Faculty Response to the Report of a Comprehensive Issues Review For the Southeast Research and extension Center and The Southeast Extension District

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Faculty Response to the
Report of a
Comprehensive Issues Review
For the Southeast Research and extension Center
and
The Southeast Extension District

Issue-based Review Conducted September 5-8, 2000
Response Finalized January 10, 2001
Overarching Issues

A) The Review Team supports the planning process that was utilized by the Faculty/Staff to identify and define issues for this review. We support the continuance of issue teams in Southeast Nebraska. We will not name the teams but leave that to the faculty and Dr. Cantrell to determine. We endorse the identification of program coordinators to head the teams. It is our suggestion that Dr. Cantrell and the identified program coordinators clearly define these roles in job descriptions, and plan for an ongoing communication between the district administration and the teams. It probably goes without saying, but we would like to see the program coordinator roles rotate so that many Faculty/Staff have the opportunity to lead in these roles. Of course proper communication with county boards will be necessary in this process. Our one caveat is that district teams work with the state action teams to deliver programs, and that SEREC representatives continue to be actively involved in the state teams. Keep an open communication line between state and district action teams so that programmatic efforts can be coordinated.

It is assumed, that these issue teams will be your programming model in the SEREC/District. The issues teams will also play an important role in developing extended education opportunities for Southeast Nebraska clientele. County plans of work and EPU plans will not exist.

Response: We agree. The district issue teams will continue to meet, and in fact most have done so at least once since the Review Team’s visit. Each team has selected an individual or individuals to serve as the team coordinator, and the teams have identified (or will identify) priority areas for action. The SEREC has allocated funds to support their work. The use of these funds may include travel costs for teams wishing to observe successful programs in other states or bringing guest speakers to meetings in Nebraska. Members of each team are already represented on state action teams, and this should facilitate communication between those groups. The District Director has attended several of these meetings and will continue to do so as his schedule permits.

A “job description” for issue team coordinators has not yet been developed. The SEREC will host a meeting of those individuals early in 2001 for the purposes of developing those guidelines, institutionalizing the role, and establishing a procedure by which team leadership can rotate on a regular basis.

B) A great deal about communication between Specialists and Educators, between Educators and Educators, between Educators and Administration was heard. We acknowledge that it is an important issue. We have asked Deans Dickey and Nelson to work with the department heads and Director Cantrell to re-define roles of Specialists associated with this district, and add the SEREC/District Director as a contributing evaluator to Specialist evaluations. We want to emphasize that communication is everyone’s responsibility. We urge all of SEREC Faculty/Staff to ask Specialists to be involved just as we will ask Specialists to involve you. We encourage
additional phone bridge calls between the District Director and Faculty/Staff, newsletters, etc. We wish we had an easy answer to communication issues. Your challenge is large because of the size of the district. On one hand, it is a blessing to have a large number of Educators and Assistants; on the other hand, communication becomes a bigger challenge. We urge you to continue to open as many communicative lines as possible.

Response: We agree. The District Director provided input (either solicited or unsolicited) into the 1999-2000 performance evaluations of all Specialists with priority emphases on Southeastern Nebraska, and has met with relevant department heads at least once since the Review Team's visit for the purpose of discussing options for enhancing communications between Specialists and Educators. Specialists and department heads from several departments, many without specific assignments in the Southeast, were extended personal invitations to the Annual District Conference in October, and about ten attended at least a portion of that meeting.

It is our intention to establish a position of "Assistant to the District Director" to be filled on a rotating basis by an Extension Educator from the district. The person in this position will have as a primary function maintaining timely and organized communications with the Faculty and Staff regarding district operations. They will also be called upon to attend some functions, such as Extension Board meetings, when conflicts keep the District Director from being present.

C) Diversity was heard throughout the reports. We see diversity from two perspectives: programmatic and staffing. We suggest you focus SERECDistrict efforts first on programmatic involvement of more diverse audiences. You already do this and we want to reaffirm what you are doing. It is suggested that a dialogue with those agencies effectively reaching diverse audiences might reveal some of the "marketing" strategies for reaching these audiences. SERECDistrict Faculty/Staff recognize that this is an issue and the Review Team complement you on moving ahead.

Response: We agree. The District Director has established a policy for all state funded faculty and staff in the district that will allow up to three-days of volunteer time to be contributed to organizations and agencies that represent diverse populations on an annual basis. We encourage County Unit Leaders to establish a similar policy for county funded positions. It is our expectation that such volunteer time will enhance our communications with diverse populations, and over time result in programming opportunities.

The urban interest component of the Community Visions Issue Team has established learner diversity as an area of priority, and we are in the process of planning for a conference on urban outreach that will include faculty members from UNO and the
UNL West Campus with the objective, among others, of identifying appropriate ways by which we can learn more about the educational needs of diverse audiences in our Metropolitan service area.

We will continue to emphasize diversity in our planning efforts in both rural and urban settings, and we will continue to actively recruit diverse applicants for positions that open in the district.

D) Faculty/Staff gave very impressive reports throughout the review. We are concerned as a Review Team that Faculty/Staff have a limited amount of human resources (i.e. time, energy, etc.) to accomplish what you wish to accomplish. We suggest that you, as teams and with clientele involvement, further pare down your program lists. This Review Team sees the need to let go of some efforts. It was suggested by a team member to look at the life cycle of a program, be sure that programs are mission driven, and ask clientele to help identify the issues from their perspectives. We, as a Review Team, believe that involving clientele all along the road of this effort will be essential. Focus and deep market penetration of key programs will be valuable and make you more visible to the public. We realize the tug and pull this brings. We have asked Dr. Cantrell to be very visible in his support of the teams and work with stakeholders on this issue; and he certainly agrees. We also urge this district to engage Sandy Stockall and work with her in developing a process for helping focus work on the highest priorities.

Response: We agree. Of course, the need to retire or eliminate programs is often more easily recognized than accomplished. We are looking forward to the work of Sandy Stockall and others in this regard, and we are pleased that one of our senior Educators is serving on that committee.

E) Support additional focused Educators in the SEREC/District. Through continued definition by the issue teams and conversations with Dr. Cantrell and Dean Dickey, this can be a reality. Dr. Dickey has laid out a model of structure-following-function when it comes to focused Educators. He believes that this is a model for Nebraska’s future. Nebraska will never move totally to focused Educators but this is an opportunity that needs to be studied carefully in this district.

Response: We agree. The Southeast District has developed its staffing model around the idea of focused Educators, and we have been successful in developing more closely focused job descriptions for new faculty members as well as for some more senior faculty members. We will continue to articulate and support this strategy.

F) The SEREC/District list of partnerships is impressive. Faculty/Staff asked about ways to maintain visibility. It is the suggestion of the Review Team that negotiation on visibility begins up front. As you work with other entities, be sure that Cooperative Extension is named as a part of the program. We’re not telling you anything new. We urge that you be attentive to this need.

Response: We agree. This again is sometimes more easily said than done, but we
recognize the importance of Extension’s role in collaborative programs being recognized. This is simply part of an effective marketing strategy, and we must not lose sight of its importance in our desire to accomplish our mission through new partnerships.

G) We do not support the identification of a separate metropolitan district but instead recommend the development of an urban issues team. This is an effort that needs fluidity. A separate district builds walls that the Review Team does not believe serves a purpose. Instead strive to involve those most interested in urban programming from acreage programming to urban/rural interface/to learning to work with new diverse clientele groups. Be sure to involve stakeholders in the planning effort. They can make a valuable contribution.

Response: We agree. However, we must also develop an enhanced awareness of our urban programs and mission. We raised the question of establishing a separate unit because it was suggested during focus group discussions with UNL unit administrators. There are certainly other ways to support the development of urban programming, and we are hopeful that our efforts to bring faculty members from the U.N. System together for discussions of urban outreach needs and opportunities will open doors for us in that regard.

H) The Review Team compliments the Faculty/Staff on support of urban and rural programming. While we believe that both are needed, we also see that the strong political leadership exerted by the urban/rural sections of this district can not be overlooked. You truly do provide the leadership for the state because of the significant business/government entities that reside here. We urge Dr. Cantrell as Director to be even more publically visible to stakeholders.

Response: We agree. The Southeast District Director will seek the advice and assistance of district faculty members in this regard, and will establish an advisory group for that purpose during the Spring of 2001.

I) We believe the traditional sources of dollars (local, state and federal) are probably at best even in the amount that will be received. We suggest that new dollars will have to come from contracts, sub-contracts with other entities, grants, user fees. We do not believe that the funding from rural programs can shift to support urban programs. We believe that there are other sources of funding earmarked for urban areas that must be sought. We believe a partnership of local Educators, the District Director and state administration begin dialogues on urban funding.

Response: We agree. The presence of a grant coordinator position in the Southeast District Office will certainly be a resource that can assist us in this effort. Our own internal audit of grant, contract and fee income indicates that, as a district, we secured over $1,000,000 in support of our programs either directly or through partnerships with other organizations. This is a significant accomplishment, and should be recognized. In the case of those partnerships, we must also recognize that
this accomplishment is closely related to our need to “negotiate” identification of Extension’s contribution to the effort, and to obtain visibility for our organization in such efforts.

It is not our intention to shift rural program support to urban areas. In fact, through two-rounds of UNL internal reallocation, the reverse has occurred, since staff reductions have been most often felt in the urban offices. This does not reflect any kind of strategic planning, but rather just the luck of the draw during those reallocation exercises. However, the reality of the situation is that in the event of another round of reallocation we will most likely look at our rural programs first, in an effort to balance and mitigate the effects of diminished resources across the unit.

Fees are a growing part of our resource mix. Extension is sometimes slow to enact meaningful fee structures, because our commitment to a mission of universal access may be affected by fees. However, public response to fees has been less negative than was anticipated by some faculty members, and we seem to meet less resistance to the concept as a result. Douglas and Sarpy Counties were recently able to support a .5-FTE horticulture position through fees, and we expect to see more such successes.

Agricultural Issues

Strengths

Within the agriculture programming area, the SEREC/District team is to be commended for producing a detailed report on the pertinent issues within each of the subheadings and identifying how SEREC/District has responded to them. The small/medium farm team did an excellent job of identifying priorities, discussing strategies, setting goals and indicating outcomes (pp30-31 of self-study document).

SEREC/District Extension Educators have provided clientele with a diversity of quality programs addressing issues of production, management, marketing as well as programs that assist in meeting certification obligations and environmental requirements during the past five years.

SEREC/District has provided leadership in developing a number of innovative programs such as the crop management and diagnostic clinics, the Nebraska Soybean and Feed Grains Profitability Project, and a soils home study course. For this reason, the SEREC/District is seen as a state leader in providing agriculture programming.

The SEREC/District agriculture team has also recognized the value of using the IANR strategic plan to set program priorities. This insures that the district’s efforts are compatible with the IANR mission.
Opportunities/Challenges

There are a number of opportunities the review committee observed and would like to share. Given that one of the overarching recommendations made to SEREC/District is keeping the issue teams as an organizational structure, there is an opportunity to rethink how the agriculture program area is arranged. At present the agriculture issues team has identified five program categories (acreages, small/medium farms, large farms, agribusiness/consultants, and structure of agriculture under which are listed crops, animals, agribusiness, and public policy as subgroupings.) The Review Team's concern is whether this organization is the most appropriate for forming teams. Many of the issues overlap to some degree, especially among the small/medium farm, large farm, and agribusiness/consultant clientele. Also, many of the issues discussed in the acreage team report are more in keeping with urban programming and environmental sustainability than agriculture. Appropriately defined teams will strengthen programming by focusing the effort and eliminating confusion relative to where responsibilities lie. A strong team will also address the issues raised by the agribusiness/consultant team regarding better coordination of programs, development of an effective marketing plan, determination of fee structures, etc. (p. 40)

Response: The Agriculture Issues Team has continued to develop as a comprehensive group, in which issues of scale or crop can be pursued by interested subgroups. Acreage concerns are represented on this team, as well as on the Environmental Sustainability Issues Team. The agriculture team has identified a leader and co-leader, and has established priorities for the coming year.

As identified by the agriculture issues team, small and medium-sized farms have difficulty generating enough income to maintain a reasonable standard of living. One strategy identified to address this issue was the development of alternative agriculture (Prioritizing Programmatic Needs; C. Developing Alternative Agriculture, page 29). Another opportunity lies in identifying and developing value-added products. This is especially true in the Southeast District. As the report points out, SEREC/District contains 63% of the state’s population and its two largest metropolitan areas. This large population base provides opportunities in both alternative agriculture enterprises and value-added agriculture for the district’s producers. Research efforts within IANR and Extension programming will play a vital role in the district’s ability to capture the benefits from these opportunities.

Response: The Agriculture Issues Team has identified major areas of emphasis for the coming year, including niche markets and identity preserved grains. Both groups have appointed a chairperson, and both programming areas will be responsive to the issues identified by the Review Team. Program plans are being developed now, and a number of educational activities are already scheduled.

