

Minutes of the Middle Managers Mini-Conference

Southern Region Program Leadership Network

April 8, 2021

<https://zoom.us/j/8260348661>

Session recording at:

https://zoom.us/rec/share/nx73HqRDE7Oz_KjRzuq87FA76_f_P1n4ZKA20rDqqCZzmG5cmEzDq8beV68hYJvE.lgLBRTJA5phCSOYK

Content:

- Minutes
- Kentucky proposed Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training for Extension Personnel for 2021
- State reports

1-Meeting called to order by Chair Mike Martin at 9:04AM (EST).

2-In attendance based on sign-in:

- Mike Martin (chair), Georgia
- Virginia Brown, Program Evaluation Specialist, UGA
- Janet Hollingsworth, Georgia
- Jenny Cocanougher (vice-chair), Kentucky
- Jeff Young, Kentucky
- Willy Howard, Kentucky
- Carolyn Williams, Prairie View, Texas (1890's administrative advisor)
- Thomas Dobbins, Clemson (1862's administrative advisor)
- Lonnnette Marsh, South Carolina
- Michael McManus, South Carolina
- Karissa Ulmer, South Carolina
- Deon Legette, Clemson

- Gerald Jones, Alcorn State, Mississippi (PLD representative)
- Tawnia Holliman, Mississippi
- James Henderson, Mississippi
- Conchita Newman, Florida A&M
- Pete Vergot, Florida
- Julie Dillard, Florida
- Nikki Kurdys, NC State
- Susan Kelly, North Carolina
- Jim Steward, Tennessee (PLC representative)
- Jerry Don Lamb, Tennessee
- David Perrin, Tennessee
- Jerry Don Lamb, Tennessee
- Claude Bess, Oklahoma
- Nancy Johnson, Oklahoma
- Cindy Conner, Oklahoma
- Danny Peek, Virginia
- Eric Simonne (secretary), Florida

Mike welcomed all members and attendees. He engaged the group in an icebreaker on menti.com

3-Review of Minutes from the February 11, 2021 meeting – No changes or comments from attendance.

4-Administrative Advisor updates and National Perspective Impacts on Middle Management

4.1 Dr. Tom Dobbins- 1862, Clemson University

Just finished 3 days of ASRED meeting. Main topic was middle management and its essential role to Extension; yet, we still often need to convince upper LGU

administration about it. Other topics: what we learned during the pandemic and going forward, virtual agents, upcoming farm bill, broad-band connectivity issues, rural health (obesity, nutrition, food safety), how do we get rid of our independence – aka, working together across state lines (a proposal: SR needs to figure 1-2-3 programs that we can work on as a region together and show the model can work), (re)define the extension role and mission in providing help to/with other parts of the Land Grant university outreach and engagement (non “Extension”) programs; Extension in the SR came out of the pandemic very strong – which says a lot about MM and on-the ground work by agents/educators; continue collaborations between 1864 and 1890 institutions; make sure that as the fight for farm bill dollars increases, we need to let legislators know about the role and importance of Extension.

Discussion and comments:

It is not return to “work”; it is return to the “office” – most offices never closed; the services went on. What wording should we use?

Tennessee has coined the term “adaptive workplace”.

Extension worked HARDER during the pandemic. Most “return to work” upper administrative polices are campus centric and often make little sense for county offices.

4.2 Dr. Carolyn Williams-1890, Prairie View A&M University

The 1890 system-wide, in-person conference has been moved to July 2022 (Orlando, FL Renaissance Hotel) partially focused on what we have learned during the pandemic. Federal funding has allocated much needed and welcomed help to minority farmers. Working on the process of application and distribution of funds. Participating in the CDC and eXtension about getting the word out about vaccines and addressing hesitation, lack of trust, and misinformation. Extension is more needed than ever these days; we have shown a lot of resolve and resilience. Prairie View U. has been the victim of a major hack and found ways to keep going. We need to support our staff and faculty as they go through tough time – “mental and physical health status check-ins”. Thank you to what MM did last year for Extension and clients.

