


# STRATEGIC PLAN

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE  
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Putting  
Knowledge  
to Work



June 1, 1993

## Preface

The first strategic planning undertaken by the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service was when the very first county agents arrived in their counties at around the same time the boll weevils got there, making critical the need for alternative crops and changes in production practices and intensifying educational needs as private as home canning and as overarching as rural electrification.

Since those first days the Extension Service has always been involved in strategic planning: assessing the needs of the people it serves and determining the best means available to bring the educational resources of the University to bear in meeting those needs.

Never was there a more critical need for strategic planning than in the situation facing the Cooperative Extension Service at the end of 1991, when in the wake of a state budget crisis the organization found its budget reduced by virtually a third, a reduction necessarily reflected in a loss of a valued part of the work force and the programs they directed. Questions abounded on all sides of the central question: How can the downsized Extension Service effectively meet the educational needs of the people of Georgia?

Fortunately, the Extension family of able educators learned well the lessons Extension has taught for 75 years. They threw their energies into the process that had helped Georgians through other crises: reassess your strengths, map your strategy, and forge ahead.

And their energies are considerable. Early in 1992 an advisory conference planning task force was formed. The group gathered input from throughout the Extension Service and convened the Focus Forward Advisory Conference in December 1992, bringing together 385 community leaders from every county in Georgia in two intensive days of input-gathering and recommendations.

By the time the conference was over, the second step had already begun: A strategic planning task force took the proceedings from Focus Forward, along with other inputs, and forged this strategic plan.

This Extension Service strategic plan is not an exact set of step-by-step objectives for the next three years or five years, but a dynamic guideline, a process by which the Extension team may become even better at the things that have always been their strengths: determining local needs and using education to meet those needs in ways that make people better: better farmers, better families, better citizens.

I am grateful for the efforts of so many Extension co-workers who have taken roles in the advisory conference / strategic planning process from which this strategic plan has evolved. I am convinced their efforts will have been well-expended; I am confident that as we focus forward on the implementation of this strategic plan, the citizens of Georgia will become its ultimate benefactors.

C. Wayne Jordan  
Director

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## INTRODUCTION

**T**he University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service has a tradition of providing services needed to bolster the well-being of the people of the state. From the beginning, county agents helped farmers adopt modern practices, home economists taught homemakers essential skills, and 4-H programs provided youth an opportunity to develop leadership ability while learning skills needed later in life.

When most Georgians lived in rural communities and depended on production agriculture for their livelihood and few women worked outside the home, the role of Extension was obvious. Today, agriculture remains Georgia's largest industry but employs a small percentage of people in production of food and fiber. Technology has replaced people on the farm.

Similarly, family life has changed, with most women holding jobs outside the home. Many services and goods are purchased rather than produced in the home. Traditional homemaking skills have evolved as technology and family structures have changed. Youth have many opportunities to broaden their experience. What should be the role of Extension today?

The Georgia Cooperative Extension Service must remain strong in agriculture. It is in a unique position to continue as the premiere provider of agricultural education, technological information and service. The University of Georgia President Charles Knapp said, "Agriculture is important to the economic and social well-being of Georgia and it should always be the home base of the Extension Service." This theme was echoed by delegates to the advisory conference Focus Forward — "Don't forget the farmer."

Extension also must continue to be attentive to the people's needs. Just as farm supply dealers now stock tractor tires instead of mule collars, so must Extension remain current with its information base and methods of delivery. Agriculture and home economics are technology based and require high-tech people and high-tech communications. Consumers are more health conscious, demanding safe and nutritious food. Extension is in an ideal position to educate and reassure the public about the healthy nature of our food supply but is challenged to deliver this information to a diverse clientele, more urban than rural. Also, 4-H still offers unique, science-based programs that Georgia youths need.

Extension is faced with many demands for research-based information to solve a multitude of modern-day problems throughout the state. President Knapp commented, "The Extension Service must move beyond the farm gate where the interests of agriculture and society intersect." At the national level, the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, Kika de la Garza, said, "The extension service does not belong to rural America; it belongs to all Americans." He further stated, "It has to fulfill the needs of urban America through agriculture and the things agriculture does."

