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Cooperative Extension Program Development and the Community-University Engagement Movement: Perspectives from Two Lifelong Extension Professionals

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For over 100 years, Cooperative Extension has been bringing university research and resources to communities to help them address critical issues. Historically, Extension was one of the first university engagement models in the country. In the last 20 years, community-university engagement models on campus have intersected and competed with Extension work. These engagement models are challenging Extension's long-established Program Development Model. Extension is only one vehicle or methodology for engagement work. For Extension to continue to leverage an important place in community-university engagement, it must more fully align the Program Development Model with the standards for assessing successful community-university engagement. Extension professionals also need to examine the program development process with an eye toward the scholarly process for doing engaged work, as well as understand and practice program development in the context of today's academic and community environments. Recommendations are provided to advance quality Extension program development within community-university engagement models.

Keywords: Cooperative Extension, program development, context, engagement, community-university engagement, engaged scholarship

As an outreach arm of Land-Grant Universities, Cooperative Extension (Extension) systems are an integral part of evolving community-university engagement models (Kellogg Commission on the Future of State Land-Grant Universities, 1999). Historically, Extension was one of the first university engagement models in the country (Coon, 2010). Select university faculty sharing information with the public through publications and farmers' institutes to improve country life were an outreach precursor to Extension (Kett, 1994). However, the creation of the Extension system formalized community-university engagement at Land-Grant Universities (Rasmussen, 1989).

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Community engagement within higher education has evolved over the past twenty years. Universities from Land-Grant to private to regional institutions have redefined their mission, vision, and action concerning how they engage with their communities (Glass & Fitzgerald, 2010). These changing models for engagement have important implications for Extension's long-established Program Development Model of planning, design and implementation, and evaluation (Seevers & Graham, 2012).

Engagement is defined as:

the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good. (Fitzgerald, Smith, Book, Rodin, & CIC Committee on Engagement, 2005, p. 3)

What differentiates community engagement work from outreach is the relationship between the university faculty and staff and their community partners.

Outreach and engagement are different. *Outreach* (sometimes called service) is often a one-way flow of information or expertise from the university to the community. Outreach tends to favor the university or university expertise over the community's knowledge or needs. For example, outreach is often sponsored solely by the university with a focus on what campus experts can provide to the community, such as campus-based educational events, expert services, or faculty conducting information dissemination (Franz, 2011b; Franz & Townson, 2008; McDowell, 2001). In comparison, engagement requires a reciprocal partnership between university and community stakeholders where knowledge and resources are exchanged for mutual benefit (Franz, 2011b). With engagement, the community and the university together define the issue at hand, co-develop the methodology to address the issue, collaborate on action, monitor progress, reflect and critique the programming process, and create new questions to research or address in the future (Clinical and Translational Science Awards Consortium, 2011). The power of this symbiotic engagement is the potential for co-creation of knowledge that informs new research, engaged pedagogy, and community-based programming in an ongoing cycle. In community-university engagement, the residents of the community participate together to address issues through community-based research (Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2013), service learning (Furco, 2002), or other scholarly endeavors.

Engagement as a mutually beneficial collaboration between the university and community makes research useful outside the academic community. Engagement also results in teaching that enables learning beyond campus and service benefitting those outside the academic community (Peters, Jordan, Adamek, & Alter, 2005). The Association of Public and Land-Grant

Universities has stated, “today’s engagement is scholarly, is an aspect of learning and discovery, and enhances society and higher education” (Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, & Swanson, 2012, p. 7). This relationship between the community and university to mutually discover and use knowledge to empower citizens is the foundation of Extension work. Community members engage with Extension professionals on advisory committees to conduct needs assessments, design and implement programs, and evaluate impact (Seevers & Graham, 2012).

Engaged Scholarship and Extension Program Development

Over the past 25 years, Boyer’s (1990) book, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, has challenged the traditional definition of academic scholarship. Rather than limiting scholarship to the work of laboratory-based original research, he charged the professorate to adopt four types of scholarship: discovery, integration, application, and teaching and learning. This widened definition successfully opened the door for higher education to recognize academic work differently and redefine the depth and richness of the work of the university (Fitzgerald, Burack, & Seifer, 2010).

Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff (1997) applied Boyer’s redefinition of scholarship by looking at the variety of work done by the professorate. They determined the common characteristics of scholarship, no matter what type of academic effort occurs. In their companion book to Boyer’s (1990) work, the authors identified common standards of successful engaged work. They indicated high quality engagement includes (1) clearly articulating goals, (2) adequate preparation, (3) appropriate methods, (4) gaining significant results, (5) effective presentation of the work, and (6) reflective critique (Glassick et al., 1997).