4.3 Update from PLC representatives Gerald Jones and Jim Stewart

The 2021 PLN meeting will be virtual (Aug 23-26) with a theme of “***Surviving and thriving: turning adversity into opportunities***”. Schedule will be similar to that of last year. Looks like PLN will not have large hotel contract liabilities thanks to negotiations, but the site rotation will change: make plans for 2022 in Ft. Worth, TX (in-person) and 2023 in Orlando, FL (in-person).

5- MM Biennial Conference- 2022 Host? Or 2023?

The group agreed that the current expanded phone calls are acceptable substitutes to our face-to-face conference that was cancelled in 2021 and stay on schedule. Members are encouraged to develop proposals for hosting the 2023 MM conference -- which hosting state will be picked at the PLN meeting this summer.

6-State Reports:

6.1 Tennessee: operated under 5 different phases through the pandemic; campus wants people in their office on June 1. Poor performers before the pandemic remained as such through the pandemic. Flexibility is valued by high-performing employees. State meetings have started, mostly with about 50% attendance. New Dean Dr. Stokes started Feb. 22.

6.2 Kentucky

Recently updated our office operations protocol to allow more in-person meetings/activities with limited numbers, social distancing, masking, sanitizing. Most offices are fully staffed during regular office hours. First in-person professional development event will be the spring 4-H Agent conference later this month.

Initiated a 9-month Certificate for Extension employees on “Racial Equity in the Food Systems”. First cohort has started with 14 employees both agents and support staff (see **Appendix A** for draft content. The College’s Office of Diversity is leading this effort. Also received a Kellogg Grant to support DEI work.

Legislature recently passed state budget, waiting to hear more details.

Several county offices are assisting with vaccination process by providing meeting room space etc. Local boards work out MOA’s with local health providers.

Efforts in Kentucky have focused on historical flooding experienced in Eastern Kentucky. A centrally located county office served as a staging area/distribution site. Counties collected cleaning supplies, financial donations, fencing supplies,

hay and other feedstuffs or grass seed. Specialists provided updated resources on food safety, livestock management and government assistance. EDEN resources were also utilized. Over \$40,000 generated in contributions from Extension employees and clientele.

6.3 Oklahoma –Back to work – all county staff are back in the office; campus back to work beginning May 14th; everyone back by July 1st

Some events are happening for over 50 people with COVID-19 protocols in place – must be approved by the dean. Most are outside events.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Efforts (DEI). Working on Coming Together for Racial Understanding with Langston University and the College of the Muscogee Nation. Setting up Community Engagement Sessions in Tulsa County involving OSU, OSU Tulsa, Langston Tulsa.

Budget. Level Budget from the State Legislature; some funding that passes through ODAFF – Oklahoma Department of Agriculture Food and Forestry (reinvesting in DASNRR money)

New President Elect – Dr. Casey Shrum

Search for a new Associate Vice President for Research and an evaluation specialist

Loss of 1 research facility, looking for another location.

Vaccine Education. Many county offices are involved in assisting with vaccination clinics especially if they are located at the fairgrounds.

The process is beginning for vaccination education program through the CDC with our FCS educators.

Disaster Response. Oklahoma has a disaster preparedness team with specific “strike” team. The team is alerted when a disaster happens.

6.4 Mississippi – Started the year without a 4-H program leader; will have a 2% budget increase from the legislation – that will be used for raises. Likely to return to “normal” office occupancy by mid-May.

6.5 Georgia – Some UGA employees are hesitant about getting vaccinated (68% intent to get it, 32% unsure or do not want the vaccine) – most hesitancy was in 4-H. Does not seem to be related to age distribution.

See **Appendix B** for additional state reports from North Carolina, Florida, South Carolina, Georgia, and Texas.

7-Topical Discussions (approx. 30 minutes each):

7.1 Virtual Agent Job Description - Pete Vergot

Presented a generic position description for a 100% digital-delivery agent. What will be the county reaction if/when programing goes well beyond county limits? Seems the right time to try this.

7.2 Roundtable discussion on Performance Evaluations - Andrea Scarrow

As Extension had to shift to the virtual world last year, today's participants are splitting into groups to discuss "how did you do your performance evaluation this year as DED?".

Group 1 – Did in-person appraisals except when covid risk; not much different approach to appraisal; just focus on how the agent reacted to the pandemic; we learned that we could handle more than what we thought virtually! It was particularly challenging for new hires just before the pandemic.

