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Self-Study Report: 09 Outreach

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Section 9: Outreach

INTRODUCTION

Extension outreach activities have been an integral part of the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication since its inception in 1992. At the time the department was founded, two faculty members had extension appointments: Bill Brown with a .25 FTE extension appointment, primarily associated with the Center for Leadership Development, and Ozzie Gilbertson with a .15 FTE extension appointment, primarily associated with Agricultural Literacy programs. In 1993 Leverne Barrett was assigned a .25 FTE extension appointment, primarily to allow him to work with the Center for Leadership Development and to do staff development for extension personnel and other client groups.

In 1996 Kay Rockwell transferred to the department, bringing with her a .60 FTE extension appointment as leader of the Extension Evaluation Unit. This unit adds an important new dimension to the AgLEC department and its expanding outreach mission.

Over time the department has achieved a notable reputation for outreach efforts in leadership and organizational development for industry, government, community groups, agricultural literacy, and inservice training of teachers and extension educators. Faculty have provided programs for Cooperative Extension boards and the Nebraska Vocational Agriculture Association, as well as youth and adult clientele, cooperatives, commodity boards, Nebraska Student Teachers, Nebraska Advocacy Services, and other entities.

Strong potential exists for outreach activities in youth leadership and organizational development relating to 4-H, FFA and other youth groups, communication, education and distance education, environmental education, and research and evaluation. While outreach is an expectation of faculty and staff with Cooperative Extension appointments, all faculty and staff have a responsibility to provide outreach or public service.

During a departmental retreat in August 1995, the potential for a more encompassing outreach role was recognized. An Outreach Committee was formed to expand and strengthen outreach programs and service to external clients. The responsibilities of the Outreach Committee include:

- Communicate AgLEC departmental program themes, internally to the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources and externally to the public.
- Develop and implement outreach educational activities.
- Establish and administer an AgLEC Faculty Outreach Award.

- Oversee development and implementation of in-service training programs for IANR faculty and staff on campus and across the state.

- Create and conduct innovative and viable affiliation programs for extension educators and teachers who wish to be associated with AgLEC.

PROGRAM GOALS AND RATIONALE

The goals of the outreach component of the department are:

***Goal 1**. Increase human and financial resources devoted to outreach in AgLEC.*

Rationale: Four faculty members presently have Cooperative Extension appointments, totaling 1.3 FTE, up from .65 FTE in 1995-96. The transfer of the Extension Evaluation Unit into AgLEC provides substantial new human and financial resources to expand departmental outreach efforts. However, both FTEs and operating support must be increased to carry out more extensive outreach programs in keeping with the IANR Strategic Plan and AgLEC Action Plans.

***Goal 2.** Expand service to larger and more diverse audiences.*

Rationale: The IANR Strategic Plan calls for providing quality education that is accessible to traditional and non-traditional students and use of the IANR statewide network to deliver resources to meet clientele needs. Leadership and human resource needs go far beyond traditional boundaries of primarily youth organizations to government, agricultural business, and others. Plans are underway to conduct a workshop on "Agriculture and the Environment" next year, in cooperation with the Environmental Studies Program.

***Goal 3.** Expand and strengthen linkages with Cooperative Extension, the Center for Leadership Development and other partners.*

Rationale: AgLEC has a basic responsibility to serve Cooperative Extension and its clients. With the transfer of the Extension Evaluation Unit on July 1, we will support evaluation needs throughout the Cooperative Extension Division via faculty inservice and individual or team consultation. The unit also provides technical support for statewide evaluation projects or Extension programming thrusts. AgLEC has long-standing substantive ties to the Center for Leadership Development as a means of fulfilling internal and external responsibilities. Relatively few AgLEC faculty currently have such ties, and finding ways to involve more faculty in CLD could greatly enhance these linkages and institutional effectiveness.

***Goal 4.** Secure greater visibility and an enhanced reputation of the department and IANR.*

Rationale: AgLEC is a relatively new department in IANR. There is a need to clarify the current responsibilities and programs of AgLEC internally as well as those programs served by IANR. The Outreach Committee is responsible for obtaining greater recognition of the department and

its members. Furthermore, one of the operational priorities of the IANR Strategic Plan calls for giving high priority to internal and external communications and communicating program impacts.

Goal 5. *Conduct outreach programs that provide a rich source of research material.*

Rationale: Several youth and organizational leadership programs have lent themselves to providing information appropriate for conducting research. The agricultural literacy program has emerged into an approved ARD research project, starting with data collection in November 1994. Students of teachers participating in summer workshops are assessed regarding their agricultural knowledge when starting school in the fall, and again in the spring prior to the close of school. Outreach programs conducted by AgLEC can provide real-world experience and outcomes to study for continuing development and improvement of programs offered by the department and its collaborators.