President Knapp summed it up best: "[Extension] must continue to adapt to changing needs but must keep itself anchored to its strategic role in agriculture and agribusiness."

**VALUES  
& BELIEFS**

*Values*

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service values:

- The work ethic.
- Honesty.
- The land grant concept.
- Its rich heritage as an agency for change and problem-solving.
- The extension of knowledge to people.
- Excellence in programming with continuous improvement through technology, communication and training.

*Beliefs*

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service believes in:

- The hopes and aspirations of people.
- The value of local programming.
- The ideal that through education people can be empowered to enlarge and enrich their own lives.
- The land grant concept and in the public institutions of which it is a part, and in the mutual benefits that come from working together.
- The county delivery system.
- The importance of agriculture.
- Its people. In humility, but with sincerity of purpose, the Cooperative Extension Service staff offers to work with Georgians to help them become healthier, more productive, financially independent and environmentally responsible.
- Its work and the opportunity to be of service to society and to the economic success of the state and the country.
- The concept that families and communities depend on each other.
- The concept that families are crucial to the success of society.
- Youth and their longings for opportunity; and their right to trained minds, healthy bodies and the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential.
- The value of cultural diversity in the workforce and among the clientele it serves.

**VISION, MISSION  
& PHILOSOPHY**

*Vision*

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service is committed to excellence in:

- Providing technical support to agriculture and consumers.
- Taking the lead to help Georgians become healthier, more productive, financially independent and environmentally responsible.
- Educating Georgians with timely, accurate, comprehensive information.
- Building coalitions to address issues facing communities, families and youth.
- Earning a reputation for integrity and respecting all people.

*Mission*

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service responds to the people's needs and interests in agriculture, the environment, families and 4-H/youth in Georgia with unbiased, research-based education.

*Philosophy*

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service:

- Is a valued component of the land grant system and of The University of Georgia Public Service Program.
- Is a people organization that demonstrates care for every client and values every employee.
- Hires top quality employees, offers continual training, provides the necessary operating and managerial support, and rewards good work.
- Adheres to a strong code of ethics and conduct, respecting the trust the people of Georgia place in its employees.
- Operates with a vision of Georgia's future and Extension's place in it under the guidance of action-oriented managers.

The Strategic Plan of the Georgia Cooperative Extension Service recommends a series of actions that can provide direction and focus to the organization, heighten accountability and awareness, and promote excellence.

**PLANS  
OF ACTION**

**ACTION 1:  
Communications  
Technology**

Extension must achieve and maintain state-of-the-art information transfer and communication networks to communicate within the organization and to deliver educational information.

**A. Strategy: Develop an information network.**

1. Establish a high technology computer expert position to build, maintain and manage a system for communicating and delivering information.

2. Conduct needs assessment using an outside technology firm working with University staff, Cooperative Extension Service Educational Support Services staff, and the computer leader to determine needs and set priorities. All areas of information transfer need to be explored, including but not limited to computers, distance learning, toll-free numbers for information hotlines, and other voice communications.

3. An action committee will develop a plan to fund and support a new communications system. This new system will be supported statewide by the Cooperative Extension Service with staff training, new equipment, and maintenance support for equipment and updating technology.

**B. Outcomes:**

1. Rapid response to multiple client and staff communication needs.

2. Increased efficiency in use of funds by reducing travel, publications, cost and postage.

3. An educational resource center in each county that is the doorway to The University of Georgia.

**C. Resources:** Implementation will take a significant investment in people and electronic equipment. Needs are:

1. Funds to build a communication technology system.

2. Adequate staffing for in-service training and system maintenance.

3. Staff time for service on planning and steering committee.

4. Funds for material development.

**D. Collaboration:**

Collaboration with the University Computer Service, Cooperative Extension Service Educational Support Services, USDA, PEACHNET, University GALIN and corporate groups is essential to develop and implement a network/system that can best serve the interests of the Extension Service and clients.

The strengthening of needs assessment and effective programming are vital to the continued excellence of the Cooperative Extension Service. Grassroots support and input through systematic use of advisory committees at county, district and state levels are major components of this process and its outcome. (Focus Forward delegates identified priorities for Extension to address. See Appendix I.)

