Applications are being reviewed for two new Initiative Team Leaders: Employee Healthy Lifestyles and Increasing Visibility.

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Initiative Updates

Advancing Tennessee Strategic Plan Update
October 2013

The initiative team charged with developing a plan for increasing and supporting external funding for UT Extension has been hard at work to meet this challenge. They have met periodically to discuss current policies and practices and seek input regarding the role of external funding in providing excellent programs to Tennesseans. Team leader Rob Holland has met with County Directors in each of the three Extension Regions to receive their input regarding gifts, grants, and fees as possible strategies for increasing external funding. The team is scheduled to meet October 29th in Nashville to process and consider the extensive feedback obtained to date.

**West Tennessee 4-H Center**

Beginning in spring of 2011, a Visioning Committee, which included Extension agents, specialists, and West Tennessee stakeholders, convened to develop a comprehensive vision for the new West Tennessee 4-H Center as part of Extension’s Strategic Plan. After visiting and gathering ideas from nearly a dozen 4-H centers in other states, the committee generated a 5-page report detailing the vision and essential characteristics for the center. Beginning in October 2012, Tim Smith conducted 14 listening sessions, involving over 1,000 West Tennesseans, to gather site recommendations from and inform individuals and communities.

Using 23 criteria, an evaluation committee identified strengths and weaknesses of three top-rated sites in Carroll County, Hardeman County, and Henry County. After Chancellor Arrington and Dean Cross personally visited each site, Lone Oaks Farm in Hardeman County (pictured above) was recommended as the preferred location for the new Center. The site meets all requirements set by the Visioning Committee, and because it has extensive development already complete, the estimated project cost is less than the initial budget request for the center.

A Word from the Director of Strategic Planning

The UT Extension Strategic Plan designed to guide our future was introduced at the 2010 Extension Conference. Since that time, considerable progress has been made to implement critical initiatives. This report details selected accomplishments to date and gives future plans. This is the first of what will be quarterly reports to communicate progress and plans regarding the strategic plan implementation.

Dr. Shirley Hastings,
Director of Strategic Planning
**BEST**

The Building Exceptionally Skilled Teachers initiative team, led by Dr. David Mercker, has been hard at work designing interactive modules to help improve the quality of teaching by Extension Employees. BEST has three components. As if legs of a stool, they include: Preparation, Presentation, and Professionalism.

Since April, the team has worked on the first component of BEST: Preparation. In the Preparation leg of BEST, participants will take part in seven online training modules. These modules will train agents, specialists, and employees about the fundamentals of teaching. The Presentation leg of BEST will help improve speaking and stage skills. The final leg, Professionalism, instills that as UT Extension employees, professionally representing the university both in appearance and proficiency is paramount to being a successful teacher.

The modules are currently being piloted in selected counties across the state.

Be on the lookout for this exciting new initiative. The Modules for the first leg of BEST should be ready for viewing in early 2014.

**IT Initiative**

The Information Technology initiative team has met several times over the past few months to design a plan for enhancing information technology use in Extension. To save travel costs and to allow for more frequent meetings, the team has conducted the majority of their meetings online.

The team led by Brad Greenfield has developed five goals and assigned subcommittees to work on each goal. Work includes the preparation of two surveys to assess the capabilities and securities of the office networks, creating a list of technologies to be considered essential for success in Extension, developing best practices for social media and newsletters, plans for an OIT trial to address training and support, and creating a SharePoint team website to house resources.

Starting in January, the team will conduct a six month trial using the following tools: Constant Contact service for quarterly newsletters, the UTIA Facebook page, and Twitter Fast Follow. Users will be surveyed after the trial based on their experience with each tool.

**Upcoming Initiatives >>>**

**Employee Healthy Lifestyles**

This upcoming initiative will implement a wellness program for UT Extension employees, develop or identify materials to support the wellness program, propose incentive strategies to encourage employee participation, and promote healthy lifestyles for employees.

**Increasing Visibility**

This upcoming initiative will develop an effective marketing plan to make Extension more visible to Tennesseans. They will launch a media campaign, develop processes to capture and share success stories, develop marketing tools for agents and specialists to increase efficiency and consistent branding, and provide training and materials to market Extension effectively.

“Enduring great organizations are characterized by a fundamental duality. On the one hand, they have a set of timeless core values and core reason for being that remain constant over long periods of time. On the other hand, they have a relentless drive for change and progress.”

Jim Collins How the Mighty Fall: And Why Some Companies Never Give In
### Initiative Teams >>>

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