



RETURN ON INVESTMENT

2006 ANNUAL REPORT

Cooperative Extension System
eXtension Initiative



The year 2006 will be best known as a year of development for eXtension. The formation and development of Communities of Practice, the work of these Communities of Practice to develop content, and ultimately the launch of one Community of Practice to the public and two others within the Cooperative Extension System are essential milestones leading to the fully integrated launch of eXtension in Fall 2007. These are the outward signs of forward progress for eXtension but internally to the initiative there has been much, much more happening. This report briefly details this progress.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE LAUNCHES

As a pioneer Community of Practice, HorseQuest has a long tradition of collaboration and creativity. That became apparent as the eXtension HorseQuest site went public on November 2, 2006. The site was the first public view for eXtension following months of development of content: interactive learning modules, graphics, news and events, and learning lessons.

On November 15, 2006, Financial Security for All was launched to the Cooperative Extension System with a "soft" launch in connection with the Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Education (AFCPE) in San Antonio. The Financial Security for All pioneer Community of Practice is also a group that has collaborated over a long period of time and members have brought great creativity and expertise in personal finance to eXtension.

December 15, 2006 marks the launch of the third Community of Practice web site to the Cooperative Extension System. Wildlife Damage Management, another pioneer Community of

Practice, has a scheduled "soft" launch with a public launch in early 2007. Again, this development team has worked during the last year to move existing and new resources into the eXtension framework.

The Imported Fire Ants Community of Practice is scheduled for a soft launch in early 2007.

COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

As with any new entity, graphic identity and branding are critical. eXtension is no different. So, as a part of the communications and marketing effort for eXtension, two firms were contracted to develop the User Interface and a Graphic Identity & Branding strategy.



Bean Creative and Bremmer Goris, both firms from Alexandria VA, worked with the eXtension staff and the Communications and Marketing Advisory Committee to develop the look and feel for eXtension and the new logo and tagline. Extensive research with both within

Cooperative Extension and with the general public confirmed that the logo and tagline communicated eXtension well. Both were implemented in mid 2006 and incorporated into new brochures and exhibits as well as the entire web presence.

Other communications and marketing efforts revolved around the launch and maintenance of a new blog site, marketing and public relations/media relations related to the launch of HorseQuest, implementation of the Communications and Marketing Strategic Plan developed in early 2006, and continued work to promote eXtension within the Cooperative Extension System.

eXtension continues to use a number of communications and marketing activities including a monthly UPDATE, quarterly national video conferences, exhibits, brochures, and presentations.

VIRTUAL NEWS ROOM

Iowa State University currently manages the eXtension Virtual News Room. As a team, Elaine Edwards and her staff members in Iowa State's Communications and Marketing Services unit write, edit, and search the land grant university system for news stories that will complement the work done by the eXtension Communities of Practice and eXtension in general. The Virtual

News Room is a critical part of the eXtension web presence and will be one of the most apparent of the value-added attributes of the initiative.

iTEAMS ON THE GROUND TO ASSIST INITIATIVE

More than 80% of land grant universities have established institutional teams or iTeams. These groups work with the eXtension staff members to promote eXtension within their Cooperative Extension organizations, provide routine feedback on technology and content issues, provide communications and marketing support, and assist eXtension in clarifying policies and procedures with local faculty and staff. Teams typically include members of the CES administration, communications, information technology, library science, Extension agents and subject matter specialists. The iTeams meet quarterly via web conferencing with the eXtension staff.

TECHNOLOGY & INFRASTRUCTURE

This past year has seen many advances in the core technological infrastructure and capacity of the eXtension system. Systems for content management were created for Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), educational content and learning

objects, digital media (video, photos, audio), events, and news. eXtension moved off of North Carolina State-provided servers and on to its own. NC State provided eXtension with a new machine room, and all of the core functionality of the eXtension collaborative workspace is now being hosted on eXtension-owned servers.

