

HEADS UP

UPDATES AND ISSUES

DIVERSITY AND CIVIL RIGHTS



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Diversity as an Extension Issue

When people think about diversity, they usually think about all the various ways people are similar to and different from each other. While that is true, diversity is also an integral part of Extension's goals as manifest in the Diversity and Civil Rights Performance Plan. Utah as a state is becoming increasingly diverse providing opportunities for Extension to meet the needs of diverse populations seeking unbiased research based information that will improve their lives. There are at least four trends which are influencing communities, our workplace and workforce in Utah.

Trend 1: *Shifting Demographics*

Our stakeholders are generally getting older; women make up 52% of the workforce in the United States; more people have different cultural backgrounds and speak more languages, eat different kinds of food and observe various traditions that are important to them; there are more stakeholders with various abilities and disabilities; people are joining USU Extension with different kinds of experiences and education; our employees have different family situations that impact them...single parent homes caring for small children, caring for aging parents and grandparents, attending college, and significant demographic changes in Latino populations are affecting us.

Trend 2: *Employee and Stakeholder Expectations are Changing*

The kinds of relationships that employees want with the organization and with their supervisors are changing. It means that stakeholders want services that work for them, rather than the one-size-fits all service formerly provided by Extension.

Trend 3: *Increasing Numbers of Service Providers*

The types of service providers and the level of intensity from providers are increasing. Extension is no longer the only game in town. Extension must establish its new niche and rethink its role with Utahns if we are to survive and remain relevant to stakeholders.

Trend 4: *Extension Must Find Ways to Change to Meet the Challenges and Leverage the Opportunities*

Never in the history of Utah Extension have the challenges been greater. The opportunities are there for us to consider how we can more fully meet the needs of diverse audiences with meaningful Extension programs. We cannot be everything to everyone. Clearly identifying the needs of diverse stakeholders, and then focusing Extension programs on those needs will lead to a healthy organization meeting the needs of Utahns in the twenty-first century.

"Utah State University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution."