**Memorandum**

**Date: December 9, 2014**

**Subject: National Urban Extension Leaders**

Leaders in urban extension from 14 states gathered in San Antonio, Texas on December 6-9, 2014 for a three day meeting. The National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL) are dedicated Extension professionals that are excited about ***advocating and advancing the strategic importance and long term value of urban extension activities.*** Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service hosted the meeting and provided the resources to make the meeting a great success. This was the third meeting of NUEL. The first meeting took place in Pittsburgh on December 2-5, 2013, and the second meeting took place in St. Petersburg on June 22-24, 2014.

The objectives of this meeting were:

1. Be inspired and motivated by presentations from Thought leaders
2. Spark new ideas for urban Extension
3. Establish a more formal structure for the group
4. Finalize Action Plans
5. Begin implementation of the established Action Plans
6. Develop working relationships with colleagues from urban areas across the nation

The meeting opened with each leader introducing themselves and talking very briefly about some of their efforts in urban extension. Some of these efforts include:

* Youth development for the under-served, under-privileged, and/or non-traditional audiences and college students engaged in serving these audiences
* Urban agriculture/local foods
  + student gardens
  + roadside farm stands
  + engagement of master gardeners in this effort
* Water resources
  + green infrastructure/stormwater management
  + water conservation
* Health and wellness
* STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education

Several speakers were invited to the meeting to help spark new ideas and stimulate the discussion on urban Extension. Being in Texas allowed the group to tap into the enormous talent from Texas A&M. Jackie Van De Walle was the opening speaker. Jackie is on the State Urban Advisory Board and is the President of the Bexar County Leadership Advisory Board for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Jackie focused Texas A&M’s Advisory Committee for Urban Programs. This advisory committee focuses on interpreting urban programs to stakeholders through annual personal updates of key stakeholders such as political leaders, quarterly newsletters, and establishing contacts with key staff of political leaders that are readily accessible and regularly updating these key staff. This is clearly an important piece to building a successful urban Extension program.

Dr. John Jacob spoke about re-imagining university engagement in the 21st century. John is the director of the Texas Coastal Watershed Program, as well as Professor and Extension Specialist with a joint appointment with the Texas A&M Sea Grant Program and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service through the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Science. John is partnering with the University of Houston, an urban serving university. He spoke about a complete remake of Extension. He referred to Sea Grant and how Sea Grant had to go outside the box to start their program with NOAA. He is calling for an urban grant to fund “Professors in Practices” and “Community Agents.” He is calling for the universities to make the “Scholarship of Application” no less than the “Scholarship of Discovery.” John’s presentation lead to an excellent exchange of ideas.

Doug Steele, Director of Extension for Texas A&M provided his thoughts on urban Extension. Doug firmly believes that for urban Extension to be successful, funds cannot be diverted from agriculture Extension to fund urban Extension. He spoke about the need to partner better with urban groups and do a better job of marketing our capabilities. Doug spoke about the need to create a new philosophy for urban extension; instead of translating knowledge, we need to provide transformational knowledge. Doug is focusing on five areas for urban Extension in Texas:

1. Feed our future (safe and reliable food)
2. Improving our health (eliminate chronic illness – obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, and even cancer)
3. Protecting our environment
4. Enriching our youth
5. Strengthening communities (creating leaders is a big part of this)

He emphasized the desperation many Extension leaders are feeling and said that if we don’t take advantage of these urban opportunities, Extension will not be here 10 years from now. He spoke about the need to provide incentives to move forward and the need to hire volunteer coordinators/managers, not content specialists for the urban areas.

Patrick Proden spoke about Extension Reconsidered. Imagining America’s Extension Reconsidered initiative invited deliberation about what Extension could and should be in the 21st century. With support from Kettering Foundation and the National Issues Forums Institute, the Extension Reconsidered initiative is now planning a collaborative process to develop an "issue guide." Extension Reconsider is:

* Call for higher education to redouble its commitment to strengthen democracy as a way of life
* Informed by the time­ honored truth that a community's well-being depends on the health of its intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and material traditions and features – its culture
* Urge and envision reciprocal collaborations between communities and their colleges, with publicly engaged arts, design, and humanities at the center
* Begin in rural communities with their rich heritage of song, story, and drama - with an intention to illuminate the connectedness of rural and urban life

Patrick will continue to follow this effort and report back the NUEL so we can determine if there are opportunities for partnering.

The remainder of the meeting focused on better defining the structure of NUEL, discussing a proposal of a National Urban Extension Network, and updating the five action plans that were developed at the last two meetings (Communications, Resources, Stakeholders, Policy, and Professional Development). Part of these discussions included how NUEL will interact with ECOP (Extension Committee on Organizational Policy). We also discussed creating a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) among the land grant universities that are part of NUEL to help recognize the leadership of this group in urban Extension. We also discussed our contribution to the upcoming National Urban Extension Conference in May 2015. NUEL would like to fund a reception at the National Urban Extension Conference and is hoping that our Extension directors will help us with funding. Each NUEL participant was asked to request $500 to $1,000 from their land grant university to help sponsor the reception.