



PLN Communications Committee State Reports 2018

1. Institution Name/Department Name (Ex. Virginia State University College of Agriculture Department of Marketing and Communications):
Mississippi State University Extension Service Agricultural Communications

2. Department Head: ***Elizabeth Gregory North***

3. PLN Representative Delivering Report, If Different Than Above:

4. Number of:

Full time employees in department: 29

Part time employees in department: 2

Staff/faculty department supports: 677

5. Department Supports (check all that apply):

Extension and Research Only

Extension, Research and Related Academic Programs

General University Initiatives (non College of Agriculture or Extension)

6. Department Annual Operating Budget:

Total appropriated budget: \$1,718,636.00

Salaries: \$1,531,847.00

Operating: \$ 186,789.00

Average annual income: \$460,932.38 (Print Shop sales, grants, & contracts)

7. Outline your top three most significant communications and marketing achievements/projects since last August:

I. **Project Name:** ***Healthy Homes Initiative Communications Campaign***
Opportunity:

- Collaborating with health education faculty and agents to develop an integrated multimedia campaign promoting a series of trainings for homeowners

Action:

AgComm produced

- 9 news releases
- 2 radio episodes

- 3 magazine feature stories
- 3 how-to videos
- 1 brochure (1,600 copies printed)
- 1 rack card (1,600 copies printed)
- 1 training curriculum for Extension agents

Impact/Result:

- 1,800 unique web visitors
- 114 requests to subject-matter staff for training
- 9,300 social media interactions
- Partnership between Extension and Mississippi Department of Health to develop modules for child-care centers

II. Project Name: *Improving Project and Production Management and Accountability*

Opportunity:

- Improve agility, accountability, workflow management, and visibility of projects, deadlines, capacity, and workload.
- Improve integrated, campaign-oriented approach to projects by breaking down barriers between sections.

Action:

- Developed one project-intake form for the creative sections of the department. The Print Shop retains their own form.
- AgComm Vision Team reviewed and evaluated 10 different software platforms using a 14-item rubric.

Impact/Result: Adopted Workzone with a soft launch in October 2017 and a hard launch on April 1, 2018. Adoption is going well.

III. Project Name: *Centralizing Printing and Mailing of County Newsletters*

Opportunity:

- As budgets are being reduced, look for ways to reduce costs of printing and charges for mailing machines and postage at county level.
- Improve branding and graphic and editorial quality of county-level publications.
- Lay groundwork for Extension CRM system by providing incentive and system for collecting county mailing lists.

Action:

- Evaluated options for three systems from two external vendors.

Impact/Result:

- Worked with Canon to implement a system including Prisma Prepare, Prisma Direct, and a third-party platform called Pressero to provide a web-based storefront for customizing and ordering newsletters and other print jobs.

- Piloted system with project to centralize printing and mailing of county newsletters. Pilot with ten counties generated so much word-of-mouth that other counties asked to be added to the system—currently 32 counties are using it as of August 2018. The templates improve design quality and brand compliance, while centralizing printing and mailing is reducing costs and allowing us to collect county mailing lists.
- Planning to add more options to the system to capture different types of print jobs from the county Extension offices and from other non-Extension parts of the University.

8. Outline the three most significant challenges you foresee for your department in the next 12 months:

- I. **Problem:** Budget reduction
Cause: Reduction in appropriations from state
Anticipated Effects:
 - \$30,000 cut in operating funds
 - inability to re-hire two vacant positions (photographer and editor)
 - possible inability to rehire others if vacancies occur**Expected Action/Result:**
 - Redistribute work.
 - Reduced our 2 magazines to 3 issues per year instead of 4.
 - Hired students to fill in.
 - Reassess and realign skill sets.

- II. **Problem:** Technology issues, outdated software, need for upgraded ad-quality video and still cameras.
Cause:
 - The majority of our Macs are nearing their end of life and need to be replaced. Several of our PCs are in the same situation.
 - We need to duplicate some computer/video equipment for a video producer now stationed at our R&E Center outside Jackson, MS.**Anticipated Effects:**
 - Reduction in operating funds available for other uses (like travel, etc.).
 - Incompatibility with external vendors for print, etc., because of outdated software.**Expected Action/Result:** More time spent solving technical issues and seeking funding.

- III. **Problem:** Entrenched employees who don't want to change and grow and be more accountable and productive.
Cause: Longevity, comfort, self-delusion.
Anticipated Effects:

- Too much investment in traditional media at the expense of new media, new audiences.
- Employees who do “get it” become overworked and disillusioned and quit.
- Low productivity and low strategic value lead to increased outsourcing and proliferation of external “communicators.”

Expected Action/Result: Training, training, training, pressure, counseling, training, training, training.

9. List 1-3 opportunities you see for SR-PLN communicators in the coming years.

I. We need to work together on regional issues, come up with regional solutions, like the training curriculum.

II. Spend more of our committee time in accomplishing work, rather than state reports.

III. Increasing collaboration between 1862s and 1890s at PLN and at home.

10. List 1-3 threats you see for SR-PLN communicators in the coming years.

I. Not coming to PLN because administrators don't see need for us to be here.

II. Further reductions in staff across the region.

III. Lack of understanding of administrators of the strategic role of communications.