

February 10, 2016

Dear UW Cooperative Extension Colleagues,

I am sharing with you today my decisions regarding the reorganization of Cooperative Extension, a division of UW-Extension. These decisions are extremely difficult, and will change the basic structure of an institution that has been positively impacting Wisconsin communities for a century and is the embodiment of the Wisconsin Idea. The citizens of the state, as well as Wisconsin's economy, depend on the programs and services we provide.

Unfortunately, Cooperative Extension is faced with a permanent \$3.6 million annual base budget cut to our state funding. This cut went into effect on July 1, 2015.

As many of you know, in mid-December I received recommendations from the *nEXT Generation* co-executive sponsors (Dean Rick Klemme, Provost Aaron Brower, Vice Chancellor Steve Wildeck) on how to address this historic budget cut. These draft recommendations were crafted after a months-long process that included input from our own faculty and staff, and from our county, tribal, and campus partners. I want to thank all of the individuals who helped to shape these recommendations and worked with our stakeholders to ensure their views were reflected in that document. This was not a small undertaking, and I appreciate their problem-solving approach and specific suggestions.

Since the recommendations were released, we have received close to 500 individual emails, letters, phone calls, and verbal comments. I have met with our colleagues, county boards, county executives and administrators, farmers, agricultural commodity groups, concerned parents, volunteers, master gardeners, deans of UW System institutions, and many more. I am filled with pride by the strong support Cooperative Extension has in every corner of the state, and how Wisconsin's citizens are rising to the occasion to help us find solutions to meet this challenge.

Your feedback was critical in helping me shape these decisions, and ultimately the future of Cooperative Extension. We need to build a new infrastructure, one that will allow us to continue our important work and grow in the future. In these decisions I tried to stay true to Cooperative Extension's mission: to teach, learn, lead, and serve, connecting people with the University of Wisconsin, and engaging with them in transforming lives and communities. I believe the decisions identified below reflect that commitment.

### ***nEXT Generation Decisions***

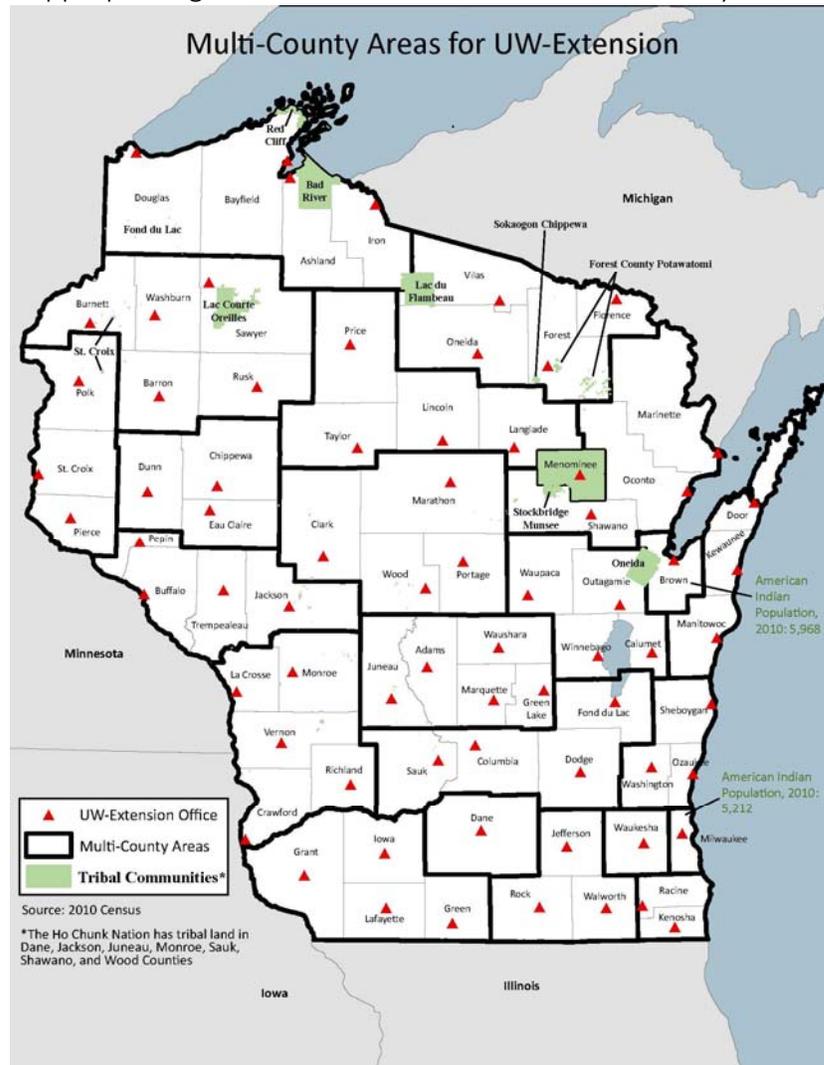
#### **County and Tribal Nation Recommendations:**

