Topic: FCS Extension and Community Engagement: Definitions and Collaboration

Many FCS Extension programs use best practices of community engagement.

Speakers:
Dr. Jorge Atiles (Associate Dean; Extension & Engagement; College of Human Sciences)
Dr. Stacy Tomas (Assistant Professor; Hospitality and Tourism Management)
Dr. Emily Roberts (Assistant Professor; Design, Housing, and Merchandising)
Dr. Sissy Osteen (Associate Professor; Human Development and Family Science)
Dr. Gina Peek (Associated Professor; Design, Housing, and Merchandising)

Summary:
The roundtable began with a discussion of whether Cooperative Extension activities and projects can be classified as community engagement. Dr. Jorge Atiles noted that many organizations, including the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) have historically approached Extension and community engagement as separate efforts. He argued that while Extension does conduct projects and programs that are consistent with best practices of community engagement (including co-creating projects with community partners and seeking mutual benefit), some Extension programs are primarily designed to expand access to university research and resources. Dr. Emily Roberts suggested that while Extension seeks to be translational across the state, to be successful it needs to do so in conversation and cooperation with local residents.

Several attendees suggested, however, that communities are not always receptive to resources that seem likely to benefit them. Dave Lassen asked if a key difference between Extension and community engagement is the nature and extent to which they each seek to persuade community members to use university resources and research. Dr. Stacy Tomas responded that in both cases, using accessible language is essential. Roberts argued that identifying areas of potential collaboration can be difficult, especially given that communities
Faculty/staff interested in community partnerships can contact local COUNTY EDUCATORS.

are not always aware of their own needs and becoming more aware can be expensive. **Atiles** commented that dynamics of this kind are reminders that community-engaged scholarship often takes more time and effort than traditional scholarship. **Roberts** requested that the university provide more resources to guide interested faculty in doing translational research, including examples of well-structured partnerships. **Dr. Gina Peek** suggested creating materials designed like fact sheets and supplemented by face-to-face conversations.

**Lassen** then asked how community-engaged faculty and staff without Extension appointments could better partner with Extension. **Roberts** responded that an important first step is to help non-Extension individuals identify and connect with the right people in Extension. She suggested that it can be difficult to know where to start. **Atiles** asserted that while Extension is active in all three major areas of the university: teaching, research, and service, it can do more to get OSU students active in Extension activities. He suggested that Paula Tripp (Coordinator of Family and Consumer Sciences Education) would be an important early contact in that effort. **Atiles** also suggested that county educators are always useful first contacts for faculty and/or staff interested in creating partnerships in a given area. This is especially important, he said, because of the ways in which Extension personnel have felt used without appropriate compensation in the past. **Dr. Sissy Osteen** argued that building local relationships should include learning about what local county educators need and what their goals are. Effective partnerships with Extension personnel should be mutually beneficial. Lassen noted that several states have begun to recommend that faculty and staff treat Extension as a community partner, including learning about its goals and co-creating projects. **Roberts** recommended that this topic be discussed at the next College of Human Sciences advance. **Kimberly Williams** asserted that while county educators are university employees, they are often treated differently than other university employees. While many community members expect them to know detailed information about all OSU-related programs and events in their county, they may not be informed about or involved in these programs or events. Similarly, faculty and staff interested in partnering with county educators should not expect them to offer logistical or administrative assistance without some benefit in return.