The content management system was adopted from the MediaWiki open-source project, and customized and tailored to serve the needs of our Pioneering Communities of Practice (CoP). Several eXtension-authored add-ons were developed, and released back to the MediaWiki community. One of the more significant additions was an IEEE-Learning Object Metadata eXtension designed to capture author information and other significant contributions of CoP members. This metadata component is a key technology for ensuring that contributors are provided proper attribution, that content undergoes thorough peer-review, and that proper quality control measures have been followed.

The FAQ application was developed and released for the Extension system to use in July of 2006. It was populated with some 3500 questions that had been collected across the Extension system, and quickly grew to over 25,000 questions with the

importation of existing FAQs from state partners and other multi-state initiatives.

The news application was rolled-out in preparation for the public launch of the first CoP Web site. This tool allows for the creation of news articles so that the CoP sites are ever changing and a reason for clientele to visit frequently. A key feature of this software is the capacity to aggregate state provided syndication feeds. This is the first of many Web services to be implemented and is the foundational technology that will provide a mechanism for data and educational content interchange among and between eXtension partner institutions.

A fourth application for content creation for public consumption is the Events application. This tool is used to inform clientele of upcoming events in their areas of interest all the way down to the local level. The plans for this application also include data standards and syndication so that events can be automatically aggregated across the system and used to populate eXtension, institution, and county Web applications.

A modern Web framework was designed to completely automate the export of content from our primary content management applications to the eXtension public Web site. A tremendous amount of effort went into the

“The subject matter specialists in the imported fire ant CoP work closely together on research and extension projects. eXtension is the next logical step for us. In this time of dwindling resources and fewer experts at Land Grant Institution, eXtension will allow us to continue to serve our clientele.”

- Kathy Flanders,
Auburn University,
Imported Fire Ants

specification, design, and coding of this system. The result is a sophisticated Web publishing system capable of automatically rendering content to hundreds (if not thousands) of custom Web sites. This technology can scale to meet the needs of the fully functional eXtension system. It has been written in a way to automatically accommodate additional CoPs with no programmer involvement. With the combination of MediaWiki, the custom content creation tools (FAQ, news, events, and learning modules) and the Web publishing framework capabilities, eXtension has a powerful, affordable, customized, and professionally developed solution to collaboratively and transparently support the anticipated growth of CoPs for many years.

An eXtension blog was created in early 2006 to serve as a simple and conversational method for informing the system about progress on milestones and other initiatives.

The eXtension Information Technology Advisory Committee worked through new processes for establishing and adopting standards and protocols to facilitate the interoperability and the seamless movement of educational materials across the system. The first candidate protocol adopted was Atom, and in late 2006 the eXtension staff was working with states to

transform their news feeds for support of news information in the pioneering CoP Web sites.

Finally, several technologies to facilitate collaboration for both eXtension and the entire Extension system were implemented: enterprise chat, mailing lists, wikis, survey software, web analytics, blogs, and open-identity management.

EVALUATION & RESEARCH

Michael Lambur accepted the position of eXtension Evaluation and Research Leader effective November 26, 2006. He is responsible for evaluating how effectively eXtension is serving the educational and informational needs of Communities of Interest through the work of Communities of Practice. He will also be coordinating evaluation activities that will impact various decision-making processes.

Lambur, formerly Professor and Head, Extension Program and Curriculum Development for Virginia Cooperative Extension, will continue to be housed at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, VA.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS INITIATIVE

On July 5, 2006, eXtension opened the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) application

to the Cooperative Extension System for submission of questions and answers as well as review and editing of existing questions. As of December 1, 2006 there are 24,447 questions within the FAQ system and 1,578 individuals have registered within the FAQ application.

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Community of Practice Leadership Development

One of the major challenges members of new Communities of Practice members face is "learning the ropes" of eXtension and learning how to work as a team in a virtual environment. eXtension organized two Community of Practice Leadership Workshops in 2006 to address these challenges and issues. Community of Practice members met in multiple-day workshops to meet the eXtension staff, learn about the tools, processes and procedures associated with content development, communications & marketing, corporate development, information technology, and professional development. A corporate trainer on virtual teamwork and team building showed the groups tools and techniques to develop creative, cooperative, and collaborative virtual working groups.

