

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SPECIALIST ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES¹

INTRODUCTION

Specialists are crucial to the success of the Colorado State University Extension system through the development and delivery of research. Specialists provide leadership for field and campus faculty, departmental, and Extension personnel in the development, implementation, and evaluation of Extension education programs relevant to their specific subject matter expertise.

The responsibilities of Colorado State University Extension (CSUE) specialists are many and varied. Specialist appointments in Extension vary typically in length from three to 12 months and in type from regular faculty to administrative professional. CSUE's specialist appointments may also be differentiated by responsibility and targeted audience. All specialists serve as important links between field and campus at Colorado State University. All specialists are responsible for supporting CSUE's mission: to provide information and education, and encourage the application of research-based knowledge in response to local, state, and national issues affecting individuals, youth, families, agricultural enterprises, and communities of Colorado. Each specialist's work should have a clear focus with priorities on topics appropriate to Colorado and the mission of CSUE. Efforts should be related to one or more CSUE Work Team plans of work.

This document provides direction regarding specialists' roles and responsibilities with guidelines categorized into teaching and advising, research and other creative activity, engagement, and service. These guidelines are not considered mandates, but rather a compilation of potential roles and responsibilities. Expectations should be commensurate with of a specialist's appointment and job description. Further, there needs to be flexibility and mutual agreement between specialist, supervisor, other administrators, and department tenure and promotion committees (where appropriate) as to specific roles and responsibilities associated with any given specialist assignment. The specialist's effort distribution is determined at the time of hire. Changes to the effort distribution shall be agreed upon with the department head subject to the provisions of Section C.2.6.2.e and E.9.1 of the Academic Faculty and Administrative Professional Manual (hereinafter referred as the Manual) and stated clearly in writing as part of the annual performance evaluation. The effort distribution shall be used as a framework for annual and periodic comprehensive reviews as well as tenure and promotion decisions.

TEACHING AND ADVISING

Dissemination of Information. Specialists, being responsive to clientele requests, will provide regular updates, summaries of research findings, and the identification of

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resources that are appropriate for use in local programs and with other clientele groups. This may be in the form of newsletters, peer-reviewed Technical Reports, blogs, electronic-mail messages, teleconferences and/or webinars, website updates, mailings, development of peer-reviewed fact sheets, etc. Specialists will support, mentor, and keep agents informed about relevant county, state, and federal databases that affect priorities for county Extension work.

In-Service and Professional Development. Specialists are expected to deliver in-service trainings and workshops. These teaching presentations are important ways of providing research-based information and effective educational programs to agents, extension paraprofessionals, and others. Effective teaching incorporates a strong research base, clear concepts of how to use resources, and coordinated updates or consulting after the training, which encourages adoption and program evaluation. In-service trainings build subject matter knowledge among agents and paraprofessionals as well as provide specialized program responses to current state and regional program issues. Effective program planning includes input from agents, paraprofessionals, and others. Successful program dissemination includes agents, paraprofessionals, and others using the materials and working with specialists to collect and aggregate program impacts.

Collaboration with Professionals. Developing professional relationships with major state and county government departments and key service or regulatory agencies with responsibility in one's subject-matter is a specialist responsibility. This includes providing information and updates or research summaries to professionals in these organizations. Team building and collaborative activity involving CSUE campus and field staff and agency partners who are associated with the design/implementation /evaluation of CSUE Work Teams plans of work also are important specialist responsibilities.

Student Mentoring/Teaching. Mentoring, co-advising, and advising undergraduate and graduate students on research projects, internships and practica that relate to Extension's mission are specialist responsibilities. When applying for funding of projects related to Extension specialists should include financial support for student, graduate assistant, or intern expenses.

