

**CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS, 2008–2012**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Administrative Strategic Directions Plan for 2008–2012 is designed to help the Cornell Cooperative Extension system meet the needs of New Yorkers over the next five years. In creating this document, leadership staff reexamined Cornell Cooperative Extension requirements, the system’s commitment to Cornell University’s land grant mission, and its leadership role as the outreach component of Cornell University.

Intended for internal use by Extension Administration leadership (Director, Associate Director, State Specialists, and other senior administrators), the document emphasizes direct and indirect ways to effect improvement in program quality and impact and concentrates on the needs of educators and faculty, the functions of the organization, and the structure and administration of the system. The plan addresses the following key areas:

- Program Development
- Campus Partners
- Cooperative Extension Associations
- Cooperative Extension Educators
- Professional Development
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Cooperative Extension Administration
- Changing Funding Structures
- Communications
- Information Technology

**INTRODUCTION**

The Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) system is a broad and diverse outreach component of Cornell University. Its unique structure integrates faculty and staff from more than 20 departments in two colleges (Agriculture and Life Sciences and Human Ecology), the university’s experiment stations and laboratories, and 56 County Associations. Active throughout New York State, the system is comprised of more than 1,700 employees. As the largest outreach arm at Cornell University, CCE is a known and trusted educational resource with a 95-year history in the communities of New York State.

The Cornell Cooperative Extension system works in part because of its inherent ability to change. Enduring success will require the system to engage in multidisciplinary, integrated approaches that effectively address complex, contemporary issues. In order to

thrive, particularly in an increasingly unstable environment, the system—from county to campus—must not only be reactive by responding to community needs but also be proactive by developing safeguards in its methods of operation.

Through 2005, Cornell Cooperative Extension Administration developed and implemented a series of strategic plans designed to improve and refine existing systems. These efforts are complete, and CCE has strong Extension education programs, reliable mechanisms in place to support, monitor, and evaluate high-impact programs, and consistent local needs assessment strategies that ensure contemporary community needs are known and addressed.

However, the far-reaching CCE system requires continual attention, evaluation, refinement, and guidance. The Administrative Strategic Directions Plan for 2008–2012 has been developed in consultation with senior staff and Association leadership to provide the system with further definition and direction. In addition to outlining recommended strategies in a number of key system areas, this plan describes some system beliefs integral to the plan’s design: mission, vision, core values, guiding principles, and roles and responsibilities of Extension Administration. These views inform the plan’s goals and tactics.

### **CCE Mission**

To improve the lives of New Yorkers through educational partnerships that put scholarship and local knowledge to work.

### **CCE Vision**

The lives, endeavors, and enterprises of all New Yorkers are informed and improved by engaging communities with the intellectual resources of Cornell University and the land grant system.

### **Core CCE Values**

Scholarship  
Research  
Learning  
Collaboration  
Accountability  
Responsiveness  
Inclusiveness  
Leadership

### **Guiding Principles**

- CCE functions to support and carry out the land grant mission of Cornell University, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS), and the College of Human Ecology (CHE).

- CCE is in business to support the delivery of locally relevant Extension programs to communities in New York State.
- Extension Administration supports improvement in and expansion of Cornell Cooperative Extension programming in Departments and Units on Campus.
- Major statewide programs will involve professorial academic leadership.
- Extension Administration encourages improvement in Cornell Cooperative Extension County Associations.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Extension Administration**

- Structuring “the system” for the future
- Ensuring programs are linked with resources both on campus and off campus
- Managing systems to mitigate conflicts that arise from operations in a complex educational system
- Identifying priority initiatives and allocate FTE efforts to priorities
- Intentional refinement of business systems, program priorities, structure
- Review, evaluate, and redesign positions as needed
- Address the changing nature of communication

## **ADMINISTRATIVE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS, 2008–2012**

### **I. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT**

**Issue:** The future success of CCE requires high-quality, high-impact, relevant, and contemporary programs that target multiple Associations and sites of implementation.

**Goal:** Strengthen Extension education program development throughout the Cornell Cooperative Extension system and focus on conducting programs that have outstanding public value, relevance, impact, and outcomes.

**Tactics:**

- Increase planned in-service education on Extension program development
- Implement high-priority statewide and multi-site program evaluation studies to capture significant impacts

- Ensure that the focused Cornell University (CU)/Cooperative Extension (CE) NYC program models are followed and the evaluation plans are carried out
- Develop systematic approaches to identify emerging issues that can be targeted as opportunities for CCE programming
- Support existing and establish new direct faculty research connections with all programs conducted by CU-CE NYC office
- Establish seed funding for emerging new and innovative programs and multi-site programs
- Continue to integrate stakeholder input via roles in Program Councils and Program Work Teams
- Support Program Work Teams that have developed high-impact, integrated proposals for consideration
- Establish strategies to identify, recruit, and retain new audiences for inclusion in Extension programming
- Develop contemporary and appropriate programs for urban and metropolitan audiences

## II. CAMPUS PARTNERS

**Issue:** The College of Human Ecology (CHE) and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) in collaboration with CCE must institute new strategies to foster Extension programs on campus, especially those that partner with off-campus Extension educators.