The six standards for engaged scholarship are encompassed in Extension’s Program Development Model (Table 1). Universities succeeding in institutionalizing community-university engagement have aligned organizational systems, people, processes, and policies around engagement (Beere, Votruba, & Wells, 2001). For Extension to continue to leverage an important place in community-university engagement, it must more fully align the Program Development Model with the standards for assessing successful community-university engagement. This alignment helps university faculty and administrators experience a direct connection between Extension programming and faculty performance related to community-university engagement.

Table 1. Comparison of Extension's Program Development Model and Standards for Assessing Community-University Engagement

Cooperative Extension Program Development Model (Seevers & Graham, 2012)	Standards for Assessing Faculty Community-University Engagement (Glassick et al., 1997)
Program Planning	Clear Goals Adequate Preparation
Program Design and Implementation	Appropriate Methods Effective Presentation
Program Evaluation	Significant Results Reflective Critique

Scholarship, defined as original intellectual work that is communicated and validated by peers, (Franz, 2011b), plays a crucial role in Extension work. Scholarship has two dimensions; one is direct and one is indirect. First, the work is directly rooted in research and knowledge generated around a specific issue. Second, the process of designing and implementing engagement or Extension work is a scholarly activity that indirectly brings to the process of engagement a level of quality that enriches the Extension program. This lays a scholarship foundation to strengthen the quality and impact of future Extension programs (Long & Bushaw, 1996).

Extension professionals need to examine the process of program development with an eye to the scholarly process of doing engaged work. For example, Extension professionals should consider the following questions during program development. Are they setting benchmarks and standards for the program development process by clearly articulating goals and the initial context for the program? Have they monitored the community setting to be prepared for the factors that can influence the program? After implementation, has the professional reflected upon the process and learned from the experience? Has this reflection generated new insights and thoughts for improving the program? Have Extension professionals shared not only their program development process with others, but have they shared the lessons learned with their advisory committee, program designers, and their peers? Extension program development as engaged scholarship supports high program quality including effective content and engagement processes leading to individual, family, and community impact through transformative learning that leads to deep outcomes for clients (Coon, 2010; Franz & Townson, 2008).

Changes Impacting Extension's Program Development and Engagement

Extension professionals need to understand and practice program development in the context of contemporary academic and community environments. The challenges outlined below specifically impact the ability of Extension professionals to engage successfully with communities. These challenges also influence the type and quality of engaged scholarship created by Extension professionals.

Campus Expectations

A major component influencing the implementation of Extension programs is the university culture and related expectations. Extension historically resides in a Land-Grant University context where the institutional mission, vision, and working definitions include engagement. In many community-university engagement models, Extension has been expanding partnerships with new colleges on campus for program development to add the knowledge base of these colleges and expand Extension's reach (Coon, 2010). The expansion of service learning and community-based participatory research for engaged pedagogy and research across campus provides Extension professionals with new program opportunities. Examples are youth engaged as researchers on urban community gardening (Krasny & Doyle, 2002) and undergraduates as Extension interns to better leverage scarce resources (Morris, Pomery, & Murray, 2002).

Tenure and promotion expectations are changing on some campuses as faculty determine what counts for tenure and promotion. There is a movement to evaluate tenure and promotion dossiers based on the faculty member's appointment rather than one set of standard criteria that tends to only reflect research appointments (Franz, 2011b). Universities are finding this requires having clear criteria for the scholarship of research, teaching, and engagement. Faculty, promotion and tenure committee members, and university administrators are beginning to support the wider forms of scholarship suggested by Boyer (1990) rather than using only research scholarship criteria to determine promotion and tenure for all candidates. Even with this change in the lenses used to assess promotions and tenure, some academics still question if community-engaged scholarship is true academic work (Calleson, Jordan, & Seifer, 2005).

Campuses and funders are also moving from supporting disciplinary work to emphasizing multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary efforts to better address complex societal issues. *Multidisciplinary* approaches include academics working sequentially or parallel to each other, *interdisciplinary* work finds academics working together on an issue from their disciplinary lens, and *transdisciplinary* approaches include academics working together on an issue from a shared framework that integrates multiple disciplines (McNall, Barnes-Najor, Brown, Doberneck, & Fitzgerald, 2015). The move to transdisciplinary approaches results in a wider scope and more depth of on-campus partnerships to support more effective service learning and community-based participatory research (Furco, 2002; Israel et al., 2013).

Faculty, graduate students, and administrators committed to community-university engagement are articulating specific expectations to support engagement. One study in particular found faculty, graduate students, and administrators expect (1) a university center for student engagement and community partnerships, (2) a clear working definition of engaged scholarship, (3) faculty incentives and training to support engaged work and engaged scholarship, (4) a friendly class schedule and academic calendar to mesh with community needs, (5) job

descriptions that include engagement, (6) time to build long-term partnership with community partners that is honored by the promotion and tenure process, (7) metrics and measures to assess the impact of engagement, and (8) multiple opportunities for engaged faculty to meet each other and discuss their work (Franz, Childers, & Sanderlin, 2012). Some undergraduate students also expect to be engaged with local communities (Garst, Franz, Peters, Smith, & Baughman, 2012).

Changing Extension Structure and Specialization

The traditional model of Extension program development has its foundation in an Extension faculty specialist conducting research on a subject. He/she then developed an educational program or other series of activities to translate the research into application. County Extension educators were then trained to implement the program and evaluate it with the state specialist (Rasmussen, 1989).

The Extension community engagement model of state specialists and county educators has changed in many Extension systems to a structure with specialists at multiple levels of the organization at a state, regional, or county level. Extension professionals may still be based in county offices or just as likely located in regional offices. Extension professionals have become more specialized to bring specific resources and knowledge to complex community issues. Shifts in funding have resulted in a more regional approach to the delivery of Extension programs. The expectation to reach citizens more broadly has also often led to Extension professionals serving a broader geographic area (Coon, 2010; Morse, 2009).

As Extension staffing has changed, so have implications for Extension program development. With more specialization, the program designer is just as likely to be implementing the program with a team of specialists who were involved with its development (Morse, 2009). Extension professional specialization can challenge university-community engagement best practices when engagement processes or content require a generalist approach. These specialized professionals may find it difficult to deeply engage with communities due to the scale of the geography.

Funding and Accountability

One trend in higher education over the last two decades has been decreased public funding for Extension programming and increased funding for community-engaged research and pedagogy. For example, the Federal government now dedicates a large amount of funding through the National Science Foundation for scientists to plan, measure, and report the broader community or societal impacts of their work, not just the campus-based intellectual merit of the work (National Science Foundation, 2015). 4-H Youth Development professionals have also found they now must compete with other youth development organizations for federal funds previously restricted to 4-H.

Less public funding for Extension has decreased the amount of traditional long-term, in-depth programming produced by Extension professionals and increased the number of short-term projects in which they participate due to specific funding requirements. This trend requires Extension professionals to more fully build evaluation on program impact into programming to measure and articulate the private and public value of the program to sustain funding and the organization (Franz, 2011a, 2015; Kalambokidis, 2004, 2011). These funding changes have also influenced Extension's programming relationship with governments as public revenue becomes more restricted and government increases its focus on economic development and regional approaches to services (Coon, 2010).

Technology and Access to Information

Early Extension professionals implemented programs face-to-face with clientele, travelling to homes and businesses to provide education for individuals and families. These early educators also met with Extension groups to teach lessons and share information. As mass media developed, Extension professionals used radio, newspapers, and television to expand their reach to consumers to disseminate information and market programs (Johnston, 1982; Romero-Gwynn & Marshall, 1990).

Today's technology, including personal computers, tablets, smart phones, and social media, changes the reach and other aspects of Extension programs such as program delivery and work efficiencies (Diem, Hino, Martin, & Meisenbach, 2011). The explosion of web usage and increased internet capabilities of information consumers present new opportunities for Extension program development. Mobile technologies, applications, and devices have enabled consumers who spend considerable time online to access information, video, webcasts, and social media networks at any time and any location. Online access to information can fit more easily into the demands of a busy lifestyle. The project also found a growing percentage of the population watching online video from May 2008 to May 2010, rising 14% from 52% to 66%. The highest level of video consumption was in Millennials (80% in 2010), while the lowest video consumption was by people 74 years of age and older (20%). An additional change impacting Extension professionals is that the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project found that the internet has surpassed newspapers and radio as the place where people go for news (Zickuhr, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c). In 2010, the internet ranked just behind television as a leading source of news. The increasing trend in the use of the internet has grown as technology has become increasingly mobile, and smart phones and tablets have become more prevalent (Zickuhr, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c). Nicosia (2014) projects that by 2018, 90% of mobile users will engage in social media through their mobile devices, while presently it is close to 80%.

These trends in internet, social media, and mobile device use have implications for Extension program development. How do professionals promote and market programs to stakeholders who

are constantly online? For a population that accesses information regularly through the web, how is Extension engaging technology users in online learning? For example, Extension professionals in Iowa developed a program to help families adopt environmentally sustainable lifestyles while simultaneously enhancing family development. The professionals planned an Eco Family day at a university research station, but no one came. They decided to meet families where they were by providing the program content totally online through a blog, webinars, and online activities. The program now engages a wide variety of families and individuals new to Extension across Iowa and the country (Santiago, Franz, Christoffel, Cooper, & Schmitt, 2013).

