

**Report of the University of Alaska Cooperative Extension Service (CES) Vision Task
Group for the Vice-Chancellor for Rural, Community and Native Education
on Recommendations to the Chancellor for Improving Cooperative Extension Service
April 5, 2007**

Executive Summary

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service serves the people of Alaska, as it has for over 75 years. It is built on a foundation that reflects the changing needs of the people and economy of Alaska, and for that reason is well-positioned to be a model for the evolving mission of outreach nationally.

The CES Vision Task Group is pleased to present this response to Chancellor Jones' charge of January 9, 2007. We believe the request is timely, given the current national discussion of the role of extension. We recommend four important steps and supporting actions that we believe will enable UAF, through CES, to continue to serve Alaskans and demonstrate UAF's understanding and full appreciation of the redefined mission of American land-grant universities:

- Recommendation One: Create a cabinet level position of Vice Chancellor;
- Recommendation Two: Place Cooperative Extension Service under the newly created Vice Chancellor position;
- Recommendation Three: Integrate CES with research, teaching and outreach to foster a collaborative environment at UAF;
- Recommendation Four: Enhance the CES approach as a gateway between the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the people of Alaska.

Background:

The CES Vision Task Group recommendations address the appropriate placement of CES in the administrative structure of UAF, the strength and breadth of UAF's internal and external (UA and the larger Alaskan community) transfer of knowledge and technology, and enhancement of reciprocal communication between CES and its constituents. The context of these recommendations considers the UA 2009 and UAF 2010 strategic plans. Additional reference documents included discussion of the College of Rural and Community Development strategic planning documents and the compact plan for CES.

These recommendations respond to the charge UAF Chancellor Jones has given to the CES Vision task group:

- A high profile for CES within and outside UAF;
- Aggressive engagement in entrepreneurial initiatives with industry and strategic partners – in addition to those with traditional programmatic ties;
- CES as a driver of strategic initiatives central to UAF's mission and reflecting national trends that are refined to an Alaskan setting;

- A strategic mechanism for program development with agencies that share similar UAF mission-critical initiatives.
- Solidification of CES's position as an important component of a modern research university, emphasizing scholarship, research, and essential linkage to academic units, other outreach units, and the full set of UAF's distributed dimensions.
- Structural and organizational modifications to implement the CES Task Group's recommendations.

Nationally, CES has been the outreach component of the tripartite mission of the land-grant schools, universities, and colleges since the early 1900s. Then, CES agents and specialists communicated with clients and communities and transferred knowledge and technology relevant to agriculture, the dominant industry in the United States.

Today, U.S. industry is characterized by service and technology. Land-grant universities are engaged in outreach activities not necessarily associated with CES. Other UAF outreach efforts extend to K-12 education and life-long learning in the adult community. These intensive efforts to increase the quality of education and scholarship in Alaska's Native communities, non-Native rural communities, and urban centers are admirable but lack overall organization and coordination by the university.

CES itself is engaged in activities that reflect the movement of the U.S. economy away from its agrarian roots and toward urban economic development, health and nutrition, family cohesiveness, and positive youth development. Service and outreach, as practiced in CES and other outreach programs, is not perceived by UAF faculty and administrators to be equal to the teaching and research missions at UAF. Yet, in the UAF Strategic Plan 2010, outreach and community engagement are major themes.

It is essential that UAF realizes the need to focus its outreach activities, CES recognized among them, and interpret these activities with the more inclusive term "engagement" as stated by J.V. Byrne, January 2006, in *Public Higher Education Reform Five Years After The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land Grant Universities*:

Engagement goes well beyond extension, conventional outreach, and even most conceptions of public service. Inherited concepts emphasize a one-way process in which the university transfers its expertise to key constituents. Embedded in the engagement ideal is a commitment to sharing and reciprocity. By engagement the Commission envisioned partnerships, two-way streets defined by mutual respect among the partners for what each brings to the table.

Recommendation One:

Create a cabinet level position of Vice Chancellor.

The Vice Chancellor position would provide CES with a higher profile at UAF, as directed in the charge. Examples of titles could be Vice Chancellor of Outreach and Engagement, Outreach and Extension, or simply Outreach. This will foster a two-way interaction between Alaskans and the university. This organizational change will elevate CES to parity with research and teaching to realize the land grant mission of UAF and the statewide vision of the university to serve Alaska and the nation. This single change, and the activities of this individual, would result in:

- Strengthened, consistent, high-profile community engagement practices;
- Accountability in UAF's commitment to the land, sea and space grant missions at the highest level of the UA system;
- Improved coordination of outreach and engagement activities at UAF;
- Integrated outreach and engagement with research and education.

The CES Vision Task Group recognizes that CES is only one aspect of outreach at UAF. The time-tested techniques used by CES to engage their clients and communities could be useful in creating an array of best practices for UAF outreach efforts.

Three vice-chancellor positions would reflect appropriately the tripartite nature of UAF's land grant mission. Creation of such a position would require renaming other vice chancellor position(s) to reflect an expanded and encompassing definition of the term "engagement."

Recommendation Two:

Place Cooperative Extension Service under the newly created Vice Chancellor position.

In line with the first recommendation, the CES Vision Task Group also recommends having CES report directly to the new Vice Chancellor responsible for outreach at UAF. This will remove CES from the College of Rural and Community Development. CES works with researchers and educators in many schools and colleges within UAF. Given the existing difficulty in being recognized for its outreach and service, placement in one college or school impedes efforts in other areas outlined in this document. By federal law, CES must have a director. The Vice Chancellor may also hold the title of Director of Cooperative Extension or a Director of CES could be hired, reporting to the VC.

Recommendation Three:

Integrate CES with research, teaching and outreach to foster a collaborative environment at UAF.

These actions would result in the following enhancements for CES and outreach and engagement at UAF:

- Effective strategic marketing of outreach activities;
- Better articulation of the vision, model and mission to foster understanding;
- New system-wide appreciation of the value and potential of CES and UAF outreach;
- Increased fiscal sustainability through partnerships and collaborations;
- Better external relations program that clearly identifies priorities for communities
- Enhanced stakeholder review, advisory council participation and stronger partners;
- Improved communication processes more aligned with UA/UAF strategic goals.

This recommendation is tied to Recommendation One in that it would be the responsibility of the Vice-Chancellor to carry out the following in concert with appropriate university departments.

The development of a strong internal/external relations plan is the first step. The recommendation emphasizes the need to clearly identify specific internal and external UA partners and create communication goals for each, including measurable objectives and aggressive funding opportunities. An example would be administration working with faculty on collaborative grants and partnerships, resulting in additional funding or expanding programs such as the Partners for Progress in Delta.

Communication needs are an essential part of fostering an environment where CES and collaborative partnerships flourish. Concurrently, the Task Group recommends that broader university communication efforts consider UA communication goals and work in partnership with the CES communications office on objectives, strategies and tactics designed to increase organizational support. Success stories will illustrate the CES model and its connection to UAF's tripartite mission, show benefits to the state (i.e., knowledge transfer and the gateway concept), and support participation of all faculty in outreach activities through increased awareness of the programs and activities that complement research and teaching in other units.

Using the traditional definition of marketing as exchanging something of value, the recommendation ensures consistency in marketing and promotion between CES and UAF marketing and communication efforts. These activities should support opportunities where appropriate to recoup costs of programs and publications.

Recommendation Four:

Enhance the CES approach of providing a gateway between the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the people of Alaska.

- Increased use of faculty community assessments to meet the needs of Alaskans and to develop opportunities related to strategic goals of the university;
- Stronger alliances between CES faculty and other UAF faculty will be strengthened, providing broader resources in addressing community issues;
- More recognition of CES as a resource for Alaskans;
- Wider understanding of how engagement with CES faculty and staff can lead to the next step at UAF;
- Better communication of community needs back to appropriate UAF disciplines.

Dynamic collaboration between CES and academic disciplines will facilitate community problem-solving and establish linkages to address community-identified problems. These linkages may be in the form of joint appointments, temporary alliances, collaborative research proposals or projects, facilitated service activities among faculty or other means. The Vice Chancellor will exemplify dynamic collaboration through interaction with other cabinet members and deans or directors.

CES faculty embody a unique ability to anticipate and respond rapidly to community priorities through non-formal education, such as workshops and seminars connected to climate change and energy alternatives, which facilitate life-long learning. For many, this is the first successful experience within a collegiate environment. The Vice-Chancellor will facilitate reciprocity between CES and statewide university activities.

Constituents will use this “gateway” to access educational possibilities offered through the university. CES will be clearly identified as a UAF-based program serving a statewide mission and audience. As such, CES faculty will have the basic knowledge to provide community members with the “next step” to the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

CES faculty will seek opportunities and be encouraged to participate in research plans, strategic plans, and academic plans that allow the needs of communities and constituencies to be expressed in university plans as well as research, teaching, and service priorities. University faculty will be expected to look to CES as a resource for engaging local communities.

Respectfully submitted by the members of the CES Vision Task Group: