
PATHWAYS TO DIVERSITY REAFFIRMED

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INTRODUCTION

As the Pathways to Diversity Revisited Task Force began its work, nearly all states were experiencing major budget challenges. While some might suggest that cuts in state budgets make diversity more difficult to maintain as a priority, we propose that these are times when diversity is most critical to Extension.

A long-term commitment for working effectively with our changing populations must remain a top priority for Extension and is a key to increased state funding. In Texas, for example, the ethnic demography of Houston is now 58% minority and 42% white, making it among the most diverse of Extension audiences in the state. A successful Houston-based Extension leadership program targeting youth-at-risk attracted the interest and commitment of key state legislators. During a tight budget year in which most state agencies were cut by more than 12%, support by legislators in key positions from Houston saved Extension \$6.6 million in funding for the FY04-05 biennial budget.

Extension's responsibility to understand and meet the educational needs of our changing populations is an issue that requires a new set of understandings, commitments, and skills. The structure that brought us to where we are today may not be relevant for getting us to where we want to be in the future—a more vibrant Extension organization. We must build upon our traditional system by courageously committing ourselves to the opportunity that lies before us. We are a nation of changing faces, which not only includes racial and ethnic differences, but also physical and mental abilities, age, gender, sexual orientation, class, spiritual practices, and other human differences.¹

VISION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The ECOP *Vision for the 21st Century* report addresses the urgency to understand and adjust to rapid changes and emerging challenges. Diversity issues are fundamentally implicit in the five challenges outlined in the *21st Century* report. For example, to address the needs of the changing faces of America, the Cooperative Extension System (CES) must add new voices to its decision-making tables.

The seven-part test for engagement in the ECOP vision implies essential elements of diversity. For example, responsiveness implies that diverse perspectives are represented at the table, and that respect for new partners requires intercultural skills.² Recommendations for *Extension in the 21st Century* report come alive with diversity actions, such as marketing for a diverse workforce, rewarding diversity accomplishments, and building capacity for pluralism through education and support.

According to the *21st Century* report, the challenge for Extension is clear: "Extension leadership must prepare its administrators, faculty, and staff to value diversity and accept that change is necessary for the viability of the organization."³ The climate within the Extension System is ready to assertively move diversity actions forward—to

¹ *Pathway to Diversity* (1991), see definition of diversity at:
<http://natldiversity.extension.oregonstate.edu/definitions.htm>

² See definition of intercultural skills on Virtual National Extension Diversity Center:
http://natldiversity.extension.oregonstate.edu/staff_dev/index.htm

³ Extension Committee on Organization and Policy, *The Extension System: A Vision for the 21st Century*, February 2002, p.8.

recommit to Extension's Emphasis on Diversity that was initiated in 1990. Listening to new and previously unheard voices is essential to designing relevant educational programs. This will position the Extension System to thrive in our complex society.

Our Charge

*Pathway to Diversity*⁴, the Extension strategic plan for diversity, was issued more than a decade ago. Following the release of the report *The Extension System: A Vision for the 21st Century*, ECOP appointed a geographically and culturally diverse task force to review the progress that the Extension System has made on meeting the diversity goals outlined in the original *Pathway* document. The Task Force included members of the original *Pathway* group along with Extension professionals who are currently working in the area of diversity.

In a November 8, 2002, letter, Dr. Lyla Houglum, 2002 Chair of ECOP, outlined the Task Force's charge:

- Use the *Extension System: A Vision for the 21st Century* report for a framework.
- Review the *Pathway to Diversity* strategic plan.
- Assess the progress made by the Cooperative Extension System.
- Recommend to ECOP how best to address the diversity issues of the future.
- Complete our work in 6 to 12 months.

Our Process

The Task Force met twice in 2003 and began by making four assumptions:

- Diversity is necessary for CES to thrive in a complex world.
- Working together, CES can become an effective multicultural system.
- Pluralism can be realized with committed leadership.
- Intercultural competencies⁵ are critical to positive outcomes.

