

Department of Agriculture/Agribusiness

Position Paper: Department Staffing

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Introduction

This document is intended to present the view of the academic Department of Ag/Agbusiness. The current budget has UW-Extension and the Counties that partner with UW-Extension examining the faculty and staff currently being employed throughout the state. The Department of Ag/Agbusiness would like to provide input into the staffing of county offices by Faculty and Academic Staff. This document contains ideas based on the current situation, but the Department would encourage a long-range planning program, including department input, to be better prepared for future situations.

This document has a two fold purpose, 1) to provide input into the decision making process, and 2) to educate Department Faculty and staff on this issue.

First and foremost the goal of the Department, as an Academic department composed of faculty, is to preserve tenured and tenure track faculty in county UW-Extension positions. It is the view of the Department that UW-Extension needs to examine local support, county/agent specialization, and the rights and responsibilities of faculty and academic staff, in future staffing decisions. Currently county UW-Extension faculty and academic staff are heavily involved in the Ag and Natural Resources Extension Team's approach to programming. The effects of reduced numbers and changes in specialization will have an impact on the team's composition and success. The Department would prefer to have input into future processes through the involvement of the Department Chair or Vice-chairs as Department Representative(s).

UW-Extension needs to be flexible in its programming, staffing and the sources of funds used to reach program objectives. The Department of Ag/Ag Business also needs to be flexible in this regard. Financial support for faculty and academic staff positions will change over time. The long-term advantages of having high quality, professional and dedicated faculty are many, therefore one goal of the Department is to preserve faculty in county-based UW-Extension positions. The Department supports the concept of "core" county faculty and staff positions. Generally, long-term, base funding will be needed to support these positions.

Considerations for Staffing

I. County Partner

The wishes of the county partner are of utmost importance. Extension is indeed a partnership between the county and the state, and every effort must be made to determine and satisfy the needs and wants of the county partner.

A. One method of evaluating county needs is to refer to the strategic planning document created in 2000 and the new one to be created in 2004. This will allow the department, Dean and others to witness first-hand what the county perceives as needs and important issues. For this to be a useful tool, it is essential that county-based personnel make every effort to contact enough residents to gain an accurate picture of county needs.

B. The department should have a role in aiding the county partner in the drafting of a position description for any open positions.

- C. The department should be involved in the initial screening of applicants to ensure applicants would be able to fulfill the demands of both the county and state partner.
- D. The department should have a representative present at the statewide interviews to aid in the decision making process for a new employee.

County Extension Committees will also have a strong feeling towards what is needed for the position. Very early in the process to determine the future of a position, extension staff should sit down with the county committee to determine what the person is expected to do. In addition, counties with active advisory committees should consult with the advisory committee for their input on the filling of agriculture and horticulture faculty and academic staff positions.

II. **Education for clientele**

We, as a department, want to be able to best serve our clientele. One method that has developed to a limited extent in Wisconsin is the specialization of agents. To make specialization work most effectively, these agents need to receive support for professional development and training in their chosen area of specialization. State specialists would be expected to take the lead in providing research-based information.

When specialization is being considered among counties it is essential that it be planned and carefully thought out. It is suggested that counties would enter into an informal short-term plan to adjust to the process of working together. As the counties become more accustomed to working together, the specialization could be expressed in job descriptions posted for new or open positions. Job descriptions for present employees may be changed to reflect the change in agent responsibilities as the result of specialization. Finally, formal agreements could be entered into between counties as the agents, elected county officials, and clientele become accustomed to the new working arrangements.

Each of our current members has an area or subject matter that they have chosen to excel in, ranging from farm management to grape production, to ventilation and facilities design. The expertise of current agents is found on the directory located at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/ag/directories/>. As agents we will often rely on other agents to get our questions answered.

Many different types of specialization arrangements currently exist throughout the State (see Appendix A). The opportunity exists for more specialization to occur, however several factors must be considered.

1. Total size both geographically and politically. The size of the area included in a specialization arrangement must be reasonable. The areas cannot get so large that travel becomes limiting in time as well as dollars.
2. Counties should have similar agricultural climates and issues - most agents would be able to help identify counties that would work well together.

3. County desires: Counties must not be forced to combine, but rather bring the topic forth from within the county.
4. Each agent must be identified with a home county and be housed in the offices of that county. Likewise, each county that provides salary for a full time position must have an agent located in the county office. This is essential in order to maintain and build county support for the extension program.

No matter how county positions are filled in the future, each county will have basic needs that must be addressed by the agent within the county. Many topics arise on a recurring basis that are geographically or politically specific. Agents from surrounding counties would not be able to properly address topics of this nature. Appendix B contains examples of programming activities that may be considered basic needs— however, counties must be able to work with the involved parties to decide how they would like to be served.