RESEARCH AND OTHER CREATIVE ACTIVITY

It is expected that all Extension specialists are engaged in research and scholarship that emphasizes the synthesis and translation of research into educational programs. Examples and evidence of research activities include publishing in refereed journals, technical reports, digital and other electronic media publications, developing research-based curricula and curriculum-products for use by others, conducting and reporting program evaluations, giving regional, national and international presentations, as well as developing research-based program materials that are adapted for use by other states. This is not an exhaustive list. Extension specialists' scholarship is typically and historically characterized by peer review of manuscripts in any and all three areas—

teaching, research, and service. Any scholarship that is different from traditional research journal-based scholarship must add to the body of knowledge, be peer reviewed, and be communicated in a way that an audience has access to it.

Scholarly creative activities include the integration of knowledge or technology leading to new interpretations or applications. The assemblage of research-based information for a targeted audience via a literature review is an element of scholarship and research. Other examples of scholarship include developing peer reviewed fact sheets, submitting grant proposals, developing policy recommendations for use by public decisions makers, and others as described in Section E.12.2 in the Manual.

Extension specialists are expected to collaborate with other faculty at CSU and other institutions from within and outside their disciplines, and with professionals from other organizations. The criteria for evaluating the original or creative nature of research and other creative activities should be the generally accepted standards prevailing in the applicable discipline or professional area. Standards for determining quality will vary among disciplines and should be specified by each academic unit. CSUE specialist research and scholarship activity, responsibility, and accountability should be consistent with the specific nature and time allocation of individual appointments.

ENGAGEMENT

The scholarship-based model of outreach/engagement stimulates interaction with the community, which produces discipline specific, evidence-based practices. Outreach/engagement activities may be integrated into the faculty member's teaching, research, and/or service effort distribution. For the activity to be scholarly, it must draw upon the academic and professional expertise of the faculty member while contributing to the public good, addressing or responding to real-world problems.

SERVICE

Historically, many Extension specialists considered the majority of their work to fall in this category. However, for the purposes of this document, "Service" carries a restricted definition described under Section E.12.3 of the Manual.

Carefully selected service is expected of specialists. Evidence of service activities might include serving on department, college and/or university committees or serving on state, regional and/or national committees or boards that are professional, academic, agency, and/or industry-based. Specialists are encouraged to establish relationships with local, state, and federal agencies participate in policy development and serve as trusted testifiers for legislative committees. Specialists are also encouraged to link with major state industries, service, and regulatory agencies in areas of major program responsibilities. Service rendered in one's professional capacity as a citizen of the community is commendable and may be evaluated as an appropriate faculty activity.

METRICS

The Manual defines engagement as education and information transfer activities for constituencies that do not include degree seeking students. These activities require a background of significant scholarship, diagnostic skills, use or development of creative and focused methodologies, information organization and media skills, and written and oral skills in interpreting as well as presenting information.

The scholarship of engagement is evaluated through the amount, quality, and effectiveness of those activities to the external community. Evaluating engagement activities as integrated into conventional teaching and research can be difficult, and requires multiple criteria to assess the scholarship of the activity.

The metrics for evaluation of engagement activities as scholarly work shall include: clear goals for the activities; documentation of adequate preparation for the activities; appropriate methods for the conduct of the activities; documentation of significant impacts and outcomes resulting from the activities; effective presentation of the results of the activities with peer review; and reflective critique on the results of the activities. Additional criteria may include a beneficial impact or outcome attributable at least in part to the application of relevant and up-to-date knowledge to the real-world problems, issues, or concerns addressed by the public service.

For faculty/specialists receiving funding from CSUE, the measurable indicators of success should include, but are not limited to: active partnership with agents and/or paraprofessionals; grants submitted and funded with agents as co-PIs; service as CCA leader and/or Work Team co-leader; Extension fact sheets and other peer reviewed publications, some of which are co-written with agents; applied research projects based on identified needs of clientele; in-service training conducted using various methods; workshops developed in partnership with agents, public agencies and others; timely completion of CPRS as a measure of time spent; and guest presentations on and off campus (face-to-face or webinar). These indicators are to be addressed during the annual performance evaluation.