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## Building Successful Campus and Field Faculty Teams

Okechukwu M. Ukaga

*University of Minnesota, ukaga001@tc.umn.edu*

Mike R. Reichenbach

*University of Minnesota Extension Service*

Charles R. Blinn

*University of Minnesota*

Deborah M. Zak

*University of Minnesota Extension Service*



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## Building Successful Campus and Field Faculty Teams

### Abstract

This article discusses how to build successful campus and field faculty teams in order to meet the Land-Grant research and outreach mission more effectively. Data was collected through individual interviews, telephone surveys, and focus group discussions. Differences between campus and field faculty with regards to their respective work environments were noted, including supervision, appointment, evaluation, publication, promotion and tenure, scholarly pursuit, and funding. Improved campus and field faculty interaction can be achieved if all faculty take initiative in identifying mutually beneficial work and are diligent in creating a body of work that is recognized in both the field- and campus-based cultures.

### Okechukwu M. Ukaga

Executive Director  
Northeast Minnesota Sustainable Development Partnership  
University of Minnesota  
Cloquet, Minnesota  
Internet Address: [ukaga001@tc.umn.edu](mailto:ukaga001@tc.umn.edu)

### Mike R. Reichenbach

Extension Educator and Assistant Professor  
University of Minnesota Extension Service  
Adjunct Assistant Professor  
Departments of Forest Resources and Wood and Paper Science  
Cloquet Forestry Center  
Cloquet, Minnesota

### Charles R. Blinn

Extension Specialist and Professor  
University of Minnesota Extension Service  
Department of Forest Resources  
University of Minnesota  
St. Paul, Minnesota

### Deborah M. Zak

District Director, NW District  
University of Minnesota Extension Service  
Crookston, Minnesota

### William D. Hutchison

Professor and Extension Entomologist  
University of Minnesota Extension Service  
Department of Entomology  
University of Minnesota  
St. Paul, Minnesota

### Nancy J. Hegland

Extension Educator and Professor  
University of Minnesota Extension Service  
Faribault, Minnesota

## Introduction

In its 1999 report, the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities recommended that universities organize their resources to better engage and serve their clientele. "In the end, the clear evidence is that, with the resources and superbly qualified professors and staff on our campuses, we can organize our institutions to serve needs in a more coherent and effective way; we can do better" (Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, 1999). This call is particularly relevant to the Cooperative Extension Service, given its long history of public outreach, engagement and service (Phipps & Osborne, 1989; Lansdale, 1986; Cochrane, 1979).

One challenge Extension faces in addressing this issue is a dichotomy that often exists between campus-based and field-based faculty. This includes differences in approaches for determining clientele needs, areas of focus, operational support mechanisms, and procedures for reporting to and evaluation by administrators. In this article, "campus-based faculty" refers to faculty with and without formal Extension appointments, but who all have strong ties to, and greater identification with, the university through departments. "Field-based faculty" refers to faculty with ties to the university through county or local Extension partners.

Beginning in the spring of 1998, the University of Minnesota Extension Service began an in-depth process to revisit its purpose and impact, and to identify organizational changes that should be made to create a more effective educational delivery system (Casey, C., letter to University of Minnesota Extension faculty and staff from the Interim Dean and Director of the University of Minnesota Extension Service, July 24, 1999). Within this context, a major issue addressed was how to build successful campus and field faculty teams in order to better meet clientele needs.

This question is not only of interest to the Extension Service, but also within many other settings at several universities. For example, at separate multi-university workshops hosted by the University of Nebraska and by the North Dakota State University, participants wrestled with the issue of building successful campus-field faculty teams (Ukaga, personal communication, January 6, 2000). Oregon State University created an institutional framework for building campus-field faculty teams by redefining scholarship, giving field faculty professional academic ranks, and adopting the same promotion and tenure process for both campus and field faculty (Schauber et al., 1998; Weiser, 1994).

This article explores the educational and research roles of campus and field faculty at the University of Minnesota and the unique attributes and obstacles of their respective working environments and identifies opportunities for building appropriate teams to more effectively address educational needs. We believe that similar opportunities exist elsewhere within the United States.

## Methods

The issues, challenges, and benefits associated with creating campus-field faculty teams were identified from the following Minnesota sources:

1. Individual interviews,
2. Telephone survey of field faculty, and
3. Focus group interviews/discussions.

Information from the campus faculty perspective was initially collected in 1999 through individual face-to-face interviews of selected campus faculty. The interviewees were asked in an open-ended fashion to provide their thoughts on unique differences between campus and field environments ("What is it about the environment for campus faculty that field faculty may not understand?"). A summary of all ideas was generated and given to several campus faculty reviewers to critique and comment on. Based on input from the reviewers, the summary was revised.

Information about the field faculty environment was summarized based on data collected through a telephone survey of 84 Extension field faculty by Extension Administrative Fellows (Hutchison & Hegland, 1999). Both summaries were combined into a white paper reviewed by a focus group of campus and field faculty participating in a University of Minnesota professional development workshop. Information from the focused discussions was used to crosscheck and augment data from the previous interviews and surveys.

