

UMass Extension

CENTER FOR AGRICULTURE

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UMass Extension Board of Public Overseers UMass Collaborative Service Center

Meeting notes November 18, 2011

Present:

Members:

Jack Angley, Ed Bourgeois, Nathan L'Etoile, Mary Jane Bacon, Eugene Tworek, Lynn Griesemer, Heidi Ricci, Ted Wales, Rena Prendergast, Marla Michel, Mike Leuders, Art Eve, Ed Davidian, Bob Macleod, John Lee

Guests:

Stephen Herbert, Joe Shoenfeld, Nancy Garrabrants, William Miller

Welcome – Jack Angley

Meeting called to order at 9:05

Approval of Minutes

Mike Leuders moved to accept minutes of June 17 meeting, seconded by Stephen Herbert. Minutes approved unanimously.

Updates – Stephen Herbert

Brief summary of recent Center for Agriculture Advisory Board meeting.

Responding to Dean's directive for further integration of research and outreach, members discussed repositioning Extension from its former isolation to part of the Center for Agriculture and joined with the Agricultural Experiment Station. A new name for the Center is needed to better describe ourselves and we need to strengthen the research and service that is provided from the University

Stephen discussed UMass as a demonstration site for innovative techniques, talked about hydroponics; locating growing at supermarkets, use of shipping containers for growing produce.

Stephen reported that the federal budget was level for Hatch Act (research) and Smith-Lever (Extension) as it emerged from the conference committee. Still needs final vote/approval from Congress.

Nancy Garrabrants noted that there is a federal and state problem in the distribution of "SNAP Ed" funds (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – formerly Food Stamps – Education) which are the primary funders of our Extension Nutrition Education Program. A. We are not getting full amount that was expected and funds are being distributed monthly. Creates challenge for staff and human resource issues.

Mike Leuders asked about the current relationship between college, center and Extension. Stephen explained how the Center is organized: Extension, along with MA Ag Experiment Station, is now under the Center for Agriculture, within the College of Natural Sciences. Merged functions are so that Extension and research can increasingly work together.

Joe Shoenfeld added that we are a Center inside CNS, but we work outside it as well; The reporting structure is Stephen Herbert → Dean → Provost → Chancellor. Stephen added that CNS the biggest college on campus with largest number of students, departments and faculty.

Jack Angley asked whether Extension's position within the university, and university funding has improved? Bob MacLeod reflected on meeting with the Chancellor three years ago, said that he had seen him recently and thanked him for this restructuring. Stephen added that there are now more opportunities for connections to the teaching side as well through the Stockbridge School.

4-H Youth Development Update – Sherrie Guyott

Sherrie presented a detailed program overview, using a Powerpoint presentation

Mission/Mandates

- Science, Engineering & Technology
- Citizenship
- Healthy Lifestyles

Grant Funded Projects

- Operation Military Kids
- SET Adventures - Sustainable Communities
- Youth Mentoring Program

Program Delivery

- 4-H Clubs
- Special Interest and School Enrichment

Funding Sources – \$1.5 mil total

- Gifts – 7%
- Fees – 9%
- Federal – 32%
- State - 16%
- County (Plymouth and Barnstable) - 19%
- Grants – 17%

Partners

- Mass 4-H Foundation
- National 4-H HQ
- National 4-H Council

4-H Study of Positive Youth Development; 4-H members

- make healthier choices
- excel in school
- more likely to be involved community members

Marla Michel commented that there seem to be opportunities for connecting 4-H with sponsored faculty research that requires outreach components and Stephen Herbert added that he thought there might be potential for collaboration with Center for Research on Families. Mary Jane Bacon suggested that 4-H revisit community organizations and foundations for additional resource development opportunities. Bob MacLeod commented that the Massachusetts 4-H Foundation is positioned to do this work and directs 100% of the funds raised to the programs. The Foundation manages endowments, solicits giving, submits grants

Rena Prendergast asked what the current membership was and Sherrie replied that the program enrollment was still lower than where it was before the 2004 budget cuts but it lost staff capacity as well. The Program only serves a small percent of youth in the state. 4-H enrollment is weakest in Boston. Bob MacLeod commented that the mechanism is there to support the activity in Boston.

Lynn Griesemer thanked Sherrie “for hanging in there.” She suggested partnering with schools for after-school clubs and programs. Bob MacLeod commented that the Foundation focus is on establishing new clubs as a tangible progress measure. Eugene Tworek pointed out that the challenge is in getting the message (about 4-H) out and suggested that a presentation like this could be tailored to various groups and delivered online with video technology

Review of Survey Results – William Miller

Bill Miller reviewed the results of the recent stakeholder internal/external survey conducted by the Center for Agriculture. He told the Board that the survey was a snapshot that could help inform strategic planning with broad input. He commented that while it was a systematic effort, it was not a survey with a scientifically valid sample.

The sample was one characterized by

- specific insight and expertise
- high response rate
- even split (internal and external)
- of external – more than half “none or very little involvement” with UMass Extension.