Animal agriculture provides another opportunity for SEREC/District Research faculty and Extension Educators to provide additional economic opportunities within the district. On page
46, the report states that animal agriculture makes up more than 2/3 of the total agriculture revenue in the State. It is also important to note that research indicates where a community’s agriculture includes livestock enterprises, the impact on the income and vitality of the community is greater than where agriculture is solely crop based. As farmers seek ways to capture greater income through value-added enterprises, the potential for opportunities in animal agriculture appear to be as great as with crop enterprises. This potential should be further explored.

Response: We recognize this, but to a certain extent believe that the review team may have given too much weight to the manner in which the agriculture team chose to segment the market. We have a strong animal science program within the district now, although it is granted that the distribution of expertise is uneven across the region. The Agriculture Issues Team has included the development of agricultural advisory group in its strategic plan, and we will look to that group to for additional advice regarding the emphasis that should be given to specific crops and technologies.

As urban dwellers continue to seek rural living settings, there is an opportunity to assist public decision makers in determining the impact of this activity on the county’s agriculture, natural resources, public infrastructure, and private economy. Understanding the costs and benefits will greatly assist decision-makers in determining appropriate land use activities through comprehensive planning and zoning regulations. Providing effective programming in this area may be the most important impact the University can have to insure healthy agriculture economies in many SEREC/District counties.

Response: The Agriculture Issues Team has established land use planning as one of its three priorities for the coming year. A chairperson for that group has been named.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the agricultural issues team engage its members and its stakeholders in reviewing the district’s needs for programming in relation to the Extension resources available. Through this process, priorities should be set regarding subject areas both to be addressed and to be eliminated. It is very difficult to develop top quality programming when resources are spread too thin. Given the political climate that Extension operates within, it is important that support for this prioritization process be forthcoming from the Institute, District and stakeholder leadership.

Accepted: As noted above, the Agriculture Issues Team has already identified the establishment of an advisory group in agriculture. The District Director will be available to meet with that advisory group.

As visioning and listening to stakeholders identifies important issues, the Review Team
encourages the issue team to look for opportunities to create focused assignments in the highest priority areas. Although limited resources relative to the District's needs prevents every educator from focusing on an issue, where it is possible, the expertise developed can be very beneficial to the district and beyond.

**Accepted:** This is, and has been, a clear priority of the district. The issue for implementing this policy is logistical, and we will continue to make our best effort to capitalize on opportunities for both our current faculty to become more focused and to create focused positions in collaboration with our county, state and business partners.

If, as recommended, the issue team is continued as the planning structure in the SEREC/District, we feel the agriculture issue area should be revisited to determine the most effective program division. The initial time and effort spent determining the most appropriate subject area teams will greatly enhance the teams' future effectiveness.

**Accepted:** Strategic planning should be an ongoing responsibility of all of the issue teams, and the district will strive to support planning efforts with such resources as may be required.

It is recommended that consideration be given to placing greater emphasis on developing programs addressing the opportunities that exist in value-added agriculture. The demographics of the SEREC/District are conducive for developing value-added, niche market, and alternative agriculture opportunities. IANR has several units that have valuable expertise for assisting interested parties in exploring these alternatives. These units include the Food Processing Center, the Industrial Agricultural Products Center and the Center for Applied Rural Innovation.

**Accepted:** As noted above, plans for "alternative" agriculture programs are already well underway. We will seek new partners within the University, from among those suggested and others, and will develop both our agriculture and community issues teams with an eye toward enhancing our ability to contribute to value added agriculture. We will seek an early opportunity to engage the faculty of such units in a discussion of possibilities for both programs and organizational relationships.

It is recommended that income opportunities in animal agriculture be explored. Although regional and national trends are depressing for many animal enterprises, opportunities still exist for alternative production methods and value-added marketing possibilities.

**Accepted:** We reiterate that we feel that we have an effective presence in animal agriculture, but we agree that we should seek opportunities for enhanced programming in this area through focused assignments, new resources and new collaborations. We will look to our soon to be established agricultural advisory group for direction in this.
It is recommended that the district explore program areas to assist public decision-makers relative to land use planning including zoning with respect to rural acreages, animal agriculture, etc.

Accepted: As noted, this has already been identified as a priority by the Agriculture Issues Team, and we have already seen one significant educational program in this arena. We will seek to enhance our own ability to work with land use issues through in-service training sponsored and funded through the district office.

Community Visions: Urban/Rural Issues

Strengths

The creation of this issue team puts the SEREC/District in a unique and leading edge position concerning issues that are affecting rural, urban and ring communities in the urban edge. Issues like rural/urban interface, rural community development, urban community development, leadership development and diversity training are all timely topics that in one way or another are being discussed and need attention in order for communities in the SEREC/District to either retain or obtain strong sustainability.

It is evident that the District Director recognizes the importance of this issue and he needs to work directly with the team in further developing its direction.

Opportunities/Challenges

By publicly addressing the areas noted above, Extension in the SEREC/District will take on a visible role that will put it in contact with key players in the private and public sector. Citizens have an interest in what happens in their communities and will also become aware of Extension’s work.

In several of the issue areas noted above Extension will be leading participants in the development of community policy. Extension Faculty/Staff will have to be vigilant to ensure that the institution is viewed as the impartial provider of information and objective facilitator of activities that lead to the development of policy.

Each of the topics identified by the issue team as needing attention have the potential to become very complex and require a long period of time before progress is demonstrated. They will also require working partnerships both within the university, and in the community. Work through this issue team may be an excellent way for Extension to enter into new working relationships with city, state and federal agencies.

Current Extension Faculty/Staff may need to either strengthen or learn new educational skills. This will ensure that educational programs developed and implemented will showcase Extension’s state of the art knowledge of both content and presentation around these complex issues. This will be most important as contact is made with major community leaders for whom
this may be their first contact with Extension.

**Response:** The Community Visions Issue Team has continued to meet since the Review Team’s visit, and have identified leadership for this year. The District Director meets with this group as a member, and members of the group share information regarding methods and techniques that they have acquired through training or experience. Among other things, the team is working to identify opportunities for additional training, and the district has agreed to make resources available in support of such training. The team will seek to bring an urban interest group together for a discussion of urban issues for University outreach. The District Director has also been appointed to the Extension’s National Urban Agenda Task Force.

**Recommendations**

The Review Team recommends that the Community Vision Team develop a more focused plan of work. While all of the topics are important, the SEREC/District may not have the Faculty/Staff at present to work on all issues at the same time. Issues selected should also be narrow enough so that Extension can demonstrate progress towards stated objectives.

**Accepted:** The Community Vision Issues Team has identified three primary programming themes for the coming year: Leadership and decision making, technology, and culture in communities. There are numerous dimensions to each of these areas, but they do provide additional focus to this team’s plan for program development. The team will develop goals and objectives around these themes. These should be in keeping with IANR priorities and capitalize on existing curricula and organizational linkages.