## Results

Data revealed some interesting commonalities and differences among campus- and field-based faculty with regard to their working environment (Table 1). These observations have implications for how we build and maintain successful campus-field faculty teams.

While both campus- and field-based faculty are interested in solving problems, factors such as the types of staff hired, work responsibilities, and evaluation systems result in different approaches to the development and dissemination of knowledge.

### Table 1.

Summary of Responses from University of Minnesota Campus- and Field-Based Faculty Regarding Factors Associated with Their Respective Work Environments

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Campus-Based Faculty</b>	<b>Field-Based Faculty</b>
Supervision	Hired by and answer to academic departments, not Extension.	Hired by Extension with direct involvement by the local advisory committee or similar local board.
Appointment	Most have split appointments with research and/or teaching. Most have no Extension appointment. Some have little interest in applied research or outreach. The Extension component for some faculty is less than 50%.	Usually have full-time Extension appointments with little research responsibility.
Evaluation	Performance evaluation systems vary from department to department. The evaluations are performed by academic department heads who hold a split appointment with Extension or by committees comprised of other campus-based faculty.	Performance is based on non-formal Extension outreach teaching activities. Extension personnel perform the evaluations.
Publications	Extension publications and presentations may count less in the evaluation system than refereed journal articles and teaching credit classes.	Refereed journal articles are counted in the evaluation process but are not necessarily required for promotion.
Extension Articles, Presentations	Not required to produce a specific number of Extension articles or offer a set number of presentations per year.	Development of Extension articles and informal outreach presentations is the centerpiece of the work.
Research	Developing and maintaining a research program (e.g., grants, graduate students, publications) that is targeted to needs is critical.	Developing and maintaining a research program is not required. Grants are required only to support local initiatives that build on the existing work of county-based faculty.
Promotion and Tenure	Research productivity is critical to survive the promotion and tenure process. Some are hired with little or no Extension experience. Promotion and tenure is granted through an academic department. The promotion and tenure process generally requires demonstrated leadership at the state, regional and national level.	Outreach and informal teaching experience is the focus of field faculty work and is often a requirement for employment and promotion. Many new staff have little or no research interest or experience other than graduate research projects. Although the trend is to hire persons with advanced degrees, field faculty may be hired without such a degree. Field faculty do not generally have tenure. Promotion is granted through Extension. Promotion requires demonstrated leadership in informal education in one or a few counties.

Direction for Work	They have considerable freedom to select area(s) where they invest their time. They make those selections based on needs identified, personal interest, research agenda, expertise, funding, and collaborators.	They have considerable freedom to select area(s) where they invest their time. They make those selections based on needs identified, personal interest, local needs assessment, expertise, funding, and collaborators. General direction may come from the local Extension committee or board.
Work Focus, Scholarship	Generally more narrowly focused in their number of areas of expertise as compared to field faculty. However, they may have considerable in-depth, science-based, knowledge in that more limited area(s) of expertise.	Scholarly activity tends to be that of integration as defined by Boyer (1990).
Funding	Many educational programs are not Extension funded but are supported by third parties.	Costs of educational programs are paid in a variety of ways including county support for office and travel, county or state support for salaries, federal support for benefits, and grants for specific targeted projects.
Travel	Travel to state, regional, national, and international activities is important. Outside funding is important to augment limited travel budgets.	Travel budgets are often limited especially for out of county or target-area travel.
Teaching, Event Scheduling	On-campus teaching has a set schedule that may conflict with travel to the field during the academic year.	Teaching credit classes may not be permitted for some field faculty due to federal restrictions for use of funds.

## Making the Connection

### Field Faculty

Results from the 1999 telephone survey of field faculty (n=84) indicated, that for the majority of the discipline-based specializations, there was a healthy relationship between most field-based Extension educators and their respective campus faculty contacts (Hutchison & Hegland, 1999). Several field-based faculty also mentioned good working relationships with faculty at regional research and outreach centers in Minnesota

Of the three organizational features that support programming efforts at the county level, interaction with campus faculty ranked highest, followed by specialization support (i.e., discipline specialty group) and regional clusters (i.e., partnerships with nearby counties to pool educator resources). In response to an open-ended question, "What factor or resource in Extension best supports your work?," campus-based faculty and field-based Extension educator colleagues were mentioned equally as often. Other factors frequently mentioned included research-based information and specialization training, both of which also rely on campus faculty involvement.

### Campus Faculty

The survey of campus faculty provides additional insights into how successful campus-field faculty interactions can be developed and the following ideas about how to build a good working relationship with field faculty:

1. Respect for the ability and skills of field-based Extension educators,
2. Common goals build relationship,
3. Initiative to make and build the connection between campus and field faculty,
4. Mutual respect, and
5. Working on enterprises of mutual interest whose success depends on close professional relationships.

