CHOICES' *Followup On Cooperative Extensio*

INTEGRATION OF RESEARCH A

It's A Priority At Penn State

by Lamartine Hood,
Wayne Schutjer, and Donald Evans

PENN State Cooperative Extension is responding to a growing demand for educational programs that serve all 12 million Pennsylvanians. Extension's expanding clientele confront critical social, economic, and environmental problems. Funding solutions to these problems will require increasingly sophisticated, multidisciplinary, scientific research efforts. In response, Penn State's College of Agriculture has implemented an administrative structure that fosters the integration of research and extension and is developing new program links with other colleges within the university. These organizational changes help assure that Penn State is increasingly responsive to the informal education needs of all Pennsylvanians.

Changes In Organization

In the College of Agriculture at Penn State, academic units (11 departments and the School of Forest Resources) now coordinate both research and extension activities. This arrangement helps ensure that Penn State's extension programs use research findings and that Penn State's research projects support priority extension education programs. Coordination of research and extension by academic and regional units likewise enhances administrative support for faculty and helps extension educators become acquainted with research activities conducted throughout the University, not just in the College of Agriculture.

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It wasn't always this way. The present approach reflects several organizational changes undertaken to strengthen the research-extension linkages. A separate extension program-planning system coordinated by state extension program leaders was eliminated. Academic and regional leaders subsequently assumed responsibility for coordinating both extension and research programs. Pennsylvania's five regional extension directors assumed total responsibility for county-level educational activities while retaining responsibility to select staff and to adjust salaries.

Other lines of responsibility were streamlined and clarified. Prior to the restructuring, the regional extension directors and state program leaders reported to the associate dean for extension. Within the new structure, both the regional and the academic unit leaders report directly to the Dean of the College of Agriculture. In practice, as well as on paper, the Dean is also the Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station and Director of Cooperative Extension.

Today Penn State's College of Agriculture has 17 administrative units—12 traditional academic units and five regional extension units (Figure 1). The academic units include faculty with extension education, resident education, and research responsibilities. The five regional extension units include county extension staff. Today, county staff members are primarily concerned with extension education; however, in the future they are likely to be involved in both research and resident education.

The new administrative structure strengthens the coordination of research and extension programs in two ways. First, the academic unit leaders are responsible for coordinating both extension and research activities within their units. Second, the regional directors are the direct link between counties within their regions and academic units for both research and extension program issues.

College Program Planning Committees

With any management system there is a need to identify the highest priority issues and to efficiently allocate resources to address those issues. To assist in that process, Penn State's College of Agriculture established 12 priority issues:

- Integrated Animal Management
- Integrated Crop Management
- Improved Human Nutrition and Health
- Food Safety
- Water Quality
- Management of Natural Resources

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Lamartine Hood and Wayne Schutjer, in the Second Quarter 1990 issue of *CHOICES*, pointed out that land-grant universities are being challenged to contribute solutions to social and economic problems of our society. They argued that cooperative extension alone has the experience with various audiences, the credibility with local and state officials and the practical operating approach required to meet the challenge.

In this issue they are joined by their colleague Donald Evans in describing the Penn State approach to cooperative extension activities. And Patrick G. Boyle, the Chancellor of University of Wisconsin-Extension and Director of Cooperative Extension at that University discusses how extension is approached in Wisconsin. ***– Editor***

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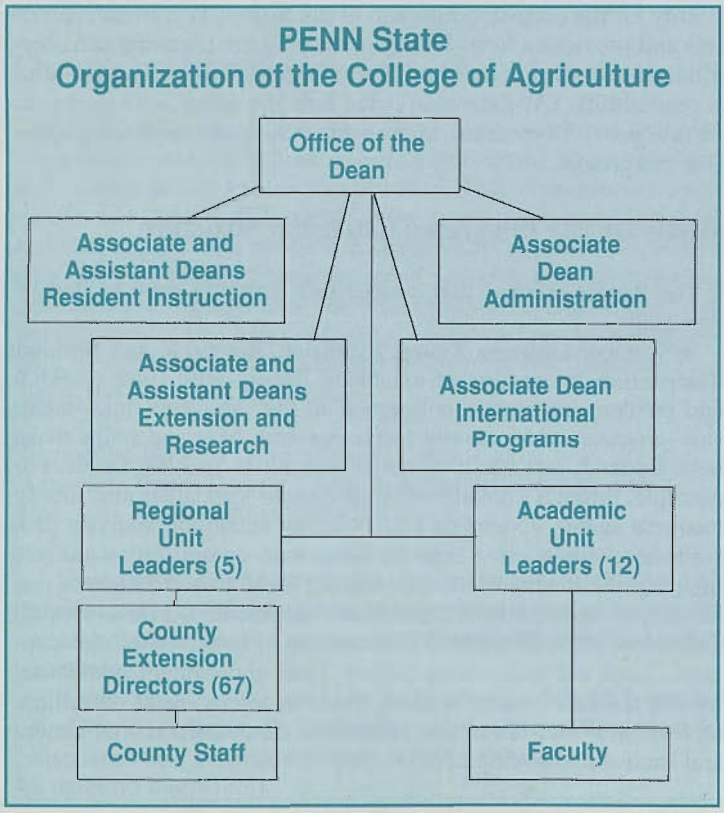
- Economic and Social Viability of Communities
- Family Social and Economic Well-Being
- Development of Human Capital
- Animal Health
- Sustainable Agriculture System
- Community Solid Waste Management

