

The page features a decorative border of black and grey triangles pointing in various directions around the central text.

# **Commitment to Diversity and Pluralism**

**A Report of the  
Council on Diversity in Extension  
to the  
Cooperative Extension System**

October 1992

---

---

---

# Foreword

---

## The Council on Diversity in Extension

The Council on Diversity in Extension (CDE) was created by the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (ES-USDA) as a response to recommendations in the Task Force on Diversity Report, *“Addressing Diversity in the 1990s and Beyond: CES Can Make a Difference.”*

CDE, an external advisory council for the Cooperative Extension System (CES) was charged with reporting annually to ECOP and ES-USDA on the status of diversity in Extension, and on actions needed to move the diversity effort forward. The Council members represent organizations with a demonstrated commitment to diversity and pluralism. The Council met for the first time in July 1991 and again in July 1992. This report reflects their deliberations and discussion at that second meeting.

Council members came to the meeting charged with the task of reviewing the progress that CES had made since summer 1991 in finalizing the *“Strategic Plan for the CES’s Emphasis on Diversity: Pathway to Diversity,”* plus the initial steps of the System in implementing the goals from this strategic document.

**Eileen Conlon**, Extension Educator, University of Maine, Cooperative Extension facilitated the Council’s interesting, informative discussion. **Margaret Johnson**, Program Leader, Home Economics, South Carolina State University, and **Patricia Calvert**, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Communication, Information, and Technology, ES-USDA, worked with the Council to record this important meeting and write this report.

Also present, to listen and learn from the Council’s discussion were: **Mitch Geasler**, Associate Administrator, ES-USDA; **Robert Crom**, Executive Director, ECOP; **George Enlow**, President, 1890 Administrators; **Ed Rapking**, Chair, ECOP Program Leadership Committee; **John Bottum**, Deputy Administrator, PDE, ES-USDA; and **Michael Brazzel**, ES-USDA, and **Curtis Gear**, Wisconsin, Co-chairs of the CES Subcommittee on Extension Diversity.

As at their first meeting, the Council deliberations were interesting, challenging, and refreshing! Their commitment to the Extension emphasis on diversity was evident in their remarks, questions, and concerns. The encouragement they give, the knowledge and expertise they bring, and their enthusiasm and commitment give strength and vitality to the Extension System’s continuing progress in diversity and pluralism.

# Contents

---

**Foreword—The Council on Diversity in Extension ..... iii**

**Commitment to Diversity and Pluralism Within CES ..... 1**

**How to Get the Work Done ..... 2**

**Defining Success Across the System ..... 3**

**Evaluating Where We Are ..... 4**

**Dealing With Differences in the Workplace ..... 5**

**Closing Thoughts ..... 6**

**Council on Diversity in Extension Membership ..... 7**

---

# Commitment to Diversity and Pluralism Within CES

---

The focus of the second Extension System Council on Diversity meeting was twofold: to review the progress made by the System since adoption of the Strategic Plan for Diversity in October 1991 and to discuss and advise Cooperative Extension on future directions and plans.

The Council commended the System for the development of “Pathway to Diversity”—the CES Strategic Plan. But, many of them expressed concern that CES was trying to do too much at once: “Pick three or four actions from the Plan and make them happen! As one Council member noted, “You (CES) need to simplify in using ‘Pathway’; education steps are going to take a long time; 1862 and 1890 universities are fundamental groups within the System; you need to explore both funding and values; race and class division; power inclusion and exclusion. All of these are issues.”

Linking diversity to the education mission of Extension was a key point made by several Council members. “Go back and study the history of the System,” one member said, “Discover what works within your organizational culture to make things happen—and use that as a model to get your diversity initiative moving!”

The Council was unanimous in their concern that support for a commitment to diversity and pluralism come from the top administration within the System. “Be very aggressive with those at the top to define their appreciation, understanding, commitment to make diversity and pluralism happen within CES (and the Land Grant University System.” Emphasized one Council member, “Get Presidents talking to other Presidents....involve them in doing the educating...”

Identify what people are doing...who are their resources...how they are doing the work. Several members emphasized that the Extension System already has several successes to point to: “Get people across the organization to conference together, to communicate. Identify success stories and share them; take stock of what’s happening that’s positive; identify things to celebrate that help people feel less isolated... We are who we want the Extension System to be...”

