

2010 WACEC Conference Discussion Questions from Mark O'Connell's Presentation

Question #1: What societal trends do we see emerging in the next 20 years?

- Family Changes
 - More single parents-less marriage
 - 60% of today's births are in single parent families, higher in the future
 - Definition of "family" will be difficult
- Poverty - more
 - Harder to get jobs
 - Lower paying jobs
- Population Growth
 - More ethnically diverse
 - More people, less jobs
 - Better assimilation of immigrants in the future
- New ways to provide community service, education
- Aging in the community
 - Living longer
 - Outlasting Medicare
 - Outlasting Social Security
 - Healthcare- more of our own responsibility
 - Increasing voice represented in politics by elders
- How legislature is failing to respond to the needs and wishes of the public
 - Too much special interests: single-issue candidates
 - Give the youth a reason to vote
- Technology & ability to communicate will be phenomenal
- Time to bring the workforce back to the U.S. – "American made"
 - More undocumented people in the U.S.
- Transportation
 - Communities may be set up differently
 - § Transportation
 - § Schools
 - § Work environment – will there be urban, suburban, rural areas

Question #2: What role can Extension play in promoting futuristic thinking in the community?

- CBS concerned with constituents and was said to bring that back to constituent
- Facilitating “what if” with CB and CB with community
- CB - future topics and have UWEX facilitate topic meeting & invite public to participate
- Possibly new technology for accessibility (i.e., Broadband)
- Involve neighboring counties with similar or same issues
- Listening to “what if’s” and encourage and foster further conversation
- Suggestion box – to eliminate fear of far-fetched ideas. Uses diversity and broad based ideas and thoughts
- What would you do if you were not afraid?
- Cannot be afraid to move forward with futuristic thinking or thoughts
- Need passion
- Offer opportunities for people with ideas to come forward in a comfortable environment for everyone (i.e., community members)
- Ask for input and ideas from the community
- Engaging in community partnerships
- Futures wheels – start with category and satellite off
- All break thru are a break with current thinking
- Don’t let resources be a stumbling block!

Question #3: If I were Chancellor, I would ...

- Maintain quality of people resources - Retain and attract bright minds
- Determine what the future jobs of Wisconsin will be and train/educate people in those areas; "Be proactive" - forward thinking
- Develop more partnerships with Wisconsin businesses

In addition, I would dedicate resources to looking into...

- Develop technology to train people to be responsive to changing business climate and people's needs
- Using revenue to look into finding new revenue streams

Question #4: How might Extension and the two year colleges complement efforts as we carry out the mission of conveying knowledge?

2 year campuses }
Extension } Complement efforts to carry-out the mission
of conveying knowledge

- Concerns
 - “Extension should act as a recruiter”
 - How would Extension faculty be viewed by campuses (equal counterparts) } Work to create collaboration atmosphere
 - Discussion on Accreditation?
 - Job opportunities? → creating “New Industries”
 - Loss of graduates
- Complement
 - Distance education capabilities – Webinars and Extension use two-year campus capabilities for greater reach by?
 - Experiential learning opportunities
 - Could reduce the cost of education
 - Extension help find/discover job opportunities
 - Extension short course - Model
 - § Adult B.S. degree to adults giving credit to work experience
 - § Tech college credit transfers → UW Campuses
 - § Need tech college collaboration

Question #5: What challenges exist to extension engaging in “What If” conversations?

- Current budget constraints
- Getting people to accept new ideas
- Fear of criticism by general public
- Challenge of change
- Agencies not willing to cooperate and work together
- Not enough risk taking
- Extension needs to be more proactive
- Longer term payback with youth programs, harder to sell
- What happens if we cannot meet new demand?

Question #6: How can we better communicate the potential of Extension to effectuate change?

- Press releases
- TV/Radio – promote to media what opportunities exist in Extension
- Make known that Extension has access to University research and information
- Communicate 4-H program (e.g., Racine - completely 4-H fair)
- Next generation communication with social media (facebook)
- Annual Family Impact Seminar
- Education, resources and networking of an issue in county
- Extension involvement in school system with curriculum – e.g., Rent Smart
- Reverse mentoring program (youth to adult)
- Communicate that there are many other areas in Extension other than cows and cookies
- Leadership opportunities (State program, County program, Tri-County –Monroe, Jackson & Vernon)
- Facilitator opportunities to smaller organization for strategic planning

Question #7: What actions can you as an individual take to engage in policy changes so that the county can better meet needs in the future?