These priorities are applicable to both research and extension activities. The issues do not, however, represent the totality of the College's research and informal education program. Issue committees for each priority area help to identify needs and provide a forum to discuss proposed education and research activities. County extension staff and campus faculty with extension and/or research appointments serve on the committees. An academic or regional unit leader chairs each committee. The committee chairs serve as the major link between the Penn State extension program and USDA's Extension Service. The unit leaders are responsible for the allocation and oversight of resources to support the research and educational activities identified by the program committees. As a group, they ensure congruence between priorities and program activity.

An associate or assistant dean for research and extension co-chair each committee. This arrangement provides a programmatic link to the Dean's office and helps to ensure interdisciplinary activity. Within the revised administrative structure, the associate and assistant deans are part of the Office of the Dean. They have program oversight and enhancement responsibilities in both research and extension.

Under the new organization, the State 4-H Office was transferred from the associate dean for extension to the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education. Four-H is being integrated into an expanded youth development program. The Youth Program Coordinating Council, comprised of the head of the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education and the five regional directors, establishes policies for youth programs.



Changes In Counties, Too

Two changes at the county level support the integration of research and extension within academic units. These changes also increase the involvement of the regional directors in the development and management of county programs. First, the position of the county extension director (CED) was assigned greater responsibility for the allocation of local educational resources. The CEDs now coordinate county programs related to all 12 state priority program areas. Previously, this type of authority was held by state level extension program leaders in the four "traditional" areas—agriculture, family living, 4-H, and community development.

Second, to help provide an adequate staff for an increasingly complex, research-based extension program, multicounty extension staff supplement those located in single counties. Multicounty agents have a more specialized disciplinary perspective and broader geographic responsibility than traditional extension staff. Many have research experience and function as regional subject-matter specialists. Furthermore, all extension staff are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities for specialization through intercounty and multistate cooperation, and additional graduate education.

Links To The Broader University

When agriculture and a rural population dominated the nation, the research base for extension education programs generally could be found within colleges of agriculture. However, these colleges do not have the full range of expertise necessary to deal with many of the new issues. Agricultural scientists continue to develop improved technology and management practices to support the profitability and quality of our food and fiber system. In addition, their expertise is critical to effectively addressing new issues such as groundwater quality and humane-profitable animal care.

But extension educators increasingly must have access to the research output of the total university. Educational programs in community and human capital development, family social and economic well-being, water quality, human nutrition, food safety, and natural resource management require expertise in addition to the faculty of agricultural colleges. Fortunately, valuable research in these areas is conducted in other colleges such as education, liberal arts, engineering, medicine, science, and health and human development. The challenge is to effectively tap it.

Penn State, therefore, earmarks College of Agriculture research funds to support the collaboration of scientists in the College of Agriculture with those in the other colleges of the university. These funds are allocated through a request-for-proposal, peer-review process that includes scientists from other colleges, as well as those in the College of Agriculture. In addition, the head of Penn State's Department of Nutrition, who is part of the College of Health and Human Development, serves as one of the assistant directors of the Agricultural Experiment Station.

In Conclusion

The genius of the land grant model is the linking together of extension and research. That link must be maintained if the success of the past 75 years of extension is to be repeated during the next 75 years. As the problems facing people at the local level become more complex and diffuse, each state must find its own solution to the problem of maintaining a strong research base for extension education programs. We feel that the administrative and program structure introduced at Penn State does that and will enable the College to meet the emerging educational challenges facing all 12 million Pennsylvania citizens. C