Group 2 – Some of us used the previous year score as default; some did virtual appraisal; we learned "technology is good"; electronic signature is great! Prefer it to having to push papers through campus.....

Group 3 – DEDs need to reassure agents who were nervous about how the pandemic affected their plans, and how administration was going to react to lower pace-to—face numbers; some agents concerned about losing connections with clients; suspended improvement plans; we learned how much technology training was needed; we learned what our equipment needs were to make technology work; we now need to figure how do we measure impact from virtual delivery.

Group 4 – Some did not do "hard" appraisals this year; we learned that tracking numbers of virtual events is easy; evaluation is harder.

7.3 Measurement tools for virtual work - Virginia Brown, UGA program evaluation specialist showed an excellent short ppt on how to evaluate digital deliveries, assess impact on target audiences, and showed some examples.

8-Other Business - None

This meeting was adjourned at 12:22.

The next quarterly call is on **Thursday June 10, 2021 from 10:00am (EST) to Noon.**

Respectfully taken and submitted by Secretary Eric Simonne.

Appendix A. University of Kentucky proposed Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training for Extension Personnel for 2021

DEI Program Timeline	
Date	Topic and Activity
03/4/21	<p>Lead Day Facilitator: Heather Hyden</p> <p>Zoom Link:</p> <p>Expected Learning Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off with Racial Equity in the Food System Panel as part of Intercultural Awareness Program. • Introductions to each other and the certificate program. • Inspire agents with stories of how other Extension systems have integrated racial equity into their programming or institutional change efforts. <p>Agenda:</p> <p>11:30- 11:50– Group introductions (Name & County)</p> <p>11:50- 12:00 - Introduce Canvas, point them to writing prompt due 3/5</p> <p>12:00-12:40 – Panel on Racial Equity in the Food System</p> <p>12:40-1:00 – Q&A</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share Canvas shell
03/5/21	<p>Lead Day Facilitator: Trying to recruit either Marcus or Nicole</p> <p>Expected Learning Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions to each other and review of program • Describe our Expectations: How we will stay connected; Setting the tone; Our approach; Ground rules and bold space, etc. <p>Agenda:</p> <p>10:00-10:15 – Welcome from Dr. Stephenson and Dr. Owens</p> <p>10:15-10:30 – Reflections on virtual panel session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share a takeaway from yesterday’s conversation. <p>10:30-11:00 – Establish group norms and expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review our approach – discuss the “why” • Ask what's the best and worst training you have experienced. <p>11:00-11:30 – Logistics overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review program schedule. • Introduce final project. • Discuss methods for communication - Canvas, emails

