



GUIDELINES FOR DECISION-MAKING

Extension Strategic Plan

FINAL DECEMBER 2011

The University of Minnesota is one of the nation's more than 100 land-grant universities with a mission to address critical public issues through teaching, research and outreach. The land-grant university system was founded by our country's federal and state governments initiated by the Morrill Act in 1862 (teaching), Hatch Act in 1887 (research) and the Smith-Lever Act in 1914 (outreach). University Extension organizations were developed through the authorization and funding of federal, state and county governments to "extend" scientific knowledge and expertise to the public in priority areas including food and agriculture, communities, environment, youth and families.

As part of the University of Minnesota, Extension has maintained a strong statewide presence, bringing University research and education that improves economic, social and environmental conditions to all of Minnesota. Extension's network of education and research faculty and staff live and work across the state, listening and collaborating with individuals, organizations and communities "to develop and deliver research-based education and information that is relevant, practical and valued."

INTRODUCTION

Embedded in the University of Minnesota mission statement is the proclamation that our institution is "... dedicated to the advancement of learning ... to the sharing of this knowledge through education for a diverse community; and to application of this knowledge to benefit the people of the state, the nation, and the world." As a part of the University, Extension's work reflects these values, a priority since the early 1900's, and resonates with the vision of leadership for the future.

Advances in technology and an evolving understanding of effective educational practices underscore the need for a commitment to an increasingly diverse learning community and to investment in new and innovative methods of educational delivery. In the context of this rapidly changing, highly competitive global environment, as well as changes in state and regional demographics and shifting funding streams, Extension must recognize and respond to the challenges and opportunities that impact our work. It is at this exciting and critical juncture that Extension presents a clear vision for its stakeholders and provides strategic guidelines for its research and education faculty and staff in the following University of Minnesota Extension Strategic Plan: A Guideline for Decision-Making.

This Strategic Plan presents an opportunity to articulate and reaffirm Extension's role and value to stakeholders and authorizers, both externally at the state, federal and county levels, as well as internally as part of the University of Minnesota. Extension's stakeholders, those audiences that have a direct or indirect benefit from Extension's programs, and Extension's authorizers, those decision-makers that allocate funding to Extension, are both recipients of Extension's solid Strategic Plan. As we strive to deliver the public value that lies at the core of our land-grant mission, we recognize that we must balance the dynamics of innovative, relevant education with organizational efficiency and accountability.

In the changing and competitive global marketplace, it is not only imperative that we assess our current situation, set goals, and develop organizational capacity to reach these goals, but that we set the stage for the kind of transformative change required to make the Extension organization and its work truly effective. Along with a formalized, institutional authentication of goals and strategies, this Strategic Plan presents a common vision, language and understanding. The Strategic Plan articulates a shared purpose that builds upon existing organizational strengths and successes to establish a framework for scholarship and focus, where innovation, contribution and interdependence are valued and rewarded. This framework can guide our work and foster the kind of dynamic and cohesive environment that will inspire and equip our 21st Century workforce to collectively address complex needs and boldly deliver on our mission.

The Strategic Plan is a commitment to and investment in a vision of excellence for Extension. The promise extended by the new focused and transparent guidelines will serve to inspire Extension's workforce to move forward with renewed energy, purpose and pride for our shared mission. By working cohesively by the guidelines of this Plan, a "one Extension" organization will be created that benefits from operational efficiencies and a common culture to enhance the brand of Extension across all programs and issues.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN – EXTENSION EDUCATION MODEL

Creating the Strategic Plan required careful deconstruction and definition of Extension work such that employees and stakeholders could share a clear and consistent understanding of both what Extension is and does, and of Extension's key contributions to our audiences and authorizers. Extension's primary product/goal is to create societal value through research-based education that is relevant to the needs of our stakeholders. The terms and dynamics developed around this mission are depicted in the **Extension Education Model** (Figure 1.).

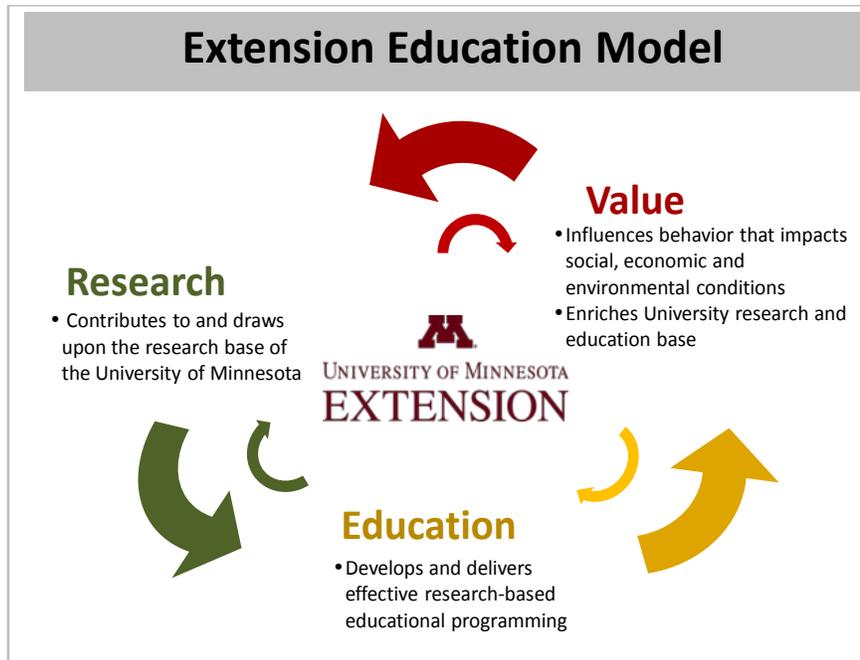


FIGURE 1. EXTENSION EDUCATION MODEL.