---

*“Define what you mean by education; education does not mean the same thing to all people. Define a process for making things happen; financial and administrative support are important.”*

---

Mary Lou Arey

---

*“Study models of your own System. Nothing will replace the knowledge you already have about how to make things work....”*

---

Judith Palmer

---

# How to Get the Work Done

---

---

*“Pathway is an excellent document....a vision document. As application it loses its power...it is overwhelming. Half of me says the job seems to be already done. You need to slow down, stop building new stuff, and work with what you have.”*

---

**Wil Williams**

---

*“Are you involved in long distance management? What are you looking to ultimately strive for? Are there some things that can be done while you are working through this plan? Who’s responsible? How do we get the job done? You need to take stock of what’s happening and share with the total System....”*

---

**Cathy Friedberg**

---

One Council member questioned if a paper (report) was the most effective way to make change happen: “Paper is often used by organizations as a delaying tactic,” she said. Identify what people are doing (across the System),” said another Council member. “Find out who are their resources...how they are getting the work done.” Another member agreed: “Identify success stories and share them. Identify ways to pull groups together that are not working well together—get ownership from the members of these groups....”

One Council member said, “Target years 1, 2, 3; rollout who is responsible, what are the barriers, how to get around them, what happens after reports.” He continued, “Take stock of what’s happening; identify things to celebrate that help people not feel isolated. Explore together how to get funding for diversity.”

“Assign a piece of diversity out to point people for various issues,” said another Council member. “Do this versus making one person responsible for your effort.”

# Defining Success Across the System

---

The value of each individual within the Extension organization was stressed by several Council members. Its important to value people for what they do. People need to be free, to be safe, to speak for themselves. Find out how people feel about personal treatment and equity within CES....” Another said that “by definition many organizations value those attributes of an employee that contribute to ‘ins’ and ‘outs’ within the organization.”

“Talk about the resistance encountered by people,” said one member. Another stated, “This work is about people, yet rewards are given on the basis of ‘hard’ products or accomplishments.” Another added, “Give people room to explore the whole range of options versus defining diversity as only a Black or White issue!” Look at perceived behaviors suggested one member. “How do these relate to position criteria,” he said.

One council member urged Extension to examine the diversity of its clientele while it works toward diversifying its staff: “One of the things you can do is examine the diversity of the audience. Next, you need to decide how to begin internally to match up to the differences found in this audience.”

Another member questioned, “How does oppression work within the Extension System?...How are people hired?...Promoted? The Extension organization should have this on their agenda to discuss.”

A Council member emphasized, “It is also important to look at where money and dollars are spent in Extension. This is a measure of values and priorities. If you do not spend money on people and human services development, you need to note that! Walk the talk!”

---

*“What are the assumptions in the organization for an employee to become successful? What skills are needed? You do not change successful behavior...examine what your cultural roots are....”*

---

Terri Kruzan

---

*“Find out who feels successful and who thinks they are successful within your organization. Find commonalities among this group. The point is—who are the successful people and how did they become successful.”*

---

Wil Williams

---

# Evaluating Where We Are

---

---

*“Look at the systemic way oppression and discrimination work. Staff needs to understand how this works! You (CES) need a mechanism through which to analyze these processes. How does Extension get accountability into the System? Address the second class citizen view...”*

---

Terri Kruzan

---

*“Before you measure, you must have an organizational understanding of goals and involvement. You need an ownership process by which people have their say.”*

---

Ross Racine

---

The need for open communications—up, down, and across CES—about issues of diversity and pluralism was a theme Council members returned to, time and time again throughout their two-day discussions. “Ownership requires participation, said one member. “Talk about your commonalities and differences,” said another.

“Before measuring where you are going, the organization needs to determine where they want to go,” emphasized one participant. “There are practices and boundaries that are getting in the way of addressing diversity across the organization.”

Said one Council member, “Resistance, it’s not about money; it’s about survival. What is the mission, who do we serve? Focus on helping the public. Your future existence depends on doing the work of diversity.”

One council member thought it was important for people to bring all of who they are into the workplace. “Do people need to modify their behavior to fill the values and norms of the organization,” she said. “Try to understand how people got there; get a dialogue, a discussion going.”

# Dealing With Differences in the Workplace

---

The Council discussed many of the issues that are part of diversity and pluralism within an organization such as the Extension System. These included issues of aging, religion, sexism, sexual orientation, elitism, and bashing one or more segments that are part of the organization.

“There is a place where you have to work with people whom you may not agree with, in order to do the job,” one member emphasized. “The organization has a right to challenge values of individuals and still create a space for them in the organization.”

“Find out how people feel about personal treatment and equity,” said another member. “Time heals; you cannot let negatives become barriers to moving forward.”

“We need to be honest with ourselves about why we don’t want to do diversity, or why we only want to talk about it. Honesty and ethics are part of this issue,” one council member noted. “Ask, is that the only issue?” This often masks clear unwillingness to engage in the work of diversity. “We need to be particularly careful about throwing epitaphs at groups within the organization, particularly white men....”

