

MAY 2019

LEADING EDGE DIALOGUE SERIES

NATIONAL URBAN EXTENSION CONFERENCE



AUTHORS

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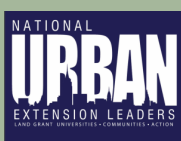
Lou Swanson, PhD

Kevan Moffett, PhD

ABOUT THE LEADING EDGE DIALOGUE WHITE PAPER SERIES

Leading Edge Dialogues (LED's) were six 90-minute interactive workshops held during the 2019 National Urban Extension Conference which explored critical issues facing our cities and our universities. Each LED consisted of a multi-sector panel presentation followed by a facilitated group discussion with all attendees. This paper captures both the presentations and the innovative discussion that followed for one of the LED's. Papers have been written for each of the LED's which focused on the following topics: Density, Youth Engagement, Preparing the Extension Workforce, Data and Policy, Fulfilling the Land Grant University Mission, and Smart Cities.

PRESENTED BY



FULLFILLING THE LAND GRANT UNIVERSITY MISSION: EXTENSION AND COMMUNITY-BASED APPLIED RESEARCH

THE ISSUE

For over a century, Extension has served limited-resource communities through targeted programs. This LED focused on advancing that mission through the lens of the land-grant university (LGU). The Cooperative Extension Service, or simply Extension, is a unique and distinguishing characteristic of the LGU, an understanding that frames this entire paper.

Major themes of the discussion included: recognizing Extension's emerging role-shift into inter- and multi-disciplinary work across the university system; establishing Extension as a co-creative partner with other public institutions in the work of community development and applied research; and exploring methodologies to advance workforce development and urban-rural interdependencies through programming.

New Collaborative Opportunities for Extension

Extension excels in building collaborative partnerships with other groups and organizations. It's not surprising that panelists described this capacity as emerging within LGU's themselves, as Extension increasingly shifts into an inter- and multi-disciplinary role across various university systems. This transformation offers impressive opportunities to serve more communities in diverse ways, utilizing multiple disciplines to serve their complex needs.

Panelists emphasized that establishing Extension as a **co-creator** with non-LGU public universities and other organizations, such as NGO's and city governments who also engage in community development and applied research, should be a priority. In doing so, Extension also adds value to programs developed by others, adding to the significance of their university's engagement portfolios.

FULFILLING THE LAND GRANT

PANELISTS

Dr. Ivory W. Lyles is the Director of University of Nevada Cooperative Extension and Associate Dean for Engagement in the College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources. He leverages the full range of expertise within University of Nevada, Reno and all Nevada System of Higher Education institutions and collaborates with community partners to address the needs and challenges of citizens throughout Nevada.

Dr. Mark Latimore, Jr. is a 30-year educator. He is the Extension Administrator and Director of Land-Grant Affairs at Fort Valley State University. He has also served as Interim Dean of the College of Agriculture, Family Science and Technology, head of the Department of Agricultural Instruction, as well as a professor and Extension Specialist in plant and environmental soil sciences

THE ISSUE CONT'D

Expanding such co-creative collaborations, presenters stressed, has required Extension to reconceptualize their idea of "work," noting that an "expert-driven" approach results in a very top-down style, unsuitable for building local community relationships and knowledge. An "expertise-driven" approach is much more appropriate for such tasks, allowing indigenous and community knowledge to be considered side by side with university research-generated knowledge, without diminishing the value of either.

Finally, presenters stated that urban Extension is the future of the Cooperative Extension System. However, to successfully navigate the complex systems integral to work in cities, Extension professionals must cultivate a qualitatively new understanding of the lived experience of urban communities. To that end, panelists strongly advocated a need to actively educate Extension personnel about urban environments, their issues and needs, and how to address those through imaginative and innovative means.

Workforce Development

Workforce development is key to the economic and social development of both urban and rural areas, and Extension can benefit both through carefully designed programming.

Panelists suggested several approaches that Extension could utilize to advance community wellbeing and workforce development, among them the opportunities to:

- Enhance communication skills, specifically through vocational based English Language Learner programs.
- Promote education in STEM and the development of professional or "soft skills".
- Aid communities in building the leadership potential of youth and adults.
- Utilize urban-rural interdependencies to improve connections between them, and advance community resources of both. For example, how technology tools can advance agricultural production across urban and rural settings.

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Workforce Development (cont'd)

Extension offers much to both urban and rural communities, especially the well-proven ability of Extension professionals to listen to community needs, work with diverse groups, and develop programming that is culturally responsive, educationally appropriate, and geographically sensitive. Such proficiency will serve Extension well as it moves forward into a future bright with promise and at the same time unquestionably complex in its demands.

GENERATING AND DELIBERATING

The Many Uses of Applied Research

In this session, participants' discussion focused on actionable measures that Extension could utilize to advance applied research in their work. Attendees also examined the need for new funding mechanisms, and how to create or discover them.

Participants considered applied research as a clear driver to move Extension forward in building collaborative relationships both within and outside the university setting. The issue was how to strengthen Extension inside the structure and culture of the academy in ways which could then advance Extension's service-oriented goals. Mechanisms to achieve this integration of applied research into traditional work within the university revolved around the role of campus faculty, students and policy with respect to Extension, such as including applied research in faculty expectations, promotion procedures, tenure standards, and student research options.

Participants also emphasized the importance of cross-university connections with relevant departments that might foster applied research in multiple projects, demonstrating the ways in which unique Extension capabilities could be shared across a university system. Lastly, attendees supported a vision of building partnerships with other community-oriented organizations, both local and regional, where Extension gathers data and offers analytical assessments to serve the needs of their associates, thus offering win-wins on multiple fronts.

PANELISTS CONT'D

Dr. Kevan B. Moffett is a hydrologist interested in the heterogeneous, non-linear, and dynamic coupling of physical and biological flow and transport pathways in the hydrological cycle. She applies these interests to study surface water-groundwater interactions, evapotranspiration and land-atmosphere interactions, and the hydrological and ecological exogenous- or self-organization of critical ecosystems concurrently subject to substantial disturbance, notably: wetlands, fire-prone western forests, and cities.

Dr. Lou Swanson retired in September 2019. Immediately prior to retirement, he served as Vice President of Engagement (2006 – 2019) at Colorado State University and Director of CSU Extension (2010 – 2019). He is a professional rural sociologist with research foci on US agriculture and rural public policy as well as on the changing structure of US agriculture and rural communities.

FULFILLING THE LAND GRANT



"An 'expertise-driven' approach is much more appropriate for such tasks, allowing indigenous and community knowledge to be considered side by side with university research-generated knowledge, without diminishing the value of either."

"Extension has, hands down, the most grassroots programs and partnerships in local communities and counties around the country."

"The future of Extension is urban and needs to become university-wide."

GENERATING AND DELIBERATING (CONT'D)

Funding Solutions

There was strong agreement in this session that new funding mechanisms were required if Extension wants to achieve the objectives listed above. To that end, all agreed that there is a strong need to “think outside the box” in this matter, and that Extension has to proactively seek solutions in order to move forward.

Participants considered the Western Center for Metropolitan Extension and Research (WCMER) as a possible model of innovative engagement, and desired to learn more of its methods. The WCMER specializes in applied research and engaged programming on a project basis, charging clients for their work on a full-cost recovery basis. Such an approach offers a diverse array of tools and an exemplar that other Extension offices could emulate.

While there were many significant suggestions and conversations in this session, one conclusion in particular stood out: **Extension needs to foster innovation and calculated risk-taking** on all these issues, whether it is integrating Extension across the university system, or advancing and supporting applied research as an important tool to further engaged programming, or actively seeking new funding mechanisms to foster Extension goals in the urban realm. Extension’s capacity and capabilities to achieve the future envisioned in this session are not in question if Extension professionals are committed to the work required.

ACTION

The discussion generated a list of potential actions to advance the Extension mission in changing times. Many ideas considered the role of campus faculty and students:

- Include applied research categories in faculty expectations.
- Incentivize tenured faculty to conduct applied research to increase promotion potential.
- Support Extension representation on university tenure committees.

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ACTION (CONT'D)

- Replicate a Provost Council of Engagement similar to that at Colorado State University, where an inclusion of the "scholarship of engagement" is provided as a category of work alongside research and teaching. This would allow the institution to give credit to campus faculty who collaborate with Extension on applied research projects.
- Integrate Extension university-wide in relevant departments.
- Proactively approach campus researchers about conducting urban research and articulating what is needed.
- Involve Extension in Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) -level discussions.
- Encourage student engagement in applied research.
- Other ideas revolved around how Extension works:
- Rethink how Extension conceptualizes "work" (i.e., replace an "expert-driven" approach with an "**expertise-driven**" approach).
- Value other types of "knowing," (e.g., indigenous knowledge is just as important as research-generated knowledge).
- Partner with elected and state agencies (local and regional) where Extension evaluates for impact and gathers data to meet reporting needs of said partners.
- Develop strategic ways to build our capital with existing partners.
- Help define urban agriculture and focus efforts.

