

# **Report on the University of Minnesota Extension Service**

## **Legislative Language**

Minnesota Session Laws 2001, 1<sup>st</sup> Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 1, Section 4, Subd. 4

*The Board of regents of the University of Minnesota is requested to review and analyze the programmatic mission, scope, and cost-effectiveness of the Minnesota Extension Service with the goal of assuring that the Minnesota Extension Service offers programs and services effectively and efficiently and within the scope of its current defined mission. The board is requested to report, by February 15, 2002, to the governor and the chairs of the higher education finance committees of the legislature with recommendations for priorities in the Extension Service.*

## **Part 1: Mission, Scope, Niche, and Vision**

### **Extension's Mission Statement:**

*Making a difference by connecting community needs and University resources to address critical issues in Minnesota*

Extension in Minnesota was established as part of the University of Minnesota by the state legislature in 1909. It followed the main principles of the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862, which stated that land-grant universities were to be created across the country to serve as “the people’s universities, bringing the research and knowledge of the campus to the people where they live and work.” The Morrill Land-Grant Act called for democratic access to higher education, both for students earning degrees and for citizens who could make use of life-long learning.

The county partnership with Extension was formed in 1913 when the Minnesota State Legislature empowered counties to appropriate money for “county agent work.” The following year Congress passed the Smith Lever Act of 1914, creating an Extension network among all land-grant institutions in the nation.

Extension, both in Minnesota and nationally, was developed to respond to early 20<sup>th</sup> century needs when the economy was dominated by agriculture, the population was primarily rural, and the industrial revolution was changing all aspects of life. The early authorizing language reflected those conditions and named agriculture and a rural focus in its charge to bring the research of the university to the people. Inherent in this was

Extension's fundamental purpose of leveraging the vast resources of higher learning in order to respond to the grass roots needs of local communities.

The mission statement of the University of Minnesota Extension Service cited earlier recognizes this original core mission that established land-grant institutions and the Extension system. It says that Extension will be a catalyst for connecting Minnesota citizens and communities to the wealth of relevant knowledge and research residing within various schools and disciplines of the University, for the purpose of addressing critical issues. It is consistent with the values that drove the Smith Lever legislation, which are equally relevant today, and it recognizes changes in our world over the past 87 years. These changes call for Extension to carry out its historic mission in ways that can best address the critical needs of today and the future.

### **Scope:**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges the University of Minnesota Extension Service to be better than it has ever been. As Minnesota is changing, Extension is also changing in order to remain relevant, vital, and focused on the critical needs of Minnesota citizens and communities. The fundamental nature of Extension is the same, but the scope and audience have changed in response to changing demographics, economics, and needs of the state. In 1990 the state legislature defined Extension work as "educational programs and services provided by extension agents in the areas of agriculture, economic and human development, community leadership, and environment and natural resources" (MN statute 39.331). Using that authority as a guide today, Extension's scope is defined to meet contemporary needs and deliver contemporary programs within three overarching arenas:

- **Community development and vitality**  
Enhancing Minnesota's economic, social, civic, and technological capacity
- **Land, food, and environment**  
Promoting use of agriculture and natural resources in order to meet the needs of today and of future generations
- **Youth development and family living**  
Shaping the future with the vitality of youth, the strengths of families, and the wisdom of seniors

Extension continues to place high importance on the issues facing agriculture and service to rural Minnesota. Agriculture is a major part of the arenas of work described above, though our programs certainly do not look like the programs of our past. In addition to production agriculture programming, Extension serves agriculture and rural areas in new ways, for example, in programming with immigrant populations who have settled in rural Minnesota. Diversity education and other educational programs for new Minnesota citizens have direct impact on the labor force for agri-business, including the poultry processing industry.

At the same time, we need to place our century-old orientation to agriculture and rural issues into a contemporary perspective, and to think broadly about our responsibility to serve the entire state and to address a broader range of complex needs, now and for the future. Thus, our audience includes urban, suburban, and rural Minnesota, and our arenas of work demand that we tap into the resources across the entire University for our outreach.