**ACTION 2:  
Needs  
Assessment**

**A. Strategy 1: Designate a program development (needs assessment) coordinator for:**

- Guiding the development and implementation of advisory committees.
- Directing the needs assessment process.
- Training Extension personnel in needs assessment.

**B. Strategy 2: Develop a comprehensive needs assessment plan using advisory committees.**

1. Include a clarification of the roles of agents, specialists and administrators in identifying priorities of the organization.
2. Use surveys, phone logs, one-on-one contacts, reputational surveys, UGA survey research center, advisory committees and other needs assessment techniques.
3. Recruit, develop and use advisory committees as a critical part of the needs assessment process.
4. Review the needs assessment plan, usage of advisory committees and implementation of suggestions/advice through the use of an annual report.
5. Convene a periodic statewide advisors' conference to assess Cooperative Extension Service's grassroots involvement and to recognize and reward advisory committee members.

**C. Strategy 3: Establish a standing committee representing all levels of the organization, including the director, which regularly reviews and refines the organization's strategic plan.**

**D. Strategy 4: Revise the performance appraisal process to include progress toward meeting the goals of the strategic plan.**

**E. Strategy 5: Designate a public policy educator to track legislation affecting agriculture, natural resources, family and youth issues.**

**F. Outcomes:**

1. Sensitivity to grassroots needs and improved ability to tailor resources and priorities to meet those local needs and provide quality programming.
2. Advisory committee use would result in increased visibility and support for programming.
3. Uniform advisory committee mission, objectives, functions and programs would be implemented through all levels of the organization.
4. The effectiveness of Cooperative Extension Service staff in developing and using needs assessment tools and advisory committees would be assessed through the performance evaluation process.
5. Continual review and refinement of strategic plan.

**ACTION 3:  
Marketing**

**G. Resources:**

1. Needs assessment coordinator.
2. Staff training on needs assessment and effective development, recruitment advisory committees.
3. Funds for state and district advisory committee activities.
4. Funds for material development.
5. Staff support for strategic planning.

**H. Collaboration:**

Effective needs assessment will provide information we can share with many groups and will open the door to obtain their information in return. Advisory committee members will share results with the rest of the community while also gathering information for Cooperative Extension Service to use.

A clear image of the Cooperative Extension Service's mission, vision, values, educational services, and affiliation with the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and The University is necessary to communicate consistent messages inside and outside the organization.

- A. Strategy 1: Hire a marketing specialist and/or use a UGA or outside marketing resource to lead in designing and implementing a comprehensive marketing plan.**
- B. Strategy 2: Develop a comprehensive marketing plan for county, district and state levels to reach both internal and external audiences. Identify staff roles and a system for accountability related to the overall plan. The marketing plan would include the marketing levels already identified:**

Marketing the Organization - Develop a statewide mass media campaign, logo, slogan and annual reports on program impact.

Marketing Extension Programs - Communicate the needs and community support for programs, program successes and program impact.

Marketing Relationships - Facilitate communications with legislators, University officials, Board of Regents, and Extension's supporters.

**C. Outcomes:**

1. Clear communication of the organization's mission, vision, impact, uniqueness and ability to deliver services.
2. Involvement of staff and supporters in marketing and promotion of the Cooperative Extension Service's mission, impact and uniqueness.
3. Increased visibility for The University of Georgia's effectiveness in addressing local critical issues through the Cooperative Extension Service.



**D. Resources:**

1. Expertise in developing a marketing plan.
2. Staff to coordinate marketing plan with the marketing committee.
3. Funds for development of marketing materials.

**E. Collaboration:**

Collaborate with business and industry and with other units of the University system and ES-USDA that may have a marketing component and could support the development of a marketing plan.

Given the recommendations of the Strategic Plan and the needs of a diverse clientele, modifying staffing patterns and the organizational structure will improve the quality of management, availability of subject matter expertise, and allocation of resources.

**A. Strategy 1: Provide basic orientation training to enable personnel to understand and function effectively within the Extension system.**

1. Implement entry-level mentor training for new agents and specialists providing a full understanding of the Extension system and all program areas.