New Communities of Practice

Ten new Communities of Practice were named to join eXtension in September 2006:

- Beef Cattle Clearing House
- Family Caregiving; Caring for the Aged and/or Disabled Adults
- Youth Literacy in Science, Engineering and Technology
- Pork Information Group
- eOrganic
- US DAIReXNET
- Corn and Soybean Production
- Urban Integrated Pest Management
- Map@Syst: Geospatial Solutions for Rural and Community Sustainability
- Diversity Across Higher Education

These 10 new Communities of Practice were named following an extensive review of 19 finalist proposals by the Call for Engagement Review Panel in mid-August. The Call for Engagement Review Panel is comprised of Extension directors, administrators, and program leaders representing the five Extension regions plus three CSREES-USDA national program leaders.

A total of \$500,000 was divided among nine of these groups. The Diversity Across Higher Education Community of Practice will receive no direct monetary support but will receive in-kind support from eXtension through use of its collaborative space and other development resources.



Henry Ford said:

'Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.' To me this says a lot about what eXtension is and hopes to be. Assembling the Consumer Horticulture Community of Practice has provided an opportunity to bring folks together with a common purpose to develop products that are potentially much larger than any of us would be able to complete on our own. With some staying power and continued hard work, I think success will



become evident.
- Rick Durham, University of Kentucky, Consumer Horticulture

“
I am excited to be
a member of a Pioneer
Community of Practice in
Wildlife Damage
Management for
eXtension. eXtension is
on the cutting edge of
Extension and I believe
that we are part of the
wave of the future...
eXtension allowed us
to focus on the general
public (the homeowner,
the farmer, the
warehouse manager)
people who every day
need straight forward,
factual information on
how to resolve problems
with wildlife damage.”

– Scott Hyngstrom,
University of Nebraska,
Wildlife Damage
Management

Pioneer Communities of Practice

These 10 newly funded Communities of Practice joined eight Pioneer Communities of Practice, named in September 2005:

- Building Local Economies of the Future
- Consumer Horticulture
- Extension Disaster Education Network
- HorseQuest
- Financial Security for All
- Imported Fire Ant Management
- Just In Time Parenting
- Wildlife Damage Management

Volunteer Communities of Practice

In 2006, eXtension added three volunteer Communities of Practice:

- Pesticide Environmental Stewardship
- Cotton
- Livestock and Poultry Environmental Learning Centers

A volunteer Community of Practice joins eXtension with its own resources and agreement with the eXtension mission, vision, values and guiding principles. With the newly funded groups, this brings the total to 21 eXtension Communities of Practice.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Beth Raney joined eXtension March 1, 2006 as Professional Development Leader to provide professional development for Cooperative Extension faculty

and staff on the use of eXtension developed and supported information technologies.

eXtension professional development training areas will include use of eXtension’s content management system, the various wiki spaces used for collaboration within eXtension, frequently asked questions, chat rooms, web conferencing, and other synchronous and asynchronous delivery tools.

Heavily using the eXtension Breeze web conferencing system at Iowa State University, the professional development effort offers 30-minute training sessions on various topics and introduced a new 6-week intensive course focusing on use of the eXtension wiki collaborative environment. Guest lectures by Kris Olsen, founder of “Wiki That!” and IBM’s Sam Ruby on Atom feeds have also been featured.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR AG EXTENSION GRANT

On behalf of the Cooperative Extension System, eXtension submitted a proposal to CSREES for the “New Technologies for Agricultural Extension” grant and was awarded \$1.4256M for building the initiative’s infrastructure and capacity. The grant was awarded in July 2006.

