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Reflection on Past, Present and Future Professional Growth

Professional Goals:

Over the past thirty years, I've worked as a summer 4-H intern in Rock and Sauk County, served as Family Living Educator in Brown County, Wisconsin and as a County, Metro and Regional Extension Educator in Minnesota. I've had the pleasure of mentoring dozens of University interns and new Extension colleagues, and a common question asked of me is "How have you been able to stay enthusiastic and creative in your job all these years?" My answer is "Finding the job you love, that keeps challenging you and your abilities and allows you to make a difference in people's lives gives you the passion and drive to be successful." I have been given a gift in feeling the joy of being a successful teacher, researcher, evaluator and community member in Extension. I hope to continue to 'make a difference' and be a calculated risk-taker.

I have been fortunate to work with great, enthusiastic, insightful Extension mentors in family living, youth development, community vitality, marketing, evaluation and agriculture. I have had the honor of working for Extension Service for many years and continue to take on new experiences to challenge myself. One of my most recent professional challenges was to connect with colleagues in a position in Agriculture to focus on programming in food safety, biotechnology, bioterrorism and consumer-focused organic agriculture.

I love to learn and focused a 1995 sabbatical leave outside my traditional field in courses in the Department of Rhetoric to better understand the philosophy and methods of multicultural communication and alternative educational delivery methods. Through necessity and belief in Extension's work and core mission I have accepted and embraced the dramatically changed way we did our work by leveraging salary and University connections to access grants, fees and program cost recovery strategies to offset budget constraints.

I have taken formal graduate study to obtain a Masters Degree and am undertaking a doctoral program. I have enrolled and obtained specialty certifications from the American Association of Family and Consumer Science, University of Minnesota Humphrey Institute Leadership Program, and the National Restaurant Association Certified Food Manager Program. These ongoing efforts have helped me keep up with research, continue to provide cutting-edge program, engage in quality evaluation and result studies. I continue to monitor my professional and personal progress in building a working knowledge and proficiency in what I consider core competencies for the Extension education professional, namely; analytical and assessment skills, policy development and program planning skills, communication skills, cultural competency skills, community dimensions of practice skills, basic science skills, financial planning and management skills and leadership and systems thinking skills.