

**Visioning Sub-Committee:** Specialists

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**Recommendations to Ken:**

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## 1. On Campus and Off Campus Relations

- a. Many county faculty do not know the Specialists or what they do. How do we change this?

We should encourage an affiliation between off-campus and on-campus faculty, perhaps by inviting them to attend department or group meetings (such as beef group, reproduction group, etc.) via IVC. When it comes to applying for grants, it is important to affiliate with others who are in the same “group” of interest.

We recommend that departments better utilize Extension Annual Conference to facilitate interactions among off- and on-campus faculty with overlapping interests. A portion of the time could be set apart for the off-campus agents to meet with the on-campus department affiliates. Go through the Department Heads to make sure they understand this isn't just Specialists' meeting with off-campus faculty – it should be marketed to any and all department faculty who are, or could be, interested in working with Extension.

We recommend organizing an IVC Specialist series coordinated by associations (e.g., Bushwhackers, FCS association, etc.) and/or administration. To ensure good participation by a live audience, host faculty must be fully engaged to promote the presentations.

Ask Marketing to include an agent and Specialist highlight article in each All Extension newsletter. The highlight will briefly inform about the faculty members' programs, interests, active grants, etc. This could help promote familiarity and collaboration within Extension (could also expand mailing list for newsletters to DH, Deans, and relevant agency administrators).

- b. Many campus Specialists do not know the county faculty or what they do. How do we change this?

See above. In addition, consider an IVC series shown on-campus and featuring off-campus faculty and some of their programs. There may be on-campus faculty who would like to collaborate and establish contacts in the state.

- c. How can technology help the Specialists be more visible and accessible?

See recommendations above regarding IVC. eXtension is another technological tool that could be encouraged more.

## 2. Role statements and FTE allocations

### a. For Specialists, what % should be Extension?

We see pros and cons of small and large Extension assignments. To a large degree, the percent assignment will be determined by available funding, the discipline, and the need. However, in general, we see value in having Extension be the primary role for those carrying the Extension Specialist title.

Some on the committee see value in having the Extension domain encapsulate research rather than having research as a separate domain. In other words, their recommendation is that, whenever possible and when Extension is the primary role, the role statement requirements for “research” should come under the Extension domain. We anticipate that the Central Committee may respect Extension more if Extension and Research are more aligned in the role statement. We understand that specific wording in the role statement may be necessary to clearly convey that the research expectations under the extension role include grants, research publications, and other typical scholarly outputs.

Others on the committee disagree with the paragraph above. The rationale being: “If you put too much language in the role statement about research, then you could end up with a Specialist who only chooses to focus on the research aspects of the role statement. Second, there are other areas in this document, where we discuss the challenge of having a Specialist teach because that can interfere with their Specialist role. I also feel that 100% Specialists’ roles or Specialist /teaching split roles in whatever split you want can lead to stale irrelevant Specialist and teachers. I favor an extension/research split of 50-50 to 70-30. To me, research is what defines a Specialist. If I don’t have original research as a Specialist, then I am just repackaging someone else’s work and that can be done by extension agents. As a Department Head, I would not want to hire an extension-teaching position.”

### a. Should a Specialist have a 3-way split?

We recommend that Extension not use a three-way split; particularly for new hires. We recommend giving Department Heads leeway to add teaching or research for those who have become tenured and have proven their effectiveness in the Extension domain.

### b. Do we continue to hire Specialists on 12-mos or should we go to 11-mos or 10-mos contracts from the start?

Specialists should be hired on a fiscal year base, with a partially funded FTE but with the expectation that they show up throughout the year. For example, if they were hired at 90% FTE they would work 90% of each week – NOT 90% of the work days and taking off the rest of the year. This would build-in the incentive to go out and get grants to supplement their FTE. We think this could help us compete for new faculty.

- c. How could Specialists be hired for a particular project? Would they be let go when the project was completed?

We recommend against hiring tenure-track faculty for a project that could be terminated. Rather, consider post-docs, temporary hires, educators, or project specific Specialists. Reserve the “Extension Specialist” title for those on tenure tracks who have a primary Extension role.

- d. Discussing hiring more Extension Assistant Professors (like we have in NR) who are housed in departments but do not have teaching roles.

Heidi LeBlanc and Paula Scott are examples of tenured Extension faculty, not Specialists, who are supervised and housed in their department. Their dean is Ken, but their supervisor is their Department Head. This can be a good fit for some situations. It can be used effectively, but it needs to be balanced.

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### 3. Specialists' "Department"

#### a. Discuss making county faculty "adjunct" members of campus departments.

This is not recommended. Yes, we have a need to facilitate collaboration that isn't currently happening, but we shouldn't call them adjunct, because the title ends in 3 years and has to be redone. Creating adjunct status doesn't make sense for faculty.

#### b. Should Specialists always be housed on campus? Or would having them located elsewhere in the state help them interact with the public and county offices?

We believe tenured faculty with a Specialist designation are best served by being housed on campus, so that they can benefit from interactions with research and teaching faculty. There may be cases where it is effective to house Specialists in a county office, but this should be an exception. If they are housed off campus, it would be preferable if they be housed in a regional center that includes other colleagues.