**Reduction Target: \$1.2 million annually**

1. UW Cooperative Extension will implement a multi-county area structure that provides shared administrative leadership to the area.

To accomplish this, I will charge the *nEXT Generation* co-sponsors and the steering committee to:

- Work closely with counties to establish priorities and staffing needs, within the parameters of the budget reduction targets.
- Consolidate administration, where possible, to allow community researchers and educators to focus entirely on their areas and expertise, rather than on administrative tasks. Based on feedback, this administrative structure may differ from that described in the December 2015 recommendations.
- Ensure financial proportionality between counties within a multi-county area. For example, the services one county receives should be proportional to its investment. Based on feedback, take into consideration that investments vary from county to county.
- Design an appropriate governance structure in each multi-county area.



Many factors were considered in determining these multi-county areas. Input was provided from Cooperative Extension regional directors, program directors, county elected officials, and our colleagues. A number of different regional configurations were considered, and based on feedback I received, some areas have been changed from the original recommendations.

**2. Maintain a Cooperative Extension office in each of the existing county and tribal offices.**

A number of our programs are local, high-touch, and require face-to-face interactions (for example, 4-H and the Master Gardener Program). These programs will continue; volunteer coordination will also continue, but the structures may evolve.

**3. Maintain single-county areas in high-population counties.**

In addition to the decision to establish single-county areas in high-population areas, the steering committee will develop a process to share resources, research, and best practices across urban counties.

**4. Develop a statewide tribal support network that leverages resources to strengthen partnerships.**

We value our relationships with our current tribal partners. In order to expand upon that work, I will charge the executive co-sponsors and the steering committee to develop a statewide network that will incorporate and better leverage existing work by existing statewide groups and other University of Wisconsin campuses. Based on feedback, this may be different from that described in the December recommendations.

**5. Establish the appropriate mix of faculty, academic staff, and university staff positions in each single- and multi-county area to best serve the needs of that area**

The steering committee will work with our county partners and other stakeholders to identify the mix of faculty and staff appropriate to each single- and multi-county area.

**6. Evaluate and provide recommendations on expanded use of digital technology in appropriate areas of program delivery, educational product development and administration.**

Digital technology will continue to expand in every aspect of life. We need to meet people where they are today and in the future by providing more of our research and information in a digital format, accessible by smartphone, tablet and future devices. Digital technology will not entirely replace face-to-face programs and services. This will be an evolution. The steering committee will take into consideration the lack of consistent broadband access throughout the state.

## Campus and UW-Extension Specialist Investment Recommendations:

Reduction Target: \$1.7 million annually

### **1. Strategically reduce the number of campus integrated and Cooperative Extension non-integrated specialists and support positions.**

Based on feedback, I will charge the executive co-sponsors and the steering committee to:

- Work with campus partners and consider meeting budget reduction targets through a combination of open positions, reductions to UW-Extension-based S&E, and other support before eliminating positions.
- Establish guidelines for the hiring of future integrated and nonintegrated specialist faculty based on collaborative and strategic priorities of UW-Extension, campus partner priorities, and emerging programmatic priorities/issues.
- Establish accountability criteria so that UW-Extension appointments and financial investment clearly reflect UW-Extension organizational priorities, administrative responsibilities, teaching load, and performance.