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe next session - Give details on how to access link to movie on Canvas. <p>11:30-12:00 - Final Reflections using River of Life exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pair and share https://trainings.350.org/?resource=river-of-life What has challenged you the most about today? What has made you feel most vulnerable?
04/02/21	<p>Lead Day Facilitator: Dr. Harris & Nicole</p> <p>Expected Learning Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to Key Concepts: Systemic, Institutional, Individual and Internalized Racism <p>Agenda: Story Circle</p> <p>10:00-11:45 – Story circle with group discussion</p> <p>11:45-12:00 – Wrap up and discuss next session.</p> <p>Story Prompt:</p> <p>Discussion Prompts:</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The film, Finding Forester deals with all these different concepts well. Has a great storied approach. Open it up for a discussion. Interactive what was individual? Flows well into the next section. Reflected strongly in the film with history of discrimination in USDA. There is also another film that Marcus suggestion – Best of Enemies – that is the story of Annie Atwater in Durham, North Carolina. Lead facilitator to decide on what film to use. <p>Story Circle Facilitation Guide from Dr. Nicole Breazeale: (Adjust for virtual story circle adaptation)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> On the day of the event, reassure participants that the exercise is meant to be fun and participatory, but that they don't need to be afraid since they have complete control over what they choose to share. (Note: do not underestimate the importance of reassuring people up front as many have performance anxiety and do not know what to expect; that said, it is very rare that everyone in the story circle does not end up sharing a story). After everyone is seated in their chairs, the facilitator should introduce the purpose and topic of the story circle. Use the "introduction to story circle" video to walk participants through the rules (or the facilitator can offer up the rules themselves). Note that setting up the process correctly is critical to the success of the story circle – do NOT skip this step). Key points to make:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is a story (and what is <i>not</i> a story). A story is not a sermon, lecture, expression of opinions, or analysis—but rather a personal anecdote; an experience that happened to you). Tips for how to bring others into your story (provide context and details; describe vivid details; share feelings; helpful to lift up the challenge that was faced). b. How the story circle will work (clockwise rotation, 3-5 minutes, no timer, no talking/responding to stories, passing is acceptable, second chance to tell a story, ok if your story goes off topic, trust the process and that a story will come to you if you listen, any type of story is fine—so long as it is a story!). c. The role of the facilitator – to gently intervene if someone gets lost in their story and goes on too long; to stop the process and check in with participants if someone gets too emotional. d. The importance of listening (and trying not to think about your own story). Eliminate distractions. Let the magic of listening deeply to other people’s stories allow you to change what you share. e. Cross-talk is the period for discussion afterwards. This is when people will share reflections on the process and discuss themes that emerged. f. Story circles are confidential spaces. Leave the stories, take the lessons. Do not record unless everyone agrees and knows how the recording will be used. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Provide the story prompt and give everyone a few minutes to consider it. Ask for a volunteer to tell the first story. The facilitator can start if absolutely necessary, but this is not desirable. It is preferable to wait in silence until someone is willing to start. Pause between stories, acknowledge/thank the storyteller through your body language (nod), and proceed in a clockwise fashion. After completing the circle, return to the participants who passed on the first round to give them a second chance to contribute a story. 4. Shift to cross-talk after the story circle is complete. Facilitate discussion around the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What was that like to participate in this exercise? To listen in this way? To tell your story? How did you feel?
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	<p>b. What themes did you notice across the stories?</p> <p>c. What comes next? What should we do with what we have learned today?</p> <p>5. Provide the attached evaluation and give everyone a few minutes to complete.</p>
04/16/21	<p>Lead Day Facilitator: Annelise Straw & Jed DeBruin</p> <p>Expected Learning Objectives: Overview of the history of discrimination in the USDA.</p> <p>Agenda:</p> <p>10:00-11:15 – Guest Speakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kentucky Farmer shares their story of discrimination • Ashley Smith - Talk about Black Soil's work with black farmers • Garrett Graddy-Lovelace – Overview of Extension and USDA discrimination, review timeline?, Pigford cases, discuss policy (Farm Bill & Justice for Black Farmers Act) <p>11:15-11:50- Discussion</p> <p>11:50-12:00- Reflection Time and Discuss goals for next session. Direct participants to the Canvas page to review the Final Project Rubric.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review timeline to show to lineage of USDA discrimination - Possible readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o "Documenting USDA Discrimination: Community-Partnered Research on Farm Policy for Land Justice" (Orozco, Ward, Graddy-Lovelace, 2018) o "Dismantling Racism in the Food System" backgrounder (Holt-Gimenez) o Roz has great reading resource- Joel Shor - Discuss the importance of the Justice for Black Farmers Act - Have \$300 per speaker – money for a total of 8 guest speakers.
05/07/21	<p>Lead Day Facilitator: Alessandra Del Brocco? Heather will make the ask</p> <p>Expected Learning Objectives: Intersections: Race, Gender, Class</p> <p>Agenda:</p> <p>10:00-11:00 – Speaker with Q&A</p> <p>11:00-12:00 – Introduce final project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop final project teams and allow time to discuss project ideas • Assign project mentors