The Task Force then addressed the question: "What recommendations can this task force make to ECOP to address future diversity issues to make CES a high-performing organization?" Barriers that could prevent the vision from becoming a reality and strategic directions toward pluralism were identified. These freshly defined vision, barriers, and strategic directions were compared to the *21st Century Vision* document and the *Pathway to Diversity* strategic plan. This process led to the conclusion that the *Pathway* document is more relevant than ever and is validated by the *Vision for the 21st Century* report.

⁴ Read *Pathway to Diversity* (1991) online at:
<http://natldiversity.extension.oregonstate.edu/about/contribute.htm>

⁵ See description of intercultural competencies at:
http://natldiversity.extension.oregonstate.edu/staff_dev/index.htm

The Task Force conducted a general assessment of progress made since *Pathway* was issued more than a decade ago. Although individuals on the Task Force cited important efforts toward pluralism, overall there was a sense that a higher level of work and commitment are still needed. There are action items that if implemented, could have accelerated progress throughout the System.

The specific recommendations from the Task Force to ECOP follow. When fully implemented, our system will function as a relevant and effective multicultural organization.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

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ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS ON THE GOALS OF *PATHWAY TO DIVERSITY*

The Cooperative Extension System has no mechanism that assesses diversity outcomes and impacts. Without such a mechanism, there are insufficient data to assess the whole System. This lack of data highlights one way in which the assessment and monitoring of action strategies in the *Pathway to Diversity* strategic plan have not been implemented. Although there is a formal evaluation being conducted in seven Change Agent States for Diversity (CASD) states, most of the evidence within states to date has not been collected systemically and are not included in this assessment. Our recommendation section addresses this lack of systemic data collection.

This assessment is limited to what we do know. The extent to which the actions and strategies that were recommended in *Pathway to Diversity* have been implemented include:

1. Selected activities within the System (not impacts and outcomes)
2. Activities specific to the national level, i.e. ECOP, CSREES

Under each action we have identified selected examples of implementation activities. These lists are not meant to be inclusive.

Overall observations are:

- ◆ Significant activities relative to education and training were conducted.
- ◆ Policy-creation recommendations have not been implemented.
- ◆ More specific action strategies were less likely to be implemented.

What follows is a review of the six original *Pathway* goals with selected actions completed at the national level to meet each goal (no goal has been completely met).

GOAL #1: COMMITMENT TO PLURALISM

Action: Incorporate pluralism into the CES mission and vision statement and implement the diversity Strategic Plan.

- ◆ CSREES reorganized since *Pathway* was adopted. In their current mission and vision statements, while diversity is an expressed value, the direct link to pluralism is not acknowledged.
- ◆ ECOP has included “diversity and inclusion” in their values list.
- ◆ The Council on Diversity in Extension issued its first report, *Valuing Differences and Celebrating Diversity* (1991).
- ◆ The CES National Center for Diversity (NCFD) was founded in 1992 by Kentucky State University, University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension, and USDA-Extension System (supported by institutional assessments for three years, 1997-1999).
- ◆ A national train-the-trainer conference was held in Albuquerque (1992).

- ◆ The Council on Diversity in Extension issued its second report, *Commitment to Diversity and Pluralism* (1992).

Action: Communicate and demonstrate commitment and support and allocate resources for achieving and sustaining pluralism.

- ◆ Diversity was a goal within one CSREES plan of work cycle (1993-97)
- ◆ Some resource support exists for the work of SED, the National Diversity Award, and presentations at national conferences.
- ◆ Support exists for the Change Agent States for Diversity Project (Special Needs Grants, Fund for Rural America, 2001-05).
- ◆ No ongoing support has occurred in policy, human, and financial resource allocation.

Action: Establish a process for monitoring the effectiveness of the implementation of the Diversity Strategic Plan and adjust for needed changes.

- ◆ A process was not established.

Action: Maintain the mechanism for an external review by the Council on Diversity in Extension.

- ◆ ***No process was established to maintain the Council after two meetings (1991 and 1992).***

GOAL #2: ENVIRONMENT FOR DIVERSITY AND PLURALISM

Action: Identify and implement ways to create a physical, psychological, and emotional environment that fosters diversity and pluralism in the workplace and in programs.

- ◆ A diversity contact in each land grant institution was identified, but no System-wide monitoring occurred on the work done in states on creating environments and reducing and eliminating prejudice.
- ◆ An evaluation or monitoring system was not established.

Action: Provide training and staff development for CES administrators, managers, and staff at all levels to achieve and sustain diversity and pluralism in the workplace and in programs.

- ◆ National diversity symposia for state diversity contacts were conducted by NFCD (1994, 1995, 1997).
- ◆ CES National Center for Diversity conducts diversity training for Extension Directors and Administrators was conducted in three regions (S, NC, NE) (1995).
- ◆ Strategic Futures conducted a workshop for USDA-CSREES, "Preparing for the Future Workforce Challenges" including:
 - SED training for Extension Administrators and Directors, Corpus Christi, TX (1997)
 - SED presentation to ECOP, Asheville, NC (1997)

- ◆ NCFD conducted a Southern Region workshop, “Recruitment, Selection, and Retention of Diverse Staff” (1998).
- ◆ SED presented diversity sessions at professional meetings of national associations including Epsilon Sigma Phi and National Family & Consumer Sciences (1999).
- ◆ SED and CASD presented diversity workshops at Administrative Officers’ meetings (1999-2003).
- ◆ SED held the first-ever joint meeting with Urban Task Force (UTF) in Baltimore (2000).
- ◆ CSREES co-sponsored “Reaching Diverse Audiences,” a conference by the DC Region of Agricultural Communicators in Education (ACE), Washington, DC (2001).
- ◆ CASD conducted four 3-day regional workshops, “Strategic Leadership for Diversity,” for administrators in seven states (2003).
- ◆ CASD Update to Directors & Administrators on project outcomes and learnings – Ft. Lauderdale, FL (2003).
- ◆ CSREES hosted “Managing Diversity” training administrators and staff (six 2-day workshops, 2000-03).

Action: Implement personnel appraisal and reward systems for CES administrators, managers, and staff at all levels that enhance diversity and pluralism as an integral part of these appraisal and reward processes.

- ◆ ECOP-PODC and SED established the National Diversity Award (1991).
- ◆ CSREES Advisory Council was established (2000).
- ◆ CSREES Advisory Council Administrator’s Diversity Award was established (2000).

GOAL #3: WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Action: Develop policies and procedures to achieve and sustain the diversity of Extension’s work force.

- ◆ Policies were not developed.

Action: Develop national, state, and territory action plans to implement policies to achieve and sustain workforce diversity.

- ◆ PODC-SED subcommittee published a System profile assessment “Managing a Diverse Workforce in the Cooperative Extension System: Recruitment, Selection and Retention of a More Culturally Diversity Workforce” (1997).
- ◆ CASD conducted profile assessments in eight states (2001).
- ◆ Other recommendations related to this strategy were never implemented.

Action: Increase the diversity in CES administration at the highest levels.

- ◆ A process was never implemented to address managing diversity in this arena.

Action: Allocate resources to achieve and sustain diversity throughout the CES workforce.

- ◆ A strategy to allocate and support resource allocation was not developed.

GOAL #4: AUDIENCE AND PROGRAM DIVERSITY

Action: Develop appropriate technology, training, and implementation plans that will enhance diversity.

- ◆ The National Center for Diversity at Kentucky State was established (1992-1999).
- ◆ CSREES Diversity Web page was established (1999).
- ◆ CASD Web site was established (2001).
- ◆ Virtual Diversity Center was created (2002).

Action: Assess and strengthen EEO/AA programs to determine current and potential audience composition and the extent of barriers to their participation in programs, and develop strategies to improve audience diversity.

- ◆ An assessment and analysis were never conducted.

Action: Involve people from diverse audiences in the selection, design, development, and evaluation of Extension programs and initiatives.

- ◆ A long-term strategy was never designed or implemented.

