

Western Center For Metropolitan Extension And Research

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2021 Mid Year Report

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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.

In 2020 the WCMER initiated four applied research fellowships; co-led a national effort to gather stakeholder input for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) Urban, Indoor and other Emerging Agricultural Production Research, Education and Extension Initiative; explored new projects around urban wildfires/urban smoke, nature based solutions, and sustainable regional systems; and produced seven Leading Edge Dialogue papers as the proceedings at the 2019 National Urban Extension Conference.

MEMBERSHIP

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With the 2021 addition of Cornell University, institutional membership in the WCMER has increased from the six founding university Extension members to twelve. 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.

Platinum Members

University of California* (UCANR)
Colorado State University* (CSU)
Cornell University (CCE)
University of Florida (UF)
University of Idaho* (UI)
Michigan State University (MSU)
University of Nevada Reno (UNR)
The Ohio State University (tOSU)
Oregon State University* (OSU)
Washington State University* (WU)

Silver members

New Mexico State University (NMSU)
University of Alaska Fairbanks* (UAF)

*founding member



APPLIED RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS & DEEP DIVES

The WCMER established Applied Research Deep Dives to spur innovation within Extension, address complex issues facing metropolitan areas, and support the organizational needs of urban Extension programs, while providing opportunities for faculty at WCMER member institutions to lead multi-state or national projects. Each WCMER Deep Dive is led by a funded WCMER Fellow, a subject matter expert from a member institution, who provides leadership to:

- Assess the current state of the issue – the current knowledge base and the need and opportunities within metropolitan communities; and build a collaborative network of other professionals working in an area.
- Identify and pursue funding opportunities; and help advance the knowledge base of other Extension professionals. Deep Dives may continue from one fellow to the next as work continues.



URBAN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RAMONA MADHOSINGH-HECTOR (UF)

Extension professionals receive professional development (PD) training through a variety of platforms. New and seasoned Extension professionals alike can find it challenging to navigating complex urban settings where greater diversity, complexity, density, and scale require contextual perspective and a collection of skills beyond disciplinary expertise. To explore the PD needs of urban Extension professionals, WCMER launched the Professional Development Deep Dive in 2018 led by fellow, Dr. Julie Fox (tOSU).

Dr. Fox's work concluded with a one-day Professional Development Summit in February 2019 in San Antonio, TX, held in conjunction with the Joint Council of Extension Professionals Conference (JCEP). The Summit brought together representatives from all JCEP organizations, ECOP regions, and 1890's universities, to discuss progress made on improving urban Extension professional development to date, and to set goals for future work.

Ramona Madhosingh-Hector attended the 2019 Summit and, in late 2020, initiated the next phase of the Professional Development Deep Dive by exploring organizational competencies and related professional development for administrative leadership such as staffing approaches, project management, working with cities and non-traditional stakeholders. Ms. Madhosingh-Hector will also focus on coordinating with other organizations supporting urban Extension PD such as National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL), Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP) and eXtension. Her work has already produced an interactive presentation, which she has co-presented with WCMER PD team members. The presentation utilizes Korn Ferry's Four Dimensions of Leadership and Talent to describe the skills, qualifications and professional development needs of different categories of personnel and applies it to Extension. This presentation has been accepted to two JCEP-related conferences and a proposal is pending for another.

This fellowship will continue into 2021.

Project page: <https://metroextension.wsu.edu/2020/05/04/ramona-c-madhosingh-hector/>.

APPLIED RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS & DEEP DIVES



CAREER PROGRESSION FOR URBAN EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS JEANTYL NORZE (UNR)

Extension faculty and staff working in urban areas need the same set of core competencies as Extension professionals in other geographic settings. However, they must also have additional skills and attributes to effectively address the needs of urban constituents. At the same time, Extension faculty and staff must manage their careers within traditionally structured academic systems that often lack the flexibility to incorporate new ways to accomplish

the land grant mission, especially for urban Extension professionals. This creates a dilemma for Extension professionals who want to both work in urban areas and advance in their careers. To be successful in achieving Extension impact and community change in this environment, Extension professionals need flexibility within the academic system. Dr. Norze will look at current system approaches for urban Extension professionals that are successful and replicable across other Extension programs.

This fellowship began in late 2020 and will continue into 2021.

Project page: <https://metroextension.wsu.edu/2020/10/23/jeantyl-norze/>.