**Goal:** Provide increased direction and support to Extension and outreach education programs, paying particular attention to the research/scholarship of academics in the College of Human Ecology and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

### **Tactics:**

- Promote faculty Extension programs and department Extension efforts
- Target innovative faculty Extension programs that maximize campus/county collaboration for investment by Extension Administration
- Assist faculty without formal Extension appointments in producing appropriately targeted materials for use with Extension audiences and thus augment efforts of Extension Associates
- Increase the connections of Cornell University outreach activities with the Cornell Cooperative Extension system
- Increase the planned interaction between leadership in CCE and leadership in other units of Cornell University
- Identify standards for distinguished quality and high-impact Extension programs
- Encourage and support student internships in Extension and student academic activities within Extension and align with campus efforts engaged in involving students in public service and service learning

- Enable stronger campus/county connections in collaboration with the Colleges, Department Chairs, and Department Extension Leaders (DELs) by developing mechanisms that encourage faculty to work with Extension professionals off campus

### **III. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION ASSOCIATIONS**

**Issue:** Exemplary leadership is needed for Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations.

**Goal:** Enable each county, multi-county, or regional Association to have a strong board of directors, representative of the area it serves, a dynamic Executive Director, and a clear vision for addressing issues and needs through strategic partnerships and integrated program scholarship.

**Tactics:**

- Develop with Executive Directors a bold and broadly accepted contemporary definition of a local presence
- Identify standards for distinguished quality and high-impact programs at the local, regional, and state levels
- Promulgate adopted Association “standards of excellence” as a best practices model
- Implement accreditation process for Associations to assure uniform organizational strength and integrity across the system
- Develop and implement actions that increase undergraduate and graduate student Extension internships in Associations
- Refine and sustain implementation of an executive development curriculum for Executive Directors, both internally and through contracted services
- Facilitate and provide incentives for the development and evaluation of sustainable program models (including multi-Association, multi-site arrangements) that support the mission and include strong connections with the research base

### **IV. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION EDUCATORS**

**Issue:** The Cornell Cooperative Extension system must employ professional Extension educators with skills and knowledge to develop and deliver quality Extension programs.

**Goals:** Staff and support quality program leadership and integrate all resource educators and specialists in the state with faculty mentors and departmental assets on campus.

**Tactics:**

- Provide strong central recruitment for educator positions
- Strengthen new staff orientation to serve the diverse needs of positions
- Mandate a competitive, merit-based salary structure

- Facilitate and create an environment for sharing specialized expertise
- Endorse standards for distinguished quality and high-impact programs
- Rejuvenate professional development opportunities in the system and work through DELs to identify department opportunities for in-service education of county and regional educators
- Encourage and enable stronger campus/county connections and support incentives for Extension professionals off campus to work collaboratively with faculty
- Investigate and address issues surrounding the advanced study requirement for resource educators

## V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Issue:** All professionals in the Cornell Cooperative Extension system should have access to professional development opportunities.

**Goal:** Increase the availability of affordable professional development opportunities for Extension professionals in New York State.

### Tactics:

- Budget and competitively support professional development venues offered by faculty (technical/scientific/scholarship in-services)
- Budget and support program and organizational leadership development opportunities
- Determine innovative and inclusive ways to deliver professional development
- Provide primary Extension education program development support to CCE Association professionals that complements specific subject and technical assistance offered by faculty
- Leverage Extension Administration support to encourage greater synergy and cooperation among the various professional Associations and the Association of Cornell Cooperative Extension Employees (ACCEE) to reduce cost and increase participation
- Implement a campus department-based mentoring system for all off-campus resource educators and specialists

## VI. DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

**Issue:** Cornell Cooperative Extension is committed to diversity and inclusiveness in the system. Additional efforts are needed to enable the system to reach the ultimate goal of a diverse and inclusive Extension system serving New Yorkers.

**Goal:** Progress toward the three broad strategic outcomes outlined for the system in June 2003: 1) create welcoming and inclusive environments for staff and clientele; 2) recruit and retain diverse individuals for senior-level positions; and 3) accomplish and sustain diverse audience participation.