The Review Team recommends that the Community Vision Team become familiar with the Kellogg Commission on the “Engaged Institution” and develop a systematic plan to engage other university resources not traditionally tapped by Extension. The Community Vision Team is perfectly poised to serve as the best liaison between the University and the community.

**Accepted:** A copy of that report will be provided to all team members, and it will be an item for discussion at an upcoming meeting.

The Community Vision Team must establish a professional development plan that identifies critical skills that need to be strengthen, such as land use management, community strategic planning, political effectiveness, leadership development and diversity strengthening. Special attention should be given to training that will lead to recognized certification. This will enhance the credibility of Extension in having the expertise to address specific issues.

**Accepted:** The team is already doing this, and will continue to do so. We are especially interested in certification opportunities, and have one educator enrolled in such a program now.
The team has identified other states where significant effort has been given to developing the appropriate expertise for community programs, and plans to arrange site visits as a way to learn what mix of skills seems to be most successful. We do indeed expect to be aggressive in this regard.

Faculty/Staff in the SEREC/District must engage in thoughtful discussion on how to diversify funding streams in order to venture into new programming areas and have the capacity to expand to meet these new educational needs. A diverse plan for fund development should be established. Extension Faculty/Staff should receive training in grant writing skills and in establishing partnerships that yield funding for Extension services.

**Accepted:** The Community Visions Issue Team has already identified grant development as a training need, and the district has agreed to provide support for such training. The team intends to explore funding opportunities along with other issues at an upcoming meeting with potential University partners, as has been described earlier.

Marketing should also be extensively discussed and a thoughtful plan should be established. This is most important if Extension will be venturing into areas not previously seen as part of the Extension portfolio of educational services. Emphasis should be given on having every member of the Extension team see himself/herself as a key player in the marketing plan.

**Accepted:** Although this has not yet been addressed, the team will establish marketing as a priority, and will seek appropriate assistance and training in devising a marketing strategy.

Community Visions presents an excellent opportunity for the Educators/Assistants to work together in teams across academic disciplines. This is especially true if Extension’s interest is to help the community address complex issues. In most instances the very nature of the complexity of the issues requires individuals from different academic disciplines to come together and develop working relationships that will attempt to bring to bear different perspectives and resources. If necessary, professional development should be considered to assist Faculty/Staff develop or enhance team-working skills.

**Accepted:** Extension Assistants have and will continue to be a strong and contributing part of this team, and have assumed leadership roles. If we hope to stress the importance of leadership in community development, we should first invest in our own leadership capacity, and the district agrees that it will provide resources for such leadership development opportunities for the faculty and staff. The issue team has identified the Center for Applied Rural Innovation, the Department of Community and Regional Planning/College of Architecture and the State Community Resource Development Action Team as potential partners with whom to seek supporting connections.
Environmental Sustainability Issues

Strengths

The Review Team noted a wide range of activities in this area from the self-study document. The activities encompassed many issues that have had a positive impact on the SEREC/District. Programs have ranged from air quality to youth environmental education with extremely visible public programs like water and earth festivals, Festival of Color and Master Gardener programs. These programs were not the efforts of one individual and many of the Faculty/Staff planned and participated in the activities. Pesticide container and pesticide disposal programs have been team efforts that have received a high level of public participation. These programs have also had a positive impact on the environment since they have decreased the likelihood of pesticides ending up in groundwater supplies.

This issue team cuts across many disciplines and has brought Faculty/Staff together that may not have traditionally worked together in the past as was evident in the review process.

Opportunities/Challenges

The Environmental Sustainability issue team identified the need for educational programs to be developed for both rural and urban audiences. These programs must encompass water quality issues and the need to educate developers and public officials on issues related to water quality and storm management. The Review Team agrees that these are educational needs, especially in the SEREC/District. Lack of information presented in the self-study document and from oral comments suggest the need to work with limited-resource households. The Review Team would suggest the team look to national models where programs have been successful in this area.

Response: The Environmental Sustainability Issue Team feels that they overlooked the opportunity to report on programs that they are currently providing to limited-resource audiences. Examples of these include:

- Training of pest control operators for Omaha Public Housing
- Integrated Pest Management training for pests found in and around the home conducted in conjunction with the Nutrition Education Program in Douglas/Sarpy and Lancaster Counties.
- Staff training for the Lincoln Housing Authority.
- Lancaster County handbook written specifically for this audience on common household pests. The manual is given to EFNEP/NEP homemakers in the county.

The team anticipates continuing and expanding the connections with the NEP/EFNEP limited-resource households, capitalizing on the good standing that our nutrition education staff has with that population. The team also agrees that we
should seek other avenues to bring environmental education to limited-resource audiences, and will continue to seek such opportunities.

The Environmental Sustainability issue team discussed the use of the internet. The Review Team felt clientele in this area are likely to access web-based information. Sites such as Lawn and Garden Central could meet some of the need for home horticulture freeing up some time for Educators to focus on projects. Information on the web sites needs to be kept current and research based.

The team recognizes that current publications (eg. NebGuides, NebFacts, etc.) are often not written in a manner well suited to working with diverse and/or limited-resource audiences. It will take expertise, time, commitment and financial resources to develop such materials. This is an important priority if we are to have materials that this audience can use. The SEREC is committed to such activities, and has provided financial support for such work. A recent example of this is the district's contribution to translating cockroach and head lice materials into Spanish.

Recommendations

The Environmental Sustainability issue team identified the following issues in the self-study document as areas they needed help in to further the outreach of the district. The issues raised by the district team are denoted with a bullet (■) and the Review Team’s responses follow.

- Develop a clear procedure to enable Educators to publish peer-reviewed NebFacts, NebGuides and Extension Circulars through the university system in a timely manner.
- Develop science-based curricula to provide current, pertinent programming for immediate and developing audiences.

The Review Team felt that administration should start the process of reviewing the currentness of the NebGuide system with needs for new publications in developing subject matter areas and updating old NebGuides with current recommendations. The team was also told that monies were to be set aside by Cooperative Extension administration for Educators to publish or update NebGuides. The Review Team felt the integrity of the review process should not be compromised to get the publications out at a quicker pace but reviewers should be encouraged to get reviews back in a more timely manner. The Review Team also felt that Educators should be encouraged to collaborate with Specialists to write publications in the areas in which they are working.

Response: In the initial report the Environmental Sustainability Issue Team recommended a clear, common procedure to enable Educators to publish peer-reviewed documents. Experience shows that there is a difference between departments in their support of publishing, especially when publications are authored by Educators. The review team refers to administration starting to review the
process publication and for updating existing publications. The team feels that the system is currently well over-loaded with pending publications waiting for review, and a major change in policy is necessary.

Web publishing and the IANR server search means that all faculty members are able to produce documents that are available world-wide without any peer review. Many documents are published quickly in response to fast breaking situations, which means that there is often no opportunity for timely peer review.

The team recognizes that this is an ongoing situation, and not specifically a Southeast District issue. There is currently a procedural review underway in Cooperative Extension, the there will continue to be much discussion regarding this issue. The team believes that it is a very important issue that warrants administrative attention.

The team has also discussed the need to work at reducing the amount of duplicated effort that occurs when multiple units publish web-based material. Part of this can be addressed by further inservice training regarding such protocols as the inclusion of keywords in a web document’s heading to allow for easier and more accurate searching.

- Re-direct the SEREC/District research monies to fund and support split Educators/Specialist appointments (75 percent FTE local Extension educator /25 percent FTE district Research and Extension Specialist). We recommend the following discipline-based positions: domestic water and waste, pest and wildlife management, horticulture, urban non-point pollution and storm water management, and indoor air.

Response: We are in full agreement with this concept, and believe it to be applicable in all subject matter areas. However it must be recognized that the SEREC has virtually no current research resources to reallocate in this manner. Thus, is most likely a long term goal. The exception to this statement is the proportional research appointment of the District Director and the support funds that come with that, and there are several ways in which those resources could be redirected.

- Because of the need for environmental education for acreage and urban clientele, we support split Educator/Program Coordinator appointments (75 percent FTE local Extension educator /25 percent FTE district program coordinator). We recommend the following interdisciplinary program coordinator positions: acreage program coordinator, sustainable urban development program coordinator.

Accepted in Principle: The Environmental Sustainability Issues Team will continue to meet, and has selected leadership for the coming year. The team’s priority programs for 2001 include:
- Private Water and Waste Water Systems
• **Landscaping**
• **Safe and Healthy Property Sales** (a program aimed at real estate professionals)

The acreage group is continuing to meet, and includes individuals with both environmental and agricultural subject matter backgrounds. An urban development interest group is forming, and will begin a strategic planning process with potential partners from the University system in early 2001 (we have referred to this effort earlier in our report).

The Review Team supports the idea of focused Educators. This process of focusing an Educator needs the review of the District Director and the individual Educator. Program coordinator positions were also supported by the Review Team. The responsibility of the coordinator would be to motivate and lead the planning processes for the issue team. The Review Team saw this format as an opportunity to address some of the needs of the developing urban/rural issues.

- Offer timely in-service training targeting environmental subject matter.

As Educators become more focused in program areas, inservice training becomes critical. Educators may look to state Specialists or for training opportunities outside of the state.

**Accepted:** The team will work to identify in-service training needs, and the SEREC will support such training. District funds in support of travel or honoraria related to training opportunities have been identified.

- Re-direct a greater percentage of Extension resources toward environmental issues important to Nebraska.
- Revisit the extension staffing formula and develop a method that more equitably distributes human resources between urban and rural counties.
- Redirect a greater and more equitable percentage of non-human resources toward urban programming.

The review discussed that urban dollars should be pursued for the developing urban needs. Care must be taken so that the feeling of taking rural dollars to meet the urban needs is not felt by Faculty/Staff and clientele. Creative efforts must be taken to secure funds and Faculty/Staff to make sure that the needs of urban audiences are met. As the urban rural interface develops, programs need to be in place to help the clientele work through the issues assisted by research based information.

**Response:** We are in full agreement with the review team in this. However, we recognize that these are issues that require the formulation of state level policy. We also recognize that the Southeast Extension District must be a leading voice regarding urban issues and urban programs, and it is our expectation that the
Southeast District Director will continue to bring those concerns to the attention of administrators in Extension and IANR. Sharing information and creating awareness are important to this effort, and we will seek an early opportunity to introduce the Institute’s new Vice Chancellor to our urban communities and programs.

Family Life Issues

The Family Life Issue Team provides high quality, innovative, and responsive programs to meet the needs of individuals and families within the SEREC/District. With the three most populated counties and nearly 2/3 of the state’s population, educational efforts to help families make sound decisions that will positively impact individuals and families will continue to be important well into the future. The Review Team recognizes Family Life Education as an area of growth for Cooperative Extension programming efforts.

Strengths

The Review Team would like to compliment the Family Life Issue Team on the well organized report and presentation. It is obvious that the team members hold each other’s talents and abilities in high esteem and work very well together.

The value of the key observer exercise was also noted by the Review Team. The importance of the information received by this effort and the organization required to facilitate the activity were evident. The Review Team believes this can serve as a model for other teams when seeking input from a targeted group of stakeholders.

The Family Life Issue Team identified key, cutting edge issues for future programming efforts. The Review Team recognizes efforts to prioritize programmatic needs and establish a time table for action.

The impacts resulting from programming within the five main areas of Nurturing Children, Parenting, Financial Management, Community Building and Interpersonal Relationships are truly impressive. The in-depth programs allow team members to focus and make a difference in people’s lives. The Review Team recognizes the value and continuing need for these programs.

The Review Team took note of the breadth of linkages with partners that have been established in an effort to expand and preserve resources.

Opportunities/Challenges

With almost two-thirds of the state’s population in this district, there are unlimited opportunities to impact individuals and families. With the range of topics in this issue area, developing programs to meet the most pressing needs of clientele will be the challenge. Establishing areas of specialization for research and public policy by each Educator to share with the team and to serve as a team contact can serve as a valuable tool in this effort.
Programming to address the current and future needs of families will require additional resources. Some options include grant writing, sub-contracting with other agencies, fee-based programming, as well as requests for additional funding in future budgets. A combination of funding sources will undoubtedly be needed to meet the growing financial needs of this program area. It may be helpful to consider jointly pursuing grant funding for a multi-county or regional program effort.

**Response:** Following the Review Team's visit and report, this team has met for further discussion and planning, and remains convinced that we are appropriately focused and moving in the right direction.

**Recommendations**

The Family Life Issue team asked the Review Team to respond to a series of questions regarding specific areas of concern. The issues raised by the district team are denoted with a bullet (●) and the Review Team’s response follow.

1) **Is the district organizational strategy the best use of time and energy?**

Establishing district teams and work groups will help you focus on the unique and specific needs of families within the SEREC/District. The Review Team recommends the continuation of the strong tie to state action teams. It is also recommended that a district program coordinator for family programs be identified. It is suggested that a rotation system be established to provide leadership opportunities for Extension Educators who indicate an interest in accepting this responsibility. This should provide the structure necessary to build upon the synergy created by the review process.