URBAN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NIGEL PICKERING (WSU)

Urban flooding, storm-water management, air and water quality, urban heat islands, public health issues, access to green spaces, and equity and social justice are all issues facing urban areas. Urban green infrastructure has a role in addressing all these urban issues. In 2018, the WCMER hosted the Urban Green Infrastructure summit to connect university researchers with city and county personnel to present research and best practices, and to build a collaborative network to develop grant proposals and applied research projects. This was followed the next year by The Next Urban Giants: Building

Resilience and Equity into Growing Megapolitan Regions by Greening the Urban Human-Natural System, a by-invitation workshop funded by the National Science Foundation – part of 2019 WCMER fellow Patricia Townsend's accomplishments.

Nigel Pickering, in his 2020 fellowship, conducted a national scan of Extension professionals and programs, university researchers, community practitioners and existing networks to support development of a national initiative. His work expanded our research network of potential partners from regional to national and explored funding opportunities for collaborative projects.

This fellowship concluded in 2020.

Project page: <https://metroextension.wsu.edu/2020/05/04/nigel-pickering/>

APPLIED RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS & DEEP DIVES



BEST PRACTICES IN SUBURBAN HOUSING AFFORDABILITY: UNDERSTANDING, MOTIVATING, AND POLICY OPTIONS CRAIG CARPENTER, TYLER AUGST, AND DAVID IVAN (MSU)

Suburban communities across the United States have different housing strengths and weaknesses; however, they have all experienced a steady rise in median housing prices (with the exception of drops during recessions). Lower housing affordability has a host of negative consequences including (but not limited to) increased homelessness, poor health outcomes, unaddressed racial housing inequality, and lower disposable incomes.



Housing research and resources often focus on urban and rural areas; however, an increasing number of suburban areas face housing affordability pressure from rapidly expanding major urban cores. Similar housing pressures face regional metropolitan areas (anchored by smaller cities such as Boise, ID and Spokane, WA), which serve as economic, cultural, social, or health-care hubs for surrounding rural communities.



Applied Research Fellows from Michigan State University developed a position paper on affordable housing, focusing on first and second ring suburban cities and smaller, growing urban centers. This paper will serve as the foundation for determining future opportunities for Extension, such as the development of programming or curricula (potentially train-the-trainer) to help metropolitan leaders establish effective housing policy.

IN DEVELOPMENT - NEW PROJECT AREAS



URBAN, INDOOR, AND EMERGING AGRICULTURE

During May 2020, the WCMER, in conjunction with the National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL) and several urban Farm Bureau county organizations, responded to a request for stakeholder input from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) about the Urban, Indoor and other Emerging Agricultural Production Research, Education and Extension Initiative. Our goal was to solicit, collect and organize responses from a broad

group of stakeholders to the two questions posed by NIFA:

1. Considering agricultural production through marketing; which phase has the greatest and most urgent research, education and extension (REE) needs in developing urban and indoor agriculture?
2. Of the eight priorities, which priority has the greatest and most urgent REE need in developing urban and indoor agriculture that is not being adequately addressed in other Federal REE programs?

The WCMER led the collaborative in summarizing the data from the listening sessions to provide aggregated written input to NIFA. A separate paper summarizing data from WCMER states was sent to WEDA. Following this effort, WCMER initiated and successfully established a Western Develop Committee (WDC53) to further develop research and Extension opportunities in this area. The goal is to submit the project for establishment as an Extension and Research Activity (WERA) by the end of 2021.

Project page: <https://metroextension.wsu.edu/urbanag/>.



WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE, WILDFIRES, AND URBAN SMOKE

America's forests are burning at unprecedented rates. Recent conflagrations devastated countless homes and structures while destroying forests and severely damaging critical ecosystems on the fringe of urban zones. The social, economic and environmental impacts on land and communities deserve attention from policy makers, agencies and community action organizations.

Long-term efforts will require transdisciplinary solutions that are customized for unique characteristics of communities and ecosystems. Extension is positioned for a leadership role utilizing its historic social capital and skills in communication systems to engage stakeholders in developing on-the-ground solutions. WCMER is working with eXtension to position Extension in this important urban-rural issue.

The project team developed a brief for the ECOP Climate Coalition, requesting endorsement for a significant planning process to define priorities for Cooperative Extension's role in addressing the nation's increasing frequency and severity of catastrophic wildfires, with particular regard for the intersection of forests and the built environment in the wildland-urban interface.

