Unifas Advisory Committee  
Minutes for July 25, 2006

Attending: Richard Miles, Phyllis Gilreath, Tom Obreza, Betty Miller, Bob Swett, Jeff Norcini, Glenn Israel, Bryan Terry

The minutes from June 19, 2006, were approved.

Extension curriculum builder revision proposal – Bryan Terry reviewed a draft of curriculum builder guidelines for the Ag Profitability and the Sustainable Use of Environmental Resources focus area. Terry said the guidelines include definitions for each component, as well as the substantive elements (i.e., target audiences, topics, etc.) for the focus area. He noted that it utilizes the logic model framework. He reported that workshops are being planned for August and September to have the focus area teams review and massage the curriculum builder categories. The categories for topics and subjects are based on the USDA’s knowledge areas while target audiences/primary audiences, outcomes/indicators and impacts have been re-worked by Terry.

Tom Obreza said that a weakness of Unifas has been the non-uniformity of the curriculum builder; he added that the proposal helps the system but some users will not like the structure; Obreza asked how well does the USDA’s classification fit Extension and Bryan Terry said that PDEC expects to make some changes or additions at the subject level for 4-H and other focus areas; Terry added that adding topics would be undesirable because it will complicate reporting to USDA.

Bob Swett said he liked the proposed structure and noted that the subjects may not be complete for some focus areas; Bryan Terry emphasized the role of the focus areas teams in reviewing the content for their area to ensure a good fit; Richard Miles said consistency is needed and suggested providing examples (e.g., identify what fits under “forage management”); Jeff Norcini said this would be a major improvement; Norcini asked about objectives and Bryan Terry answered that the outcomes also serve as objectives; Phyllis Gilreath said the focus area impacts were more realistic and she supported the revised structure.

Glenn Israel reported that that some DEDs had suggested adding a text box for separate objectives; No committee members voice support for this option; Betty Miller suggested a need to emphasize the local situation statement instead and making required.

Betty Miller suggested that Bryan Terry re-order sections of the curriculum builder guidelines to improve the flow and organization; Phyllis Gilreath reported that some people, especially new agents, are confused by terminology and they need help understanding “goal areas,” “focus teams” and other terms.

Tom Obreza observed that the primary purpose of Unifas is to provide the database needed for federal accountability reports and, secondarily, to create individual reports; he noted that the latter can be edited and that standardization is needed for the former.

Glenn Israel summarized that the committee consensus was in support of the proposed model for revising the curriculum builder and that a mechanism for focus area teams to add or change topics/subjects should be provided.
Annual report issues – Glenn Israel reported on meetings with Extension Administration/Supervision and the DEDs and he noted that the concerns focused on reports containing too many pages, difficulty in seeing the agent’s work on team programs, and the lack of information about advisory committee involvement and parity participation of clientele. He noted that factors contributing to these concerns were 1) the report structure (i.e., information that is included or excluded), 2) database design which provides the flexibility to report as an individual or a team, 3) limited understanding of programmatic roles (i.e., team member versus resource person) and 4) incomplete or inaccurate reporting by faculty; Israel identified several options for addressing the concerns and factors.

Tom Obreza said the DEDs could solve most of the problem by working closer with agents; Betty Miller agreed that information about advisory committees was needed and that the parity participation table should be added to the annual report; Miller noted that she had no problems with her one-person programs and added that agents who have problems were on team programs; she said new agents were having difficulty selecting appropriate categories; Phyllis Gilreath has team programs and she noted that most people enter information into the program without communicating with other team members.

Tom Obreza said federal report is to justify the organization, which is based on team reporting; Bob Swett said teams are important but there needs to be more training on what a team is and how it works; Swett added that he would like to see the program summary table include the number of days expended for each program.

Glenn Israel summarized the committee discussion on the options for addressing the DEDs’ concerns as showing more support for 1) streamlining annual reports by dropping information that does not pertain to the specific individual and 2) conducting train-the-trainer workshops on program design and faculty roles (member vs resource) while there was little enthusiasm for removing the capacity for team programs from the Unifas database design.

Modification to the Grants and Contracts table – Glenn Israel introduced a DED recommendation to include a text box for describing the individual’s role. The committee discussion identified additional options: 1) add a “my dollars” field, 2) add a “my contribution” text box, and 3) report contributions under extension, research or teaching activities. No consensus was reached and the discussion will resume at the next meeting.