

Manifesto — Extension and Engagement Western Extension Directors Association¹

Committing to the concept of engagement by public universities is part of a broader social movement in higher education. Extension has a legacy of such work by connecting communities with their public universities. We believe that the following principles are crucial to the next century of Extension work and commit to providing needed leadership at our respective institutions towards a future defined by them.

- Engaged Scholarship

Land-grant universities are focused on the knowledge enterprise with an historic commitment to engagement and outreach. Extension's role in the scholarship of engagement is assumed but often not articulated, understood or acknowledged by the majority of the academy. Extension educators must lead the development and documentation of engaged scholarship and the associated outcomes of value to a civil society.

- University Integration

Extension will benefit from moving closer to the entire academy while intensifying its engagement and connection with society. Extension's outreach mission advances the social and personal goals of learners. Extension's engagement mission is not independent of the university's primary educational mission — it is an integral expression of this mission. Reaching internally and connecting with campus faculty enriches the learning environment for students and community learners.

- Learning Technologies

Technologies that advance the goals of learners also enhance the effectiveness and relevance of outreach and engagement. The pace of technology development requires constant adaptation in approaches to teaching and learning. Land-grant universities (LGUs) and their Extension units should incorporate innovations provided by emerging learning management systems, while staying consistent with their heritage of engaging learners, open source access and non-credit curricula. The information ecosystem supports strategic and networked partnerships with public and private sectors.

¹ Extracted from proceedings of Centennial on the Summit, September 22-24, 2014
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/weda/summit-2014-links>

- Demand-Driven

Historic outreach programs tend to be supply-driven by the availability of research-based knowledge. Engaged universities institutionalize careful listening and collaboration with populations in their service sphere. Extension must invigorate its commitment to listening to a broader community, especially audiences with diverse and changing demographics. Creating partnerships with communities and framing the Extension educational agenda based on identified local/regional issues are pivotal in developing and maintaining demand-driven programs.

- Innovation: Open Source

Easy access to sharing and building upon knowledge broadens possibilities for learners through self-actualization, entrepreneurship and informed citizenship. Open and action-oriented relationships with communities have been a century-long hallmark of Extension. LGUs, by expanding the sphere of engagement of their Extension services, enhance opportunities for successfully creating and incorporating market disruptions and expanding their customer base.

- Culture

Extension and university engagement are tools and platforms of democracy, increasing the capacity for informed thought, and social and economic change. The accelerating velocity of social and economic transformations and the technologies shaping these changes provide opportunities. Extension, as a locally anchored and globally informed academic agency, is a nexus for locally relevant knowledge in a global setting.

- Identity and Staffing

The success of 21st century Extension professionals depends upon the relevance and impact of their work. Separate from their role as content experts, Extension workers convene inclusive communities of interest and carefully weave partnerships to identify, create and apply knowledge. Communication and marketing skills, supported by unbiased credibility, underlie Extension's future.

Signed:

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