Goal 6. *Develop more faculty and staff contact with "real-world" organizations to improve quality and credibility of their efforts.*

Rationale: While it is important to continue to work directly with fellow faculty and staff in IANR, the ultimate objective is to help new audiences, which will enhance their effectiveness as well as AgLEC faculty. Research conducted with these audiences is intended to enhance departmental effectiveness.

Goal 7. *Offer quality educational programs throughout the state and nation via distance education.*

Rationale: One overarching objective in the current IANR Strategic Plan is to expand distance education offerings. This objective is based on needs expressed by Nebraskans and others for expanded educational opportunities and easy access.

FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER UNL UNITS

The Outreach Committee and other faculty in AgLEC work closely with faculty and staff in other units and across Nebraska to carry out the mission of IANR. Key examples include specific programs in the IANR Strategic Action Plan, programs of CLD and OPOD, as well as the Nebraska LEAD Program (Leadership, Education, Action Development), as explained previously in this document. The IANR Strategic Plan and the IANR Action Plan focus attention on key issues which include leadership and human resource development.

An issue surfaced during 1995-96 regarding the programmatic relationship between AgLEC and the Center for Leadership Development. Prior to July 1995 AgLEC and CLD were closely affiliated, sharing the same leadership from CLD's inception in 1989 through June 1995. In July 1995 the two entities were formally separated and emphasis was placed on providing the two units with their own leadership and administration. Prior to this action Professors Brown and

Barrett, as well as some other AgLEC faculty without formal extension appointments, were extensively involved in programs offered by the CLD, most of which generated revenue for the Center. During 1995-96 concerns regarding the amount of AgLEC faculty time being allocated to CLD program development and the distribution of revenue caused a review of the relationship between the department and CLD. In 1996 the job descriptions of Drs. Brown and Barrett were modified to remove any quantitative time obligation with the CLD, with the expectation that they would continue to be involved in CLD programs. In July 1996 a CLD policy for a one-year trial period to generally return $150 of revenue to IANR departments for each full day of programming done by faculty was implemented. It is too soon to know the exact effects of these actions. However, some faculty involved believe it is likely that they will result in a substantially reduced rate of participation by AgLEC faculty in the programs of the CLD and an increase, at least by faculty with formal Extension appointments, in more extension programming and in-service training directly from AgLEC. These issues will be under continuing review.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Areas in Which the Program Excels

The AgLEC department is known for outreach in the areas of leadership and organizational development, agricultural literacy, and teacher inservice training. Department faculty have a reputation for providing experiential education, as well as quality instruction based on sound teaching methodology and an extensive network of agency contacts.

Recent accomplishments in outreach include:

- The introduction of the concepts of "Transformational Leadership." Working with national experts faculty have developed cutting edge programs which have been used extensively with both faculty, staff and external groups.

- The AgLEC faculty have been active participants in the NN21 Food Systems Professional Education initiative funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. A faculty member, Joyce Lunde, served as the coordinator of the visioning phase and obtained extensive input from external clients. Two other faculty members, Bill Brown and Liz Banset, wrote the implementation proposal which resulted in a $1.5 million grant over the next three years.

- Multiple intervention programs in Leadership Development for farmer cooperatives, farm organizations, government agencies and private businesses (e.g., AT&T).

- Identification of individuals to serve on a broadened and reconstituted AgLEC Advisory Committee to provide guidance, perspective and direction for programs/activities. A diverse pool of individuals representing various constituent groups has been identified and letters of invitation will be sent in the fall of 1996.

- Reexamination of the Leadership Certificate Program, currently under review by the Center for Leadership Development, may be carried out in cooperation with AgLEC faculty and the Office of Professional and Organizational Development in IANR.

- Closer ties with AgLEC extension affiliates developed in the spring of 1995 at two events.

  A two-hour workshop on leadership, including experiences outlined by four extension educators, was presented to 35 persons at Cooperative Extension's April Update on April 17, 1996. The workshop was followed by a four-hour AgLEC affiliate meeting discussing such topics as ag literacy, ethical leadership, team building tools, and ideas for future inservice topics.