The Extension Education Model describes the three interdependent components of Extension work: **Research**, **Education**, and **Value**. Extension contributes to and draws upon the research base of the University to develop and deliver effective research-based educational programming such that behavior is influenced to impact social, economic and environmental conditions, while enriching the University research base through this model. Extension operates this model within a global context as well as within the context of funding and expectations of our key stakeholders (federal, state and University administrators) as shown in Appendix 1. Each of these components is critical to the Extension organization’s accountability and sustainability. Value in this context refers to the outcomes that result in direct or indirect fiscal allocations to the University and Extension.

Research is the comparative advantage that sets the University of Minnesota apart from other educational organizations. Extension personnel contribute to the University’s research base through various forms of research -- empirical, basic, translational, applied, and exploratory, to name a few. Extension research includes work that involves people, products, practices and communities using interventional and engaged processes to primarily benefit public good. In addition, Extension personnel work collaboratively with University non-Extension faculty to draw from their results for use in educational curriculum.

Education is Extension’s primary goal. Effective education brings about knowledge gain and positive behavior change that ultimately impact social indicators such as a safe and clean environment; economic sustainability; strong and vibrant communities; and/or a better quality of life. Extension education is unique in that it is based in University research/scholarship on complex issues. As such, the focus of Extension education is aligned with the research foci of the University. As an active, two-way process, Extension education/learning requires strong relational networks of engaged audiences. While Extension uses a relational and engaged process in many of its educational programs, it is the actual education that creates Extension’s comparative advantage.

Value – Successful Extension work provides societal value through education. This value, while hopefully experienced by audiences, must be realized by Extension’s authorizers and result in financial benefit to the organization. Extension focuses on outputs, outcomes and impacts as indicators that measure areas of societal value such as a safe and clean environment; economic sustainability; strong and vibrant communities; and/or a better quality of life. The value of the Extension organization and its work is measured in the investment of support and funding by key stakeholders. Extension education also creates value within the context of the Extension Education Model by enriching the University’s research base.

The Extension Education Model and its social value proposition provide an important foundation for shared understanding that is reflected in the goals and strategies set forth in this Strategic Plan.

THE EXTENSION STRATEGIC PLAN

As discussed above, the foundations of the Strategic Plan are grounded in the role of Extension as part of a land-grant university, and in its core product/service – public value delivered through effective research-based education. The Strategic Plan articulates a vision which encompasses:

- An educational model (Figure 1) that describes a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between research, education and value;
- An organizational emphasis on a “one Extension” workplace and system; and
- A foundation of goals and strategies that provide a “blueprint” for decision-making.

The key contextual factors influencing the Strategic Plan are centered on societal trends that were identified as having an impact on the work of Extension, either currently and/or in the future, including changes in:

Demographics and the associated shift in habits and priorities among audiences, authorizers and employees;

Technology and the lag in adopting advanced products and practices in the areas of innovation, communication and delivery of curriculum;

Competition that will come from industry (bundling information with products), nonprofit organizations and agencies; and

Funding Models that will potentially decrease the amount of funds allocated to Extension and increase the amount of competitive funds and/or income funding.

The following goals and strategies encompass five areas of emphasis:

What - What does Extension do?

Why - Why does Extension do its work?

How - How does Extension do its work?

People - How does Extension address issues pertaining to employees and the work environment?

Brand - How does Extension communicate itself and its value?

Each goal is grounded in the foundational understanding that Extension is an integral part of, and adds value to, the University of Minnesota. The strategies for each goal are designed to guide decision-making as Extension leadership, faculty and staff collaboratively develop and implement action plans to accomplish the goals and strategies.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

As part of the University of Minnesota ...

GOAL #1 (WHAT)

Extension delivers exemplary education based on University research and scholarship to fulfill its land-grant mission

Strategies:

1. Provide education using most effective tools/methods
2. Ensure that all programs are based on comprehensive program/education plans
3. Establish consistent standards for research, scholarship and education
4. Establish a consistent program model (identification, development, delivery, evaluation, sun-setting)
5. Align research, scholarship and education with University, State and Federal priorities

GOAL #2 (WHY)

Extension research and education addresses significant issues by effecting behavior change to improve social, economic and environmental conditions

Strategies:

1. Establish consistent, measurable criteria for public value (relevance, outcomes, impact)
2. Use collaborative, multidisciplinary approaches to address significant issues
3. Engage stakeholders throughout the program model (identification, development, delivery, evaluation, sun-setting) to ensure relevance and effectiveness
4. Build strong relationships with funders and key influencers
5. Establish program priorities that optimize stakeholder/audience needs and University assets.