IPAC MEETING BRINGS INTERNAL PARTNERS TOGETHER

The Internal Partners Advisory Committee (IPAC) met in April 2006 to learn more about the eXtension initiative and to strategize on greater involvement and participation by partner groups in the initiative. Jim King, Professor of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, facilitated the meeting. Organizations represented included:

- 1994 Land-Grant Institutions
- 4-H Youth Development, Youth Representative
- Academic Committee on Organization and Policy, Board on Agriculture Assembly, NASULGC
- Administrative Heads Section, Board on Agriculture Assembly, NASULGC
- American Distance Education Consortium (ADEC)
- Association for Communications Excellence (ACE) in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Life and Human Sciences
- Association of Natural Resources Extension Professionals
- CARET
- Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, USDA
- Council Extension Continuing Education and Public Service
- Epsilon Sigma Phi
- Experiment Stations Committee on Organization and Policy,

Board on Agriculture Assembly, NASULGC

- National 4-H Council
- National Agricultural Library, USDA
- National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals
- National Association of County Agricultural Agents
- National Extension Association for Family and Consumer Sciences

IOWA STATE HOSTS WEB CONFERENCING CENTER

Following a national RFP process, Iowa State University was awarded the contract to provide web conferencing for the eXtension initiative. The technology is being used to support Community of Practice meetings, professional development activities and institutional team meetings. An average of 18 conferences is conducted via the Breeze system per month. The eXtension Web Conferencing Center has leveraged use of the Breeze conferencing technology throughout the system as member institutions may use the technology at the same costs provided to eXtension.



The 37-member HorseQuest Community of Practice has brought greater expertise to each area of interest and reduced the workload on individual experts at the same time. The collaborative relationships with other experts is minimizing duplication of effort and maximizing utilization of good materials. The spin offs into other projects is phenomenal.



*– Clint Depew,
Louisiana State University
AgCenter, HorseQuest*

W
 It has been a stretch to become comfortable with new technology and working in a web-based environment with multiple contributors. The rewards are becoming clear, as I begin to see the work of many coming together to produce a resource that will be valuable to us all, consumers and educators. As a county based Extension professional, I appreciate being linked to expertise from around the **W** country...

– Jacque Miller,
 Colorado State
 University, Financial
 Security for All.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

2006 - eXtension Financial				
Revenue Projections				
Source	Amount			
2006 Institutional Contributions	\$1,600,000			
2005 NASULGC Carry-Over	\$600,000			
NTAE available in 2006 7/1-12/31	\$826,330			
Carry-Over from eXtension (2004-2005)	\$671,745			
	\$3,698,075			
Expense Projections				
Category	Labor	Grants / Expenses	Contract Services	Capital
Executive & Business Admin	\$181,541	\$50,000	\$104,000	\$20,000
eXtension Program Management		\$92,000	\$280,236	\$0
Information Technology	\$613,558	\$71,000	\$260,000	\$0
CoP Support / Content Development	\$464,277	\$1,167,000	\$75,000	\$0
Communications & Marketing	\$0	\$30,000	\$272,244	\$0
	\$1,259,376	\$1,410,000	\$991,480	\$20,000
			Grand Total:	\$3,680,856
			Receivables:	\$3,698,075
			Difference:	\$17,219

BUSINESS STRUCTURE

The eXtension Foundation was incorporated in the state of Missouri with headquarters at the University of Nebraska. A Board of Directors was named, which includes representative directors/administrators from the Cooperative Extension system and a NASULGC representative. An application for 501c3 tax exempt status is pending with the Internal Revenue Service. The process is underway to secure liability insurance to cover Board members. The eXtension Foundation is a legal entity

needed to manage key business activities including:

- License agreements to manage the intellectual property of content contributors
- Private fundraising
- Secure and manage key assets including domain names, trademarks, and more.

The eXtension Contributor and Business Agreement allows contributors to maintain ownership of their intellectual property, while giving rights to eXtension to copy, distribute, display, perform, and create

derivative and collective works based upon their work and requires that contributors be given credit for their work. Contributors retain the right to use and license their copyrighted material. By accepting the agreement, contributors are also certifying they are the original author of the subject works or have the authority to grant this nonexclusive license to eXtension, and that they have not violated anyone else's copyright material in the creation of the work. Signed Institutional Contributor and Business Agreements are due in early 2007.