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need Mia to come and provide overview of Final Project funds available- pop in! <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Heather may invite her sibling to speak about trans farming community and intersections between housing justice and food justice 2. For canvas site, include slides or notes that describe what intersectionality is, where it originated, etc. This can be a useful resource for them in the future.
05/21/21	<p>Lead Day Facilitator: Heather Hyden</p> <p>Expected Learning Objectives: Power inequality in local communities; Thinking outside the box on inclusion; Focus on how community moves at a different pace than institutions.</p> <p>Agenda:</p> <p>10:00-10:45 – Michelle Howell of Need More Acres Farm with Q&A (Michelle discuss how she redirects power to food insecure individuals through her farm)</p> <p>10:45-11:30 – Agents share their challenges, wins, obstacles, and approach to community engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pair and Share • Michelle to stay for this portion to offer some of her advice. <p>11:30-11:45 – Allow 15 min for project teams to regroup.</p> <p>11:45-12:00 – Wrap up and introduce next session.</p> <p>Notes:</p>
06/04/21	<p>Lead Day Facilitator: Final Project Mentors</p> <p>Expected Learning Objectives: Present project ideas and gather feedback.</p> <p>Agenda:</p> <p>10:00-11:15 – Project idea presentations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short presentations of project ideas (~5 min) • Feedback from mentors and cohort • Include a rubric to be used <p>11:15-12:00 – Reflections on program thus far</p>
June	<p>Work on project with team throughout the month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentors available to meet individually. • Provide update on Canvas discussion board.
07/09/21	<p>Lead Day Facilitator: Ron Hustedde</p> <p>Expected Learning Objectives: Introduction to civic dialogue.</p> <p>Agenda: TBA</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on when civic dialogue is needed. • Examples of agents who have done this.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer resources from Coming Together for Racial Understanding curriculum.
July	<p>Work on project with team throughout the month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentors available to meet individually. • Provide update on Canvas discussion board.
08/06/21	<p>Lead Day Facilitator: Ron Hustedde & Dr. Harris</p> <p>Expected Learning Objectives: Deep Listening 101</p> <p>Agenda: Ron and Roz to create.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Coming Together for Racial Understanding as a tool.
August	<p>Work on project with team throughout the month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentors available to meet individually. • Provide update on Canvas discussion board.
09/10/21	<p>Lead Day Facilitator: Nicole & Marcus</p> <p>Expected Learning Objectives: Story circle for program check-in. What has been most significant change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain feedback on content so far and find out what activities and topics the agents would like to dive into deeply in October. <p>Agenda:</p> <p>Notes: Nicole and Marcus to decide if story circle or river of life activity fits best here.</p>
09/24/21	<p>Lead Day Facilitator: Final Project Mentors</p> <p>Expected Learning Objectives: Present project progress and gather feedback.</p> <p>Agenda:</p> <p>10:00-11:15 – Project progress presentations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short presentations of project progress thus far (~10 min) • Feedback from mentors and cohort • Include a rubric to be used <p>11:15-12:00 – Reflections on program thus far</p>
10/08/21	<p>Lead Day Facilitator: Nicole & Marcus</p> <p>Expected Learning Objectives: Based on feedback from 9/10 meeting.</p> <p>Agenda:</p> <p>Notes: Last content meeting</p>
October	<p>Field Trip to a Farm- Maybe Need More Acres in Allen County This will require more time for travel and visit/cook lunch together. Topic will be expanding on inclusion and being an equitable partner.</p>
November	<p>Project month</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on projects and provide updates on Canvas Discussion Board • Final Project mentors will be available 4 hours possible
	TBD: Project Presentations with the cohort and mentors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “rehearsal” for presentations at Extension Conference
12/10/21	Lead Facilitator: Nicole Breazeale Expected Learning Outcome: Wrap up with Story Circle Agenda: Story Prompt: Discussion Prompts: Notes:
December	Project Presentation at Extension Conference!
	Total Hours= 36 without field trip included

Appendix B. Additional state reports from North Carolina A&T, Florida, Clemson, and Georgia.

B.1 North Carolina A&T (April 8, 2021)

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts (DEI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Community Resource Development (CRD) Extension Agents have facilitated/trained using the curriculum <i>Coming Together for Racial Understanding</i> to reach over 100 agents around the state, which has resulted in one county's partnership to provide DEI training sessions to their county department heads.• The Harnett County CRD facilitated at the NC State's Racial Equity Summit.• The team continues to look for ways to come together to help understand racial equity issues within their own organization as well as include racial equity into programs they conduct within communities.
Budget Situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• State Match approved• Increase in Federal funding• Campaign for Sustainable County Partnership• 60% commitment from counties to support 50/50 cost-share agreement• Upward of \$83,000• Awarded \$6.2M in new grant funds