**Accepted:** A coordinator for this area will be selected for a 2-year term; one-year as co-chair and a second year as chair. Participation with State Action Teams will be encouraged.

2) **Are we spreading ourselves too thin?**

Establishing areas of specialization for research and public policy by Extension Educators for this issue team can serve as a model statewide. Communication with Extension Specialists, as well as research and teaching faculty in related areas, who can serve as a valuable resource in this effort is encouraged. Seek ways to interact with other issue teams where interests and expertise intersect.

**Accepted in Principle:** As a first step the team intends to identify areas of specialization that characterize the current faculty. Extension Educators are, in large part, focused or “specialized” in particular subject matter areas now. This approach is in keeping with an asset based approach to planning. They will also seek opportunities to establish mutually beneficial networks with campus based members of the University faculty and with other state and district programming teams.
The team plans to further develop the five-areas identified in the Review Document, and will devise a division of labor that will provide leadership for evaluation, research and public policy.

The team will seek to adjust the time frame for subject matter goals, setting dates that are in keeping with our current resources and abilities. Those adjustments will be reexamined as necessary.

3) Will our Action Strategy tell us, what is the right program, for the right audience and the right delivery strategy?

Use the key observer/focus group model to assist in the continuing efforts to focus and prioritize program efforts. This can be an example for other teams as they seek and utilize stakeholder input.

Accepted: The team will identify an evaluation tool to go with each sub-area, including input from other teams and organizations involved in that arena. The team intends to build a solid structure, and will investigate the development of team success markers.

The team will continue to use key observers and methodologies such as focus groups to inform themselves when setting program priorities.

4) How do we reach the diverse audience and the families just above the poverty guidelines?
Is working with diverse audiences through established agencies the most effective strategy?

Study the strategies of agencies who successfully work with diverse audiences as a model for entry to interaction with specific clientele groups.

Accepted: Team plans include:

- Meeting with Marilyn Fox as a key informant in developing a networking strategy aimed at gathering information that will enhance our effectiveness.
- Continue working with agencies and organizations that serve or represent a diversity of communities (eg. ethnic centers), and take advantage of the district policy regarding volunteer service to such agencies and organizations.

5) When we partner, how do we find our niche? How do we balance the visibility of Extension with being a team player with our partners?
Continue to explore SEREC/District’s role when collaborating with other partners offering programs in similar subject matter areas. Seek to find the niche for Cooperative Extension programming. Balance the need for visibility for Cooperative Extension and receiving “due credit” with coalition goals and practices.

**Accepted:** We clearly need to address the issue of visibility and receiving credit for the work that we do.

**Healthy Lifestyles Issues**

The Healthy Lifestyles Issue Team has produced local and statewide programming whose quality and well-documented impact have led to national acclaim. Unfortunately, national and state trends indicate there is much opportunity in the future for the healthy lifestyle education of clients (both youth and adult), and hopefully modification of behaviors which will lead to healthier Nebraskans.

**Strengths**

The Review Team would like to commend the Healthy Lifestyles Issue Team for articulating strong rationale and conducting needs assessments which have guided past programming decisions and future plans.

SEREC/District Educators have capitalized on the number of agencies and organizations in their district who have a common interest in lifestyle issues. They have been the leaders in initiating the building of several coalitions. These coalitions have led to pooling of resources resulting in addressing a broader audience than was possible by one group.

The Healthy Lifestyle Issues Educators’ expertise seems to be in alignment with the needs identified in the report. Therefore, the team is poised to respond to these needs with virtually no lag time needed for position redirection.

**Opportunities/Challenges**

The report and presentation reveal a broad array of healthy lifestyles subjects for future pursuit. It is not possible to adequately address each of these subjects. Consequently, determining which of the subjects will become the Educators’ niche is the challenge. Those subjects which Educators are clearly best suited to address, by virtue of resources (human and financial) and of most dramatic clientele need, should be those that drive program planning.

Based on existing need and potential clientele, the Healthy Lifestyles Team has the potential to have tremendous impact on choices and lifestyles in Nebraska. Because of these opportunities, their programming will likely become the model for other Nebraska Cooperative Extension Educators. Continuing to develop an excellent trail describing the program planning process and related impacts will help others to replicate or modify SEREC/District healthy lifestyles programming for adaption to their local needs.
The existing needs, the potential urban and rural clientele numbers, and the healthy lifestyles subject matter intersect to offer many options for grant writing, contract-for-service arrangements, fee-based programming, and requests for support for additional funding in upcoming budget years. Pursuing any one of these strategies will not result in sufficient funding to meet the needs of District clientele. Therefore, careful attention needs to be paid to seeking a mix of strategies that establishes a strong financial programming base. Language and literacy may be two barriers that will limit programming effectiveness with diverse audiences. Support should be sought for translation of materials and programs into the “primary” languages represented in the District. It would be helpful if these materials were developed for those with basic reading and advanced reading skills.

Response: A strength of Extension is its response to local needs, recognizing the diversity of the clientele served in various parts of the state. As “healthy lifestyles” can incorporate almost everything a person does, our program “clothesline” will always contain a lot of different pieces from food safety to farm safety, from healthy eating to head lice to community healthy coalitions, based on local needs. The review, however, has offered a common item — food safety — that we can all “hang on our line.”

The process of working together as a team has helped open an ongoing dialogue to help us support each other in identifying and serving the various niches in different parts of our district and sharing resources for grant writing, contract-for-service arrangements, fee-based programming, etc. Another area for support will be translation of materials and programs into “primary” languages represented in the district — both basic and advanced reading skills. Our team plans to continue the listserv communication set up for the district review.

Recommendations

It is recommended SEREC/District Educators capitalize on food safety as a mechanism to reach into diverse audiences. Many entry-level food service positions are being filled by diverse employees who will need food safety training. Additionally, some of the healthy lifestyles issues may be culturally based (for example, stress and time management) and food safety is not—everyone needs to eat, and be aware of safe ways of storing and preparing food.

Accepted: As a district team, we are poised to use a variety of delivery strategies to spread the food safety message. To avoid segmenting out groups due to a digital divide, a mix of program strategies will be used:

- Face-to-face group programs.
- One-on-one contact.
- Technology/mass media (includes distance education).
- Train-the-trainer.
Some programs will be focused solely on food safety - others will integrate food safety into other program subject matter. Individual team members will continue to work on additional healthy lifestyle issues identified as needs in their counties and will work together on those that cross county lines. However, food safety will be a theme that we all contribute to on some level.