The Department recognizes the need for and advantages of diverse funding sources. When specific local, regional and/or state needs can be addressed more effectively with funding sources aimed at addressing those needs, the Department must be willing to and should aggressively seek out other public and/or private financial support. These funding sources may only support shorter-term faculty and staff appointments. These appointments should generally supplement “core” county and campus based positions. They should also enhance agent/county specialization agreements as well as ANRE programming objectives. Of utmost importance is that the Department can continue to provide high quality, unbiased, research based educational programs.

III. Program Area Support

As we move forward into a time of tough budgets several factors need to be considered.

- A. Can the county be served by one person? If so, what does the person need to specialize in?
- B. If a county has two personnel, what are the true differences between a faculty position and academic staff? Academic staff personnel should not be required to do the same tasks as a faculty without the benefits, responsibilities, and privileges of a faculty member.

The department should be allowed to comment on the position description. Usually this would be a matter of support for the county to fill a position and express the statewide and regional need for the position to be filled. Currently, the working difference between an academic staff position and a faculty position is very small. If we shift towards more academic staff, these differences may be either increased or become more visible to the county partner (Appendix C).

IV. Statewide Resources

For county agents to successfully address the needs of the local clientele, statewide resources are needed. Extension is founded on the fact that we provide unbiased, research-based information to the clientele. This is the backbone of the “Wisconsin Idea”.

In addition to salary dollars and professional development, the most important resource is the state specialist. As state specialists retire, new specialists must be hired to maintain the flow of relevant information to the clientele. We, as a department, would like to be involved in the discussion regarding the prioritization of refilling or developing specialist positions. In addition to academic responsibilities, the position description of a state specialist needs to include an emphasis on the importance of providing support to the county faculty and staff. New specialists should be provided training on this specific issue. Traditionally, campus-based faculty have achieved tenure based primarily on their research appointment and secondarily, their extension responsibilities. By equally balancing the importance of extension work and research, campus-based departments could strengthen the “Wisconsin Idea” while improving the success rate of newly hired state Extension specialists.

As industry conducted research increases, it becomes even more important for UW-Extension to provide unbiased information. This should be looked at as a means to provide the best information possible to the people of the state.

The Ag and Natural Resources Extension Program Teams have provided a valuable tool for county faculty and staff to work with specialists to address local and statewide needs. For the team concept to maintain its success, dollars need to be provided to allow these groups to meet, exchange information and conduct vital farm based research projects.

Appendix and Support Materials

Appendix A: Multi-county operating arrangements:

In addition to, or in conjunction with specialization, has been the development of regionalized cooperative units within the state. Listed below are some of the specialties/regionalization groups currently operating within the Agriculture and Natural Resources program area.

Counties with a formal agreement and pooled funds with specialization expressed in position descriptions:

Columbia-Dodge with Arlington Research Station

Burnett-Sawyer-Washburn Counties (share two agriculture agents)

Douglas-Bayfield-Ashland with Ashland Research Station (share two agriculture agents)

Pierce-Polk-St. Croix (share two horticulture educators)

Milwaukee-Waukesha (Share one commercial horticulture agent and one commercial horticulture educator)

Counties with a formal MOU and specialization expressed in position descriptions:

Sheboygan-Ozaukee-Washington Counties

Lincoln-Langlade-Marathon Counties

Counties with specialization expressed in position descriptions:

Marinette-Oconto

Pierce-St. Croix

Door-Kewaunee

Adams-Green Lake-Juneau-Marquette-Portage-Waushara-Wood

Informal specialization:

Kenosha-Milwaukee-Racine-Waukesha (Horticulture)

Chippewa-Dunn-Eau Claire

LaCrosse-Monroe-Jackson-Tempealeau

Rusk-Price

Jefferson-Waukesha

Iowa-Grant-Crawford

Appendix B: Basic Needs:

1. Providing clientele with general information about government sponsored programs and issues. As a part of Cooperative Extension members would provide educational resources for federal (NRCS and FSA), state (DATCP and DNR), and local (land use, Planning and Zoning, and LCD) programs.
2. Providing clientele with basic agricultural production information. These topics may include custom rates and custom operators, land rental value, local sources of production, market potential, as well as local prices for supplies and product.
3. Local agents may serve as the resource for educational programs pertaining to mandated programs. Some of the mandated programs that agents are currently involved with are Pesticide Applicator Training, Tractor and Machinery Safety and Certification, Pork Quality Assurance, and Commodity Group referendums.
4. Local agents may facilitate local efforts tied to state and national efforts in agricultural and horticultural issues. These issues would include such programs as Agricultural Clean Sweep, Master Gardener, and hay lifts for drought assistance. In addition, agents would work with their local farm organizations (Farm Bureau, NFO, Farmers Union, etc) to provide resources or educational programs as desired by these groups.
5. Support for county based youth activities. Agricultural agents have a long history of supporting the local 4-H and FFA programs.
6. Local media contacts. The most credible agent to the media will be the one that is employed within the area in question.

