

Arkansas Report to Program and Staff Development Committee
Southern Region Program Leadership Network Meeting
Biloxi, Mississippi
August 29-September 1, 2004

AIMS (Arkansas Information Management System) is the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service's web-based, planning, reporting and evaluation system. Rolled out October 2002. It incorporates a one-stop shop for:

Planning: Individual Plans of Work are created from the state program plans within AIMS.

Reporting: Allows agents and specialists to report time, contacts, benchmark indicators and impact reports to all 5 Federal goals.

Evaluation: Program results are available 24/7 via the Web. The system has the ability to pull results for individuals, counties, districts, sections, and/or statewide. AIMS also calculates the allocated resources for the Federal Report.

CORE COMPETENCIES:

Arkansas Extension has developed sets of core competencies for Extension employees related to subject matter areas (e.g., ANR, FCS, CD, 4-H Youth) and for a number of program development and professional support areas (e.g., program development and evaluation, teaching methods, communication skills, technology skills, management skills, etc.). In FY2004, Arkansas Extension implemented an agriculture and natural resources (ANR) core curriculum professional development program for new, and relatively new (three years or less), Extension educators. A cohort of 21 faculty members participated in 12 days of in-service training related to ANR core competencies conducted by faculty of the various ANR departments. This training was the first year of a planned program that will have the members of the training cohort progress from basic core competency training through a five-year series of progressive training programs for ANR-related competencies. Similar FCS, 4-H Youth and professional support area core competency training programs will be inaugurated in FY2005.

STRATEGIC PLANNING:

The University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture (which includes the Cooperative Extension Service and the Agricultural Experiment Station) is currently in the midst of a strategic planning process. The strategic plan will provide guidance for the directions that the Division and College will take over the next five years. As a part of this process, opportunities were provided for stakeholder input to help identify issues and trends that should be priorities for the Division of Agriculture. Input from external stakeholders was collected through a series of sixteen meetings held throughout the state. Over 500 Arkansans participated in these meetings. Input from faculty and staff of the Division of Agriculture were collected through two on-line surveys that provided opportunities for all Division personnel to provide input into the process. Over 150 individuals responded to the surveys.

Using the stakeholder input from the meetings and surveys, as well as other data relevant to identified issues and trends, five writing teams are currently developing sections of the strategic plan, using the Federal CSREES plan of work goal areas as the base structure for the report. The goal is to complete the strategic planning process and have a plan developed by fall of 2004.

Extension Faculty Leadership Program:

On April 16, 2004, the first Faculty Leadership Program class graduated. Twenty class members began the program in January 2003 and participated in seven seminars and a national study tour in Washington, DC. The seminar topics included Key Issues in Extension, Professional Development Planning, Decision Making, Communication, Professionalism, Resource Development, and Evaluation. The membership of the class included:

10 County Extension Agents

9 Specialists from program and support units

1 Assistant to the Vice President for Agriculture

Since beginning of the program the class members have had the following successes:

five of the classes members have had promotions,

2 became staff chairs in counties with more responsibilities

1 promoted to an assistant department head position

1 promoted to an area specialist position

1 promoted to a vice chancellor position in the UA system

2 class members have started major projects in their counties

A chamber of commerce

A youth leadership program

1 class member began working on a doctorate in Higher Education 1 class member earned emeritus status with UA system and served on a USDA panel to review proposals awarding approx. \$1,000,000 in funding to Geospatial Extension Specialist Programs

Online In Service Training Management Software

Extension has purchased Educator, a product of UCompass. It is similar to Blackboard but much less expensive. We plan to have 8-10 online inservice training courses available by next year in both program and support areas.