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Editor's Introduction to This Special Issue

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Editor's Introduction to This Special Issue

Since its formal authorization by the Smith-Lever Act in 1914, Cooperative Extension (Extension) in the U.S. has focused on “taking knowledge gained through research and education and bringing it directly to the people to create positive changes” (U.S. Department of Agriculture, n.d., para 1). Extension delivers non-formal education and other learning activities, often called *programs*, in both rural and urban areas to multiple audiences, including children, youth, families, agricultural producers, consumers, businesses, and communities. Extension's stakeholder-involved, grassroots approach has allowed Extension to be responsive to issues facing its targeted audiences throughout its history. Utilizing a model that integrates program planning, design and implementation, and evaluation is essential for successful programs that achieve desired outcomes and impacts.

This issue of the *Journal of Human Sciences and Extension* focuses on the Extension Program Development Model first presented by Seevers, Graham, Gamon, and Conklin in 1997. Nancy Franz, Barry A. Garst, and Ryan J. Gagnon served as Co-Editors for this special issue. The articles in this issue discuss components of this model and present recommendations for adapting the model to ensure the continued success of Extension programs.

- In the first article, Nancy Franz, Barry A. Garst, and Ryan J. Gagnon provide an introduction to the use of program development models and the Extension Program Development Model.
- The second article, authored by Nancy Franz, describes Extension's public value movement and steps for public value success through the Program Development Model.
- In the third article, Barry A. Garst and Paul F. McCawley present a history of needs assessment and discuss implications for the future of Extension needs assessment.
- The fourth article, authored by Mary E. Arnold, describes the implications of umbrella program models using the 4-H Youth Development Program as an example.
- In the fifth article, Ryan J. Gagnon, Nancy Franz, Barry A. Garst, and Matthew F. Bumpus share core concepts and factors related to successful Extension program implementation.
- In the sixth article, Allison Nichols, Stephanie M. Blake, Scott Chazdon, and Rama Radhakrishna trace the history of evaluation in Extension and identify challenges for the future of evaluation in Extension.
- The seventh article, authored by Charles French and George Morse, discusses stakeholder engagement efforts through the use of two case studies.
- In the eighth article, Scott R. Cummings, Kevin B. Andrews, Katy M. Weber, and Brittney Postert explain the importance of professional development for Extension professionals related to program development and highlight professional development efforts of various Extension institutions.

- The ninth article, authored by Karen Bruns and Nancy Franz, describes the need to align the Extension Program Development model with community-university engagement models.
- In the final article, Ryan J. Gagnon, Barry A. Garst, and Nancy Franz summarize key points from this special issue and offer recommendations for the evolution of the Extension Program Development Model.

The Extension Program Development Model serves as a framework for Extension programming and can be adapted to changing contexts in the future. To remain relevant through the next 100 years, Extension must continue to engage and serve multiple and diverse audiences, document outcomes and impacts, and demonstrate public value. Professional development for Extension professionals at all levels will be critical to ensure that Extension can continue to provide trusted, practical education for individuals, businesses, and communities that will help them solve problems, develop skills, and build a positive future.

This issue of *JHSE* joins the following Extension texts as critical professional development resources for current and future Extension professionals:

- *Education Through Cooperative Extension* (3rd ed.) by Seevers and Graham (2012)
- *Program Evaluation in a Complex Organizational System: Lessons From Cooperative Extension* by Braverman, Engle, Arnold, and Rennekamp (2008)

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