IN DEVELOPMENT - NEW PROJECT AREAS



NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

During the December 2020 Advisory Board meeting, WCMER decided to establish a leadership position to support the emerging body of work around ‘nature-based solutions’ – the sustainable management and use of natural or modified ecosystems for addressing challenges such as climate change, food security, water security, human health and disaster risk management. In 2021 we will further develop the operational structures for this new role.

In support of this new effort, WCMER recently joined the Nature-based Solutions for Urban Resilience in the Anthropocene (NATURA), a project which enhances global connectivity among the world's scholars and practitioners to advance urban resilience in the face of extreme weather events. This collaboration will particularly benefit early career WCMER member faculty (through learning exchange fellowships and networking opportunities) and help position WCMER and Extension within similar research networks in the United States.

TRANSFORMING RURAL-URBAN SYSTEMS: TRAJECTORIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN THE INTERMOUNTAIN WEST RESEARCH NETWORK (TRUST-RN)



Figure 1. Conceptualization of the core-themes of the TRUSTS-RN.

“Overcoming the existential crises of climate change, a growing urban-rural divide, and growing economic inequalities demands action from all of us. We need new partnerships, inclusive approaches, and agents of change who will fight together for a sustainable future for our urban and rural communities and landscapes.”

- Congresswoman Deb Haaland in her opening address at our 2019 Sustainable Urban Systems workshop (NSF #1929769) on Exploring Connections Between Urban and Rural Communities and Environments (2019).

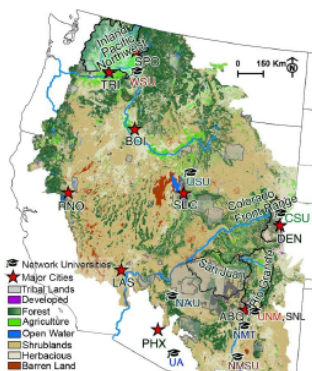
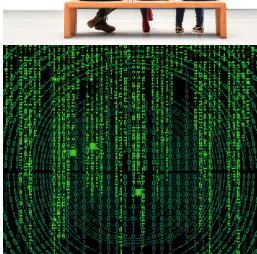
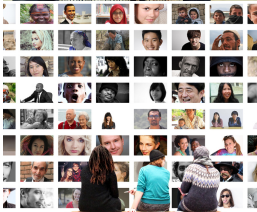


Figure 2. The Intermountain West (IMW) including tribal nations, major cities, and the universities involved in the Network. Cities are by airport codes except for Spokane (SPO) and the Tri-Cities (TRI).

The WCMER was asked to join the NSF Sustainable Regional Systems proposal to create the TRUST-RN because of our urban and Extension expertise and networks. This transdisciplinary research effort represents diverse communities, sectors, disciplines, and backgrounds. The aim is to advance basic theory and applied knowledge of the dynamics, resilience, and trajectories of sustainable urban-rural systems (SURS) through convergent research that catalyzes transformations in the way we use, manage, and protect environmental resources to improve well-being and to create a sustainable future in the IMW. Our convergence research and education plans focus on headwaters and headwater dependent systems; food-energy-water systems (FEWS); and innovative institutions and approaches to governance.

NATIONAL URBAN EXTENSION CONFERENCE: LEADING EDGE DIALOGUE SERIES



Leading Edge Dialogues (LED's) were 90-minute interactive workshops held during the 2019 National Urban Extension Conference which explored critical issues facing our cities and our universities. They replaced what would have traditionally been the 'leadership track' for the conference. Each of the six LEDs consisted of a multi-sector panel presentation followed by a group discussion with all attendees, facilitated by eXtension.

The topics we developed for the LED series fell into two groups - those relating to *how* Extension works in urban communities:

- Fulfilling the Land Grant University mission: Extension and community-based applied research;
- Reaching 10 million youth with Extension;
- Staffing: preparing the urban Extension workforce;

and *what* current or emerging societal issues, patterns or opportunities Extension should be aware of:

- Data & policy: responding to human services needs;
- Smart cities: technology, equity, livability and trust; and
- Urban green infrastructure (UGI).

WCMER led an effort to capture both the presentations and the innovative discussion that followed during each LED into a set of individual position papers, authored by one or more panelists from each session. These six forward-looking papers, published in 2020 and early 2021 reveal how Extension can step into unfamiliar spaces, address emerging issues, form new partnerships, and offer its capabilities and experience to communities, cities, states and regions.