SUGGESTIONS

- The LED discussion identified several opportunities associated with Extension's historic commitment to educational programs at the county level, namely:
- Engage students, both urban and rural, in the fertile ground where agriculture and technology meet.
- Support student involvement in agriculture and agriculture-related ventures.
- Aid student exploration of new opportunities for youth leadership (e.g. urban farm management).
- Enhance communication skills, especially through English Language Learner programs
- Promote both STEM and professional, or "soft," skills related to workforce development.

"What new knowledge do we need to help cities adapt and thrive going forward?"

"We need to learn more about urban environments so we can make them better."

"We need to better articulate our work in strategic ways to build human capital."

(Preceding quotes represent sentiment of group dialogue and are not attributed to any individual.)

ABOUT THE WESTERN CENTER FOR METROPOLITAN EXTENSION AND RESEARCH

The Western Center for Metropolitan Extension and Research (WCMER) is a multi-university collaboration established by the Western Extension Directors Association to increase the internal capacity of Western Extension programs to address metropolitan issues, and to elevate the stature and value of Cooperative Extension to external metropolitan audiences.

Since its founding in 2014 we have focused our efforts on applied research on best Extension practices and issues facing metropolitan areas, and professional development for Extension professionals, with a goal of better aligning programs and program delivery with the needs, issues and interest of their metropolitan constituency.

SUGGESTIONS (CONT'D)

Other opportunities for urban Extension personnel included:

- Create interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approaches through collaborative projects with all relevant departments across the university.
- Support cultural explorations by staff of indigenous ways of "knowing" and their integration into Extension work.
- Finally, participants suggested that Extension "think out of the box" when looking for urban Extension funding such as approaching the CDC, NIH, NSF, etc. about integrating Extension or applied research and practice into grant proposal parameters, and entrepreneurial models such as the WCMER.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR NATIONAL URBAN EXTENSION

NUEL presented a strategic analysis of urban Extension opportunities, and four common themes that emerge in the literature on the unique aspects of urban Extension, in The National Framework for Urban Extension (NUEL Steering Committee (NUEL): et al., 2015). The following section is aligned with these themes:

- **Positioning:** How Extension is positioned at the national, state, regional, and city levels
- **Programs:** How Extension addresses the multitude of issues and priorities in the city
- **Personnel:** How Extension attracts, develops, retains, and structures competent talent
- **Partnerships:** How Extension collaborates to leverage resources for collective impact

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POSITIONING

What new knowledge does Extension need to help cities adapt and thrive moving forward?

This question has the potential to shift some Extension services into a new level of connection with actors positioned at the city, state, and even national scales. NUEL can support Extension's partnership development by helping to increase its visibility with local and regional agencies as a co-creator of research to address community issues and needs.

In order to effectively work at this new level, Extension must educate itself about the systems that make up the urban realm -- economic, environmental, social, and the intersections among them. Urban communities are no longer separate and distinct from each other. Cities have created networks that span the nation and even the globe, and these must be understood if Extension wishes to offer itself as a partner to address the increasingly urgent real-world problems.

Systems thinking is all about connections across seemingly divergent arenas, crossing multiple geographic scales. This is a challenging area for Extension, whose work is often siloed in academic departments and disciplines. In order for the organization to succeed at this transformative challenge, NUEL needs to offer staunch support for this goal, while providing a ladder of learning that can be utilized to aid growth in this area.

PROGRAMMING

Programming and projects are Extension's work "on the ground", a focus on the concrete details of "doing" to achieve larger goals. NUEL can advocate for practical interdisciplinary work in that arena, encouraging directors to support community projects with potential for interdepartmental collaboration.

NUEL can also set the standard that programming begins with a focus on each particular community, whether urban or rural, honoring its issues and needs. Urban Extension faces new challenges in this area, however, and must draw on the history and expertise of community-based program delivery of Extension while still exploring new territory in its use. In addition, NUEL can offer and support forums where directors can share successful programming strategies, identify barriers, and describe gaps found.