Action: Reallocate existing funding and cultivate new funding sources to encourage and enhance diversity in programs and audiences.

- ◆ Funding resources were never identified or developed.

Action: Articulate CES' EMPHASIS ON DIVERSITY to stakeholders and clientele, including those who have traditionally provided support or received services.

- ◆ A strategy was never outlined and no efforts were systematically implemented.

GOAL #5: FULL AND INFLUENTIAL PARTICIPATION

Action: Appoint and fully involve members of diverse groups as leaders and members of decision and policy-making bodies, program development and advisory committees, and coalitions and networks of ES-USDA, ECOP, Extension regions, and the overall CES.

- ◆ No mechanisms exist to ensure full participation, internally or externally.
- ◆ The inherent strengths of the 1890 and 1994 institutions have bolstered the racial and ethnic diversity of Extension's overall participation rates. 1862's, as

predominately white institutions, have struggled to increase diverse representation on committees and in partnerships and as a result have fallen short in this arena.

Goal #6: EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS

Action: Assess allocation of resources and the administrative structure for partnership and cooperation.

- ◆ These systems were never systematically assessed and realignments never occurred.

Action: Develop cooperative programming between and among 1890 and 1862 institutions in states, territories, and the District of Columbia.

- ◆ SED submitted a proposal on equitable partnerships to PODC on recommended strategies (1994).
- ◆ An 1890 panel was hosted for SED and CASD members, resulting in creation of the document "Points of Influence and Strategies," Montgomery, AL (2001).
- ◆ A 1994 panel presentation was conducted for SED and CASD members, North Dakota (2002).
- ◆ A task force under the leadership of Dean Alton Thompson, North Carolina A&T, conducted the research study "Partnership Study Strengthening the Extension Partnership Among the 1862 Institutions, 1890 Institutions and CSREES" (2001-present).
- ◆ CASD: Supporting Equitable Partnership Model is an ongoing initiative in North Carolina (2001-present).
- ◆ SED-CASD Task Force on Equitable Partnership was established (2001-present).
- ◆ CSREES grant was made to 1890 presidents for funding to assess enhanced working relations between 1890s and CSREES (2003).

Recommendations to ECOP for Addressing Diversity ISSUES IN THE FUTURE

- Develop policy and administrative guidance to reaffirm strong support for *Pathways to Diversity Reaffirmed* and a System-wide commitment to pluralism, with understanding of its long-term significance.
- Encourage CSREES to allocate \$5 million in integrated programs for organizational change initiatives to enhance CES's competitiveness in a changing and complex demographic environment.
- Appoint a task force to develop models and strategies for recruiting, selecting, and retaining a diverse workforce and volunteer base (reference: *Managing a Diverse Workforce*, 1997).
- Advocate for national CES diversity and pluralism program leader(s) and shared faculty.
- Provide administrative guidance to enable CES staff to spend at least 10% of their time in training and professional development, of which 16 hours annually should be devoted to diversity and pluralism (reference *21st Century Vision* document).
- Collaborate with CSREES to include diversity reporting and accomplishments in their planning and accountability processes.

MOVING TO ACTION

In 1991, *Pathway to Diversity* was offered to the Cooperative Extension Service as a roadmap for moving a multifaceted organization toward pluralism. As a result of this task force's review, it is apparent that these goals are as valid today as when they were first proposed. The recommendations listed above are critical steps in continuing CES's journey toward organizational excellence.

An environment where diversity is valued and pursued is evidence of a commitment to pluralism. A workforce that reflects the multicultural realities of our communities will strengthen CES's effort to attract and retain staff and volunteers dedicated to Extension's mission. Programs and partnerships resulting from trusting relationships will flourish when we are engaged with others in a respectful and equitable manner

What follows is an updated roadmap in the form of a logic model that offers a guide to both the CES and states for achieving pluralism. The three goals outlined in the logic model are grounded in the original six goals of *Pathway*. These recommendations are the most current thinking of the *Pathways Reaffirmed* Task Force for leading the Cooperative Extension System toward excellence.