Additionally, the entire district will be invited to think FOOD SAFETY as a theme that cuts across many other issue areas as well as parts of their routine activities such as:

- Working with pantry pests and indoor use of pesticides.
- Encouraging families to cook together.
- Supporting handwashing activities in schools and for other groups.
- Selecting material for personal columns and news articles.
- Working with 4-Hers enrolled in foods projects.
- Helping consumers and commercial groups select appropriate pesticides, etc. when growing food.
- Answering consumer food safety questions, including food preservation questions.
- Testing canner gauges.
- Promoting NUFACTS which includes food safety messages.
- Distributing table tents or other information to promote National Food Safety Education Month as a way to help families.
- Providing food safety information or creating links to information on their Web sites.
- Helping with farmer's markets.
- Promoting Nebraska agriculture products (the end product of most is food we eat!).

Carefully consider delivery strategies as they relate to what you want to accomplish and who you want to serve. Some delivery choices segment clientele immediately, and although some of the most innovative programming may have been developed, the potential audience is diminished by the limitation of access to technology. (This is a growing issue commonly referred to as the "Digital Divide.")

**Accepted in Principle:** We will seek to engage in program planning processes that help us to most appropriately match educational methods and logistics to learner needs.

However, we also note that according to a recent Gallup poll (2/00), the number of Americans who say they have recently used the Internet is now 54 percent. The future trend is toward decreasing technology costs, increasing user-friendliness of computers and a computer-literate society through the teaching of Internet skills in school. We forecast Internet use will eventually become a matter of choice rather
than a cost-consideration, such as microwave ovens, VCR's and cable TV have become. Thus, we plan to continue to dedicate a portion of our time to using the Internet to deliver programs.

When partnering with other agencies and organizations, make clear to them and your key stakeholders, why you are involved in healthy lifestyles programming. Further, articulate the need for visibility for Cooperative Extension through any publicity associated with the partnership. This need should be discussed at the beginning of the partnership.

**Accepted:** We will work with existing groups and partner with other agencies as well as initiate programs in which we work alone. A part of our ongoing dialogue as a team will be on determining marketing strategies to provide community visibility for Extension in this work.

In those situations where you are considering distance delivery strategies, seek sustainable formats (web, video-tape, home study) that are less time consuming for the programmer, asynchronous, and easily maintained. To enhance client contact with Cooperative Extension, consider supporting phone bridges, e-mail or chatrooms which allow questions, answers and discussion with Educators.

**Accepted:** As a team we will investigate uses of technology that are less time consuming and/or pool resources (e.g. web pages, power point presentations, e-mail listservs with clientele, distance education, etc.).

**Youth Issues**

**Strengths**

The Youth Issue Team has a clear understanding of the complex make-up of the SEREC/District and how this complexity impacts educational programs that must be offered. Four of the five priority areas identified address critical areas in both youth development and environmental stewardship. The fifth priority area clearly recognizes the need for continued focused attention to Faculty/Staff issues such as number of hours worked, professional development and need for specialized human resources.

Youth in both rural and urban communities will continue to be reached through strong and relevant 4-H programs. Other youth development educational programs will also be explored and used.

Establishing partnerships with other educational systems and organizations that provide youth services has been identified as an important way to extend the impact of the Nebraska Extension youth efforts in the community.

**Opportunities/Challenges**
Because of the unique composition of the SEREC/District the Youth Issue Team will continue to be on the edge of new and emerging trends, such as:

- Continued growth in the number of youth in the district,
- Continued growth by diverse audiences,
- Continued introduction or expansion of other youth serving programs and/or agencies that may be perceived as competitors to Extension, and
- Continued demand for more 4-H programs being delivered in new and unique ways.

The challenge presented is how to respond to all these opportunities without diminishing the high quality of Extension youth services, that continue to over burden Faculty/Staff with additional work and lose the Extension identity and visibility in the community.

Expanding and creating new partnerships will become more essential to reaching larger number of youth. Partnerships will range from simple Faculty/Staff working relationships to partnerships established between organizations. Extension must have the capacity to encourage and support partnership relationships from the simple to the complex.

It is highly unlikely that traditional funding streams (federal, state and county) will be able to provide funding commensurate with the demand that will be placed on Extension for expanded youth services. The challenge is not to shy away from this demand but, rather, to find new funding sources to allow expansion.

**Recommendations**

*The Learning Experience*

Extension Educators are viewed as experts in youth development. At the same time other individuals and organizations in the communities SEREC/District serves are also expanding or developing their own expertise in youth development.

Profession development for Extension Educators becomes extremely critical if Extension is to continue to be perceived as the leader in this area. The Review Team recommends that the Youth Issue Team along with appropriate state and district leadership Faculty/Staff develop a long-term development plan that addresses the most critical need areas. Emphasis should be given to development of expertise in areas where there are current gaps in yet there are demands in the community for assistance. Examples could be in workforce preparation, natural resources, and citizenship/leadership.

**Response:** The Youth Issues Team is in full agreement with this recommendation. However, a comprehensive strategy for professional development for Extension faculty and staff will be developed and implemented most successfully through a statewide effort. Indeed, evidence that such a plan exists can be found in the statewide youth development conference being offered in January of 2001. The Southeast District can provide leadership in this arena through example, and we will be hosting a research symposium on youth development later in 2001. It also
appears that we will soon be able to offer a Masters in Extension program through the University of Nebraska, and that such a degree will be available through extended education technology. The Southeast District will seek ways to encourage Extension Assistants to pursue such advanced training, and will seek to use the availability of such a degree in its recruiting activities.

The Review Team recommends the revision of curriculum being used with school systems be given priority to ensure that state and local school district standards are being met. Without this assurance school districts will not be able to use Extension to enhance their educational mission.

Response: We agree with this position, and will continue to stress the importance of this work. We will also happily assist the curriculum development process in whatever way we can.

World Leader Image
The Review Team recognizes that Extension can no longer take pride in being perceived as the hidden jewel in the community. This is most important in the SEREC/District where there are many providers of educational services that could be easily perceived as either being duplicative or in direct competition with Extension.

The Review Team recommends that the district develop a comprehensive public relations and marketing plan. This plan should be developed to cover the entire district, be cross-discipline and require that all Faculty/Staff see themselves as public relations and marketing agents for Extension within their area of work. District leadership may want to seek the aid of an expert in public relations/marketing to develop a plan.

The plan should be focused and have goals and objectives that are deemed important to the future of Extension in the SEREC/District. Be very specific as to what Extension wants to get out of all the time and effort that will be placed in the development and implementation of the plan. Do you want more money for a specific programming effort, do you want more participants to attend a specific programming activity, do you want key community leaders to become advocates for Extension during the next county budget deliberations?