The University of Minnesota will provide leadership to ensure that our programs “address critical issues” and “make a difference” by instituting a more formal process of community assessments with involvement of community members, regional educators and campus faculty. The University will provide leadership in selecting which local needs to address, given institutional strengths. We will also create new systems for program evaluation and commit to annually replacing at least 5 percent of programs in our existing portfolio.

**Niche:**

It is essential that Extension clearly define its niche, to distinguish it from other University of Minnesota or community outreach and to be able to explain its public value. There are three historic and current characteristics that collectively add value to both the University and the state, and define Extension’s niche:

- Research based educational information and programs on critical issues  
Education, with an emphasis on practical application to everyday life, is Extension’s business. Extension education comes in many forms, from information dissemination, to educator or computer-delivered training sessions, to community problem solving that applies research to grassroots issues. In all cases, the core of this education is objective, research-based knowledge.
- Statewide reach to citizens and communities throughout Minnesota  
The scholarship of the University of Minnesota campus faculty, combined with the presence of Extension staff throughout the state, makes Extension a system without peer. This campus-field partnership expands the capacity of both the community and the University to be engaged with each other, public engagement that is a bedrock principle for public education.
- Partnerships that build capacity through education  
Extension strives to partner with groups inside and outside the University to maximize effectiveness and efficiency, to avoid duplication, and to strengthen the capacity for the future. Extension is clear that what it brings to a partnership arrangement is its educational role and its knowledge based in University research.

## **Vision:**

Extension has articulated a vision for 2002-2005, which states that the University of Minnesota Extension Service will:

- Have a solid reputation for high quality programs addressing critical issues consistent with the University's mission and responsibilities.
- Demonstrate value-added connections to University research, making knowledge applicable to critical issues across the state.
- Expand and diversify revenues dedicated to a critical investment pool supporting research and development of new programs.
- Make a difference with clearly documented impact and relevance.
- Demonstrate commitment to diversity in its workforce and populations served.
- Renew staff energy through incentives, job redesign, and staff development.
- Develop a new, efficient, and effective delivery system with optimal use of technology and much stronger campus-field connections.
- Maximize collaborative capabilities through partnerships within the University, with other organizations, and with neighboring states.

## **Part 2: Strategies, Efficiency and Effectiveness**

### **Program Oversight:**

State law dictates that each county have a county Extension committee, comprised of nine members including two county commissioners. These committees are critical in assuring that Extension programs have public value and meet the needs of local communities. A statewide advisory committee gives direct citizen input to the dean and director of Extension at the state level. In addition, there is a close working relationship between Extension and the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), which has an AMC-Extension Committee that reports to the AMC Board.

### **Budget:**

Extension has a \$60.684 million operating budget for FY2001, most of it from public sources.

- \$23.965 million (39 percent) – State funds
- \$14.989 million (25 percent) – County funds\*
- \$11.249 million (19 percent) – Other grants, gifts, and fee/sale income
- \$10.481 million (17 percent) – Federal funds

\* Approximately \$4 million of total county funding is for cost-sharing of Extension field staff. The remaining contribution to Extension's budget covers local operations and support staff, and is thus available to Extension at the discretion of the county.

### **Staff:**

Extension carries out its mission with a network of Extension educators across the state and a corresponding network of faculty experts across the University, who collaborate with community and other state agency and organizational partners to design and deliver educational programs. As of January 2002 there are approximately 656 field educators and staff in counties and 426 faculty and staff on campus. The change plan for Extension 2002-2005 calls for some reduction in workforce to avoid a deficit in the budget. In addition to its paid staff, Extension programming is leveraged with thousands of volunteers who receive training and expand our capacity to deliver our programs to youth and adults in every county.

### **Technology:**

Extension's website, on-line publications, on-line interactive learning, streaming video, presentation graphics, and video conferencing are a few examples of new efficiencies made possible with technology.

- Extension's website has 11,567 documents available to the public, including news releases, audio scripts, newsletters, program listings, catalog abstracts, and full-text publications with graphics.
- Extension publications: In 2000, 326,000 publications were ordered, an increase of 37,000 from 1998.
- Annual hits (moving around within the Extension website) rose from 1.2 million in 1997 to nearly 11 million in 2001. Google, the top web search engine, identified University of Minnesota Extension Service's website as the second most linked-to of all state Extension websites in the nation.
- Technology enhanced learning: In the Extension program "Profitable Strategies for Marketing Grain," for example, participants are able to use real farm records and market-year data via computer simulation, and practice concepts taught in regional workshops.

