2007 Annual Report

Executive Summary

The West Virginia University Extension Service (WVU-ES) submits the following report of its major program accomplishments for fiscal year (FY) 2007. This summary reflects accomplishments and impacts for a number of federal, state, county, grant, and fee-funded programs, many of which are non-Cooperative Extension efforts not supported by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) funding.

Consistent with the concept of the engaged university, West Virginia University (WVU) is strongly committed to becoming of greater value to the state and nation. As West Virginia University’s primary, geographically distributed, public service-oriented academic unit, Extension actively partners with other University colleges, schools, regional campuses, and distributed (distance) educational delivery systems to meet the changing lifelong educational needs of West Virginians. Through strategic partnerships with higher and basic education, government, and private and nonprofit organizations, WVU-ES has committed to five strategic priorities based on state priorities. Extension faculty and staff invest time, expertise, and efforts on these five areas of strategic focus. These strategic priorities include:

1. Developing more—and more capable—leaders at the community, organization, and state levels
2. Helping create more—and more successful—rural and community-based businesses
3. Improving the successful development of youth
4. Increasing the capabilities and readiness of West Virginia’s future and current workforce
5. Being a direct provider of—and critical partner in—delivering education that ensures healthier West Virginians

In Extension, we acknowledge that we cannot answer every question or address the state’s critical issues alone. Our greatest asset is our ability to bring people and groups together, to use the knowledge and the research of the University as our foundation, and to find innovative solutions to the unique and varied needs among West Virginia’s people and communities. However, we face increased expectations from clients but have fewer resources. We are approaching this challenge in several ways.

Extending our capacities to deliver programs by:

- Making adjustments to staffing and redistribution of personnel resources
  - Reducing regular full-time employees and increasing seasonal employees
  - Reducing the number of single-agent counties to 12 even though our staffing formula calls for 22 single agent counties. This county staffing plan identifies counties to receive one, two, or three agents based upon demographic parameters. WVU fully supports a county’s first agent.
Counties provide $15,000 toward salaries of second and third agents if allocated under the plan. This is very old news I’d delete and say:

- Improving recruitment and retention of county agents by funding two years of across-the-board raises of $500 per year (06-07 and 07-08) on top of existing merit raises and increasing minimum and entry level salaries for agents to $37,000 in 07-08.
- Moving resources to the field. WVU Extension decreased the number of administrators and the amount of central administrative support and moved the funds involved into field and program positions.
- Reviewing budget status and operational efficiencies. Extension program and support units have reduced staff to manage Extension’s budget and anticipated future budget constraints. This has been accomplished through making reassignments, merging assignments (e.g., multi county), and closing vacancies. Every vacancy is carefully scrutinized, and only those positions that address critical needs are advertised.
- Supplying a minimum of one office support person, space for the county office, and current expenses for such items as travel and telephone.
- Strengthening our team concept by adjusting our reporting system to measure the impact of 15 program areas, each represented by a team co-led by a field agent and specialist.

**Increasing funding for Extension programming**

- Increasing county funding from $3.2 million to $3.9 million while Federal and state funding remains flat.
- Increasing funding from sponsored programs (from $996,437 active multi-year in 1997 to $5,400,000 active multiyear in 2007).
- Increasing funding from the state of West Virginia. As a direct result of WVU advocacy, the West Virginia Legislature provided $1.5 million in funding for Jackson’s Mill. Along with this funding, WVU provided $1.5 million of its own funding to totally renovate the Mount Vernon Dining Hall at WVU Jackson’s Mill. Along with this project, Extension has many facility upgrades either complete or in process involving more than $432,000 in University and private funding in the past year.

**Partnering with other agencies and institutions**

- Increasing the number of our strategic partners at WVU (e.g., Health Sciences Center, Davis College of Agriculture, and School of Applied Social Sciences in the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences), state and federal agencies, and key stakeholder groups. In 2007, an after-school specialist was hired, linking for the first time, 4-H and after-school programs offered by the WV Department of Education.
- Continuing to enhance our working relationship with West Virginia State University. West Virginia State agents and specialists have recently joined state Extension associations and they actively participate along side WVUES faculty in these associations.
- Working with the West Virginia Legislature, Higher Education Policy Commission, and representatives of USDACSREES.
Staying attuned to state and community needs through broader Extension Service. We are helping to create a climate more open to inventing new models for doing our work and involving stakeholders in (a) review of vision and mission and (b) strategic plan implementation (consistent with national benchmarks and changing resource conditions e.g., Kellogg Commission reports, 21st Century Vision for National Cooperative Extension System, WVU Compact with the state of West Virginia).