- Collaboration
- Individual reactions
- Willingness to speak out
- Informed decision-making
- Clear vision process – individual assets
- Bring people to the table for community solutions
- Panning – Extending resources
- Finding fees for innovative ideas and money saving strategies
- Money into a non-departmental account so smaller departments not hit
- Employee wellness program
- Sometimes you need to invest to be able to address issues and save money
- Encourage ideas and divergence
- Willing to speak up and be a good listener
- Develop future leaders

Question #8: The facets of a productive Extension and county relationship include:

- Communication
 - What is the modern face of UWEX today?
- Good staff
 - People willing to get along (UWEX/CB)
- Supervisors understanding UWEX – what it is
 - Importance of UWEX
 - All the “other things” that UWEX does
- 60%/40% funding understanding (not the traditional rural staff)
 - Different was to pay for it
- UWEX is not just 4-H
 - 4-H is not just farming anymore
- Partnership to educate clientele about what UWEX does
- Wait to know return on investment of money spent on UWEX
- Schools should use UWEX as much as they can

Question #9: Extension needs more (and what type of) authority in the following areas:

What if UWEX had the authority or the mandate to?

- Interaction with DNR (ordinances that affect farmers, especially) to be in on the ground floor in terms of planning
- Businesses – start up. CNRED agents need to be involved in economic development. Helping negotiate with planning. Right now they don't really have the authority – can just educate and make a case. Agents are not recognized as authorities. Use title or expertise.
- Teaching finance educations in schools – need a mandate perhaps to do this (Ex., reality check – but mandated)
- Divorce resolution (mediation) – Ex., with Courts or Human Services. More mandates to do this kind of work
- Responsibility of Board members to get department heads together to use Extension services (Example- Teen Courts)
- When county executive or coordinator appoints Extension agent to chair a task force – we have automatic authority
- State needs to market UWEX – all programs

Question #10: What adaptations must be made by Extension to address the needs of a society undergoing significant demographic changes?

- Need to position ourselves to be competitive for federal dollars in federal priority areas
 - Example: Aging demographic focus. Related federal priorities:
 - § Nutrition & health
 - § Global food security
- Adults will possibly need to work longer which may reduce jobs available to youth
- Need continuing focus on agriculture to also address health/ nutrition & food security
- Is Extension as flexible as it could be?
 - E.g., changing technology?
 - Extension has changed, but needs to continue to change!
- Make sure Extension is not duplicating efforts of other departments:
 - We need to partner, not duplicate
 - Provide facilitation
 - Get a group together and “think outside of the box” without feeling threatened. Ask “what if”?
- Need new ways to get education to people (people don’t come to programs like they used to)

Question #11: What might we see ourselves (Extension) doing programmatically in the future?

- More youth involved in government
 - They can vote, but it doesn't count
 - Adams – summer youth
 - Pierce – no, Marathon –no, Dodge – no
- Strategic Planning – reach out and determine what plans could be taken in the county
 - No current mechanism for bringing ideas together. Bringing University resources to the board
- Extension should be involved in forming partnerships with other counties to address shrinking budgets and revenues?
- Financial planning/education for families writing a check, making a deposit, e.g., rental unit
- Extension bringing core curriculum changes to the school system. Educating teachers in some areas of life skills (i.e., credit cards & finances)
- Reaching out to private industry to do educational programs for employees (horticulture, financial, etc.)
- Help with transportation needs of families
 - Wheels to work type programs with community collaboration. Transportation for Humanity

Question #12: How can Extension become engaged with the portion of the county which is outside the Extension family?

- What if county budget is done differently?
 - New approach to budget process
- What if we share responsibility to build healthy youth?
- Make county presentations
 - Tell stories of how Agents have helped people to succeed
- What if we used different forms of communication?
 - Communication is key
 - Cannot rely on one form to meet all people
- Master Gardener type of format
- Leadership development of WACEC members to act as advocates at county

Question #13: What role can Extension play in engaging in policy change?

- Extension needs to be sure decisions are made by policy makers
 - Sometimes worry they try to influence the decision in a certain direction
 - No advocacy role (e.g., Pro-ag preservation)
- Change should be initiated by UWEX county-based staff if it is a state Extension
- Gather different stakeholder groups to facilitate dialogue across groups that don't always interact
 - Part of the process, not the decision
 - They do have a role to suggest policy change but need to present all sides of an issue
- Bring research-based knowledge/technology information to understand local issues/where the county fits in
- Bringing program initiatives and grant funded possibilities for approval of Extension Committees (for discussion and decision-making by the county board)
- Encourage experimentations with policy changes
- Direct communication with the state legislators to inform/build awareness of impact of state initiatives on the local area but informing committee first
- Do not like Extension dollars to be used for lobbying for Extension positions (letterhead, taxpayer paid time)