Technology will continue to play an increasingly important role in disseminating information and other forms of educational program delivery. While technology cannot fully replace people in the educational process, it offers a vehicle for fundamentally changing the ways universities can engage with the public and accomplish their land-grant mission. Extension has a role in building that future, within Minnesota and across the nation. Extension will evaluate where efficiencies can be created with technology in ways that learner outcomes are enhanced.

### **Effectiveness and Accountability:**

New evaluation and reporting techniques were used to document outcomes in Minnesota relative to national goals for the FY2000 report to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA AREERA Reports 1999-2000). The University of Minnesota Extension professional staff conducted over 1.2 million educational services, an average of 3,414 educational service contacts per staff member. Last year alone, 800,000

Minnesotans had some educational interaction with Extension. In addition to our professional staff impacts, 2,100 Master Gardeners trained by Extension contributed over 88,200 hours of service. Additionally, nearly 14,000 volunteers contribute 800,000 hours per year to youth development outcomes through 4-H. Over 1.2 million Extension publications were sold last year. These data underscore the capacity of Extension in expanding the reach of the University of Minnesota into communities throughout the state.

Some examples of outcomes that cut across various programming areas include:

- Agriculture Financial Management  
1,800 farm businesses improved their financial situation as a result of FinPak analysis.
- Farm Resource Management  
Of the 7,500 individuals who participated in farm resource management training, 70 percent indicated they strengthened their knowledge and skills.
- Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program  
44 percent of participants reported at least one positive change in diet quality.
- Community Diversity Leadership Program  
54 percent of participants reported finding a way to use their leadership capacities to address diversity issues in communities.
- Parenting Program  
Participants in Parents Forever reported that they made significant progress toward each of the program goals. 76 percent reported putting the best interest of their children first as a result of program participation. 77 percent have provided their children access to both parents.
- Water Quality  
Close to 1,000 livestock producers adopted new annual waste management practices.
- 4-H Youth Development  
250,000 young people and 14,000 adult volunteers participated in programs and projects sponsored by the University of Minnesota Extension Service's 4-H Youth Development program in 2001.

The Extension 2002-2005 change plan calls for continued emphasis on accountability and program impact evidence. We recognize the importance of responding to the unique mandates of each of our major public funding partners – federal, state, and county – and the need to have measurement and accounting systems that respond to their needs.

## **Part 3: Direction and Recommendations for the Future**

The question put forth in the 2001 legislative language, regarding Extension's scope of mission and its ability to deliver programs effectively and efficiently, is precisely the question Extension asked itself, leading to a major change plan for 2002-2005. To ensure that this historic outreach system meets contemporary needs and that it moves forward with fiscal viability, Extension worked with its University authorizing body, the Board of Regents, and its county partners through the Association of Minnesota Counties, to build a framework for the future. Details will continue to be shaped within this framework, with much of the implementation to be in place by June 2002. In December 2001, the Board of Regents unanimously endorsed this change plan, which includes the following major components:

### **A New Knowledge Model:**

As we work toward our mission, Extension will offer a more focused portfolio of high-quality programs that will continue to evolve and improve in response to Minnesota's changing needs. Extension's programs will focus on the three arenas of activity described earlier in this report:

- Community development and vitality
- Land, food, and environment
- Youth development and family living

To carry out our mission appropriately and effectively, the two-way relationship between the community and the University must be highly valued. Extension will ensure that our programs address critical issues and make a difference by instituting a more formal process of community assessments with involvement of community members, regional educators, and campus faculty. We will also create new systems for program evaluation and commit to annually replacing at least 5 percent of programs in our existing portfolio.

