Administrative Response to the *Advance: 2011 Leadership Summit*

The *Advance: 2011 Leadership Summit* for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach was no ordinary annual conference. It was a “summit”—an essential step in transforming ISU Extension and Outreach, laying the foundation for more deliberate decision-making, effective program implementation, and coordinated, planned action across the organization.¹

During the summit, we gathered a lot of information about what needed to happen next. Clear themes emerged, and while not all represented new ideas or issues, they pointed out gaps in our structure, processes, or resources that were hampering our ability to be more effective. It was apparent that we needed to address our ad hoc style of operating as well as the uncertainty expressed by ISU Extension and Outreach faculty and staff on campus and throughout the state regarding the basic principles and values of our organization. We also needed to address concerns raised by the internal audit of ISU Extension and Outreach conducted by the Board of Regents, State of Iowa. As a result, we were faced with two major tasks:

1. Determine the Administrative Response to issues raised at the summit.
2. Update and finalize the ISU Extension and Outreach Strategic Plan.

This Administrative Response outlines the immediate steps ISU Extension and Outreach will take to move forward on our summit outcomes. We gathered all the actions identified at the summit, and as we organized them, it became clear that we also needed to address how we work as well as what we do, so we can more effectively engage additional citizens and create increased impact through both existing and new programs.

**Understanding Our Assumptions**

For ISU Extension and Outreach to be a good steward of the public trust and taxpayers’ dollars, we assume the following statements to be true:

- Partnerships with counties, campus units, and other organizations must be based on meaningful, shared priorities and resources.
- Our educational programs
  - must be appropriate within the scope of the ISU Extension and Outreach educational mission, and provide knowledge, instruction, or information; and
  - must be based strongly in research evidence, and/or be connected to ongoing research at Iowa State University.
- A combination of faculty and a network of program specialists must lead programs and adapt statewide initiatives to local contexts.
- Programs should be evidence-based and/or actively under assessment, and programs must include ongoing documentation of outcomes, impacts, and program quality.
- Our educational programs must align the needs of Iowans with federal, land-grant system, and college and university priorities.
- By virtue of state and federal support for our system, we must provide statewide, equitable access for priority content and audiences through a variety of methods.

¹ The Executive Summary and Full Report will be available at [http://www.extension.iastate.edu/content/planning-documents](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/content/planning-documents).
Acting on Our Fundamental Principles

During the summit, we agreed to the following fundamental principles. From now on, these principles will guide our decisions, structure, behavior, and priorities.

- **Our core purpose** is to engage citizens through research-based educational programs. We extend the resources of Iowa State University across our state.
- We accomplish our goals by developing **diverse and meaningful partnerships**.
- Through our purpose and partnerships, we provide relevant, needs-driven resources, and as a result, we create **significant impact** in the state of Iowa.

As a result of these fundamental principles, we agreed to

- invest in meaningful partnerships,
- refine a system to collectively identify emerging and current needs,
- develop and support a structure to sustain professional development, and
- develop and support systems to improve internal communications, coordination, and collaboration.

In the weeks following the summit, senior leadership organized the action steps recommended at the summit for each of the above items, reviewed the audit plan to ensure coverage, and checked alignment with the university strategic plan. We also identified the functional unit responsible for leading the action and the high-level tasks to be accomplished. We then aggregated the related action items and determined priorities.

Drawing Conclusions

From input gathered at the summit, through multiple conversations with members of our system, and through our internal audit process, it is apparent ISU Extension and Outreach needs clear ways of working together to get things done. To address this issue, ISU Extension and Outreach Administration will take the following actions:

I. We will streamline ISU Extension and Outreach Administration into functional units responsible for the key actions identified.

II. We will complete our Business Plan to articulate and document our standard operating procedures, particularly around budget planning, effective systems for collaboration across our system, and policy management.

III. We will update and finalize the ISU Extension and Outreach Strategic Plan.

Streamlining ISU Extension and Outreach Administration

We are streamlining ISU Extension and Outreach Administration into functional units for Program Leadership, County Services and Outreach, Operations, and Organizational Advancement. This is a process that will take time, but we are on our way. The following teams already have begun developing plans to carry out the actions identified either during the summit or during the internal audit.

**Program Leadership Team:** Program directors, program specialists, and program support; John Lawrence will serve as temporary lead.

**Actions for the Program Leadership Team Identified by Summit Participants**

- Clarify and lead a system-wide program development process, including a system to identify emerging and current needs.
- Focus citizens’ advisory efforts at the programmatic level.
• Create guidelines and criteria for successful program partnerships.
• Strengthen connections to campus units and departments to enhance the outreach function of ISU colleges.
• Increase cross-program interaction and coordination.
• Improve connections between researchers and ISU Extension and Outreach faculty and staff.
• Create and implement a professional development plan for ISU and county personnel on content and research associated with ISU Extension and Outreach educational programs.
• Identify and monitor the impacts and quality of programs.

**County Services and Outreach Team:** Regional directors, county support information technology, county human resources, and county finance; Sherry Glenn will move into leadership as Assistant Vice President.

*Actions for the County Services and Outreach Team Identified by Summit Participants*
• Coordinate program implementation across the state and at the local level.
• Target and implement new partnerships to diversify our program portfolio.
• Provide support to strengthen the capacity of extension councils (human resources, finance, etc.) and simplify operations to enhance council engagement.
• Provide support for councils as they develop regional partnerships.
• Provide ongoing professional development for councils and county staff.

**Operations Team:** Finance, human resources, information technology, and operations; Ron Cox will serve as Interim Assistant Vice President.

*Actions for the Operations Team Identified by Summit Participants and the Internal Audit*
• Enhance system capacity through appropriate use of technology.
• Become sustainable within the university’s resource management model.
• Oversee audit completion, assign tasks to appropriate staff, and ensure implementation of recommendations.
• Assist in implementation of priorities identified in the Summit Report, specifically those related to reorganization of the administrative unit and efficient systems.
• Finalize and implement components of the business plan, specifically those related to finance, information technology, and human resources.

**Organizational Advancement Team:** External relations, professional development, philanthropic development, and marketing; for now, this team will report directly to the Vice President for Extension and Outreach.

*Actions for the Organizational Advancement Team Identified by Summit Participants*
• Create general information on ISU Extension and Outreach for potential partners, stakeholders, and others.
• Target and implement new partnerships to diversify our program portfolio.
• Recognize partners and partnership successes.
• Create and implement a professional development plan for ISU Extension and Outreach education processes.
• Provide new staff orientation and mentoring.
• Create an effective plan for ongoing development activity within ISU Extension and Outreach, including coordination of various entities involved in fundraising.
What You Can Expect Next

As we streamline administration, our next steps center on finalizing and implementing a business plan to focus on our short-term operational changes. This will include many of the suggestions that surfaced in the summit. Following this, we will finalize the ISU Extension and Outreach Strategic Plan to reflect our shared vision of the longer-term future. In the next few months, you can expect actions and initiatives to support the issues identified at the summit, but we will need engagement from across our system to be fully effective. For example, we need individuals from across our system to serve on committees, to submit ideas, and to help develop creative future directions. When all is said and done, we conducted the Advance 2011 Leadership Summit for three reasons.

First, in ISU Extension and Outreach, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Participative management is based on the belief that when more people participate, a synergistic effect increases the possibility of better decisions.

Second, people have a right to be involved in making decisions that affect their lives. Research supports the proposition that when people are given the opportunity to participate in making decisions that affect them, they experience greater job satisfaction and higher morale.

Third, people involved in making decisions have a greater stake in carrying out those decisions than do individuals who are not involved. How decisions are made can have a more lasting impact on people's attitudes about work than the actual decision itself.

The summit and this response are not a conclusion and solution for ISU Extension and Outreach. But they move us forward on our path to becoming a more relevant, vibrant organization, with a common mission and common principles. No matter what any individual's role is within ISU Extension and Outreach, we are all one team. Remember why we are here:

  Through Extension and Outreach, Iowa State University engages citizens, community leaders, business leaders, and others, which allows us to anticipate emerging issues and trends;

  Through Extension and Outreach, Iowa State University acts in catalytic ways, creating educational opportunities and building relationships throughout the state; and

  Through Extension and Outreach, Iowa State University is embedded in communities across Iowa and able to stay for the long haul.

See you there.

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