In addition to county-based Extension Agents, we do believe there is a place for more faculty around the state who have Extension expectations, though they may not be called Extension Specialists.

#### c. When a faculty member leaves/retires, what should be the process to strategically determine where that salary money should go?

The Department Heads should have major input.

#### d. Identify ways to remove obstacles for Specialists to be accessible in the counties. (e.g., eliminating or minimizing teaching, not scheduling them for MWF courses).

While we recognize that teaching is one of the best ways to integrate Extension faculty into a department, we recommend encouraging Department Heads to be sensitive to teaching loads for Extension Specialists so that teaching does not hamper their Extension role.

Offer some Extension operating funds to Department Heads so that they have more incentive to support Extension Specialists in their department.

#### e. What can Department Heads do to incentivize and support Specialists getting off campus and into the county?

We recommend looking at the role statement to make sure involvement with county agents is clearly stated – especially for those Specialists where this is clearly appropriate. It is better to have that expectation in the role statement, in general, and take it out for special situations.

Specialists need to be told that their Extension operating funds are to be used for county/state travel. If they are not getting out into the county, this discussion needs to come up in their yearly review. Make sure there is a clear expectation of this in their role statements. If we are going to expect it, it needs to be an expectation that is stated.

We also recommend clear communication and interaction between Extension administrators and Department Heads; pass on any complaints from county offices about Specialists not showing up.

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#### 4. Promotion & Tenure and Annual Reviews

- a. Consider having an expectation that at least one county faculty serve on a Specialists' P&T committee. And vice versa for county P&T committees.

On-campus Extension Specialists, as well as county faculty, should be considered for membership on each other's P&T committees, as long as they are of equal or higher rank. IVC can be used to help off-campus faculty participate. Department Heads (especially new ones) need to be made aware of this policy.

- b. For annual performance reviews conducted by the Department Head (some of which are not very familiar with Extension), gather feedback from the field regarding the engagement and responsiveness of each Specialist.

There should be encouragement for both Department Heads and regional directors to seek feedback from both on and off campus faculty. It is recommended that Extension administration create a feedback form that Department Heads can use when they contact agents. An online system could also be developed. Similar to the process for external P&T reviewers, we recommend that Specialists annually provide their Department Head with names of agents who can speak to their work. The department should be encouraged to contact these individuals and others to gather feedback from the field. If the Department Head doesn't know who else to contact, she/he can get names from the committee or Extension Administration.

## 5. Operating Funds

- a. Clarify the purpose of Extension operating funds given to Specialists. Are funds for research and grad students -- or Extension-related travel and programming?

We recommend that each Specialist have their own account rather than having shared or pooled accounts. There should be annual communication to both the Department Heads and Specialists about how much money the Specialists are being given and what it is appropriate to use the funds for. Also provide the Department Head and Dean with some “operating funds” to help with unforeseen needs or special requests. Rather than, later, asking for extra money for travel, the Specialists should ask their Department Heads for money for other program expenses that come up during the year and save their yearly funds for travel. Make sure the Department Heads know *how* they can access the financial system to view funding accounts owned by their Specialists.

## 6. Incentives

- a. Discuss Specialists role in obtaining grants or other funding (not just for research but for Extension programs) and in guiding program development and implementation statewide.

If Specialists receive extra compensation and have incentives to apply for grants, they will focus more on obtaining grants. This can be a good for the Specialist and participating agents; however, a drive for more grants may lead to neglect in responsibilities without direct linkages to funding.

- b. How can we incentivize and compensate those who write and receive grant funding for Extension programming?

We believe the culture and nature of the workforce necessitates that we continue to look for ways to incentivize productivity. Administration should continue to pursue and approve the collapsing of FTE, extra compensation, royalty sharing, etc. for productive faculty.

If there is on-going revenue from fee-based programs, the money allocation needs to be decided up front – before the money starts coming in -- with funds going proportionately to those who do the work and the department who is supporting the program and faculty.

## 7. Specialists' Availability

- a. Faculty with teaching roles often have “office hours.” For faculty with Extension roles, should there be Extension hours?

There is no way to realistically schedule “Extension hours” for a Specialist. The public wants help at the time they ask, not when the Specialist is available. Also there could be a negative result if the Specialist has already filled their “Extension” hours and yet they are getting more questions.

- b. Should all Extension Specialists be expected to contribute to Extension blogs?

The responsibility of getting contributions for blogs and newsletters should lie with the Marketing group. They should give Specialists a planned request with a specific time deadline and not wait for random submissions. Specialists are not likely to contribute without being prompted, but often *will* contribute if asked to do so.

The blogs should be designed around major state themes being addressed by USU Extension, and provide measures of impact for those who contribute. Faculty do not have time to participate if blogs aren't helping them meet their roles and responsibilities.

- c. If we centralize some of our services, what should be the role of the Specialist in responding to “Ask-the-Expert” emails and calls?

We need to be proactive in gathering FACT sheets and online information that we can direct people to. Having a big library of FACT sheets/online videos is the best tool for satisfying community questions. If there is *no* FACT sheet out there and the general knowledge is *not* out there, then the Specialist may have the expertise to find an answer or create the FACT sheet. Email addresses can be created that direct clients to a particular Specialist or group of Specialists (e.g., questions on pest management, plant or livestock care, etc.).