



## Strategic Vision & Planning Initiative 2013-2014

### A Timeline of Progress

### "Creating the Extension of the Future"

#### 2000 - Present

Roughly \$20 million in permanent federal and state budget cuts to the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service, impacting the loss of ~90 positions through attrition in the past four years.

#### Sept.-Oct. 2013

Dr. Joe Zublena, N.C. Cooperative Extension Service director, announces launch of reorganization effort and initiative website.

[www.ces.ncsu.edu/vision-initiative](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/vision-initiative)

#### November 4-6, 2013



Extension renewed the tradition of an annual state conference, holding an initiative listening session with 600+ employees.

#### Nov.-Dec. 2013

More than 2,000 people participate in a series of 14 public listening sessions across the state. These meetings explained our current strategic planning situation and gathered input from key stakeholders to help us move forward.

#### Oct. 2013 - Feb. 2014

The Visioning Committee - an appointed team of ~50 employees, county government and community partners - reviewed stakeholder feedback, synthesized plans and presented recommendations to Extension leadership.

#### May / Spring 2014

Extension celebrates the 100th anniversary of the Smith-Lever Act in May. Finalize plans to facilitate success and sustainability.



## Questions & Answers

As with any major planning and reorganization process, communication and transparency are keys to success. People will have questions about the status and impacts of the planning initiative - that's only natural. Although we're not yet in a position to share tangible change (there are no final plans to report), we want to address some common questions to alleviate any concerns and issues.

The N.C. Cooperative Extension Service is, has been, and always will be an organization that exists to empower people and change lives. We provide citizens across the state with knowledge and solutions to help strengthen families and communities.

Our strongest asset is our people and the relationships they forge and maintain. Those priorities will never change. We're excited and energized by the opportunities that lie ahead in our next century - positive change is on the horizon.



**Extension's stakeholders spoke, and we listened. Our top priority is to continue providing North Carolinians with the resources, relationships and services they need. Now we must align our core programs and resources with economic realities.**

#### What is the "vision initiative"?

The initiative is a strategic planning effort aimed at optimizing our business model for long-term success and sustainability. We're asking ourselves questions like, "Who are we?," "Who do we need to be?," and "How can we best operate in today's dynamic business and cultural environment?" In doing so, we will better position ourselves for long-term success and sustainability.

#### Why is Extension reorganizing?

This effort is both reactive and proactive, but overall a positive opportunity. It's *reactive* to our economic realities, like permanent budget cuts of \$20M since 2000, which have greatly impacted our operations. Our business model is no longer sustainable.

We're also seizing a chance to be *proactive* in addressing the long-term needs of North Carolinians. We're refocusing on the core strengths of our organization and identifying what we can do best given the circumstances. It's a "system update."

#### What are the goals/objectives of this effort?

1. Focus our efforts on our most competitive and needed programs.
2. Strengthen our impacts toward the state and the counties.
3. Establish a financial buffer (not a reserve account) to reduce major impacts of future cuts.
4. Develop a staffing model that aligns to our new financial realities and provides competitive salaries and a better quality of life for our employees.

# A New Promise for a New Century

## What kind of changes are taking place?

No final decisions regarding changes have been made yet. We will place emphasis on our county government relationships, as our success has largely resulted from those partnerships over the years. Attention will be given to identifying our program areas of most impact and focusing our resources to strengthen those core services for North Carolinians.

## When will the final plan be ready/shared?

This initiative is a work in progress with a final plan scheduled for the spring of 2014. Any plan will involve a staggered roll-out of changes (it won't be an overnight adjustment). Internal stakeholders will be notified before any public announcements, and a timeline for implementation will be made public.

## How is Extension determining its plans for the future?

From start to finish, the vision initiative operates based on the principles of open-mindedness, transparency and transformation. With that as our foundation, the organization has taken a series of steps to compile and synthesize input from key stakeholders, including holding 14 public listening sessions with over 2,000 people across the state,

collecting more than 160 online comments, conducting meetings with partner groups and facilitating an ongoing dialogue to leave no opportunity unexplored and no road untraveled in our quest for ideal solutions. Extension charged a group of ~50 employees, county government and community partners - the "Visioning Committee" - with being trustees of our future. This team has been tasked to help formulate a prioritization plan, which includes reviewing the aforementioned feedback, analyzing our situation, and presenting recommendations to leadership, which will ultimately make the final decision going forward.

## How will these changes impact programs and people across the state?

With no final plan yet, it's still safe to say that changes should support the recent strategic planning initiative finalized by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) at N.C. State University. The plan will optimize our organization, strengthen our relationships and position our people to provide North Carolinians with an unparalleled level of service, expertise and attention. The N.C. Cooperative Extension Service embraces the opportunity to improve and will emerge as dedicated, passionate and valuable as ever.



**"Because of 4-H, I always knew that I was destined to succeed."** ~ **Curtis Crump** (Anson County, scholarship student in business administration at East Carolina University)

Extension will continue to be there for our employees, county government and community partners throughout North Carolina. Our focus is on the future, and it looks bright.

## A Journey We Must Make Together..



"This initiative comes at a critical time for the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service. We'll soon be celebrating our 100th anniversary and many years of success because of the great people we have. However, we're also facing some significant financial challenges that are impacting our organization.

I firmly believe that Extension is needed today as much as it ever was. I also believe that we must implement change to ensure the organization we built over a century will continue to provide unparalleled public service during the next 100 years.

I'm proud to be a leader in this process. It's an obligation I feel I owe to an organization I love, for the people I believe in, and to a tradition that I want to see succeed for the next 100 years.

Thank you for your continued patience and dedication throughout this process. We'll continue to update you and provide open channels for two-way communication - we greatly value your feedback - as we position the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service for another century of success working with the fine people of North Carolina."

~ Dr. Joe Zublena, Associate Dean, CALS and Director, N.C. Cooperative Extension Service

## Extension Leadership

**Tom Melton** — Deputy Director, N.C. Cooperative Extension Service (NCCES) and Agriculture and Natural Resources Program Leader

**Sheri Schwab** — Associate Director, NCCES and Director of County Operations

**Mitzi Stumpf-Downing** — Assistant Director, NCCES and Interim State Program Leader 4-H & FCS

**Joe Zublena** — Director, NCCES and Associate Dean, CALS

## Media Contact

Justin Moore, Extension Communications  
704-785-1851 ~ [justin\\_moore@ncsu.edu](mailto:justin_moore@ncsu.edu)  
[www.ces.ncsu.edu/vision-initiative](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/vision-initiative)

