

idea corner

Integrating Extension, Research, and Instruction

Extension, research, and instruction are the three basic functions of a land-grant institution. Success in fulfilling these functions is greatly facilitated by close working relationships among Extension, resident instruction, and research faculty. Such relationships have been traditional for agriculture, but are less commonly found in home economics, due to various differences. But success is possible if all concerned are committed to the task. The recipients aren't only people located at the land-grant institutions, but also the county agents and their clientele.

A favorable administrative climate is necessary for effective interaction. Such a climate exists at the University

of Kentucky, where an integrated program has developed over several years and is currently in operation. Some intangible factors necessary for effective interaction are: professional equality of all faculty, proximity of housing, knowledgeable and supportive administrators, and professional determination/cooperation or "give-and-take" from all concerned.

It might be helpful to look at a few examples of interaction among us in teaching, research, and Extension in Kentucky.

- Most college committees include Extension faculty.
- The college recently received AHEA accreditation. Extension faculty are members of eight of the nine committees involved in preparing the self-study.
- Some graduate students in the college have done their thesis research in cooperation with the Extension program at the state and local level. County agents who study toward advanced degrees provide a strong linkage with research and teaching faculty. Specialists have cooperated with resident faculty in conducting applied research, resulting in relevant information and recommendations for a better quality of life in Kentucky.
- Resident teaching and research faculty frequently make technical presentations before Extension audiences. This brings research results one step closer to the consumer and helps the agent understand and interpret research. Joint authorship sometimes results.
- Extension specialists have presented papers at national and

international professional meetings.

Joint research possibilities involving Extension and resident faculty are unlimited. The Extension faculty have access to a population of homemakers, 4-Hers, paraprofessionals, and other groups that may provide more than adequate samples for "trials" or home/family based projects.

How many problems are there that need solutions among any clientele group? The list is endless, but each year the Kentucky Association of Extension Home Economists develops a brief list of suggestions for research and studies that's shared with administrators and resident faculty.

The ultimate payoff of joint research is that home economists, other professionals, and participating clientele begin to recognize that people in home economics units are concerned with finding valid solutions to real problems of individuals and families. Research becomes visible and viable.

Are there any problems because of joint or cooperative efforts to integration? Some problems could be: lack of communication, fiscal arrangements, space, and/or secretarial loads. All concerned discuss solutions that are acceptable to the majority and there are "trade-offs" that compensate for the lesser advantages of integrative efforts.

What are the benefits of integrating Extension, research, and instruction? Basically, the benefits of close cooperation accrue to the state, county agents, specialists, college, resident faculty, and land-grant institution. Support networks are established that benefit all of us.

Future efforts might include concentrated, visible activities that will help accomplish the purposes of

"new initiatives in home economics," involvement in legislation affecting all areas of home economics, and/or working with the various organizations related to all areas of home economics.

To summarize, integration of the Extension, research, and instruction functions can work effectively. Administrators can provide the incentives and support the total integration, but the results depend primarily on the state and county personnel involved. The

model that has evolved at the University of Kentucky works—and it's rewarding!

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