### **A New Business Model:**

Extension's budget reality is being addressed in the plan for change. Centrally allocated state and federal funds are flat at best and there are no resources available to invest in the critical new areas to remain relevant and viable. At the present time, nearly 90 percent of our state and federal resources are committed to Extension personnel costs, precluding vitally needed budgetary and organizational flexibility. We have set a goal to commit 75 percent of our centrally allocated resources to personnel costs by the end of FY2005. To achieve this, we have also established detailed principles and procedures for generating and capturing earned revenues that will total \$2.5 million annually by FY2004, with expense reductions that will total \$4.5 million annually by FY2004.

Extension 2002-2005 will require a significant investment to develop programs that address community needs, access a broader spectrum of expertise in the University's colleges, re-deploy and support our workforce, and develop the technology and other systems to more effectively deliver our services. We will achieve these goals by creating a strategic investment pool estimated at \$5 million by FY2004. The strategic investment pool will be used to leverage resources across the University and will provide greater flexibility to address critical issues. This investment pool will be funded by generating external earned revenues (e.g., grants, contracts, fees, gifts) coupled with internal savings from staff and expense reductions.

Fiscal targets will be met through a combination of budget reductions, including staff reductions throughout the system, and revenue generation, including charging fees for some Extension programs. Due to the controversial nature of moving to some fee-for-service programming, we have identified several principles that will guide Extension in this change:

- Extension program fees will be managed within the parameters of USDA, State of Minnesota, and University policies.
- Criteria will be used to determine when fees are charged for Extension programs. Provision will be made to waive fees or offer scholarships on the basis of special circumstances.
- Cost recovery must be consistent with the mission of the University of Minnesota Extension Service, "Making a difference by connecting community needs and University resources to address critical issues in Minnesota."

### **A New Delivery System and Organizational Structure:**

As we in the University of Minnesota Extension Service redirect our work toward a more focused agenda, we must also realign the organization to support focused programming. We will re-direct our human resources to the work that matters most and fully capitalize on the increasing role that technology plays in the lives of Minnesotans.

This 2002-2005 plan builds a new structure for Extension's field organization that forges a much closer partnership between field and campus. We will both deepen and broaden the field's access to the University's research base, allowing us to better serve the state's residents. We will access scholarship across more colleges, and we will call for greater expertise among our regional educators. Key structural elements include the following:

- Programs delivered regionally by a field force of regional Extension educators who will work closely with campus faculty to design and deliver programs.
- Creation of a network of county Extension directors, who will assess critical needs and access University of Minnesota resources to address priorities in local communities.



- Program assistants who support local programming, especially in the 4-H Youth Development and Family Nutrition programs.
- Designing a seven-county metro Extension program and staffing strategy, to specifically address the unique demographic characteristics of this part of the state.
- Continued exploration for how technology will appropriately augment and support program delivery.
- Continued strong commitment to diversity and inclusivity and to programs and program delivery that honor and demonstrate that commitment.
- Collaboration with Extension programs in neighboring states.

### **A Time of Urgency and Opportunity:**

In concluding this legislative report, we turn to a paragraph from a committee planning for Extension at the national level. This paper builds on input from professionals and clientele across the country, in an effort to frame the future in the best possible combination of drawing on the past but not being held hostage by it.

*“A new century, a symbolic beginning compels institutions and organizations to reflect upon their purposes and vision and to determine whether they are prepared to cope successfully with all that is occurring around them. Extension is no exception. Globalization, consolidation, integration, and mergers impact all of society. Technological breakthroughs open new horizons and create new challenges. Demographic data forecast a new and much different America in the not too distant future. If Extension is to thrive, it must understand and adjust to this rapidly changing world. Each state Extension Service must examine its vision, its structure and its processes to assure that it is truly accessible and is able to engage with the people it serves, with the entire land-grant university and with other public and private sector partners.”* (Extension Committee On Policy [ECOP]- report. December 2001)

We believe this statement, along with the questions of the legislature that led to this report, are very consistent with the work we in the University of Minnesota Extension Service are doing to be able to best serve Minnesotans well into the future.

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### **References:**

Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA) Accomplishments and Results Report. March, 2001. University of Minnesota Extension Service Data Summary for 1999-2000

Extension Committee on Organization and Policy [ECOP]. (December 12, 2001) Draft Report of the “Extension Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” Committee. Washington D.C., p.3

Minnesota statute: County Extension, Section 38.331; Definitions, Subdivision 2. (1990)