Vaccine Education Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative Extension at N.C. A&T is strategically partnering with three organizations with the Vaccinate with Confidence Campaign: Student Health Center at N.C. A&T, Association of Mexicans in North Carolina (AMEXCAN), and N.C. Farmworker Health Groups. • The Student Health Center already provides a wide range of high-quality health care services and education to the university community. They have been instrumental in showcasing the preventive measures in their current capacity in managing the COVID vaccine clinic with other partners. They will be instrumental in providing guidance and assistance to host equity pop-up sites in East Greensboro where vaccination education is needed. They have voiced that more proactive steps will ensure the minority populations in Greensboro are being screened and educated about coronavirus. • Another partner AMEXCAN is currently working with several county health departments to host drive-in events that appeal to Latino communities' needs in eastern North Carolina. The NC Farmworker Health Groups have taken steps to partner with rural clinics to ensure migrant and seasonal farmworkers and families have access to information and proper screening. The project targets communities where the minority populations are most at risk.
COVID-19 Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 Online Resource Page • Duplin County: Small-Scale pasture swing producers connected to independent feeder pig producer • Mecklenburg County: 410 4-H youth participated in a 4-H Starter Garden Project • Hands to Service Face Mask Sewing Project (200+ masks to 6 counties) • Extension Extended • Small Farm Week food dispersed to families in Warren and Bladen counties and charitable organizations in Anson, Mecklenburg and Mitchell counties

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 800 pounds of fresh vegetables grown in high tunnels at A&T University Farm donated to Greensboro area non-profits
Employment Opportunities (Campus) https://jobs.ncat.edu/	<p>Extension Associate – Area Specialized Small Farms</p> <p>AgroMedicine Coordinator</p> <p>Director of Agricultural Communications</p> <p>Program Evaluation and Accountability Coordinator</p> <p>Extension Associate – Area Specialized 4-H STEM</p> <p>Extension Specialist – Agribusiness and Marketing</p> <p>Extension Specialist – Family Life and Human Development</p> <p>Extension Specialist – Urban Agriculture Production</p> <p>Extension Specialist – Plant Pathology</p> <p>Extension Specialist – e-Learning Instructional Design Specialist</p> <p>Extension Specialist – Natural Resources</p> <p>Extension Specialist – Animal Production</p>

B.2 Florida (April 6, 2021) - UF/IFAS Extension Middle Manager update

UF/IFAS Extension

- Our 2021 IFAS Extension Symposium (statewide extension meeting) will be 100% virtual. This professional development opportunity will be held May 3 – 7. Doug Steele is our keynote speaker. <https://extadmin.ifas.ufl.edu/symposium/>
- Work on our next Extension long-range plan (the “Extension Roadmap” <https://pdec.ifas.ufl.edu/roadmap/poa.shtml>) continues. We are currently acquiring stakeholder input.
- We are gradually refilling 40 County Agent positions that accumulated during the pandemic. <https://hr.ifas.ufl.edu/careers/county-extension-faculty/>
- We are advertising for our first 100% virtual Extension Agent. The title of this position is “Life Skills and Wellness Digital Media Influencer.” The home base is Duval County (Jacksonville) but the Agent will have some regional responsibility. <https://apply.interfolio.com/85415>
- Four candidates for the next IFAS Dean for Extension were interviewed in March. A decision is expected soon. We are anxiously awaiting our new Dean, whoever that may be! <https://ifas.ufl.edu/searches/dean-for-extension/>

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access

- Emphasis on “Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access” (IDEA) continues. Many training opportunities are available. Each Unit has developed a plan (Each Extension District is a Unit) <https://hr.ifas.ufl.edu/diversity-and-inclusion/>
- Each IFAS unit was assigned to write an IDEA strategic plan due at the end of 2020. It is a ground-up process. Plans were presented to Scott Angle by unit leaders in one-on-one meetings. Dr. Angle is determined to see results from these plans.
- Working on reviewing all Affirmative Action updates to prepare for - UF IFAS Extension County faculty for a future audit in 2025 by NIFA.