“Extension is a Christian organization,” said one Council member. “There is a resistance to letting go of religious stuff. Also, sexual orientation needs to be looked at.”

Another member continued this dialogue: “Get an understanding of what it’s like not to be able to share one’s life, children, spouses. Try to understand how people got there; get a dialogue, a discussion going.”

“Focus on people bringing all of who they are into the workplace,” said another Council member. “Do people need to modify their behavior and beliefs to fit the values and norms of the organization. Behavior is key—share views of the religious position against gays; don’t preach; get behavior (outside the workplace) out of the conversation.”

Another member felt that many within the organization are dealing effectively with sexism, but not ablism. “If I truly value diversity in others—this means not forcing my views and beliefs on someone else. You cannot say people have to give up their beliefs (to enter the workplace).”

“Everyone draws a line somewhere—you have to appreciate that in diversity, said a Council member. “Respect those who say ‘I cannot go another step’; who say we are going forward and I appreciate your position’.”

---

*“Learn to agree with disagree. If we truly value diversity, create a safe environment. All people experience pain with growth; but not all pain causes growth. Value people who do not do it the way I do it.”*

---

Catherine Friedberg

---

*“Change is hard—it scares the hell out of people! It is going to affect people.”*

---

Steven Jones

---

*“The greatest resistance is the mirror theory...I don’t want to look in the mirror and say I’ve got issues with.... Look at what you have to do to work through these differences individually and organizationally....”*

---

Rosalyn Taylor O’Neale

---

# Closing Thoughts

---

**A**s the Council concluded its two-day discussions and deliberations, several members had closing thoughts for the Cooperative Extension System to consider as it continued on its Pathway to Diversity.

*“Consistently raise the issue of where the money is being spent,  
—Kim Cromwell*

*“This is not just about money... this is all about what we must do or we will die. It’s about the success of our future....Capitalize on strengths, autonomy, competitiveness, consensus process.”  
—Stephen Jones*

*“Have a vision; it is not clear that all people have the same vision. Do visioning with people. Create a safety net for the people who do the work (of diversity); that could encourage people to do it....Survival is the glue; as a Nation this country has to step up. As a Nation, it needs to build a different picture of what it looks like.”  
—Mary Lou Arey*

*“What we’ve done is good, but people want to see action.... Take credit for what has worked...Identify what still needs to be done, and do it!”  
—Magdalena (Millie) Torres*

*“Your organization can push the notion of lifelong learning... The journey is complicated.”  
—Judith Palmer*

*“Examine Goal Six; equitable aspects are about serving the whole American public, yet you are only addressing two fractions. There is exclusion in wording; no mention of funding for Indian people and schools.”  
—Ross Racine*

*“You are continuing your mission; as you look at existing structures, look for things you can build on. Modify; have mechanisms in place to bring about the changes you want. If someone who represents a large community is not comfortable, you need to examine why. Ross represents a large community that is not comfortable....”  
—Catherine Friedberg*

*“Sustained leadership supporting diversity is necessary to make things happen. At this initial stage, it might make more sense to concentrate on the Directors and Administrators; make as much use of them as internal and external advocates of diversity and pluralism.”  
—Billy Tidwell*

*“Avoid judgments and settings that are right/wrong. Be careful, judgments can put you in the hole!.. Also be careful about your language...about your words to others, theirs to you. This can create resistance to listening!”  
—Wil Williams*

# Council on Diversity in Extension

---

## Membership

**Mary Lou Arey**, *Independent Consultant*, Landenberg, PA

**Kim Cromwell**, *Corporate Valuing Differences Consultant*, Digital Equipment Corporation, Maynard, MA

**Catherine Friedberg**, *National Coordinator of Special Training*, Anti-Defamation League, New York, NY

**Steven Jones**, *The Campaign to End Homophobia*, Laurel, MD

**Terri W. Kruzan**, *Associate Director*, American Institute for Managing Diversity, Atlanta, GA

**Judith D. Palmer**, *Associate Director*, Finance Personnel Department, The Procter & Gamble Company, Cincinnati, OH

**Ross Racine**, *Intertribal Agriculture Council*, Billings, MT

**Rosalyn Taylor O'Neale**, *Independent Consultant*, R. Taylor O'Neale Associates, San Jose, CA

**Billy J. Tidwell**, *Director of Research*, National Urban League, Washington, DC

**Magdalena Torres**, *Communication Consultant*, Lynbrook, NY

**Wilford (Wil) Williams**, *Independent Consultant*, W. J. Williams, Associates, Three Bridges, NJ

The Cooperative Extension System, a national educational network established through legislation, is a partnership of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, state land-grant universities, and county government.

The Cooperative Extension System's programs are open to all citizens without regard to race, color, sex, handicap, religion, age, or national origin.