Response: Your point is well taken, and we can not claim to have a well articulated or universally pursued public relations/marketing plan. Clearly the importance of public relations applies to all of our work in Extension. Over the last several years, Nebraska Cooperative Extension has invested significant resources and energy in improving our marketing plans and our understanding of both the importance and the purpose of marketing. We will continue to keep this requirement in the forefront of our planning, and as you suggest we will seek an opportunity to provide additional training in this arena, and we will work toward the development and implementation of a comprehensive plan.

Youth Development Profession
The Review Team recognizes that Extension Assistants working in youth development are in a unique position to pilot a flexible Faculty/Staff scheduling initiative. A limited pilot could be implemented in one or two counties where Extension Assistants have clearly demonstrated a consistent pattern of working well beyond 40 hours per week, many evenings and weekends and having to work with multiple groups or organizations at the same time or with conflicting schedules. County partners (boards) will have to be convinced that a flexible schedule does not diminish services to clients.

Accepted: We have already discussed this item with the District Faculty and Staff Advisory Committee, and have begun the process of bringing a planning committee together. The issue is very complex, due to the mix of job descriptions and funding arrangements found among Assistants and Associates in the district. It is our intention to involve County Commissioners, Extension Unit Leaders, Extension Assistants and Associates and University administrators on We are, however, committed to offering a plan for flexible scheduling of Extension Assistant and Associate time in 2001.

Please refer to the Overarching Issues recommendations that address diversity and the metropolitan team for suggestions on how to address the inclusion of diverse audiences and Faculty/Staff and how to better work in an urban setting.

Response: We are committed to equality of access for all of our programs, and will work in partnership with other agencies, organizations and our Extension colleagues to shape a more inclusive organization in any way that we can.

Strategic Partnerships
The Review Team recognizes and commends the district for its work in developing working partnerships at all levels. This will continue to be an ever-expanding way of doing business in the future. Many funding sources are giving greater weight to grants that represent a consortium of partners addressing complex community needs through comprehensive programs.

One of the key constituencies that the public relations/marketing plan could target is elected officials. This could be under the heading of Political Effectiveness. Beyond simple awareness of Extension what else is being sought from these individuals? Assistance in obtaining more funding, introductions to other government agencies that have money that could be tapped by Extension, advocates for specific Extension programs, etc.?

Response: Your point is again well taken, and we probably could not easily answer those questions. We will include such questions as we develop a plan for the district.

The Review Team recommends that a taskforce be organized to develop a fund development plan. This taskforce should be district-wide and include Faculty/Staff from all academic Faculty/Staff, state Specialists and district leadership. There are multiple ways of raising funds beyond the creation of a grant writer position.
Response: We will take this under advisement, and we will seek the advice of development professionals regarding the options that we might have available. If there appears to be significant potential in such an effort, we will move forward with the recommended task force.

The Review Team recommends that the Youth Issue Team explore ways Extension Educators can become a resource to other youth serving agencies and be seen as experts that should be consulted in the development of public policy affecting youth.

Accepted: We already have many linkages with such organizations, and in many cases we sponsor workshops and educational activities which they attend. We have given consideration to certifications and other credentialing activities that would help enhance the image that you suggest we should strive for. In the course of developing our issue team we will explore these ideas more fully during 2001, and we will seek to engage faculty with public policy expertise in these discussions.

The Review Team recommends that the Youth Issue Team become familiar with the W.K Kellogg Foundation, The Engaged Institution, report and explore ways how district Faculty/Staff can be the link between the university and the community. Special emphasis should be given to departments not currently involved with Extension.

Accepted: We will distribute copies of the report to all team members, and include discussion of its implications in our agenda for 2001. We have always been supportive of developing new linkages within and between the University and the community, but have not always been equally proactive in creating them. This is an area in which we must seek to improve.

Research Issues

Strengths
The self-study document indicates that relevant research based programming efforts are underway in Southeast Nebraska. The location of the SEREC/District provides opportunities for collaborative relationships with many University of Nebraska Researchers/Specialists. SEREC/District faculty are very supportive of an integrated Research/Extension program in southeastern Nebraska.

Opportunities/Challenges
SEREC/District faculty need to increase efforts to identify research priorities for southeastern Nebraska. The also need to broaden the linkages between SEREC/District and campus units beyond IANR that can address research issues in Southeast Nebraska. Further, they need to strengthen the day-to-day working relationships between Educators of the SEREC/District and the faculty based within IANR departments.
Recommendations

The Review Team urges the Director of the SEREC/District and IANR Department Heads/Chairs to work together to provide opportunities for the clientele/faculty of SEREC/District to give input to the identification of research issues impacting Southeast Nebraska. Involvement of SEREC/District is essential in providing adequate access by the SEREC/District Educators and clientele to crucial research based information. It was suggested by several individuals that the development of a team to address urban issues in a multi-disciplinary, multi campus, Research/Extension format would be beneficial.

Accepted: Efforts to develop the suggested urban team are underway, and will begin with informational discussions early in 2001. The Agriculture Issues Team is forming an advisory committee, and we will seek ways to share the advice of that group with departments on campus. We will also seek to institutionalize one or more annual opportunities for field-based and campus-based faculty members to interact around the subject of research needs in Southeastern Nebraska.

The Director of the SEREC/District should be included as an evaluation partner when assessing the contributions of the Specialists with assignments targeting Southeast Nebraska.

Accepted: The SREC Director received the Annual Report of Faculty Accomplishments and offered comment on the performance of all Specialists with priority assignments in the Southeast District this year, and will continue to do so.

The SEREC/District is encouraged to continue to build program linkages beyond the IANR so to be a conduit and contributing partner to University-wide Research/Extension efforts that will impact the residents of the Southeast Nebraska. Use this opportunity to increase the visibility of SEREC/District within the University system.

Accepted: A meeting for faculty members from IANR, UNO, and the College of Arts and Sciences who have an interest in urban outreach programs is already being planned. We will plan similar discussions around other priority issues in the district.

Inclusion of Campus-based faculty on a regular basis in program planning activities of the SEREC/District should be explored as a means of increasing communications. Opportunities for applied research conducted jointly by Researchers/Educators should be encouraged.

Accepted: Personal invitations to attend our Southeast District Fall Conference were extended to department heads and faculty members both within and outside of IANR. Most of these individuals had no formal assignment in the Southeast District, and several had not Extension appointment at all. We were pleased with the participation that these invitations resulted in, and will follow this practice in the future. We have met with two Department Heads from IANR for the purpose of devising a method for Specialists to learn of researchable issues being seen in the field, and we have
identified, emphasized and supported the applied research activities of Educators. We will seek ways to encourage more such research activities for Educators, and we will encourage the participation of campus-based faculty members in such projects, even if only in an advisory capacity.