- Improving existing programming and developing new programming to meet the needs of the state.
  - Increasing the number of individuals we serve. This year we had 230,000 direct contacts with adults, 250,000 direct contacts with youth, 1,800,000 indirect contacts with adults, and 1,130,000 indirect contacts with youth for a total of 3,410,000 contacts.
  - Increasing the number and diversity of West Virginians we touch each year. Our Reaching the Underserved team is assisting all programs in finding ways to attract low-income and ethnically diverse populations.
  - Improving the programming of Jackson’s Mill in areas consistent with its traditional mission to increase the proportion of its budget supported by users and outside sources. This year a major renovation took place at the Jackson’s Mill Conference Center, including a total upgrade of the dining hall to include lodging and conference space.
  - Improving computer and technical skills in our youth. More than 100 state 4-H’ers will learn the intricacies of computers and how to train senior citizens to use them in July during the first Science, Technology and Leadership program, which will be part of the annual Alpha I State 4-H Camp at WVU Jackson’s Mill State 4-H Camp, near Weston. Verizon Foundation provided a $34,700 grant to the West Virginia University Extension Service to allow 110 youths to participate in “Wired and Wonderful Camp” July 8-13.
  - Enhancing the safety of our citizens by improving the fire safety skills of youth and adults. The first West Virginia Junior Firefighter Camp was held from August 12 through August 15 at WVU Jackson’s Mill State 4-H Camp, near Weston. In addition, using high-technology mobile units, Fire Service Extension takes live-burn training to volunteer and career firefighters in their own communities. In 2007, more than 640 firefighters fought realistic smoke and fires with their own equipment as they entered WVU's new two-story structural Mobile Fire Training Unit under the guidance of Extension instructors.
  - Improving the dental health of our youth. The 4-H Dental Planner was unleashed this year and is widely used in 4-H clubs.
Finding new sources of revenue for West Virginia citizens by developing new markets for agricultural products such as fish produced through aquaculture farming.

- Identifying State and Community Needs through Extension Research
  - The WVU Extension Service strives to deliver programs that address the most pressing needs of West Virginians. Through collaborative efforts with state government agencies, non-profit entities, and other academic units within West Virginia University, Extension performs research to identify pressing needs throughout West Virginia and develop programming that meets these needs. Among the research-related activities undertaken by WVU Extension Service are:
    - Awarding of $40,000 in fiscal year 2007 to Extension personnel to conduct research and programmatic team activities. These funds provide seed money for novel activities with the potential for significant impact on some aspect of West Virginia. Recipients of these funds frequently use data acquired during the funded activity to develop programs in their counties or full grant proposals submitted to federal funding agencies.
    - Offering training to Extension personnel in the development of successful grant applications and project proposals. In June 2008 WVU Extension Service personnel will have the opportunity to participate in a proposal development workshop delivered by the WVU Office of Research and Economic Development. This training will help county faculty develop more competitive grant proposals and requests for funding.
    - Developing closer working relationships with entities of state government, non-profit organizations working throughout West Virginia, and academic units within West Virginia University and other institutions of higher education. The Associate Provost’s Office is working daily to develop and strengthen relationships between Extension and those entities throughout West Virginia that would benefit from the resources Extension can bring to bear on research needed to develop policy recommendations or plausible solutions to important problems experienced throughout West Virginia.

A description of our merit review and peer review process this year

This year, a new Associate Provost for Extension, David Miller, was hired. The new administration will deepen its strategic planning by systematically implementing its general strategic plan through several policy efforts, including major program reviews. These efforts will apply the strategic plan as a benchmark for conducting program review and policy development to ensure that the strategic plan translates into local programming.
The following external reviews were conducted in the last two years. This was just said:

- An external study of Agriculture and Natural Resources Unit was conducted in 2007. The findings from this study will be used in program development and implementation efforts during the coming year.

- Nationally eminent faculty and administrators from three other universities completed an external program review of the Institute for Labor Studies and Research (ILSR) in 2006. Faculty and stakeholders are working to implement the results of the review in a new strategic plan for ILSR.

How we encourage Stakeholder participation

An ongoing system of securing stakeholder input into program planning and implementation, along with quality assessment, has been and continues to be a primary commitment for WVU Extension. Stakeholder input is gathered annually through several methods. One regular approach to assessing community needs and programs is to seek input from members of state mandated County Extension Service Committees. In each of West Virginia’s 55 counties, eight member committees serve three primary functions: (1) to approve annually the employment of Extension county employees; (2) to help secure financial support for the Extension Service from the county Board of Education and the County Commission, and (3) to give guidance and support for local Extension Service programming (W.Va. State Code Chapter 19-8-1). Additional input is gathered from a number of program-specific advisory committees; e.g., the Institute for Labor Studies and Research Advisory Committee, 4-H Funds Advisory Committee, and Extension Service Visiting Committee. Program recommendations are also solicited during farm family risk management educational dinners where inquiries are made about future program topics.

This year, a new Associate Provost for Extension and Public Service, David Miller, was hired to lead the WVU Extension Service. His selection was the product of extensive interaction with stakeholders throughout West Virginia where he has been active in agriculture promotion and education for many years.

