Other than dealing with budget cuts and personnel problems, motivating and empowering faculty to evaluate, document, and communicate the impact of their programs is one of the greatest challenges of the Staff Chair. Extension faculty tend to have their learning style preferences, and they may not enjoy the creative intellectual work that is required to design and implement a rigorous program evaluation. Faculty members may neglect program evaluation until they face promotion, tenure, and merit-based salary decisions, or worse, program cuts during economic recessions.

At the local, state, and federal level, it is no longer enough to recount historic achievements or isolated individual success stories to justify public financing of Extension programs. Policy decision makers generally do not care about research and education for their own sake. They care about research and education that makes a difference in the lives of their constituents. University administrators and public policy decision makers are required to make difficult decisions that require recent and credible evidence that Extension makes a significant difference (Hoffman and Grabowski, 2004).

Regardless of the urgent need for credible impact data, Extension faculty should understand that evaluation, documentation, and communication of impact are not peripheral or add-on activities. They are central to our mission.

Faculty members of land grant institutions are accountable, at some level, for all three missions of the university, research, teaching, and service. Extension faculty members teach and conduct applied research, but their primary responsibility is to put knowledge to work in service to the community. There is a world of difference between discovering new knowledge (research), conveying knowledge and skills (teaching) and putting knowledge to work in the community (service). These scholarly activities involve different methods and produce different outcomes. Evaluation, documentation, and communication of impact are third mission activities.

Definitions

- **Program Inputs** are the resources you put into a program such as time, money, staff expertise, and materials.
- **Program Outputs** are the things you do as a result of your inputs such as offering a workshop or camp, and developing a curriculum.
- **Program Outcomes** happen as a result of your inputs and outputs such as learning, changed behavior, and changed social conditions.
- **Impact** is the difference that Extension educators make in peoples lives as a result of applied research and education programs (O’Neill, 1998).
**Outcome** is a more general term than **impact**. Applied research and education produce three levels of outcomes: short-term learning, medium-term behavioral change, and long-term changes in social, economic, and physical conditions (Arnold, 2002).

**Evaluation and Documentation**

In your role as supervisor, you can help faculty members overcome barriers to the evaluation, documentation, and communication of impact:

- Discuss position descriptions with faculty; emphasize the difference between assigned duties and scholarship.

- Discuss the difference between documenting activity (outputs) and documenting impact with faculty. For example, educational program and applied research projects are activities or outputs, but adoption of new practices by practitioners is a behavior change.

- Provide faculty with examples of Extension programs where impact has been effectively evaluated, documented, and communicated. One of the best sources of these examples is the Journal of Extension, [http://www.joe.org/](http://www.joe.org/)

- Provide faculty with training in proposal writing, program planning, and longitudinal program evaluation.

- Encourage faculty to set aside time every week for reading, writing, reflections, and analysis of their programs.

- Encourage faculty to study university and departmental promotion and tenure guidelines with special emphasis on how their academic home (department) defines scholarship, creative intellectual work, validation by peers, and communication.

- Encourage faculty to review the Periodic Review and Professional Development Plan (PROF) with special emphasis on the progressive levels of program planning, teaching skills, educational methodology, and scholarship.

- Encourage faculty to join or create teams with research, teaching, and Extension faculty members. Effective teams will share program planning, program evaluation, and technical expertise. Encourage faculty to make creative intellectual contributions to team projects that will lead to co-authorship of research papers, Extension publications, and journal articles.

- Create and sustain the expectation that faculty articulate in writing measurable objectives for their applied research and educational programs, and emphasize they implement a plan for measuring progress toward those objectives.

- Acknowledge that a long-term plan and a sustained effort is required to document and communicate short-term learning outcomes followed by behavior change and changes in social, economic, and physical conditions.
• Create and sustain the expectation that annual Reports of Accomplishment should include well-written impact statements and credible impact data for at least one of their programs or initiatives.

**Communication**

The scholarly activities of evaluation and documentation of impact lead naturally to communication in the form of scholarly products: professional presentations and posters, written conference proceedings, Extension publications, and in some cases, refereed journal articles. Encourage Extension faculty to take advantage of opportunities for written feedback from colleagues about their programs, methods, and results. At Oregon State University, “scholarship and creative activity are understood to be intellectual work whose significance is validated by peers and which is communicated” (OSU Faculty Handbook). <ADD link: http://oregonstate.edu/facultystaff/handbook/> “Such work in its diverse forms is based on a high level of professional expertise; must give evidence of originality; must be documented and validated as through peer review or critique; and must be communicated in appropriate ways so as to have impact on or significance for publics beyond the University, or for the discipline itself.”

The final phrase in the OSU definition of scholarship distinguishes OSU as a land grant institution and is critical to Extension. We must resist a narrow definition of “communication” as publication of refereed journal articles. It is arguable that to be “fully communicated” knowledge must be adopted and applied. Evidence that creative, intellectual work has advanced to the level of scholarship requires evaluation, documentation, and communication of impact.

**Position Descriptions**

The scholarly requirement of evaluation, documentation, and communication of impact to peers and others may be overwhelming to Extension faculty. Encourage them to read and understand their position descriptions. In general, county-based Extension position descriptions include 10-15% scholarship. In other words, county Extension faculty are expected to spend 75-80% of their time doing their job, conducting informal Extension educational programs and applied research, and demonstration projects. They also are expected to spend time each week reading, writing, reflecting, analyzing, and evaluating. Each year at least one of their programs or team projects should be well thought out, well designed and executed, and lead to the documentation and communication of impact. And, that is sufficient.

**Citations <ADD LINKS >**