  An AgLEC Affiliate Retreat held June 4, 1996, at Grand Island was attended by 24 Extension Educators and AgLEC faculty. The program featured "Icebreaker" and "Team Building" exercises (which provided extension educators with ideas that could be used in their groups), brainstorming to identify affiliate expectations, and discussion of overall needs, delivery methods, priorities, and plans for 1996-97 and beyond.

- A 3-year program integrating agriculture and social studies, called "Nebraska Studies," brought 24-27 urban teachers to historic and agricultural sites through a 5-day road tour. This program was funded by the Kellogg Foundation.

- AgLEC has taken the lead in Nebraska's Ag-in-the-Classroom program since its inception in 1984. This has included coordinating the credit workshops primarily for elementary teachers, in addition to periodic presentations at statewide and selected local curriculum inservice sessions.

Areas in Which the Program Needs Improvement

As AgLEC's efforts in outreach continue to expand, we recognize several areas in which improvement is needed. Principal among them are:

- AgLEC faculty need to make the Extension Affiliates Program more visible to members of IANR and other partners.

- More outreach programs are needed to extend faculty expertise to IANR faculty and staff, youth, K-12 and college students, business, industry, government, and the public through programs, materials, distance education and the Center for Leadership Development. All faculty have a responsibility in participating in such programs.

- Expanded programming is needed in AgLEC to offer leadership and organizational development programs for 4-H, FFA, and other youth through closer collaboration

with the State 4-H Youth Development Office and the Nebraska Department of Education.

- Efforts in agricultural literacy need to be extended beyond Ag-in-the-Classroom to serve youth in other settings, such as 4-H, and to reach rural and urban adult populations. For example, local and state policy makers would be excellent client groups to serve more effectively with agricultural literacy programs, for obvious reasons. (And perhaps we need to explore broadening the content and appeal of the program by renaming it to include food, biological, and environmental literacy.)

- AgLEC faculty need to increase inservice educational offerings and other types of involvement for agricultural teachers, extension educators, and other professionals in education, leadership and organizational development.

- There is a clear need to increase client-oriented research in areas of AgLEC faculty expertise, and to evaluate outreach programs as a means of improving overall departmental effectiveness and recognition.

Strategies for Improvement

Some means of achieving the improvements listed above include:

- Revitalizing the AgLEC Advisory Committee to provide input on needs and ways of delivering programs and linking to external audiences.

- Energizing, renewing, expanding and maintaining the AgLEC Affiliates Group with an innovative professional development program and opportunities for input to the department on a continuing basis.

- Developing outreach programs for members of IANR as well as diverse youth and adult audiences through workshops, conferences and distance education.

- Articulating AgLEC accomplishments to internal and external audiences through newsletters, other printed materials, broadcast media, web page and presentations to various groups.

- Recognizing AgLEC faculty and staff efforts through new Faculty Outreach Award and seeking appropriate internal and external recognition.

Those who attended the June 1996 Extension Affiliate retreat recognized an opportunity for AgLEC to be a model in reaching the considerable potential for departmental affiliates. Affiliates advocated continuing two-way communication between AgLEC faculty and affiliates to share ideas, input, experiences, upcoming conferences and professional development

opportunities. Furthermore, the affiliates felt that the roles and responsibilities of AgLEC cut across many disciplines.

Needs and priorities identified included establishment of an AgLEC listserv for all faculty and affiliates to facilitate continuing communication, as well as two meetings each year for professional development and to share ideas and plans. Retreat participants also suggested designating a person in each Extension Programming Unit to be an evaluation contact; expediting communications on agricultural literacy and integrating efforts with IANR Action Plans with greater involvement of 4-H, FFA and IANR specialists/field staff; holding periodic AgLEC Affiliate Retreats, departmental meetings and symposia. Affiliates also recognized the need for: removing obstacles to education along with greater collaboration in use of educational resources; helping affiliates prepare for the "new" role of the extension educator; and developing skills in team-building, group dynamics, personal development, self-leadership, and greater understanding of the many facets of leadership.

Finally, AgLEC faculty with varying types of appointments, including those with full-time teaching appointments, have much to contribute to the outreach mission of the department. Our outreach mission is our duty to citizens who support us, to our varied clients, and to our colleagues in other units and institutions. Outreach is much broader in concept than "extension," and new possibilities and opportunities are rapidly emerging ahead. One significant example is the likely interface of outreach and distance education as these priority areas develop more fully in AgLEC. Another example is the potential for AgLEC faculty to contribute in creative new ways to statewide youth development efforts of 4-H and FFA organizations, as collaborative ties between the faculty and the state 4-H staff are more clearly established. Such approaches will serve to link AgLEC more effectively with its many client groups in the future.