

## **The Scholarship of Extension: Implementing Extension's Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Whitepaper by PODC

Roger G. Adams, Reginal M. Harrell, Deborah J. Maddy, Daniel J. Weigel

The new century is a symbolic beginning that compels institutions and organizations to reflect upon their purpose, examine their vision, and determine whether they are prepared to cope with the changing world. The national Cooperative Extension System is no exception.

Extension must become the catalyst for connecting people to the wealth of relevant knowledge and research residing within various colleges and disciplines of the university and their partners. The Extension Systems' capacity to contribute to university- and community-wide engagement is prodigious. But in order to achieve the potential greatness, some overarching issues must be addressed at the System level and within the university culture itself. One of the issues is Scholarship of Extension.

Scholarship has been defined as the creation of something new that is both validated by peers, and communicated to others. Types of scholarship may include the: scholarship of discovery, integration, application, teaching, learning, and creative artistry (Boyer 1990; Weiser 1995; Glassick et al. 1997).

The Extension Committee on Organization and Policy's (ECOP) Personnel and Organizational Development Committee, promotes a framework for identifying and evaluating the scholarship of Extension. Obviously, most decisions must be made, applied, and evaluated by the host institution. The following is intended to serve as a guide to assist individual state Extension organizations and university administrations to discuss, develop, and implement a scholarship model, which recognizes, values, and rewards the Scholarship of Extension on an equal basis with the scholarship of Outreach from other units as well as the research and instruction mission within the *Engaged University*<sup>1,2</sup>.

### **Situation**

In the 1980s and 1990s many State Colleges and Land-Grant Institutions transitioned from the tripartite mission from teaching, research, and service to research, instruction, and outreach. Others maintained the mission of service. For those who switched there has been an ongoing struggle to define the scholarship of outreach outside of the context of service but within the context of traditional standards used for research and instruction (Boyer 1990; Weiser 1995; Glassick et al. 1997; Bull 1998; Driscoll and Lynton 1999; multiple authors in various monographs such as Penn State University 2000a,b; Olsen et al. 2001; ECOP 2002).

To further complicate the issue, some institutions do not equate the scholarship of extension with that of outreach. For example, the Auburn University Flynt Committee Report on Outreach

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nasulgc.org/publications/Agriculture/Ext%20Sys%20Vision.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nasulgc.org/publications/Kellogg/engage.pdf>

Assessment (Flynt et al. 1997) states, “When assessing outreach, the university is assessing a component of academic life different from the traditional functions of ‘cooperative extension’ and ‘service.’ Cooperative extension, as defined by a specific allocation of money with attendant duties, is a form of outreach...” Thus the problem of changing the antiquated paradigm of Cooperative Extension as an exclusively “service-oriented” organization is still prevalent in the minds of not only its clientele but its academic colleagues and administration as well.

The Flynt Report goes on to state “University outreach at Auburn has been defined as instruction or research ‘that is applied to the direct benefit of external audiences and that is directly relevant to the mission of the units in which the contributing faculty and staff members work.’ It is broader than extension and different than service.” Given the fact that the philosophy generated in the Flynt Report is common among many of our Land-Grant faculty and administrators it helps define the conceptual and image problems faced by Extension educators today. This information only serves to strengthen the argument that the applied research and education they conduct is indeed outreach scholarship.

Extension professionals are recognized by many different titles within the Land-Grant system ranging from Extension faculty, staff, agents, specialists, and educators. Because all of these labels encompass education, for purposes of this whitepaper when we refer to the term educator we are referring to all Extension professional regardless of what the local designations may be called. While “service and traditional extension models” are still important components of Cooperative Extension and is the expectation of some, it should not and does not any longer define Extension’s educational mission in its entirety.

We live in a fast-growing information age intermeshed with rapidly changing demographics of the age and ethnic diversity of our populations and, in many states, our rural communities are transitioning to urban-suburban environments. Defining extension’s audience from a traditional sense is becoming more difficult. We must broaden our expertise across many disciplines beyond our typical foundational areas such as production agriculture and youth and family development. Thus, regardless of whether a particular extension service organization is perceived as predominately service directed or more academically directed, in order for it to remain credible and relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it must strengthen its education presence. In doing so it must evolve into a “learner-oriented,” “partner-linked,” engaged organization. To accomplish this evolution, identification and meeting the needs of our stakeholders and partners is paramount. This dynamic, socio-cultural, and political environment requires each and every extension educator to invest in and commit to the scholarship of Extension.

### **Defining Scholarship of Extension**

Viewed as a dynamic process, the scholarship of Extension may be defined by what Boyer (1990) calls the “*scholarship of application.*” This is an effort to apply knowledge to a given situation and involves a two-way approach in which new understandings can emerge during the process. It is a process of discovery and integration of knowledge (Olsen et al. 2001). Boyer and others note that this perspective of scholarship both *applies and contributes* to human knowledge and is crucial in a world where almost insurmountable, intractable problems call for the talents that only the academy can provide (Boyer 1990; Olsen et al. 2001). Penn State University (2000b) developed for their

promotion and tenure system, the UniSCOPE, a multidimensional model that conceptualizes the three mission areas of the University – teaching, research, and service as a continuum of scholarship.

### **Guiding Principles**

Scholarship of Extension is equivalent to other forms of scholarship in that it:

- 1) Supports the Land-Grant mission
- 2) Adds distinction to the profession and/or discipline
- 3) Exists in several forms including extension, research, and teaching
- 4) Expects scholarship to be consistent with position descriptions
- 5) Identifies standards for evaluating scholarship
- 6) Conforms to the ethical principles of the profession

Therefore, scholarship is an expectation of all extension educators.

### **Definition**

*Scholarship of Extension is the creation, integration and application of research-based knowledge whose significance is validated by peers and communicated for the adoption and benefit of communities and citizens.*

A core function of the State Colleges and Land-Grant University Systems is outreach, and it often represents the scholarship of application in a setting both internal and external to the university. In those institutions where educators serve in public service appointments, outreach may be considered service, and service is crucial to job security and promotion, but **not** at the expense of education.

“Public service is principally involved in the identification, development, and rendering of service to individuals, communities, organizations, and public service agencies in support of their own purposes and functions. Public service activities deal basically with the public-policy needs of society. Problem oriented, they rely heavily upon the integration of knowledge from many disciplines as well as the application of an experience-based understanding of real-world relationships and phenomena” (University of Georgia 2000). Common examples of service include: responding to questions from the public, providing diagnoses and identifications, providing publications or web site addresses, solving problems, working on policy development, and arranging logistics for a meeting, as well as contributions made on boards, committees, and councils.

Service to the community, the university, and one’s profession are important, but must be balanced by education and the scholarship of this education. Education focuses on outcomes, impacts and results, and changes in knowledge and behavior. It is the source of scholarly efforts and products associated with outreach. It also provides an essential feedback for defining or refining research needs. For outreach to be effective, service, education, and research are intertwined to form a continuous loop whereby a user asks a question, which identifies a need for a new or on-going

educational program, stimulating research to determine the answer either intellectually or empirically, then transferring that knowledge to the original user. The challenge for the educator is to maintain an appropriate balance between education and service (Bull 1998). It is also incumbent for the educator to provide feedback or independently research the issue as appropriate.

Extension educators must be knowledgeable about the latest developments in their field and be well prepared to educate others. A mastery of existing knowledge both in content and process is necessary to provide high quality assistance to outreach audiences (Portland State University 2000). Extension educators utilize the literature in their fields or disciplines, other sources of scholarly information or, occasionally, conduct applied research themselves to develop new extension outreach education knowledge and/or programs and to further enhance existing programs. Thus Extension educators have a professional responsibility to contribute scholarly products and outcomes to the literature and to other knowledge and experience-based vehicles of information exchange (Adams 1999).

Coupled to the professional responsibility and accountability of information exchange, whether peer-review or popular literature, a crucial component of the scholarship of outreach is the effectiveness of communication (Olsen et al. 2001). Whether oral or written, clarity of communication of research- or community-based knowledge into a format or language easily understandable by a target audience is as much an art as a science and requires the individual to have that “mastery of knowledge” mentioned above. Boyer (1990) stated ... “To make complex ideas understandable to a large audience can be a difficult, demanding task, one that requires not only a deep and thorough knowledge of one’s field, but keen literary skills, as well.” He felt that just as much as providing to the wealth of peer-review literature was important in defining scholarship, communicating to the non-specialist was a legitimate scholarly endeavor as well. He further elaborated that while establishing the right standards and identifying proper peers for validation of this work may be difficult, it is nonetheless important.

Boyer also provided a mechanism to identify whether these non-specialist communication efforts fall within the confines of scholarship by answering the following questions; “Does the work show a careful understanding of the discipline? Have key issues been well defined and creative insights well presented? Has the essential message been well clarified?” Educators should therefore subject their scholarly ideas and findings to critical inquiry and independent review among professional peers. The use of effective communication, regardless of the audience, facilitates the learning of new knowledge (Portland State University, 2000; Olsen et. al., 2001).

### **Indicators of Scholarship**

The scholarship of extension is an expectation of all extension educators. Educators should develop a diversified portfolio of scholarly products, creative works, and outcomes over the course of their career. This portfolio may include: newsletter and newspaper articles; fact sheets; bulletins and magazine articles; new curricula and courses; educational manuals and teaching guides; books; published abstracts and proceedings of presentations at professional meetings and conferences; peer-review journal articles; grant proposals; educational games; web sites; distance education non-credit courses; computer programs, simulations and data bases; videotapes, audiocassettes and CD-ROMs (Adams 1999; Portland State University 2000; Olsen et. al. 2001). The portfolio reflects the

result of or foundation for individual excellence in educational programming.

By widely disseminating the knowledge and experience gained in a research or community-based project through published scholarship efforts, extension educators share its significance with those who do not benefit directly from the project or program. Educators can make a substantial scholarly contribution and gain critical acclaim by communicating methodological innovations, curricular developments, and other results to professional peers who may adopt the approaches and findings (Portland State University 2000; Olsen et al. 2001).

