

CCE and University-Community Engagement

Cornell Cooperative Extension **is** the university engaged and embedded in New York State communities. Currently, there is renewed interest within Cornell University around the concept of "university-community engagement." The Cooperative Extension System can use this interest as an opportunity to more fully articulate extension work as engagement.

Public engagement is a broadly inclusive term to encompass the variety of ways that Cornell works to effect positive change in the world. "Conceiving of the university's outreach mission as 'public engagement' is an important shift because it recasts that mission in broader and more inclusive terms." (Cornell strategic plan) CCE is (or should be) a key player in assisting the university in public engagement in NYS. CCE supports the language of public engagement that has recently been developed that includes community-engaged research, community-engaged teaching and learning, outreach and dissemination, the scholarship of engagement.

In order to fully understand and gauge our relationships with communities it is important to look at the range of engagement, reflect on where Cooperative Extension System (CES) has traditionally been positioned, and consider what a truly engaged university might look like. One of the goals of CCE's new 5 years plan entitled, "People, Purpose, Impact: A Strategy for Engagement in the 21st Century," is to implement action steps to enhance CCE's role in university-community engagement and to more fully brand our work that supports meaningful engagement.

Fundamental to the success of CCE's unique approach are skilled educators. We believe that educators need to be aware of the technical, political, economic, environmental, and social complexities of New York's communities and regions. We expect all educators to 1) have a basic understanding of community development principles and practices, 2) be adept at building relationships, developing partnerships and fostering collaborations, and 3) be able to help communities synthesize different kinds of knowledge which includes making accessible research findings. The relationship aspect needs to be underscored as essential for truly effective educators working with a wide range of partners: other educators, faculty and campus based associates, community members and increasingly students. Ideally extension educators position themselves as co-learners and co-researchers with their project partners.

University-Community Engagement is embedded in CCE's new mission and vision statements.

Mission

Cornell Cooperative Extension puts knowledge to work in pursuit of economic vitality, ecological sustainability and social well-being. We bring local experience and research based solutions together, helping New York State families and communities thrive in our rapidly changing world.

Vision

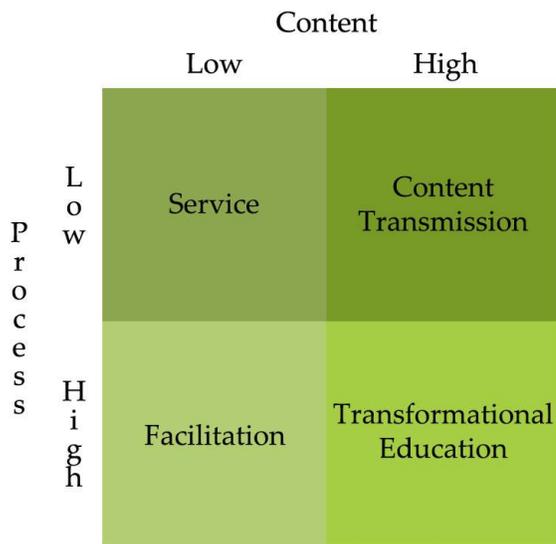
Cornell Cooperative Extension is a national leader in creating positive change on behalf of families and communities through rigorously-tested extension programs. We create measurable change in the following priority areas by aligning local needs with the resources and priorities of the land grant system and its state and federal partners.

The land grant mission is a covenant between higher education and the people. Our scholarship directly responds to needs in the local and global community and strives to improve the quality of life in our society. A unique aspect of a land grant university is that the flow of information, wisdom, and discourse is bidirectional between the university and the people. Across the world the intent of this model is being replicated, and today the land grant mission at Cornell is a mission for the world. Helene Dillard, former director of Cornell Cooperative Extension and professor of plant pathology and plant-microbe biology

Historically two (at times) competing tendencies have been at play within cooperative extension work. The technology transfer model positions the university as distributing innovation to "the people". This model emphasizes a one way flow of knowledge and information being delivered from the university. Technology transfer tends to position communities as passive receptors of needed knowledge and innovation. The second model arises from a more participatory approach and validates community knowledge as an equal partner to university research and innovation. These tendencies can be seen as two poles on a spectrum of "university-community engagement". Held within these poles are a range of possible activities and outreach approaches.

The work of the CES is the work of engagement. However, recently we have taken a somewhat constricted view of engagement. This narrowing of focus is, in many ways, tied to economics and budgetary uncertainty. The challenge for Cornell Cooperative Extension is in negotiating the tension between our necessary adherence to federal funding priorities and a full bodied engagement in communities. A robust engagement would, of necessity, open a dialogue about what we stand for in relation to such issues as healthy families, the promotion of economic opportunities, environmental

health, informed citizens and sound decision making. A deep engagement means that we are involved with individuals, families, businesses, local officials and communities. Increasingly we see our work done in relationship with others. Through trusted relationships and partnerships we have to be clear on what we are supporting through education and outreach. Our engagement as a trusted partner positions us in a way such that may suggest that some of the language we have used in the past might be revisited, e.g. "neutral."



Ewert (1999) Instructional Styles for Outreach
Adapted from: McDowell 2001

In looking at instructional styles, past CCE Director Merrill Ewert's developed the above process/content matrix. We feel that this matrix provides a map for evaluating the categories of community engagement (<http://blogs.cornell.edu/ccstrategicplan/community-engagement-and-cce/categories-of-community-engagement/>). In a similar way all extension activities could be mapped into one (or more) of the 4 quadrants of this matrix. We may have as a goal for CCE's work related to university-community engagement that it be both high process and high content leading to transformational practices.

McDowell, G. R. (2001). *Land-grant universities and extension into the 21st century: Renegotiating or abandoning a social contract*. Ames: Iowa State University Press.