- During the first six months of employment, agents would work in state-funded county mentor programs and receive evaluation before being assigned to a county Extension role in another location. This would extend the probationary period to 18 months. Salary should be normal entry level. The program would orient and train inexperienced new employees.
- Within the first 12 months of employment, subject matter specialists would spend two to five working days in each of two county settings around the state. Specialists should be exposed to all three program areas and experiences determined to be important by an ad hoc committee of agents and specialists.
- Evaluate, modify and accelerate core training to include collaboration, strategic planning, needs assessment, marketing, advisory committee development and other actions to complete the strategic plan.

2. Orient all newly hired Extension professionals, paraprofessionals and support staff, as well as volunteers, in the vision/mission of the Cooperative Extension Service, its history and the organizational structure (via videotapes).

**B. Strategy 2: Provide for, support, and reward professional development at all levels.**

1. Develop a career ladder for agents which would include criteria for promotion and salary increase for completion of specified levels of approved internal and external training. Promotion system should parallel that used for specialists to include peer review, two step increases, and mandatory termination if not promoted within seven years of initial hiring. Committee of county agents with help as needed from specialists and administrators should develop criteria.

**ACTION 4:  
Human Resources**

2. Continue to encourage professional development by allowing and supporting release time for work toward advanced degrees and other opportunities.

3. Establish criteria for management positions. Successful completion of management training or demonstration of management skills is a prerequisite for consideration for a managerial position.

**C. Strategy 3: Establish staffing patterns that promote operational efficiency and effectiveness.**

1. Strive to reflect the cultural diversity of the state through staff appointments and hiring at all levels.

2. Streamline the organization administratively at all levels to provide equitable representation of county and state staff, including changing district staff to a single manager responsible for administration, programs and productivity in 15-20 counties.

3. Ensure balanced programming, career opportunities for Extension faculty, and equity in salaries for the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. The college should promote a balance within the administrative staff by encouraging the appointment or hiring of department heads equally from research, teaching and Extension backgrounds.

4. The 1992 College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences' Reorganization Plan should continue to be studied by Cooperative Extension Service to determine impacts on programming, position in leadership, financial savings, funding, recruitment of quality personnel and personnel administration.

- Appropriate adjustments should be undertaken if the resulting impacts deviate from Extension's goals and objectives.
- Cooperation and collaboration should be strongly encouraged within the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences to assure the people of Georgia timely, accurate, meaningful technology for the decision making process. Clear administrative lines should be maintained for Extension, research and teaching.

5. Strengthen subject matter support and programming to adequately meet identified needs.

- Examine identified needs in Georgia and set priorities for funding subject matter specialists based on those needs.
- Implement a pilot program to determine the feasibility of using county agents with expertise in specific areas as multi-county subject matter specialists.
- Place subject matter specialists at locations in the state to optimize service to county agents.
- Contract with University, public and private sectors to develop programs in specific areas. Once the program is developed and agents are trained, these funds would be used for another issue.

6. Revisit the UGA classification system for classified employees and the titles for professional Extension personnel.

7. Expand staffing patterns to include flex time, shared positions and permanent part-time positions to meet the changing needs of clientele, boost morale and improve efficiency and effectiveness of employees.

8. Increase the use of paraprofessionals and University of Georgia and university system student interns.

9. Develop a process for recruiting, screening, educating, managing, evaluating and rewarding volunteers and for training Extension professionals in this process.

**D. Outcomes:**

1. Better service to clientele by improved staff training from adequate and accessible subject matter specialists.

2. Higher self-esteem from a better understanding and appreciation of the Extension system.

3. Expanded support base from increased visibility and stronger Extension programs from increased use of volunteers.

4. Increased organizational efficiency through improved staffing patterns.

5. New ideas from outside sources.

6. Better use of employees' abilities through multi-county and mentoring efforts.

**E. Resources:**

1. Funding and personnel to provide orientation, management, subject matter training and support for county programming.

2. Support and staff time for training and coordination of volunteer programs.

**FINANCES**

**A. Strategy: To remain the leader in delivering timely, unbiased, research-based educational programs to the citizens of Georgia, Extension must be creative in its approach to garnering financial resources. To develop and improve funding mechanisms, the Cooperative Extension Service should:**

1. Allocate resources to priority areas and maximize the use of funds.
2. Seek additional sources of public and private funding:
  - Encourage the development, sales and distribution of marketable products and processes when and where possible.