GOAL #3 (HOW/OPERATIONS)

Extension operates as an efficient, effective and integrated organization

Strategies:

1. Ensure sustainable funding through diversified and strategic sources
2. Streamline and align operations across all centers, administrative units and offices
3. Develop communications systems that enhance efficiency and support collaboration
4. Develop infrastructure/capacity to support consistent and effective use of technology
5. Establish consistent standards for program development, delivery and evaluation
6. Enable and promote collaboration among faculty and staff

GOAL #4 (PEOPLE/WORKFORCE)

Extension fosters a workforce and environment that drives innovation and excellence and supports a culture of inclusion and collaboration

Strategies:

1. Create an organizational workforce that operates efficiently and effectively to successfully represent the traditional culture and the modern brand of Extension
2. Establish a work environment that balances employee needs with organizational mission and resources to promote innovation and collaboration
3. Recruit and retain a diverse workforce Ensure that staff receive professional development grounded in research and scholarship
4. Refine performance review and promotion systems based on academic scholarship, professional excellence and alignment with organizational priorities
5. Provide organizational support for all employees through the Extension career lifecycle (e.g. recruiting, on-boarding, promotion, recognition, etc.)

GOAL #5 (BRAND)

Extension communicates and demonstrates the value of its educational solutions, research focus and knowledge expertise to its stakeholders and the public

Strategies:

1. Define and communicate Extension's value with stakeholders
2. Implement consistent University and Extension brand identity across the organization
3. Inspire and equip employees and volunteers to serve as brand ambassadors, ensuring a consistent brand experience for all audiences
4. Support and enhance Extension's brand and reputation across program marketing and communications activities
5. Enhance the reputation of Extension by consistently delivering on our promise to stakeholders

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Holli Arp – Regional Director, Field Operations

Jeffrey Coulter – Assistant Professor and Extension Agronomist

Jodi Dworkin – Associate Professor and Extension Family Social Scientist

Jennifer Garbow – Assistant Extension Professor Family Resource Management

Laura Kalambokidis – Associate Professor and Extension Economist

Josey Landrieu – Assistant Extension Professor, Program Evaluation

Pamela Larson Nippolt – Assistant Extension Professor and Program Leader, Youth Development

Dean Malvick – Associate Professor and Extension Plant Pathologist

Nathan Meyer – Associate Extension Professor and Program Leader, Environmental Education

Ryan Pesch – Associate Extension Professor, Community Economics

Michael Schmitt – Senior Associate Dean

Trisha Sheehan – Associate Extension Professor, 4-H Youth Development

Jennifer Skuza – Extension Professor and Program Leader, Youth Development

Aimee Viniard-Weideman – Assistant Dean and Director of Communications

Benjamin Winchester—Research Fellow, Community Vitality

APPENDIX ATTACHMENT A.

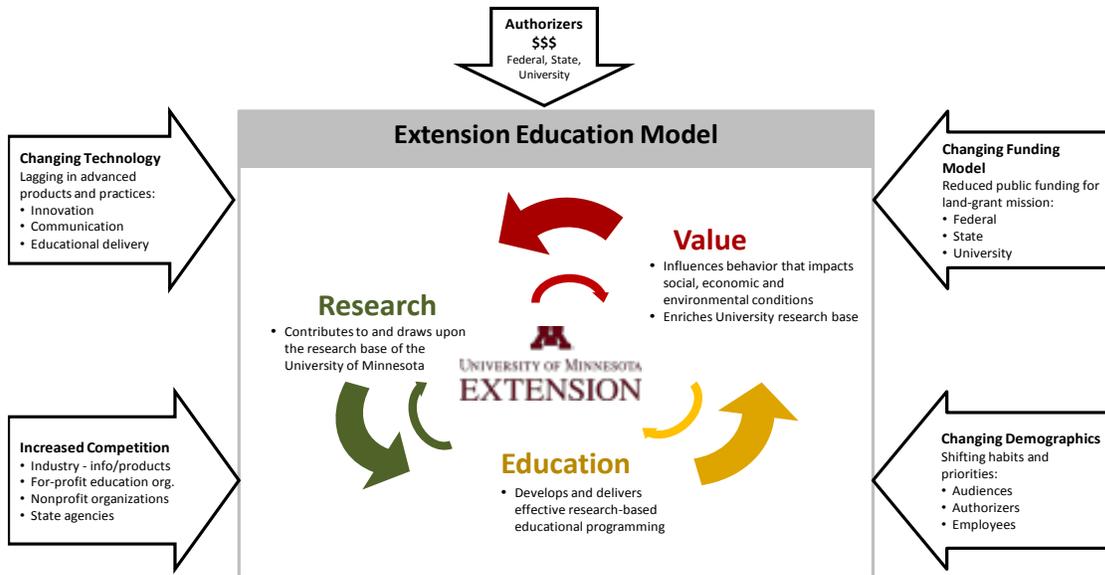


FIGURE 2. - University of Minnesota Extension Strategic Planning - Context/Societal Trends.

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