



AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>
aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

THE COMBINED RESOURCES OF THE INSTITUTION — HOW IT WORKS

*Charles E. Donhowe, District Supervisor
Extension Service, Iowa State University*

Extension supervisors, because of their role in middle management, deal directly with problems of providing to the public the benefits of the combined resources of the land-grant institution. This role is an emerging one as the role of extension supervisors changes to meet the demands placed on a modern Extension Service.

Within the past fifteen years the responsibilities of supervisors, which traditionally have included the recruiting and training of staff members and the maintenance of extension activities have expanded to include broad program leadership. During this period specialist groups have often expressed concern about supervisors' shortcomings in general leadership and their failure to promote specific subject matter areas.

Supervisor conferences and workshops, increased understanding and refinement of program development principles and procedures, and experience in meeting broad problems which require an interdepartmental, interdisciplinary response have placed supervisors in a new role of program leadership. How can they fulfill this role? Certainly institutional resources must be coordinated and combined and be made available to county extension offices.

The combined resources of the institution infer a responsibility not only to agriculture but also beyond agriculture. Local people should be entitled to call on the resources of a public supported institution to meet their concerns in any areas where the institution has competence.

The institution assumes that adult education is one of its significant functions. It recognizes that much adult education is less than adequate both in method and content. From a careful analysis of purpose and function, the institution can develop its area of priorities, educational standards, and concepts of institutional extension activities.

We cannot assume that everything is all right in Cooperative Extension and that the only problem is expanding a concept to the other colleges. Although real progress has been made in coordinating and integrating the traditional lines of Cooperative Extension work, continued efforts are needed toward interdepart-

mental and interdisciplinary work. What are the elements of this problem?

Interdepartmental efforts raise concerns about who will lead, who will play the important supporting role, and who will get credit. One of the dangers is the development of an interdepartmental package program which may not fill completely a county request which developed through planning committees. This issue challenges concepts of grass roots and state leadership, the validity of program planning, and the objectives of staff members at both the state and county level.

The key to these concerns in connection with Cooperative Extension and the entire institution appears to be staff agreement achieved through committee participation; seminar attendance and presentation, discussion, and review of papers; and involvement in implementation and evaluation.

But this solution seems too pat. The capacity of the several departments and colleges within the university to withhold their cooperation and resources is obviously considerable. What is needed is a process which creates institutional policy, operating logic, and joint commitment. The important education function carried on by scholars in the classroom must be designed to flow to an audience beyond the campus community. This calls for study by the institution of what is required from the institution and from the Cooperative Extension Service. Within this study the opportunity and obligation to perform new tasks can be seen. Changes in procedures, habits, and programs are at best difficult and slow and require flexible plans because the concept is vague.

Turning specifically to Cooperative Extension, several principles and considerations seem to be important:

1. The county office is the key service point of the Extension Service and its program. Effective performance by the county office is the principal measure of the effectiveness of the whole system.

2. Not all staff members respond to the same "push." Performance is not uniformly high.

3. High level performance results in new and important status in the public mind. Demands increase.

4. Performance goals must be established. Staffs capable of high levels of performance must be given the necessary tools.

5. Successful state-wide programming need not develop all parts

of the system at the same speed. All parts must be challenged to develop at a pace consistent with county interest and capacity. This requires program guides, manuals, and aids as tools. Interpretation of these are administrative and supervisory responsibilities. The result is a genuine program leadership which will come from key counties as well as district and state staff members.

6. The role of the district supervisor is expanding. It includes the supervision and coordination of program efforts, responsibility for interdisciplinary efforts, program leadership in the district team, staff training fitted to the county with adaptations of the state-wide effort. The problem of the supervisor is to manage the numerous details in his work load.

7. The state director's office should assume a primary responsibility in initiating and coordinating programs that are interdepartmental in character or state-wide in scope.

From these principles and considerations and the development of a broad university extension function can evolve a service which provides a base and resource for education to: (1) guide the management of economic and social change and (2) improve the quality of life for its people, both rural and urban.