**Tactics:**

- Encourage, enable, and support the CCE Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development Team
- Support action plans developed around the three strategic outcomes outlined in 2003 for CCE
- Encourage system participation in diversity workshops
- Collaborate with Cornell University efforts in diversity and inclusiveness

**VII. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION ADMINISTRATION**

**Issue:** Overall declines in funding necessitate improved system-wide administrative leadership.

**Goal:** Align critical system-wide administrative leadership needs with resources.

**Tactics:**

- Align staffing with system goals and critical needs identified by system campus (Director's Council, DELs, Chairs, Deans) and county leaders (Executive Directors)
- Promote a CU-CE NYC program with a clear, focused vision and major city-based (and other external) funding for operations and project support as described in the May 2005 external review
- Invest in regional administrative FTEs by contracting with Executive Director leaders
- Align system hires with common priorities in CCE, CHE, CALS, and the university land grant mission
- Advance relationships with statewide leadership in partner agencies and institutions

**VIII. CHANGING FUNDING STRUCTURES**

**Issue:** Current formula funding structures may be replaced with competitive grant-based structures and program contracts that do not account for infrastructure costs. Faculty, staff, and educators on and off campus will need to successfully compete for grant funds and enhance their reporting skills.

**Goal:** Prepare all faculty, staff, and educators in the Cornell Cooperative Extension system to operate under new and rapidly changing funding structures.

**Tactics:**

- Host competitive grant writing workshops and communicate funding opportunities

- Regularly communicate to the CCE system the goals, objectives, and RFPs of funding agencies such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
- Commit resources to assist teams of faculty and CCE professional in their pursuit of major integrated research and Extension proposals for high-priority programs
- Lead faculty, staff, and educators to terminate mature programs with little contemporary value or impact and to align with high-value and high-impact programs that will attract funding
- Develop a plan for financial security of the system, including a scenario where base funds are significantly reduced or no longer available to support infrastructure
- Participate in and align with development opportunities in CALS, CHE, and university campaigns
- Empower the system to thrive without increased reliance on Extension Administration
- Develop criteria for deciding the level of assistance that should be provided by Extension Administration when a County Association is threatened by insolvency or doesn't meet accreditation standards
- Provide incentives for the development of regional business systems among County Associations
- Enable a process by which Association staff can be co-pi's for internal S/L funding in concert with faculty

## IX. COMMUNICATIONS

**Issue:** In today's rapidly changing and competitive world, there is an increased need for communication to federal, state, county, and private agencies and organizations around reporting, accountability, impact, and outcomes. There is also a critical need for continuous communication internally and externally with stakeholders and potential new audiences. In order to compete successfully for government and private funding and to be recognized as a vital educational system, our communications must be top notch, targeted, and timely. Now that a new internal communications structure is in place and functioning, it is time to improve our external communications capability.

**Goal:** Provide high-quality, consistent, regular, and purposeful communications to organizations, agencies, decision makers, and the campus community about the high-quality, high-impact work of Cornell Cooperative Extension. Disseminate targeted, consistent information and messages to the general public about Cornell Cooperative Extension.

### **Tactics:**

- Intensify communications regarding the outstanding public value, relevance, impact, and outcomes of the CCE system

- Provide the general public with regular, timely, and consistent information about CCE's programs
- Develop materials that convey CCE's commitment to diversity
- Define a position of "Director of Communications" to address the need for a full-time focus on communications
- Align financial resources to support the communications plan
- Increase communications with central university administration
- Coordinate communications with the colleges and the university
- Invest in needed systems to support a comprehensive communications strategy that includes database support, popular editing, and Web access
- Require all counties to implement all three ACCPAC modules in order to facilitate the collection of economic impact data

## **X. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)**

**Issue:** High-speed Internet access has provided campus and Associations with the physical connectivity that was desired in the Committed to Excellence Plan of 2001. However, this connectivity needs to be refined and enhanced through innovative content and interactive learning.

**Goal:** Deliver innovative CCE content through the Internet.

### **Tactics:**

- Align CCE IT efforts and systems with those of the university and colleges
- Establish regular communications among the CCE Administrative Program Directors and State Specialists, CCE IT, and DELs
- Develop and support goals and milestones in innovative Internet program delivery for the CCE information technology staff in partnership with Director's Council
- Support short- and long-term goals outlined in the IT Strategic Plan
- Participate and invest in national eXtension system if it remains relevant to CCE system priorities
- Develop and sustain a comprehensive program of distance education opportunities in collaboration with faculty and designed to enhance campus/local connections and address the professional development needs articulated above
- Where appropriate, move elements of existing professional development curricula (New Staff Orientation, Executive Directors "Boot Camp") to online platforms