Extension scholarship should not be considered complete until an evaluation of the effort is undertaken. In actuality, evaluation should be as much of the planning, development, and implementation process as it is in the final accountability component (University of Wisconsin 2000). Scholarly evaluations determine the degree to which the intended outcomes and impacts of the program were achieved with the target audience, as well as the larger community. Credible evaluation for measuring the significance of results requires the input from multiple sources, not just direct user satisfaction. Extension educators must use evaluation feedback at all levels to empirically measure the quality and significance of their intellectual contribution and to improve the quality of future work (University of Wisconsin 2000). Possible indicators of extension program effectiveness are achieved through audience or clientele contacts; peer and leader evaluations; program reputation; outcome-based criteria such as changes in audience awareness, attitudes, knowledge levels, and behaviors, in addition to changes in societal indicators (Portland State University 2000; University of Wisconsin 2000; Olsen et. al. 2001).

Academic integrity must be beyond reproach. The one thing that separates Extension educators from all the other sources of information is that we provide unbiased research-based knowledge. Extension's integrity must be its highest standard and should be held inviolate in terms of honesty and objectivity. This integrity is the basis for almost 90 years of established respectful relationships with our clientele and stakeholders. Coupled to the Extension code of ethics is honoring the contributions of others and acknowledgement of sources of information regardless of where or how it is used (Portland State University 2000; Olsen et. al. 2001).

For the continued acceptance and advancement of Extension scholarship, quality indicators are paramount. Benchmarks that indicate the quality of these scholarship efforts may include the following:

- Ability to attract external resources
- Publication
- Economic and/or social impact
- Adoption and/or replication by peers
- Adoption by clientele
- Recognition by peers
- Presentations to peers

### **Recommendations**

- ECOP establish a national dialogue, directed by PODC, to integrate the definition, guiding principles, and quality indicator benchmarks throughout the system.

- ECOP facilitate the integration of this whitepaper with the Scholarship of Engagement efforts.
- Extension Directors and Administrators create opportunities within their respective university community to embrace the tenets provided in this whitepaper, and supported through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Third Letter of the Kellogg Commission's reports.
- The National Cooperative Extensive System adopt the definition, guiding principles, and quality indicator benchmarks as a national standard.

### Summary

The tradition of recognizing scholarship, as being applied to real world problems, had its historical roots in academia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That trend gave way to thinking of Extension and service-oriented scholarship as citizenship activities rather than as a serious body of knowledge in which theory and practice are rigorously connected for addressing social problems (Boyer 1990; Driscoll et al. 1999). Today Extension is evolving toward a “learner-center” *Engaged* organization, which appropriately seeks to be an active and credible equal partner within academia. Reviving the applied approach expands the current definition of scholarship and requires new ways to measure it (Glassick et al. 1997) in the Engaged University of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **References**

- Adams, Roger G. (1999). Cooperative Extension Unit (CEU) Criteria for Promotion, Tenure and Reappointment. University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System.
- Boyer, Ernest L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. New York.
- Bull, Nancy H. (1998). Defining Scholarship for the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System. University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System.
- Driscoll, Amy and Lynton, Ernest, A. (1999). Making Outreach Visible, A Guide to Documenting Professional Service and Outreach. American Association for Higher Education Forum on Faculty Roles & Rewards.
- Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) (2002). The Extension System: A Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.  
<http://www.nasulgc.org/publications/Agriculture/Ext%20Sys%20Vision.pdf>
- Flynt, J. Wayne. (1997). Faculty Participation in Outreach Scholarship: An Assessment Model. Report of the Committee on Assessment of Outreach, Auburn University, Auburn, AL.  
<http://www.auburn.edu/outreach/flynt>
- Glassick, Charles E., Huber, Mary Taylor, and Gene I. Maeroff, (1997). *Scholarship assessed:*

*Evaluation of the professoriate.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Lynton, Ernest, A. (1995). Making the Case for Professional Service. American Association for Higher Education Forum on Faculty Roles & Rewards.

Olsen, Charlotte S., Robert Bowden, Michael Langemeier, Charles Marr, Steve Paisley, Derald Stokka and David Mengel (2001). Scholarship of Extension. Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service.

Penn State University (2000a). Best Practices in Outreach and Public Service: The “Scholarship of Engagement” for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Penn State University Outreach and Cooperative Extension.

Penn State University (2000b). UniSCOPE 2000: A Multidimensional Model of Scholarship for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Penn State University.

Portland State University (2000). Promotion and tenure guidelines. Portland State University. <http://www.ozz.pdx.edu/oadoc/PTGUIDE/Scholarship/scholarship4.html>.

School of Family Studies and Human Services (2000). Documentation guide for promotion, tenure, and reappointment. Manhattan, KS: Kansas State University College of Human Ecology.

Society for College Science Teachers (2000). The scholarship of college science teaching. <http://newton.clayton.edu/scst/TFSCO6.html>

University of Georgia (2000). Public Service and Outreach Academic Rank Guidelines for Appointments and Promotion. University of Georgia, Athens.

University of Wisconsin (2000). Providing Leadership for Program Evaluation. University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Weiser, Conrad J. (1995). The Value System of a University – Rethinking Scholarship. Oregon State University.