:

1. What do we value about our community?
2. What trends and issues are impacting what we value?
3. If current directions persist, is this where we want to go? If not, are there local resources that can best address each trend or issue?
4. Of those issues and/or concerns that can best be addressed through the expertise of Extension educators, what priority should be placed on each issue or concern?

Following the county listening session, county Extension faculty will work with the County Extension Overall Advisory Committee to develop a long-range plan. Each long-range plan should reflect the needs of currently targeted audiences and the emerging issue priorities identified at the listening sessions. In addition,

---

<sup>2</sup> Steven Ames, "Community Visioning: Planning for the Future in Oregon's Local Communities." <http://www.asu.edu/caed/proceedings97/ames.html>

results of other appropriate county planning sessions may be used to supplement the county Extension long-range plan.

Each plan should contain one or more long-range objective statements that reflect projected directions and priorities of county programming during the next four years. Long-range objective statements should be considered as projections because change and challenge may be “just around the curve” on this journey into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### **Academic Departments and REC Listening Sessions**

While counties are carrying out “county” listening sessions, faculty holding appointments in departments and/or Research and Education Centers (RECs) will be asked to participate in internal scans of the Extension program components of their departments and/or RECs. The purpose of each scan is to review the unit’s mission and purpose as it relates to Extension education, describe Extension programs of excellence in support of UF Extension’s mission, and identify and prioritize trends and transitional issues that could affect both traditional and potential audiences impacted by those issues.

Each department and REC is encouraged to invite appropriate county-based faculty to participate in department and REC listening sessions. In addition, results of other appropriate planning sessions may be used to supplement the internal scans of the departments and RECs.

### **Regional Listening Sessions**

County faculty will present their county long-range objective statements to Extension administration in “regional” listening sessions. Academic departments and RECs also will participate in the regional listening sessions and present results of their internal scans.

Based on the county long-range objective statements and the internal scans of departments and RECs, UF Extension will formulate a statewide long-range plan that reflects those educational priorities and future directions. The expertise of interdisciplinary teams will be called upon to develop educational materials in support of these educational priorities. Each educational priority will be reflected by a statewide Extension long-range objective statement.

### **Development of Statewide Long-range Objectives**

UF Extension has a long history of providing science-based educational programs designed to enhance economic well-being, environmental stewardship, and quality of life of individuals, families and communities throughout Florida. In

developing these programs, faculty across the state have drawn upon a vast array of research-based information in developing programming in such administrative program areas as agriculture; natural resources; aquatic, coastal and aquaculture; 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, energy extension, and community resource development.

Interdisciplinary teams of faculty will be asked to review county long-range objective statements and categorize them according to administrative program area and focus of issue (economic, environmental, life quality, or some combination). Working collectively, the interdisciplinary teams will be challenged to provide further classification that would enable county objective statements to fit into one of 5 to 8 statewide long-range objective statements. These statewide objective statements, in turn, will reflect UF Extension educational priorities and future directions for 2004-2007.

Each county, in turn, will be asked to review and comment on the listing of their county long-range objective statements by statewide objective. Once agreement is reached on the assignment of county long-range objectives to statewide long-range objectives, a statewide listing of county long-range objectives by statewide long-range objective will be made available to all counties.

To assist faculty in carrying out educational programs in support of the educational priorities for 2004-2007, the expertise of interdisciplinary teams will be called upon to develop educational materials in support of each statewide Extension long-range objective statement. Each team also will be asked to develop program objectives in support of each long-range objective. The criteria for a program objective would include the following components:

- Description of primary and secondary target audiences (people to whom change recommendations will be directed are known as primary audience. Secondary target audiences are those who could be affected by the changes made by the primary target audience).
- Situation statement (general description of economic, environmental, and/or quality of life conditions facing the targeted audiences).
- Projected impact of recommended changes on economic, environmental, and/or quality of life conditions of the targeted audience and the larger community.
- Listing of possible subjects to be taught to the targeted audiences.
- Projected changes to be made by the primary target audience. Possible change measures would be developed to assess
  - ◆ Attitudes formed

- ◆ Knowledge developed
- ◆ Skills acquired
- ◆ Behavioral changes
- ◆ Adoption of Best Management Practices
- ◆ Adoption of appropriate technology

## **Evaluation and Accountability**

In addition to helping translate Extension's purpose, vision and strategy into tangible future results, the educational priorities provide a framework for program evaluation and public accountability. From a program evaluation perspective, the educational priorities guide program evaluation efforts to measure the effectiveness of Extension programs in achieving their long-range objectives.

From a public accountability perspective, the educational priorities inform stakeholders of the projected value to Floridians of its educational programming efforts (audiences targeted, types of program activities to be conducted, outcomes expected, and impacts projected). In the publication, "Colleges of Agriculture at the Land Grant Universities: Public Service and Public Policy," the Committee on the Future of Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture<sup>3</sup> wrote that the expenditure of federal funds is justified for research and extension that meets two basic criteria:

1. it addresses national needs and priorities and
2. it is aimed at generating public goods

The classic characteristics of public goods applied to educational information means that use of the information by any one person need not diminish the quantity used by anyone else and it is impossible to confine the benefits of the information to selected persons (Ahern, Yee, and Bottum)<sup>4</sup>. Examples of public goods in the context of the food and agricultural system<sup>5</sup> include

1. Fundamental knowledge (embodied in best management practices)
2. Enhancing environmental quality
3. Knowledge about food and product safety risks and protection from undue risks
4. Improve dietary health

---

<sup>3</sup> Colleges of Agriculture at the Land Grant Universities: Public Service and Public Policy. Committee on the Future of Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture, Board on Agriculture, National Research Council. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press (1996).

<sup>4</sup> Ahern, Mary; Jet Yee, and John Bottum. "Regional trends in Extension resources." Paper presented at the 2002 Southern Agricultural Economics Association Meeting, (Feb.), Orlando, FL.

<sup>5</sup> Committee on the Future of Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture, Board on Agriculture (1966).

5. Protection against genuine national food security risks
6. Knowledge essential to the accomplishment of public goals such as social equity, economic efficiency and informed public policy making.

The linking of both program evaluation and public accountability to the long-range plan enables University of Florida Extension to insure that it is “doing things right” and “doing the right things.” Program evaluation provides important feedback to Extension on the efficiency and effectiveness of its programs in addressing the needs of people (doing things right). Public accountability enables stakeholders to see that Extension is addressing local, state and national needs and priorities and contributing to the well-being of societal groups (doing the right things).