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To: All Extension Employees  
Partners and Stakeholders

From: Joe Zublena   
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Date: April 22, 2014

Subject: North Carolina Cooperative Extension Vision and Planning Initiative

It is a busy and exciting time for the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, with preparations coming together for our Centennial Celebration in May and progress continuing to be made on our Strategic Planning and Vision Initiative, to position us for another century of service and success. I'd like to discuss our progress on the latter with you now.

Work has been continuing at a tremendous pace. The Vision Team finished its work in February, fulfilling their charge by submitting recommendations to the Extension administration team ("L4") – Sheri, Tom, Mitzi and myself – for final decisions. The Administrative Team then met in March and again the week of April 14th to further review and refine a strategic plan/business model for Extension going forward. Both were productive and valuable meetings, and from those the team-crafted plans – which were built from data, from our listening sessions and researching a variety of other Extension models – we continue to set our direction.

### WHERE THINGS STAND

The finish line is near and our Vision Initiative goals are very much in reach. At this point, we are confident we will soon arrive at a comprehensive and strategic roadmap that will energize and optimize our organization. As we laid out last fall at the beginning of this journey, our goal is to have a strategic plan in place in late Spring 2014, and we're on pace to achieve that goal.

We understand that people are eager to learn if/how they will be impacted by forthcoming changes. When the plan is finalized, we'll share clear and concise details with all employees and partners in a timely manner – YOU will be the first to be informed.

I feel confident sharing with you now just a few early, overarching points. Notably, our objectives will be focused on relationships and service in our core program areas, and our commodity groups and county governments will certainly continue to be essential partners. Further, we will invest in bolstering employee satisfaction, improving career growth opportunities and providing updated tools/resources for our people to better serve our clients and partners. These themes and others will be described in detail in the final plan.

### WHAT'S NEXT

You can expect the final plan sometime during May or June 2014. In addition to specific goals and objectives, a timeline will include expected benchmarks for any changes or transitions. As you might predict with a plan this complex, some items will be take effect immediately, while for others there will be a staggered rollout. To clarify, at this time we anticipate that there will be minimal overnight changes with a smooth transition plan in place for any program areas that may experience change.

Our people are our strongest asset, and we know that some employees are concerned about job security and the impact this initiative may have on their lives and livelihoods. We appreciate the dedication of our employees to go above and beyond on a regular basis, and we are making every effort to minimize disruption to our employees while optimizing our organization for the future. We are considering the best interests of all involved.

We are prioritizing the programs North Carolina needs that we are best equipped to provide. This approach will help us to make changes and improvements to our organizational structure to effectively deliver those most critical educational programs.

### **HOW WE GOT HERE**

At its core, the Vision Initiative is a strategic planning effort aimed at optimizing our business model for long-term success and sustainability. This effort is both reactive and proactive, but overall a positive and timely opportunity for us to refocus on our mission and the core strengths of our organization to identify what we can do best.

As any "smart" organization would, we are seizing a chance to be proactive in addressing the long-term needs of North Carolina. Extension is turning 100 years old next month and it's an ideal time not only to celebrate our successes, but also to review and optimize our business model for the future.

### **SUMMARY OF PROGRESS**

- An employees listening session was held at our Annual Extension Conference in Raleigh last November, where ~600 employees made their voices heard.
- Listening Sessions (14) were held across the state during a six-week period with nearly 2,000 participants.
- Our Visioning Team, made up of Extension employees, county government partners and volunteer leaders, convened four times to assist in crafting a plan.
- The Extension leadership team has met with county governments, commodity groups, community organizations and others to discuss the future of our organization.
- A county government survey was created to identify county commissioner and manager expectations and needs for Extension services going forward.

As always, keep up to date about this initiative on our dedicated website: [www.ces.ncsu.edu/vision-initiative](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/vision-initiative).

We've made significant strides since this initiative was launched last September, and although work remains to be done, I'd like to personally thank everyone that has helped us get to this point with their time, dedication and vision.

With our gratitude,

Joe, Mitzi, Sheri and Tom

c: NCSU Administration  
CALs Faculty & Staff  
External Stakeholders