

## QUESTIONS/CONCERNS/NEEDS & ADMINISTRATIVE REPLY:

1. Employee Appreciation Week. Off-campus people can't get benefits of that. Would like to see Extension have an Employee Day/Week so we have a smaller version of what University Administration does for employees.

*County Extension faculty and staff are University employees as such, the university needs to provide or open this opportunity to the counties. Dr. Ort will bring this concern up to University Extension Operations Council since there may be similar concerns for IES and SBTDC faculty and staff that are housed off campus.*

2. Trying to get back to 80-20 for salary/operations. We are going to lose positions because we're taking money from salary to overhead. It is time to close some programs. We can't be everything to everybody and can't keep adding new programs. Extension has to take a hard look at where we can draw the line. Different generations are not going to do what 'mature' agents will do; they will walk. We need permission from Administration that we can say 'No' and we need them to back us up. We need to cut the program out, not just 'prioritize.' If our marketing is successful and there are less agents, what do we do then?

*The 80/20 rule is unattainable because we are not permitted to seek additional operation funds through the change budget process. Every year there is a legislative increase, the percentages of salary increase and the ratio skews to the left at the expense of operating. This is why we initiated an internal redistribution by closing \$2.5M in positions and moving the funds to operating. As you know, since the initiation of this effort the state and national economy has suffered and we have been issued mandatory cuts that are competing for these funds.*

*In regard to the statement of cutting programs, administration strongly supports not doing everything. This is why we initiated the comprehensive environmental scan and prioritization program planning process. We have streamlined what we are supporting with only 9 program goals and 20 objectives. This is over a 50% reduction from previous long range plans. We also believe that each county has to make their own decisions on cutting further and we encouraged them to do so with local prioritization. With local support of county government and the advisory council, our local units have the support they need to say no and we have and will continue to add our support.*

3. Why did CES administration begin a policy that only 15% of state travel allocation can be used for professional associations? All counties do not receive their sole travel support from CES Administration. Those that receive mileage reimbursement from

county funds and utilize state travel dollars for professional association business and professional development conferences are penalized. Stating that County Extension Directors have the ability to approve travel funds above 15% assumes all County Extension Directors hold the same beliefs about professional associations and professional development. This ruling will result in dramatically reduced attendance and participation in professional associations at all levels. How will CES employees

receive professional development competencies if they cannot afford to personally finance these endeavors? This across-the-board decision from CES Administration will further lower employee morale and weaken the county-level view of state-level Administrative support. 'Don't punish the masses for the sins of a few.'

*We believe this is a reasonable business principle and a generous cap. 15% is a significant percentage of an individual's operational support especially when you look at the percent of time related to professional associations. Most agents attend less than 5 days for professional association meetings which calculate to 2.3% of their annual working time. Even if you double the attendance time it's less than 5%.*

*It also needs to be emphasized that because of the fiscal reversions, our operational funds are extremely limited. That is why this is a maximum cap. County Directors have the authority to provide from 0 up to 15% of the total travel operation allocation to professional association travel. They can allocate the total amount to one agent, divide it among several or not provide any. The highest responsibility each of us has is to meet our client's needs, so it is imperative for the CED to ensure that this is not jeopardized at the expense of professional association meetings. As mentioned in the question, some counties may have additional sources of travel and this is why this has to be a local decision.*

4. With recent budget reductions, and maybe more in the future, are plans still intact for the Secretaries Training Conference in August, 2009? We are 'formally' trained only every 4 years. With the heavy workload of all support staff, OJT can be difficult in some offices. As a new-hire, do I have to wait 4 years to learn basic Extension procedures ... what type of 'orientation program' is that?

*The training mentioned is not the type of training that is offered every 4 yrs. On the Job training (OJT) is usually done by other local secretaries or by the District Director's Administrative Associate. The district Administrative Associates have all contributed to the creation of an orientation manual for new county secretaries and each provides individualized training.*

*Whether we have the meeting or not will need to be decided by Drs. Ort and McKinnie based on their projected finances.*

5. Please explain County Operations Support Staff (COSS)? What does it mean for PAs and SPA employees? The District Directors have not been consistent in sharing the same

information at the same time, statewide. Some employees have heard everything the DED knows, but some have been told nothing, not even by their County Directors.

*A joint letter from Drs. Zublena and Lineberry was sent out in November explaining the County Operations Support Staff (COSS) designation and implication for secretaries. This was based on a similar question being provided at the last Federation Board meeting. All secretaries should have received this by now. PAATs received a similar letter of explanation earlier in the year and the issue was discussed at their annual association meeting.*

6. Did a letter go out to the CEDs regarding this change of classification of secretaries?

*Yes, as noted in the previous question.*

## **REPORT CARD:**

Average Grading:

**A** -**Open Communication**/Is Administration and Federation approachable?

**B** -**Equal Representation**/Do you feel your association has equal time at the discussion table?

**B** -**Effectiveness/Responsiveness**/Do you get answers to your questions in a timely manner that is workable?

**A** -**General Impression**/Level of interest to the membership.

## **COMMENTS:**

‘I feel that the other associations, especially the agent associations, get more time at their meetings. I understand they are the ones in the community doing these programs, but their state/national meetings last at least twice as long as ours. We cram so much information into not even a full day, hardly. More networking time with other counties and districts would be so much more helpful.’

‘As an Extension Agent in 4-H Youth Development I believe my effectiveness is dependent upon relationships. When working with young people and adults, they must trust me in order for my teaching to have an impact on their lives. I believe the information I share through programming is valuable and if I want participants to remember what is being taught, they must see me on a regular basis. I must also model what I am teaching; what I show participants has a greater influence than what I tell them. If extension professionals are to

succeed in *empowering people* and *providing solutions*, we must remember we deal with humans and humans need relationships.'

...4-H Agent

'Attended Organic training conducted by Jeanine Davis. It contained excellent program with good mix of classroom, field trips and social activities. Useful material and good references were provided to each student.' ..... *Horticulture Agent*