

# HEADS UP

## UPDATES AND ISSUES

### DIVERSITY AND CIVIL RIGHTS



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### **Why Wait? The Future is Now**

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century has become the century of bilingualism in America, with the United States being the fastest growing Spanish speaking country. It is estimated that by 2050, 55% of American workers will be Hispanic, and that these workers will be younger in age than the average worker in the population at large. Many in Extension have recognized this significant language shift and are gearing up by polishing former foreign language skills, enrolling in local language courses, and exploring the Extension web based resources for improving foreign language proficiency.

<http://extension.usu.edu/diversity/htm/exploring-the-spanish-language>

It is critical that Extension serve stakeholders without discrimination and with assistance that will improve social and economic well-being; improved foreign language skills help us to be more effective in doing so. Failure to do so can be a costly proposition for Extension and our federal partner, USDA. For example, this month the Obama administration offered \$1.3 billion to settle complaints from female and Latino farmers who say that they faced discrimination from USDA. This settlement came on the heels of the US Congress poised to approve a \$1.25 billion settlement with African-American farmers in a similar discrimination case. USDA is also negotiating with American Indian farmers over a discrimination based lawsuit. Thousands of minorities and women say that for years, local USDA offices denied them loans and other assistance that routinely went to whites.

Overall, resources are better spent providing program access and assistance for all stakeholders served in Utah communities, rather than paying discrimination lawsuit settlements. We are learning that the power of diversity and unity work together. As we implement good Extension practices and embrace diversity, increased synergy is developed in Extension programs.

Today's society is truly a mosaic of many cultures. Utah increasingly reflects that mosaic. The demographic shifts and changes which we see in Utah communities are here to stay. It is not necessary for us to wait to experience the demographic changes coming in 2050, for *the future is now*. Utah communities are becoming global villages enriched by the perspectives brought from many rich cultures. It truly is our role to insure that Extension programs, and the scarce resources available to support them, are delivered without any discrimination, maximizing the Extension opportunities for improving the lives of Utah stakeholders.

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