Terms of Use were developed and are now available at the public web site: http://www.extension.org/pages/eXtension_Terms_of_Use. The **Terms of Use** explain how users may use eXtension resources.

- Use Of Content
- Inaccuracy Disclaimer
- Liability Of Extension Foundation and Its Licensors
- Children's Privacy
- Site Public Areas
- User Submissions
- Passwords
- Subscription Services
- Searches, Advertisements And Links
- Indemnity
- EEO Statement
- Jurisdiction
- Notice And Take Down Procedures
- Copyright Agent

A new third-party business agreement was developed to subcontract with Community of Practice lead institutions.

CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT

eXtension has signed an agreement with the University of Nebraska Foundation to serve as its "bank" so that private funds may be developed to fund the eXtension initiative and Communities of Practice.

Betty Johnson, eXtension development officer, was able to begin contacting potential donors to fund the initiative and the Communities of Practice. A prospect list had been created and she has begun to talk with potential funders to educate them about eXtension and determine their interest so partnerships can be created. At the same time, policies have been approved for the development program including a policy for private dollar distribution, development activity notification, and others are in development.

Discussions are still being held in regard to recognition of donors on the website, as well as to sponsors and the policies needed to accept and recognize their investment in eXtension. Johnson is also working with the Communities of Practice to determine their prospect list so that joint, unified proposals may be made on behalf of eXtension.

"eXtension will soon become the model for multi-state collaboration and more importantly bring together the public and private sector in cotton in ways that simply were not possible in the past"

**- Sandy Stewart,
Louisiana State
University, Cotton**

“
We had a working
group of specialists from
across the country who
had been trying to
collaborate on a single
product for several years,
without much progress.
eXtension helped create
a structure and process
that allowed us to make
our plans a reality and
this collaboration will
have concrete effects on
state and national
programming.”

– Aaron Ebata,
University of Illinois, Just
in Time Parenting

GOVERNANCE & STAFFING

eXtension has multiple groups working within the organization to accomplish its goals:

eXtension Governing Committee

The eXtension Governing Committee, approved by ECOP, is a representative committee that is charged with approving the plans and actions of the eXtension project and staff, and providing the guidance necessary to ensure success. It includes a representative from each of the NASULGC Extension regions, the chair of the ECOP Program Sub-Committee, the Director of Extension and Outreach at NASULGC, and a representative from CSREES. Listed below are the governing committee members:

- Elbert Dickey, Chair, North Central Region
- Karen Hinton, Secretary, Western Region
- Paul Coreil, Vice Chair, Southern Region
- Lavon Bartel, Northeast Region
- Dalton McAfee, Secretary, 1890 Region
- Noland Williams, Jeff Barcinas, Ex-officio, ECOP
- James Wade, NASULGC
- Greg Crosby, Ex-officio, CSREES

1. Staff

- Dan Cotton, Director
- Carla Craycraft, Associate Director for Content Development (.50 FTE)
- Craig Wood, Associate Director for Content Development (.50 FTE)
- Kevin Gamble, Associate Director for Information Technology (.90 FTE)

2. Communications & Marketing

- Terry Meisenbach, Communications and Marketing Leader (subcontract at .75 FTE to June 30, 2006; 1.00 FTE effective July 1, 2006)

3. Corporate Development

- Betty Johnson, Corporate Development Officer (subcontract at .60 FTE)

4. Evaluation & Research

- Michael Lambur, Evaluation & Research Leader

5. Business and Legal Representation

- Steve Wyatt, Attorney (part time subcontract)

6. Director's Council

The eXtension Director's Council meets weekly as an advisory group and is comprised of the eXtension staff as well as representatives from each region, NASULGC, and CSREES:

- Carl O'Connor, North Central Region
- Ron Brown, Southern Region
- Lorenza Lyons, 1890 Region
- Lyla Hoaglum, Western Region
- James Wade, NASULGC
- Greg Crosby, CSREES

Advisory Committees

Four major activity areas within eXtension have named advisory groups to facilitate their work. Members of these committees work on a voluntary basis in support of eXtension:

Content Development Advisory Board Task Force

- Clint DePew, Louisiana State University
- Erik Anderson, University of Idaho
- Judy Barth, Colorado State University
- Betsy Green, University of Vermont;
- Ashley Griffin, University of Kentucky,
- Larry Lippke, Texas A&M University;
- Shirley Pope, Alcorn State University;
- Nancy Porter, Clemson University;
- Jane Schuchardt, CSREES/USDA, and
- Carl Wilson, Colorado State University

Information Technology Advisory Committee

- Robin Adams, North Carolina A&T State
- Deb Coates, Iowa State University
- Jonathan Davis, Auburn University
- Weldon Floyd, Texas A&M University
- Fred Piazza, Louisiana State University AgCenter
- Becky Osborne, West Virginia University
- John Ray, Ohio State University
- Bob Rubyini, University of Minnesota
- Tony Wright, Washington State University

“eXtension involvement has allowed me the opportunity to work with top specialists from around the country. I have collaborated with them in writing professional papers and formal presentations, and have learned how to best use cutting edge educational technology. It has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my over 20 years as an Extension Agent and Specialist!**”**

**- Debb Pankow,
South Dakota State,
Financial Security for All**


Communications & Marketing Advisory Committee

- Terry Canup, New Mexico State University
- Elaine Edwards, Iowa State University
- Scott Fedale, Washington State University
- Elizabeth Gregory, Texas A & M University
- Frankie Gould, Louisiana State University Agricultural Center
- Anne Henderson, CSREES, USDA
- Paul Hixson, University of Illinois
- Tom Knecht, Mississippi State University
- Michael McLendon, Tennessee State University
- Gloria Mosby, Prairie View A & M University
- Kersten Roan, Virginia Tech
- Suzanne Steel, Ohio State University
- Stephen Vantassel, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- Ashley Wood, University of Florida
- Holly Young, University of New Hampshire

Fundraising and Development Committee

- Lavon Bartel, Governing Committee
- Karen Hinton, Governing Committee, Treasurer
- Ron Brown, Director's Council
- Dan Cotton, eXtension Director
- Carl O'Connor, ECOP Extension Finance Committee
- Carolyn Fernandez, National 4-H Council
- Barbara Casady, University of Missouri
- Bill Sheets, Colorado State University
- Mary Peabody, University of Vermont;
- Doyle Medows, University of Tennessee

TELLING THE STORY

In this second year, information about eXtension has been delivered face-to-face at various gatherings and meetings throughout the country. For the most part, eXtension staff members alone have prepared and delivered speeches and presentations to the following entities or meetings as well as quarterly national video conferences and monthly update newsletters:

- AgNIC
- American Distance Education Consortium (ADEC)
- Association for Communication Excellence (ACE) in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Life and Human Science
- Association of 1890 Extension Administrators (AEA)
- Council for Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching (CARET)
- Council on Extension, Continuing Education, and Public Service (CECEPS)
- Children, Youth and Family at Risk (CYFAR)
- Clemson University Cooperative Extension
- ECOP North Central Regional Meeting
- ECOP Western Region Summer & Fall Meetings
- Energy Conference
- Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP) Annual Conference
- Horticulture Meeting
- Idaho Cooperative Extension Annual Conference
- Institutional Partners Advisory Committee (IPAC)
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP) – Public Issues
 - Leadership Development (PILD)
- Maine Cooperative Extension Annual Conference
- Mississippi State Extension Conference
- National Association of County Agricultural Agents (NACAA)
- National Association of Extension 4-H Agents (NAE4-HA)
- National Extension Association for Family and Consumer Sciences (NAEFCS)
- National Extension Directors & Administrators (NEDA)
- National Extension Technology Conference (NETC)
- Science & Technology Conference
- Society of Nutrition Education
- Southern Region Program Leadership Network – AEA-ASRED
- University of Connecticut
- University of Massachusetts
- Western Beef Resource Meeting