Patents and copyrights should be sought when appropriate to protect the Cooperative Extension Service's investment. The needs of limited resource clientele must be considered when a product or process is marketed. Collection of fees should be administered centrally and uniformly.

- Employ a professional grantsperson to lead extramural funding efforts consistent with UGA policies.
- Pursue grants for programming within the scope of the Cooperative Extension Service mission and vision, and train Extension professionals in fund development techniques.
- Encourage establishment of a competitive grants program within UGA Public Service to foster collaboration.
- Seek corporate loans when compatible with the Cooperative Extension Service mission, vision and identified priority program areas. Corporate support could include people, facilities, in-kind contributions, materials, transportation and other resources.

**A. Strategy: The Cooperative Extension Service seeks to develop relationships to facilitate efforts with research, teaching and service components of the University, University system groups, and related agencies. These efforts will identify and support priority issues, but it is imperative that Cooperative Extension Service maintains its identity and receives appropriate acknowledgement for its contributions.**

**COLLABORATION**

1. Collaborate with other University departments and public agencies to avoid duplication of programs.
  - Encourage Cooperative Extension Service staff to develop cross-disciplinary efforts at all levels of the University and reward collaboration through the performance appraisal process.
  - Encourage development of written agreements defining roles and responsibilities of collaborative partners.
  - Training and programs at all levels should provide appropriate interdisciplinary planning, networking and coalition-building.
  - Implementation of a county-based, UGA classroom using advanced technology.
2. Collaborate with industry, associations and organizations.

**B. Outcomes:**

1. Efficient use of Georgia citizens' human and financial resources.
2. Improved and increased interaction, communication and support between Cooperative Extension Service educators, researchers, teaching faculty and corresponding partners.
3. Increased program impact on identified needs.
4. Resource bank of programs and services offered by collaborating partners.

**APPENDIX I**

The 385 Focus Forward Advisory Conference delegates each completed a survey and listed problems they considered most important for Extension to address. They identified the following priorities in the three major programs areas: agriculture, home economics and 4-H. (Problems identified in the community area have been integrated with the other categories.)

Agriculture (Farm/Agribusiness)

| <u>Mentioned Most Often</u> | <u>Considered Most Important</u> |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Marketing                   | Marketing                        |
| Environmental Issues        | Environment                      |
| Environment                 | Technology                       |
| Recycling                   | Water                            |
| Waste and Solid waste       |                                  |
| Technology                  |                                  |
| Water                       |                                  |

Home Economics (Family and Consumers)

| <u>Mentioned Most Often</u> | <u>Considered Most Important</u> |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Nutrition                   | Nutrition                        |
| Diet and Health             | Diet and Health                  |
| Family                      | Parenting                        |
| Values                      | Values                           |
| Financial                   |                                  |
| Parenting                   |                                  |
| Budget                      |                                  |

4-H (Children and Youth)

Mentioned Most Often

Drugs  
 Leadership  
 Teen Pregnancy  
 Values  
 Sex

Considered Most Important

Leadership  
 Values  
 Drugs

(Refer to Focus Forward Proceedings pages 23 and 24 for more details. County needs assessment will fine tune programming.)

**STRATEGIC  
 PLANNING  
 COMMITTEE**

Ilene Dailey, co-chair  
 Bill Lambert, co-chair  
 Ron Atkinson  
 Bruce Beck  
 Mary Ellen Blackburn  
 Mickey Fourakers  
 John Gunter  
 Rosalyn Joseph  
 JoAnn McCloud-Harrison  
 Charles McPeake  
 Roosevelt McWilliams  
 Debbie Purvis  
 Tony Roberts  
 Rose Simmons  
 Arch Smith  
 Emma Thornton  
 Mary White  
 John Woodruff  
 Joe Courson, administrative liaison, ex-officio  
 Lamar Martin, ex-officio  
 Ann Peisher, ex-officio

Special thanks goes to members of Educational Support Services and to the Bibb County Extension Office for their help in facilitating and preparing the Strategic Plan.