

SOUTHERN REGION PROGRAM LEADERSHIP NETWORK CONFERENCE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

August 21-August 23, 2012

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ruth Borger, Maria Bowie, Matthew Browning, Cheryl Crawford, Debbie Dalhouse, Suzanne Deatherage, Frankie Gould, Cathy Gant Hill, Ayanna McPhail, Gloria Mosby, Lorna Norwood, Bob Ratliff, Bob Reynolds, Dee Shore, Lyndall Stout, Dennis Thomas, Carol Whatley, Wyvette Williams. Advisors: Dr. L. Washington Lyons and Dr. Ed Jones.

August 21, 2012

Introductions were made and state's night out dinner was discussed.

Drs. Lyons and Jones lead the group in a discussion of the structure of the PLN organization.

Dr. Lyons also reported some items of interest to the group:

- NIFA's new director has expressed the need to show impacts in order to communicate to elected officials what NIFA does and the difference it makes. This will be a big push for him going forward. Noted new NIFA director has requested we do a better job reporting impact statement and data to share with legislative aides who declared to him 'we don't know what you do over there. Where does the \$ we give you go? How is it used?'
- The House has cut two to three percent out of almost every program. The Senate at this point has an equal balance budget.
- A \$100 million research foundation is being proposed by the Senate.
- Battelle is doing a study called the Impact of Agriculture in the Southern Region beginning in January 2013.
- ECOP and ESCOP have commissioned a \$400,000 marketing initiative with kglobal to get Extension's story in large media outlets.

Dr. Lyons expressed that he was pleased by the Communications Committee attendance and encouraged everyone to get and stay involved with the group.

Frankie noted that Judith Rudd with NIFA recently sent request to all ext comm directors for five impacts of research and extension for this purpose. Original due date was August 16 but Frankie verified Judy is still accepting these for the time being. jrudd@nifa.usda.gov.

Advisors noted recent (8.20) ask to extension directors from ECOP for contact person to work with new marketing and outreach effort to targeted legislators

Frankie noted the new national extension branding toolkit to be previewed by extension directors in October. If you haven't already, join the eXtension Marketing/Branding COP. They conduct productive monthly webinars we (each state) should be contributing to.

Anyone done/doing anything notable to celebrate Morrill Act anniversary?

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- IFAS has been posting a daily land grant fact on college facebook page that has been very well received. They have enjoyed using anniversary to celebrate institutional past but emphasis on looking toward future. Also emphasizing that the whole university is land grant, not just IFAS/college within. Great website but need help driving people there.
- TX AgriLife produced new county office signs that uses Lincoln quote and new organizational logo
- LSU had large banners made used at field days, lapel pins, exhibits to leave up in county offices, tile ads for webpages, social media channels
- UGA had student-led panel discussion with Commission of Ag, UGA President (who sent spokesperson) good media, faculty and student interest
- NC State issued special issue of their magazine
- MSU helped fund and develop content for Smithsonian exhibit on the mall. Gloria visited it. HOT!
- UT has solar powered house that pushes Extension 'living green' info

Carol suggested we all submit state specific definition for Extension for listing in Wikipedia.

Check out Jim Lancaster's blog: Mission Extension

With budget situation, what's the latest?

- LSU and others- no raises in 4 years has led to a loss of many excellent, young faculty & staff who gave up after becoming frustrated with being asked to do the impossible and no end in site/reward for good performance
- TX cost recovery saved 40 positions
- UT did video response to 'most useless degree' report
- UGA and others did editorial response from dean
- AR hired videographer w/ soybean commission funding, got 5% increase for their salary the next year (in the face of no other approved increases)
- LSU noted they've been paying 40% salary for staff member paid for by rice commission for many years and has worked well for them

August 22, 2012

The group finalized the 2011-2012 Plan of Work and created the 2012-13 Plan of Work which includes finalizing the white paper on strategic communications, creating a Communications facebook group and beginning research on the core communications competencies for agents.

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Maria Bowie was appointed vice chair for 2012-13 to replace Sharon Dowdy. Matthew Browning was appointed secretary. Frankie Gould was appointed the PLC and Executive Committee representative for the Communications Committee, as agreed to by IT, PSD and Middle Managers chairs.

Attendees recapped what they heard in the cross-committee meetings.

Advisors Lyons and Jones spoke about the state of eXtension and committee members discussed how they could better utilize eXtension in their states.

State reports were started.

NC State presented by Dee Shore. Restructured two years ago and most staff were transferred to university communications. College is in transition period with new dean coming in. Five writer/editor positions remain in college and have been expanded their work responsibilities to include basic design for print, video and audio editing and photography. Establishing relationships with credible freelancers to help with service demands. Dee also noted the college's restructuring is resulting from political power plays on campus due to budget support from traditional stakeholders.

WV State presented by Matt Browning. New to his role as director. Hired a new specialist and is now housed in the same building as university relations and also has an Americorp volunteer for 25 hrs/week.

University of AR at Pine Bluff presented by Bobbi on behalf of Debbie Archer. New chair of Ag Dept. also have new chair of Human Sciences. Shared copies of their calendar.

LSU Ag Center presented by Frankie Gould. Had big celebration of 125 birthday for research. Did series of supporting promotional material. Culminated in one hour documentary airs on PBS. Magazine packaged with video and brochure summary of research and extension brochure and ag facts booklet and intellectual property brag list. Starting on extension anniversary soon. Noted the national task force is being formed. Let Frankie know if you are interested in serving. Wants southern region well represented. Busy news year- since January delivered about 2,000 news stories. Design team working on e-book which will be released with all publications. Scaling back on tanberg/distance ed equipment due to expense of maintenance and needed updates. Back to 4-5 locations vs. 15 a few years ago. Staff is now at 20 people.

NC A & T presented by Cathy Hill. Current staff consists of 12 people. Restructured recently and IT pulled out and now report to an Assistant Dean but still work very closely together. Has been working heavily on social media- providing guidelines. Has also been working a lot on branding. Solutions magazine used theme 'we are' for 2012 issue. Went over really well and has had more buy in this year

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from administration than usual. Did t-shirts, presentation templates. Nice joint-brand with NC/A&T. Dean is proposing to bring in an external firm to review marketing direction.

Frankie noted CSREES (now NIFA) used to offer free unit reviews. Someone needs to contact Judy Rudd to see if they still offer this service. Ayanna will follow up with Judy about this and report back.

Oklahoma State presented by Lyndall Stout who is currently interim director. She serves as the host for their television show 'SunUp' which airs weekly on PBS on Saturday morning and on YouTube. Has been well received- in 80/90s was daily noon show. Cancelled about 2000 and came back on air in 2008. Good feedback from producers and administrators. Also have a gardening show. University communications is engaged and wants their content aired on OState television channel. 800 videos of SunUp on YouTube agents access from field. Having app development discussion. Have had students develop prototype. Drought major issue. Have a water center that did video shorts shared with other universities. Tackling the drought feature on website. One of their beef specialists will be on Talk of the Nation on NPR this afternoon. Bullet (doll version of their actual mascot) makes cameo appearance documented via photo/video. Fire wise tips to help prevent their spread. Ebook discussion has started. Looking at pinterest account to help promote extension.

Share ebook experiences via our Facebook page.

Cross-committee Reports

Budget and Coop Ext Services: attended by Suzanne Deatherage (who also attended the administrator social media session). Her group discussed the use of social media in lieu of face to face meetings. Widespread adoption primarily for internally based/hosted meetings. Frankie's group discussed mobile device usage, data plans (TN gives up to \$125/month to be used at their discretion, some aren't giving any allowances- it is expected as part of the job that they have some type of mobile device). Delivery of information using mobile devices – explore pooling resources for joint/regional projects. Cross programming responsibilities (ANR/4-H, etc.). A lot of talk about outsourcing.

Administrator support of social media- recommend reviewing the presentation once it's online. Michigan State presented on how they are delivering content via social media. They require all their faculty to publish two articles a month via social media. KY administrator explained how he reviews

CES Agent Recruitment, Training and Retention: Gloria reported discussion centered around difficulty recruiting qualified applicants to the organization. Internship programs have helped groom professionals. MSU has had tough time recruiting FCS and 4-H agents. MSU have had better luck with ANR positions. In training, the middle management committee discussed orientation training – SEAL existing curricula they recommend to help show what agents are expected to do. It was noted that the white paper

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investigative team should review that curricula for potential info. Salary an issue. Retention can be tough. Losing agents to industry. Though it was noted that the reduced job market has helped minimize this.

Climate Variability- no attendees from committee

Food Systems-Cathy reported lots of discussion about local food and how it is defined. Good advice from Tom Melton at NC State – focus on providing information- not defining to help minimize alienating traditional clientele base. Their center for local food is well established and a good place to find reference material for local, sustainable, organic, etc. what does it take to make local food systems work? Challenge to find and retain growers in local farmers markets. Should Extension drive this discussion and lead this effort? Bob Ratliff noted that eXtension is developing a local food COP. Steve Brown from UGA noted their effort to build the middle farmer to help feed the local system. Food hubs concept. Also noted usefulness of having an MOU to help foster local partnerships to help keep lines of authority established. Food deserts can be offensive to some so we should try to refer to these areas as ‘limited food access’.

Job Skills Training and Education: Ayanna reported. Challenges and issues ID’d as shortage of STEM trained graduates, rapidly evolving technology, lack of job skills. Noted 4-H can help better prepare students for the work world. Summary- workforce ready community, showing economic impact

Measuring and Reporting Impacts: Lorna and Ruth attended. Their ? was how can our region best capture and report. General confusion on how to best address this question. Summary was to review goals from NIFA, figuring out status of last round of impact reporting effort that Frankie and Faith have been working on.

Frankie updated committee on current discussion with NIFA. They are working to refine this process and make the data more readily available to the public or at least shared with communicators to better leverage our success stories.

Issue comes down to reducing duplication of effort, getting the components to work together more effectively. Boils down to the need to better tell our story using impact data. Difference of reporting vs. lifting up impact data. AR has impact statement format that uses picture w/ testimonial from actual participant in the program they are describing. Bob has also suggested they use a QR code on their impact statements that directs to a testimonial video.

Middle managers are being asked by legislators to quantify extension. How are you making a difference? In a group setting, they want bottom line, big stats type info. When speaking individually to a legislator, they want to know personal stories from their district.

Obesity session reported by Dee. Picked two issues extension can help with- sedentary lifestyles: doing an assessment of current programs that help address this

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Lack of food prep skills: FCS committee has put forth a proposal to take NC curricula Cook Smart, Eat Smart across the region for widespread adoption.

Thursday, August 23

Bob Reynolds, Frankie Gould and Ayanna McPhail reported on what they heard at the PLC meeting:

- 2013 PLN Conference will be held August 19-23 in Nashville.
- 2014 PLN Conference will be held August 18-22 in Fort Worth.

Members were reminded to complete the online evaluation form for the PLN Conference and to record the 2012-2013 conference calls on their calendars:

- 3 Eastern and 2 Central, all third Wednesdays except October. Please call 712-451-6125 and enter participant code 237957#
 - October 10
 - February 20
 - April 17
 - June 19
 - July 17

State reports were concluded.

Everyone said goodbye to Carol Whatley and wished her good luck on her retirement.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Maria Bowie and Lorna Norwood