In response to, "What changes would improve the relationship with field faculty?," campus faculty suggested the following strategies:

1. Establish formal methods to link campus and field-based staff,
2. Create opportunities to mix, mingle, share, and discuss ideas, needs, research, and scheduling,
3. Improve communication linkages,
4. Provide a program-planning process that involves both campus and field faculty to address both crisis issues and to develop programs that address emerging needs,
5. Offer orientation for new faculty and re-orientation for existing faculty, especially on who to contact and where to make connections, and
6. Examine reward systems and institutional structure. There is a need for creating more formal ties through institutional change.

Additional focus groups and personal interviews with campus faculty provided several suggestions that field faculty can use to build successful one-time or long-term relationships with campus faculty:

1. Involve campus faculty early in most activities rather than calling them at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour so that they can place relevant dates on their calendar and provide input about the program, speakers, handouts, and budget. As most campus-based faculty do not have Extension appointments and outreach may be just one of their many responsibilities, be flexible when making a request.
2. Make initial contacts via e-mail, and then follow up through a phone call.
3. Have a specific role in mind when making the contact with a campus-based faculty member. Rather than ask, "I would like you to come speak at the upcoming XYZ meeting," provide some background about the meeting, audience, and other presentations, and ask "I would like you to speak about the topic ABC at upcoming meeting XYZ because your topic fits in the following ways."
4. Try to target inquiries. Most campus departments have Web pages that list faculty and their expertise. If you are unsure whom to contact, check the appropriate Web site or directory to make sure you are contacting the right person.
5. Recognize that travel support may be needed to get campus-based faculty off-campus.
6. Be willing to convene and facilitate local groups, pulling in campus expertise where needed. Recognize that it may be difficult to get campus faculty to travel to the field for multiple planning sessions. Serving as the link back to campus can be very helpful.
7. When on-campus, stop by appropriate campus units, and develop/maintain contacts with relevant campus faculty.
8. Remember that a campus faculty member with whom you have worked successfully in one area may be willing and able to help facilitate contacts in another.
9. Employ telephone conference calls as a convenient way for campus faculty to participate in planning committees.

10. When conducting a broad-based educational needs assessment, involve faculty from the relevant college(s) to help design the assessment so that all potential audiences that might be served by Extension are recognized.

## Discussion

Our results indicate that both campus faculty and field faculty will continue to benefit by working together. The roles for the two faculty groups are very complementary, and, by working together, they can create much stronger research and outreach programs. Successful working relationships can be formed and maintained by recognizing the many ways in which faculty are complementary while also being aware of each other's constraints.

Field faculty can be a significant link for campus faculty in identifying current and emerging research needs through their vast network of contacts and day-to-day association with on-the-ground clients. In addition to identifying the "needs," field faculty know who is most interested locally in the work being done (which can help with the process of identifying cooperators and potential sources of funding). They can also help make contacts that can provide input to campus faculty to steer the research direction to make sure that it meets local needs.

Field faculty can help facilitate local groups, which can be very difficult for campus faculty to do because of factors such as distance, time conflicts, and travel budget constraints. Keeping campus faculty member(s) informed and involved makes it easier for them to participate in those projects. In many cases, they could not participate otherwise.

A primary role of field faculty is to work in teams to provide educational leadership for programs that meet significant needs of youth and adults in communities. These field faculty work primarily with locally identified programs based on local needs. The success of these programs often depends on the involvement of campus faculty in providing research-based information, program design and delivery.

Whether the goal is to bring field needs to campus faculty or to seek local assistance for delivering campus programs, communication between the supervisors of campus and field faculty can help build field-campus faculty teams. This means that universities should include a connection between those supervisors. This is happening at the University of Minnesota through monthly meetings of Department Heads and Extension District Directors.

Recently, the Department Heads for Forest Resources and Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology suggested that field-based faculty should be experts in one or more subject areas related to their work (Ek & Perry, 2000). Building this depth of expertise will help field faculty increase opportunities for interaction with campus faculty. Further, Perry suggested that field faculty should seek out those campus faculty who are "synthetic." By synthetic, he meant faculty who have demonstrated scholarship ability or expressed interest in areas of integration and application (Boyer, 1990). This may make it easier to develop effective campus-field faculty teams.

In summary, regardless of a university's current organizational structure, improved campus and field faculty interaction can be achieved if all faculty:

- Are proactive in identifying common objectives,
- Take initiative in identifying mutually beneficial work, and
- Are diligent in creating a body of work that is recognized in both field and campus-based cultures.

Ultimately, the success of the collaborative effort will depend in large part on the degree to which there is a shared vision for the organization (Senge, 1990; Minarovic & Mueller, 2000). After all, "a shared vision is an organization's foresight that is bound together by a common purpose or goal," and "an organization's visioning process can slow down or stop if diverse views overcome the programming focus and cause conflict" (Minarovic & Mueller, 2000).

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