Discussion on strategic directions for Extension & Center - Nancy Garrabrants and Joe Shoenfeld

Aside from nationally recognized research and access to affordable student education, what do you think Massachusetts’ citizens expect from a high-quality state land-grant university?

John Lee commented that as agriculture reemerges as a desirable lifestyle and enterprise, UMass is in the spotlight. There is a renewed expectation for research that improves the business in the state, including agriculture, which provides jobs in the state. Nathan L’Etoile added that people want businesses to be successful and sustainable, but don’t trust businesses to do it themselves and that UMass can show how they can do both. John added that educating for agriculture helps nurture the local business economy by educating people who are going to stay in Massachusetts and create the businesses that will sustain the local economy. Bob MacLeod pointed out that Massachusetts is an education destination (education, recreation, health care, quality of life) and that agriculture is a big part of this.

Ed Bourgeois said that he was glad that the Board was being asked to think creatively because “too often we have been asked to focus on continuing what we are doing... The word “Extension” explains what we are supposed to do. Call us (Center for Agriculture) “The Land-Grant Center.” It would expand the scope of what we are about. It’s going to take millions. We need to encourage the land grant mission.”

How can UMass establish a community presence?

Heidi Ricci said the Center should connect with existing community groups and local agriculture commissions; hope whatever happens in Waltham will contribute. Ed Davidian said that faculty expertise should be focused on community issues/questions. University has recognized expertise that citizens and communities can access.

Mike Leuders suggested that for UMass to be recognized, it has to be available -- there needs to be a conduit to communities. Not just for the people who have known, established connections.

Nathan asked whether the the Donahue Institute did that and Lynn Griesemer responded that everybody would like a UMass presence across the state. Lynn added that "President Caret did that in Maryland. Marla is doing it in Springfield. I suggest we look at where we already have a presence/people. How can we partner with other higher education institutions to establish this presence? You have to figure out how you're going to fund this. These have to be thought of as providing services and a virtual network. What can technology do? Extension is a great place to begin. When he (President Caret) meets with us, he has to hear about our presence all over the state."

How should the Center interact with citizens?

Nathan responded that the Center should interact with people in person, adding "it's the hardest, it's the most expensive, but those direct interactions are so much more valuable." Heidi Ricci said that there are opportunities for speaking to community audiences in ways that are different from providing technical services. Stephen Herbert commented that we have done our work too much in isolation, we need to partner more, use other agencies to get our work out and reach a lot more people. Ed Davidian said that the Center needs to use all methods, but that direct methods were the most effective.

Ted Wales said he thought that depending on the topic, videos can help, but the Extension expert, face-to-face, can get people excited about doing things right, for example with environmental stewardship. Heidi added that Extension use events (e.g. recent storms) as opportunities to get information and content out (e.g. how to make trees more resistant/ resilient). Ed Bourgeois suggested that we have this as a major topic at a meeting soon: How we communicate given our limited manpower. Rena Prendergast suggested there should be a focus on our lack of presence in the cities. How do we get information to urban gardeners? We should approach a community to ask what the needs are.

Members briefly share one thing you want Extension and Center leaders to know

Ed Davidian: The new Agricultural Learning Center will be a classroom and meeting center, and ag Demonstration site. The Mass Farm Bureau has committed to \$500,000, to be used for moving the 1894 Barn - building will be called Massachusetts Federation Farm Bureau Hall.

Eugene Tworek: 4-H is viable and strong, moving ahead in tough times. There is hope. It's the youth! It's encouraging.

Art Eve: Be careful not to disappoint people. Don't promise what we can't deliver. Figure out how to communicate through technology as a supplement to the face-to-face.

MJB – Don't raise expectations if you can't meet them. We're not going back to one-on-one services. Realize limitations and work within the system. There are effective models, existing resources (e.g. 4-H). Problem is in delivery, not in vision.

TW - Remember there is an untapped support base in the suburban homeowner that needs information. We can help them to support us and to be better stewards of the environment.

NL – There have been disappointments in the past. This iteration is looking hopeful. We have to fit it all together.

John – Ag in MA is changing; entrepreneurial yet collective. University needs to reach out to the groups who are committed to agriculture. Be mindful of unintended consequences.

RM – Let's focus on opportunities emerging from the leadership of the new UMass system president.

ED - It took us 14 years to get here. We have finally gotten to where we belong. We are not arguing where the \$ goes, we are trying to move forward together. I applaud everyone. We have turned a corner and we are now a Board of Overseers

RP – (Reacting to comment by TW) The need for serving urban populations too. Let's be aware of the needs of the SNAP-Ed program in the upcoming budget issue.

MM – Maybe a letter of thanks to legislators for not cutting the budget.

ML – How can we tie it all together, not reinvent the wheel, avoid duplication.

EB - We need updates on initiatives as they are forming, rather than reports after the fact

HR – Center is well-positioned for this reorganization and revitalization, with a focus on agricultural sustainability and local health. The interest is there. University is poised to provide the support if we can make the connections.

Adjourn

JA - Joe Shoenfeld will send meeting dates for 2012.

William Miller, Ph.D.
Director of Program Development and Assessment
Submitted - November 22, 2010