Through the use of technology, Extension professionals have more control over the consistency of programming. Educational programs can be delivered with the same approach across an entire state, region, or nation. The opportunity to connect with consumers in multiple formats online over an extended period of time allows Extension professionals to deepen the dosage of the program in an interactive and engaging fashion, especially with young adults. Through technology, the professional is challenged to assess the responsiveness of the participant and the impact of the program. How does the professional know who is accessing the educational program delivered online? Is the consumer changing their knowledge, skills, and behaviors due to the program? Sophisticated analytics and innovative program evaluation help assess the level of engagement and impact of the user.

Increased access to information through technology impacts how Extension programs are being planned, implemented, and evaluated (Diem et al., 2011; Schneider, Brock, Lane, Meszaros, & Lockee, 2011). The Extension professional is no longer the sole source of expertise on most topics. Competition for information dissemination and learning opportunities comes from a variety of sources ranging from the internet to businesses, nonprofit organizations, and other educational institutions. As a result, Extension professionals are challenged to adapt program development to this environment.

Volunteerism

Volunteers are a growing part of Extension program development as baby-boomers retire and a wider variety of capable and caring older adults are encouraged to contribute to their communities. The Corporation for National and Community Service (2014) projects the number of baby boomer volunteers could increase from a medium projection of 11.2 million in 2015 to a medium projection of almost 18 million in 2035. This trend creates new challenges and opportunities for Extension program development. Recent retirees have deep experience in the workforce and multiple skills and talents honed through their work life. However, these highly competent retirees may not be content to only assist in the delivery of programs. These community members are becoming adept co-creators of program development as they work in partnership with Extension in their communities.

This maturing volunteer force is increasingly assisting with planning, teaching, and implementing programs developed by and with Extension staff. Extension master volunteer programs such as Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, and Master Water Stewards are important examples of this trend in volunteer support for university-community engagement (Posthumus et al., 2013). Extension volunteers, youth and adults can increasingly take on more in-depth program development roles in needs assessment, program design, teaching, or collecting and analyzing program quality or impact data. For example, volunteers are becoming more viable as program evaluators (Franz, 2009) and assisting with program data analysis (Franz, 2013). These volunteers are also partners in co-creation of knowledge through community-based participatory research or other scholarly endeavors (Franz, Piercy, Donaldson, Westbrook, & Richard, 2010).

Recommendations to Advance Quality Extension Program Development Within Community-University Engagement Models

The multiple community-university engagement models being used by Land-Grant Universities impacts how Extension approaches program development. The following recommendations will help Extension build on its strong and successful history of community-university engaged work to maintain or increase its engagement footprint and leverage at Land-Grant Universities.

Extension's greatest strength is the relationship between campus and field-based professionals to jointly plan, implement, and evaluate programs (McDowell, 2001). However, this relationship has eroded over the last several decades due to changes in staff from funding cuts and changing performance expectations for both campus and field Extension professionals. The community-university engagement models at Land-Grant Universities provide a superb opportunity to rebuild these relationships to better connect community and university partners.

Rapid changes in technology for education and communication require deep professional development for Extension professionals to gain and use up-to-date technology skills. Without this support for updated program needs assessment, implementation, and evaluation, Extension will fail to be an important player in community-university engagement.

Extension professionals in all units of the organization need to support, implement, evaluate, and celebrate a co-creation environment with Extension volunteers and learners. The role of expert information disseminator is losing ground in today's community-university engagement models in favor of higher-level learning and action to address complex community issues. Extension workers adept at community engagement are required to be experts in engagement processes, as well as subject matter content.

Extension program leaders and university department chairs need to integrate engaged scholarship more fully into Extension program development, rewards, and performance reviews to enhance credibility with partners across the university. The overlap between the Extension Program Development Model and standards for measuring engaged scholarship should be used to support this integration.

Extension professionals need to be supported as highly credible scholars by increasing their level of engaged scholarship (Coon, 2010). They have the important role and obligation of bringing community voice and community members into engaged scholarship.

All Extension professionals, from national and state leadership to those in the field, are positioned to impact understanding and quality of program development as contexts and learners change. This will help ensure that community-university engagement models employ best practices for addressing difficult issues on campus and in communities. The use of best engagement practices in Extension program development needs to be catalyzed by the involvement of Extension professionals in key engagement organizations such as the Engagement Scholarship Consortium, Campus Compact, Imagining America, the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement, and the Higher Education Network for Community Engagement.

Above all, Extension professionals need to articulate and celebrate the unique role that Extension has played, currently plays, and can play in community-university engagement. This requires helping campus partners and decision makers understand Extension's mission, audiences, programs, and impact. Sharing examples of successful Extension community engagement builds on the Extension Program Development Model, which should drive this celebration to help Extension boldly hold a respected and effective place in community-university engagement at Land-Grant Universities.

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