

## Future Trends and Their Implications for Extension

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**Introduction** Extension has always been a human development institution. It has been successful in increasing the choices, opportunities and quality of life of people through research, education, and direct participation with our clientele. Extension, outreach and land grant universities face many opportunities and challenges as we move into the 21st century. This paper discusses several of these key challenges.

**Method** Literature, secondary sources and experiences as Extension Administrators are used to develop key trends and conclusions.

**Major Points** Key trends that will affect Extension include the following:

- Changing Demographics: A growing elderly population living longer, healthier lives; more diversity by both race and country of origin.
- Technological Changes: Ubiquitous connectivity – more communication devices continually with internet related contacts. Clientele have the ability to not only retrieve, but interact with programs and information that is online.
- Societal Trends: An increasing ability to choose – clientele are able to get more information from multiple sources.
- Economic Transitions: Move to knowledge economy. Increased move towards multiple careers over a person's working life. Disintermediation (flattening of distribution networks) changing the role of information providers.
- Public Policy Impacts: Less disposable revenue; movement away from formula funding to competitive fund distribution; more accountability and need to measure and document impacts and outcomes. Increased devolution of services to local units of government without commensurate fund transfers.

**Conclusion** The following items need to be addressed by Extension to remain viable in the 21st Century.

- Scholarship of Extension: understand Boyer's four levels of scholarship and recognize that activities like integration and application, if done with rigor and peer recognition, qualify Extension and outreach professionals as scholars. This is important to secure Extension's role in the academy and among academic peers.
- Multidisciplinary approaches: Build on the scholarship of integration and recognize that Extension is a leader in bringing broad university expertise to bear on complex social issues.
- Build diverse portfolios of funders and relationships: Focus on developing a portfolio of relationships that will lead to alternative funding streams and an expanded stakeholder base. This will be critical to insure secure funding above and beyond what will likely be shrinking base formula funds.

**Educational Importance** Understanding trends and implications are important for research and program planning, delivery and decision making with limited budgets.