Many of our Extension programs seek input from stakeholders, for instance, the Strengthening Family team is conducting an assessment from Community Education Outreach Service (CEOS) members about benefits, barriers, recruitment, and future programming. Three of our largest programs Energy Express (children’s literacy) with Diabetes, and the Family Nutrition Program have extensive evaluation components that, in addition to measuring impact, also gather satisfaction information that is used to improve programming.

Methods for identifying individuals and groups

County Extension Service Committee membership, as designated by law, consists of the following: the president of the county farm bureau; the president of the county Extension Homemakers’ Council; the president of the county 4-H leaders’ association; a county
commissioner designated by the president of the county commission; a member of the board of education designated by the president of the county board of education; a county representative of the Grange; and two members who are residents of the county to be appointed by the West Virginia University Board of Governors (BOG). If any of the above-named organizations does not exist in the county, the WVU BOG may appoint an additional member for each such vacancy.

In addition to formal meetings of our stakeholders, we regularly engage in evaluation efforts at all levels. Evaluative materials are used in decision making.

Methods for collecting stakeholder input

WVUES utilizes a number of methodologies for collecting input from stakeholders and community members. One methodology is observation County Extension Service Community meetings by county agents and at times by administrators. Another method is questionnaires as in the CEOS assessment study and by almost all of our program initiatives. Our Communications Unit and Administrative Unit monitor phone calls and emails to determine concerns by the public and by our stakeholders. This year, the Associate Provost for Extension will be holding regional meetings of Extension staff and faculty to gather feedback about Extension operations and programs.

WVUES uses WVU Day at the Legislature to inform policy makers about the work of Extension and to gather input about our programs. This year, hundreds of WVU Extension Service volunteers and supports attended the event in Charleston. When they visited their state representatives, they not only asked for support for WVUES but also listened to what the legislators had to say about how Extension fits into the plans for they have the state. Following the event, WVUES conducted an online assessment.

The Associate Provost and Public Service interacts regularly with the WVU President and other university administrators, with legislators, and with the heads of organizations that impact on Extension’s work such as the head of the Department of Agriculture, the President of CEOS, leadership at the Farm Bureau, and others. In 2008, WVUES and West Virginia State University Extension will begin a new series of meetings to meet to discuss programming and operation and to set priorities.

This year, WVUES will begin a “branding” assessment to determine how Extension is perceived by citizens of West Virginia.

How the input was considered: How we used feedback from stakeholders

Each week, the WVUES leadership team (Associate Provost, Director of Communications, Assistant Director of Resources, Director of Operations, Finance Director, and Unit Directors meet to discuss the feedback that have received from multiple sources. This information is used to improve operations and programming and often to address problems raised by our constituency. The budget is often a focus of discussion and decisions are made in response to stakeholder feedback, such as the ones
described earlier in this document about focusing on county needs over state administrative needs. Assessment data is processed and the findings are used by most of our program initiatives. Teams have the responsibility of making recommendations to WVUES administration about new programming based on emerging needs in the state.

The following are recent examples of how feedback from stakeholders has been used by Extension.

1. New Positions
   Based on feedback from stakeholder, a new position, the assistant director for resources, has been created. Roger Hanshaw, the new assistant director for resources, is using feedback from stakeholders to determine what is needed to carry out our programs in a more effective way. Most importantly, he is working with unit directors, specialists, and teams to obtain grant funding to further our programs.

   In addition, the evaluation specialist has been moved from one of the program units to administration in an effort to centralize the collection and analysis of evaluative information.

2. County Staffing Guidelines
   As of 2003, county staffing patterns were a patchwork of historic negotiations with individual counties over many years. Extension polled a sample of faculty members to generate a county staffing guideline to govern staffing for each county. Principles include:
   - A minimum of one county agent in each of West Virginia’s 55 counties
   - Designation of counties that merit two or three agents
   - Counties pay 33 percent of salaries of second or third agents
   - Additional agents paid 100 percent by counties

2. Program Specialist Guidelines
   Multiple consultations with faculty and staff resulted in a program specialist guideline that identifies “Core Specialists.” These represent positions that the organization deems to be essential functions for Extension over at least 10 years. Some of these newly designated core positions are currently vacant and will become priorities to fill as resources become available. Currently filled specialist positions that are not core will not be filled when they become vacant. As a direct response to feedback from our stakeholders, this year a new family specialist was hired and another will be hired in 2008.

3. Core County Functions
   In response to the significant variation in faculty staffing patterns in West Virginia counties, WVU has developed and implemented a comprehensive listing of functions and programs that will be accomplished in each West Virginia county. This list informs our stakeholders as well as faculty of our minimum program commitments to each and every West Virginia county. It reflects our strategic thinking about who are.
4. Program Teams
Extension now conducts its major program development and coordination through program teams. These 15 teams are co-led by a specialist and a county agent. Each team generates an annual plan of work (Team Assignment Document) and reports yearly against this plan of work.