Covid Update

- IFAS Extension activities remain mostly virtual during the spring. Some face-to-face events are occurring with social distancing and masks. Despite our guidelines, masks are generally being shunned at “outdoor” event like livestock shows. Travel with COVID-19 precautions is approved for clientele visits. Extension leadership is advising extension faculty they can plan “normal” events (no social distancing) beginning in August, but masks will be required indoors.
- We expect masks will be required through the end of 2021.
- UF’s “Screen, Test, and Protect” program to limit COVID-19 spread has been deemed successful so far. Positive tests and hospitalizations have been well below local and state averages.
- Vaccinations are on the rise. Covid Vaccinations are occurring at pharmacies and grocery stores. The entire Florida population 18+ are eligible for vaccination
- While campus administrators have returned to their offices, many faculty and staff continue to use mixed scheduling with some days in the office and some days at an alternate work location (typically home).
- County offices some county faculty continue alternate work locations.

- Extension collaborated with UF Health to hold virtual town halls that described vaccine safety and efficacy, one in English and one in Spanish. These events were well-received by stakeholders.
- Our new on-line portal connecting the public to IFAS Extension is now called “Ask IFAS.”
- One year ago, County Extension Directors worked with their local government to develop “resumption of operation” plans. We are now in Phase III of four phases, where Phase IV is a return to “normal.” Some county governments continue to act like COVID does not exist.
- 4-H events this summer will be a hybrid of face-to-face and virtual programs.
- We have lost 4-H volunteers due to the slowdown of club activities due to the pandemic. A lot of work must be done to rebuild our volunteer base.

UF/IFAS (Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences)

- New - Vice President Scott Angle continues his travels throughout the state to meet stakeholders, decision-makers, RECs, and county extension offices. His goal is to visit every one of our 67 county offices and he is about halfway there.
- The IFAS budget currently being set by the state legislature appears better than it did several months ago. In late 2020 IFAS was told to prepare for a budget cut, but that message has disappeared in recent weeks. (\$10 billion in stimulus package funding due to Florida helps.)
- IFAS has established an AI Advisory Committee composed of external stakeholders that will assist IFAS in strategic planning, identify funding and collaborative research/teaching/extension programs, and help identify workforce development opportunities.
- Another round of 12 to 9-month conversions for state faculty will occur this year.
- IFAS is about to hire its first “Chief Financial Officer” to provide visionary financial leadership and integrate funds management in a holistic way across teaching, research, and extension.
- IFAS received its largest single gift ever. “The DeLuca property” is 27,000 acres of mostly pristine Florida wilderness in the center of the peninsula valued at **\$40.5 million**.
- At least four bills under consideration in the current legislative session take aim at China and foreign influence. One bill wants to “combat foreign influence in our public institutions and prevent corporate espionage in Florida.”
The consequences of these bills could be devastating to UF/IFAS (students, post-docs, collaborations, even support from Chinese-owned Syngenta).

UF

- UF has established a long-term campaign to implement Artificial Intelligence (AI) across the curriculum. UF aims to become a worldwide leader in AI as it hires **100** new AI-focused faculty. A \$100 million public-private partnership was established with NVIDIA that will leverage UF’s research strength to address worldwide challenges, create access to AI training and tools for under-represented communities, and build momentum for transforming the future of the workforce.

At the heart of this effort is **HiPerGator AI** – the most powerful AI supercomputer in higher education. <https://www.rc.ufl.edu/services/hipergator/>

B.3 Clemson 4/8/2021- Middle Manager's Report – SC

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts

Objective: Encourage diversity, respect, and inclusiveness throughout Clemson Extension Service.

Provided access to resources developed from the diversity and inclusion plan.

Cultural Awareness Workshops conducted for several Extension employees (Navigating Differences) and cultural awareness training for Extension staff and other units within the University System and local communities as requested (Coming Together for Racial Understanding)

Budget

Clemson Cooperative Extension has been able to maintain our state budget at current levels. We were not cut by the state and added \$1 million in non-recurring funding to renovate an Extension Building at Sandhill REC. We have been able to reorganize within current organization to cover for vacant Associate Director position. This was done with changes in the District Director organization chart and Program Team Director Organization Chart. We have also implemented a virtual online course offering through Clemson online.

Vaccination Education and Efforts

Collaborated with MUSC to organize, schedule, and deliver COVID-19 testing clinics in rural, low-resource counties. These clinics will be transitioning to vaccination clinics by end of spring, early summer.

Several DHEC vaccination sites in local communities, and Extension assisted sites will start in the Upstate/Midlands of SC mid-April.

Currently, vaccinations are not required for students, faculty, and staff to return to work.

B.4 Georgia - Middle Managers Report, April 8, 2021, Submitted by Mike Martin

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI)

- All UGA Extension Administration participated in the Coming Together for Racial Understanding (CTRU) facilitated by Rachel Wellborn and other Southern Region personnel.
- We are incorporating DEI into onboarding and mentoring programs
- Studying advertising and recruitment strategy to attract a more diverse applicant pool
- Learning about and investigating Affinity Groups
- Planning to diffuse DEI throughout the organization in an intentional way

Budget Situation

- The FY 21 Budget was reduced by 11% and then 60% of the cut was restored in March.
- House and Senate have restored the 60% in the FY 22 budget. \$2.6 Million back into our budget.

- Sales and Service which includes all of the 4-H Centers has a significant funding deficit due to COVID and lack of business in FY21.
- Currently hiring as vacancies occur. No new positions at this time unless fully county or grant funded. Working on staffing plans to address future and long-term needs as opposed to just filling a vacancy.

Vaccine Education Efforts

- Vaccine Education “Healthy Georgia” flyers were printed and distributed to all counties to place in businesses and other places frequented by the public sharing research-based information regarding the COVID vaccine.
- UGA has applied for a CDC grant for \$25,000 to work on a plan to educate migrant farm workers and low-income families on the benefits of vaccination. A secondary \$200,000 grant is also being applied for.
- Currently surveying Extension faculty and staff. At this time, 745 surveys completed. 68% intend to get the vaccine. 32% are unsure/don’t want the vaccine. Most hesitancy is with 4-H staff with 40% unsure/don’t want it.

Other Items of Interest

- Planning to implement a new compensation plan for County Extension Coordinators. The new plan would be scaled and based upon the total number of employees in the local office. Currently, the compensation is based upon the number of Agents in an office. More to come on this one.
- As more people get vaccinated and COVID numbers continue to decline, the state is gradually opening back up. The Governor’s office recently removed limits on group gatherings. Social distancing and face coverings are still being recommended. 4-H Summer Camp will be happening at 1/2 capacity this summer. Transportation is an issue for 4-H since we currently have strict limits on the number of passengers in vans and busses.
- A new Chief Communications Officer was hired for the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences. Cassie Ann Kiggen, Started March 17th.

B.5 - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- Continuing our work with Prairie View Cooperative Extension on Coming Together for Racial Understanding. The Steering Committee, consisting of Agents and Faculty from both Institutions has released a survey across both agencies to gather current status and perceptions in order to build training efforts to be initiated in 2021.
- Summer Intern program will be initiated in June and will place emphasis on minority students with an interest in Extension. We will hire approximately 20 Interns to be placed in County offices across the state. The goal would be that approximately 1/3 or more would be from minority populations.

Budget Situation

- The agency submitted a budget at 95% of previous biennium funding. We were able to request a return to base as our first priority exceptional item request. Both houses have submitted budgets that have kept that cut in place, but a Conference Committee from both chambers will begin work soon to evaluate exceptional item requests. We are hopeful that we can maintain previous biennium levels.
- County funding continues to be strong in the majority of counties across the state.

Vaccine Education Update

- Our agents have been very involved in the distribution of vaccine to regional vaccination hubs, working with the Texas Division of Emergency Management.
- Health Agents and FCH Agents are engaged in providing educational outreach to clientele related to vaccinations and the availability of vaccine.

Disaster Response and Recovery

- Agents are still very engaged in distribution of vaccine and test kits across the state, working with regional warehouse sites and state officials.
- Winter Storm Uri was devastating to much of the state, with temperatures reaching record lows in many cases and large amounts of snow and ice. Our agents have been very involved in assessing damage to crops and livestock and working with local Emergency Boards to educate producers on the process to apply for assistance.