Appendix C: Faculty and Academic Staff:

RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS OF FACULTY IN UW-EXTENSION

Faculty - Your Responsibilities and Rights

As a faculty member of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, your knowledge, research and expertise are critical to meeting the educational needs of the residents of Wisconsin. Working with 300 peers statewide, you are an integral part of a dedicated team of professional educators who embody the century-old traditions of UW educational excellence and the Wisconsin Idea. Moreover, as faculty you:

- share specific responsibilities with your peers in the concept of shared governance
- enjoy the respect and prestige that comes with being part of a select group of colleagues
- have rights related to tenure, academic freedom and due process

Tenure - A Career Commitment

Tenure is a career commitment - a pledge on the part of the University that you have the freedom to educate others creatively in an environment free of prejudicial influence. You directly affect the content you teach - and the methods used to teach it. Tenure is also a commitment for you - your pledge to maintain high professional standards and to continue improving your professional skills.

Because tenure denotes a high level of commitment and recognition, it's an important step for both the faculty seeking to reach it - and the faculty serving in reviewing tenure candidates. It deserves the time and effort of every faculty member in reviewing the criteria used to assure the highest quality of faculty - and refining the process that will assure this outcome.

Your Department

Your department offers you the possibilities for direct governance. A successful department means that each faculty member participates in its activities. UW-Extension has seven academic departments: Labor Education, Educational Communications, Environmental Sciences, Agriculture/Agri-Business, Community Resource Development, Family Development, and Youth Development. Departments function through structures such as:

- executive committee
- rank and tenure committee
- tenured faculty review committee
- the voting body as a whole

Faculty Rights

Faculty have rights to assure that academic freedom, shared governance, and all other aspects of a faculty appointment are upheld. To insure that your rights as a faculty member are not violated, the UW-Extension Faculty Hearings Committee provides for hearings on issues not resolvable through other methods and renders opinions. The committee of six is elected by the faculty-at-large. Members serve three years.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN UW-EXTENSION

Academic Staff - Your Responsibilities and Rights

Academic staff in UW-Extension are involved in a wide range of professional and technical roles, with duties that are primarily associated with higher education, from instruction to administration. It is the special knowledge and expertise of academic staff, working with faculty colleagues, that make the work of UW-Extension - the “Wisconsin Idea” - world-renowned. Academic staff in UW-Extension:

- share specific responsibilities with peers in the concept of shared governance
- enjoy the respect and prestige that comes with being part of a distinguished institution
- have rights related to due process

Shared Governance

Shared governance means that, as an academic staff member, you have representation in matters that affect you. Based on Wisconsin State Statutes, academic staff are afforded the “primary responsibility for the formulation and review, and shall be represented in the development of, all policies and procedures concerning academic staff members, including academic staff personnel matters” (Wis. Stat. 36.09(4m)).

Academic Staff Council

If you want input into the policies and procedures that will affect you in Extension, get involved in the Academic Staff Council, the UW-Extension academic staff’s governance body. The Council consists of eight members. All are elected by the academic staff members to serve two-year terms. Each of the three Extension programming divisions, plus administrative units, is represented. The Council meets monthly, including an annual all-academic staff meeting, generally conducted via the Wisline system.

The Council’s work is conducted both at its regular monthly meetings and through ad hoc committees addressing current issues. The Council serves as the official channel of communications between the academic staff and all institutional offices and bodies, including the

Chancellor and the faculty. The Council represents the Extension academic staff in matters of collective concern.

Academic Staff Hearings Committee

The Academic Staff Hearings Committee is a body elected from the academic staff at large to hear appeals, complaints and grievances of academic staff. It includes six members elected to staggered three-year terms, with no more than three members elected from any one UWEX division.

"Faculty Status"

In some cases, academic staff may be granted "faculty status," which confers the right to participate in departmental and/or institutional faculty governance. It does not change an academic staff appointment into a faculty appointment. At the level of the academic department, "faculty status" allows academic staff the right to participate in departmental governance at the same level as probationary faculty. At the institutional level (recommended by the department and approved by the Chancellor), "faculty status" allows academic staff the same rights as probationary faculty to participate in institutional governance matters, including serving on the UWEX Faculty Senate and University Committee.

Systemwide Extension Council

A body representing all UW System institutions, the Systemwide Extension Council (SEC) provides a forum for communication between administration and faculty and academic staff. Its 36 members include both faculty and academic staff. Each year, the Extension Academic Staff Council elects a UW-Extension academic staff member to serve on the SEC (three rotating 3-year terms are held by academic staff members). Major issues confronting the statewide extension function now, and those on the horizon, are discussed. Council members represent the interest of their peers at campuses, statewide units and county offices to the UW-Extension Chancellor. The Council meets four times a year.