### **2. Develop and implement mechanisms for the allocation of resources (a flexible pool of base, one-time, and other funds), accumulated over time used to address critical emerging issues or problems in the state that require special expertise beyond that available among existing faculty.**

The original recommendations I received proposed an “overcut” of 10% of FTE. Based on feedback, this pool will not be established immediately, but will be phased in over time. I will charge the executive co-sponsors and the steering committee to develop a plan in consultation with our campus partners. In addition, the final amount of the pool may differ from what was proposed in the original recommendations.

## Administrative and Educational Program Support Recommendations:

Reduction Target: \$0.7 million annually

### **1. Consolidate Cooperative Extension administrative functions with UW-Extension central administration where possible (e.g., IT, HR, business services, marketing), to leverage efficiency and flexibility while maintaining support of our mission.**

I will charge the executive co-sponsors and the steering committee to:

- Implement administrative workflows and technology that eliminate redundancy and reduce administrative cost.
- Determine and implement staffing levels and organization structures appropriate to best support existing partnerships.

2. Undertake a comprehensive analysis of the division’s overall revenue/resource portfolio, and recommend opportunities for enhanced mission-driven revenue generation and entrepreneurship.

I will charge the executive co-sponsors and the steering committee to:

- Review current resource allocation to ensure resources from all current sources are appropriately deployed to meet our mission.
- Based on feedback, develop a plan for increasing existing revenue sources with an emphasis on contracts and federal funding.
- Establish a plan for developing new revenue generating fee-for-service opportunities beyond the State of Wisconsin.

### Timeline and Process

A steering committee has been [appointed](#) and will develop work groups comprised of Cooperative Extension faculty, staff, tribal, county and campus partners, and more. These groups will work through spring 2016 to develop detailed implementation plans. We have engaged a project manager to organize work and keep the process moving forward in a timely manner.

Changes will occur over time, not all at once. Some changes—for example, new job descriptions and recruitments for these positions—may begin as early as this summer. These new positions may provide career advancement opportunities for our current faculty and staff. Even though we know we need to cut additional positions, no positions will be eliminated or notices given as a result of this reorganization until late 2016 or early 2017.

### Job Impacts and Resources

Even though no positions will be eliminated immediately, we know that a change of this magnitude creates a great deal of uncertainty and anxiety. We want to provide some basic information and support as early as possible.

The Office of Human Resources (OHR) has assembled a set of resources to assist individuals facing employment transitions. See the [Job Transition Resource Guide](#).

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) also will be available for all employees, including those whose jobs are affected by budget reductions, for up to a year after the job is eliminated. The MyLifeMatters website can be found [here](#), and the password is SOWI.

## Pivot to the Future

As many of you know, I spent a good part of last summer traveling through the state, visiting Cooperative Extension county offices, meeting with state specialists, observing your work, and interacting with a wide variety of community partners. Though I feel I have just scratched the surface, I hope you know that I care deeply about our mission and preserving our ability to serve.

My sincere thanks go out to the various groups who spent countless hours developing recommendations to implement our significant budget cuts. I am also grateful for all the thoughtful input and suggestions from our various stakeholders throughout the state. These individuals are helping us all move forward toward solutions and determining our own future, building an organization that is relevant, flexible, and digital.

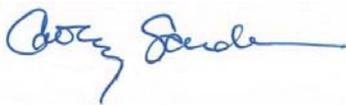
I hope we all can make that pivot as well, a pivot to the future, for the good of the individuals, families, and communities throughout Wisconsin.

I know there will be many questions, some now and some in the weeks to come. We have developed a preliminary FAQ (available online [here](#)) that we hope will provide some answers to specific questions you may have. I encourage you to read through that document. We will update this FAQ as needed.

We will also schedule a series of town hall meetings in the next few weeks where you can ask me questions directly. We will forward the details for those Google Hangouts soon.

Making decisions like this is one of the most difficult responsibilities a leader can confront. Believe me, I do not take it lightly. I sincerely appreciate the understanding and support I have received from so many of you. This is a difficult task, but one I am confident we can work through together.

Respectfully and sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cathy Sandeen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Cathy Sandeen