Once we completed the papers, we recognized a number of themes that emerged in multiple LEDs: trust; inclusion and unity; partnership and collaboration; embracing a bottom-up model; building bridges between urban and rural; and the need for new funding mechanisms. This prompted the writing and publication of a summary paper detailing the connectivity we discovered between and across the six subject-matter focused papers.

The complete collection can be found at
<https://metroextension.wsu.edu/2020/04/13/led/>.

SCHOLARSHIP

PUBLICATIONS: LEADING EDGE DIALOGUE SERIES

Gaolach, B., Norman, J. , and Aitken, M. (2021). Editors' introduction to the Leading Edge Dialogue series. In M. E. Aitken, J. Norman, & B. Gaolach (Eds.), National Urban Extension Conference: Leading Edge Dialogue Series. Western Center for Metropolitan Extension and Research.
<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2164/2021/02/Editors-Introduction-to-the-Leading-Edge-Dialogue-Series.pdf>

Gaolach, B., Norman, J. (2020). Urban Green Infrastructure Workshop. In M. E. Aitken, J. Norman, & B. Gaolach (Eds.), National Urban Extension Conference: Leading Edge Dialogue Series. Western Center for Metropolitan Extension and Research.
<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2164/2020/10/LED-UGI-rev.-10.13.20.pdf>.

Fox, J. (2021). Staffing: preparing the urban Extension workforce. In M. E. Aitken, J Norman, & B. Gaolach (Eds.), National Urban Extension Conference: Leading Edge Dialogue Series. Western Center for Metropolitan Extension and Research.
<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2164/2021/01/Workforce-LED-1.19.21.pdf>.

Morrison Winters, J., Norman, J. (2020). Data and policy: responding to human services needs. In M. E. Aitken, J. Norman, & B. Gaolach (Eds.), National Urban Extension Conference: Leading Edge Dialogue Series. Western Center for Metropolitan Extension and Research.
<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2164/2020/07/Data-Policy-LED-7.16.pdf>.

Moffett, K. (2020). Fulfilling the land grant university mission: Extension and community-based applied research. In M. E. Aitken, J. Norman, & B. Gaolach (Eds.), National Urban Extension Conference: Leading Edge Dialogue Series. Western Center for Metropolitan Extension and Research.
<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2164/2020/06/LGU-LED-6.1.pdf>.

Turner, A., Hernandez, E. (2020). Reaching 10 Million Engaged Youth with Extension. In M. E. Aitken, J. Norman, & B. Gaolach (Eds.), National Urban Extension Conference: Leading Edge Dialogue Series. Western Center for Metropolitan Extension and Research.
<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2164/2020/10/LED-YOUTH-PAPER-rev.-5.28.20.pdf>.

Zentz, K. D. (2020). Smart Cities: Technology, Equity, Livability and Trust. In M. E. Aitken, J. Norman, & B. Gaolach (Eds.), National Urban Extension Conference: Leading Edge Dialogue Series. Western Center for Metropolitan Extension and Research.
<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2164/2020/10/Smart-Cities-LED-rev.-5.28.20.pdf>.

PUBLICATIONS CONT'D

Comment Letter to National Institute of Food and Agriculture, national letter on *Urban, Indoor and other Emerging Agricultural Production Research, Education and Extension Initiative*.

<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2164/2021/01/Urban-Agriculture-Listening-Sessions.pdf>

Comment Letter to National Institute of Food and Agriculture, WCMER letter on *Urban, Indoor and other Emerging Agricultural Production Research, Education and Extension Initiative*.

<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2164/2021/02/Urban-Agriculture-Listening-Sessions-WCMER-1.pdf>

PRESENTATIONS

Aitken, M., J. Fox, R. Madhosingh-Hector, B. Morrisroe-Aman, B. Gaolach, and B. Rogers. Urban Extension Professional Development. Epsilon Sigma Phi National Conference, Virtual. October 2020.

Madhosingh-Hector, R., J. Fox, B. Morrisroe-Aman, M. Aitken, B. Gaolach, and B. Rogers. Urban Extension personnel – new ways to explore skills, competencies and professional development. Joint Council of Extension Professionals – Extension Leadership Conference, Virtual. February 2021.