ABOUT THE WCMER CONT'D

Institutional membership in the WCMER has increased from six founding university Extension members: (University of Alaska Fairbanks, University of California, Colorado State University, University of Idaho, Oregon State University, and Washington State University) to 11 in 2019 with the addition of University of Florida, Michigan State University, New Mexico State University, University of Nevada Reno, and The Ohio State University. This expanded membership has allowed us to broaden our collaborations and reach, and engage in new projects that advance the knowledge base of Extension work in our metropolitan regions. work in our metropolitan regions.

ABOUT NUEL

National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL) began in 2013 as a grass-roots effort of a group of passionate and committed urban Extension educators with the mission to advocate and advance the strategic importance and long-term value of urban Extension activities by being relevant locally, responsive statewide, and recognized nationally. NUEL is geared towards creating a network for collective impact currently with active participation from 23 states. NUEL is passionate and committed to moving urban Extension forward realizing each state in the Cooperative Extension System is different and may have diverse ideas and strategies for meeting urban needs.

PROGRAMMING (CONT'D)

Finally, NUEL can offer educational experiences that add to Extension's cultural understanding concerning the value of indigenous and community knowledge and how to utilize both in their programming, as well as supporting the addition of an "expertise-driven" approach to their toolkit.

PERSONNEL

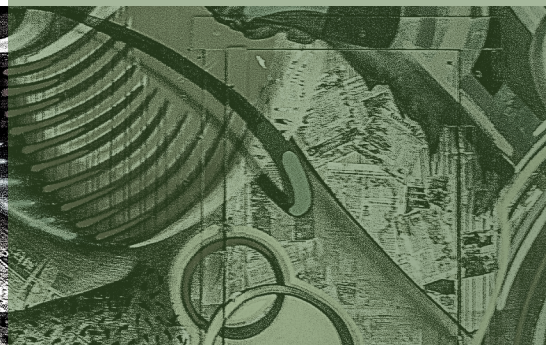
Extension is increasingly shifting to an inter- and multi-disciplinary work mode, one which requires their personnel to build collaborative relationships across local and regional agencies and organizations, and within and across disciplines in the university landscape. For example, strategic doing (<https://strategicdoing.net/>) a method of quickly forming collaborations to achieve measurable outcomes, can help Extension personnel to manage the complexity inherent within their work and advance the achievement of shared outcomes with collaborators and allies.

Such a shift requires employees to be open to diverse methodologies, perspectives and agendas, and to exhibit a nimble ability to relate this knowledge to community needs on the ground without alienating their collaborators. NUEL can aid Extension's growth in this area by supporting the integration of conflict resolution, community dialogue and civility into personnel training, which could help all involved work toward win-win solutions.

In addition, Extension employees may require more training in the methods and enactment of applied research, and should be familiar with its use in serving community needs through engaged programming. As a participant in this session stated, Extension needs to advocate for conducting translational research with practical applications. The WCMER is an obvious expert in this area, and NUEL can support opportunities for others to learn from its example.

There is a strong interest among Extension personnel to build connections between both rural and urban groups and communities by finding commonalities between them. Extension has a geographic advantage in that its personnel work across all areas of the urban-rural continuum. NUEL can advocate for the purposeful facilitation of mixed groups of Extension personnel willing to learn from each other about serving community needs across the continuum.

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PARTNERSHIPS

Interest is growing among some Extension programs to step outside traditional academic disciplines and engage with other departments across the university campus, to take the leap and explore a new future for Extension in this arena.

Extension programs at different universities should partner with each other, building campus - community partnerships to address common issues. NUEL members can lead the way here, setting an example by building multidisciplinary connections in and among their own universities and supporting Extension colleagues doing it elsewhere as well.

All participants agreed that Extension's future is urban, while acknowledging the organization's rural history. Rural-urban interdependencies cannot be forgotten and must be integrated into any work that Extension does. NUEL can aid in this area by carefully delineating connections between rural and urban that Extension can utilize to build bridges.

In order to truly utilize the benefits of interdisciplinary Extension work to develop partners and serve communities, it's necessary to realize that cities, regions and states are connected by issues that do not halt at city limits. In these challenging times, NUEL can offer a vision of Extension acting as a partner in sustainability to cities, whether as educators of youth, food system specialists, community development experts, or green infrastructure developers. The WCMER can also offer guidance and real experience in this regard.

CONTRIBUTORS

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FACILITATION PROVIDED BY:



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FUNDING PROVIDED BY:

