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# OSU EXTENSION EDUCATION: FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

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OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE

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## OSU Extension Education: Focus on the Future

**A**fter 75 years of serving the Oregon public, the Oregon State University Extension Service has become an essential resource for Oregonians in solving problems and developing leadership and life skills related to youth, family, community, agriculture, forestry, energy, and marine resources. As Oregonians grapple with concerns about water quality, failing farms, chemicals and the environment, conflicting demands on Oregon's natural resources, child abuse, teenage pregnancy, and many other issues, Extension programs are meeting their needs for objective, research-based information to help them lead better lives and manage resources wisely.

OSU Extension is actively preparing for Oregon's future with educational programs in economic development areas such as tourism, family business, alternative agriculture, and development and marketing of new products. Our youth and community leadership programs help train young people and adults for roles as responsible leaders who take part in making decisions that affect the State, region, and Nation.

### Educational Goals and Initiatives

As we look toward a new decade, OSU Extension has identified four major educational goals that are important to Oregon and its citizens: *economic development, human development, resource conservation and management, and leadership development*. These areas will form the core of Extension education for the years

ahead. The nine program initiatives outlined below have been developed to address specific, timely issues. These initiatives cut across the traditional university framework to help resolve the complex, interdisciplinary problems Oregonians are facing today.

**O**n the national level, the USDA Extension Service also has established priority initiatives. OSU Extension's initiatives echo the national agenda, but focus on how these issues affect Oregonians. To establish realistic goals and initiatives for Oregon, a statewide Extension committee worked with several OSU colleges and drew from the University's Long Range Plan, the Governor's "Oregon Comeback" program, and the College of Agricultural Sciences' two- and ten-year plans. An informal survey of constituents, advisory groups, and related agencies and organizations provided feedback on the real-life concerns facing Oregonians and how our clients look to Extension for support.

Although our immediate emphasis centers on nine key initiatives, OSU Extension will continue to offer a broad range of educational programs that help people help themselves. At the same time, we will take a dynamic approach to our focus on the initiatives: As needs change, so will the initiatives. New problems or opportunities will require new goals, replacing those already accomplished or no longer as critical. What will not change, however, is our resolve to deliver effective, timely education based on client-identified needs. This is the foundation for the initiatives described here.

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## Economic Development

*Help the State, its communities, businesses, families, and individuals expand and develop economic opportunities.*

**T**he challenge is to stabilize or increase the standard of living for Oregon citizens, businesses, and communities in both prosperous and trying times. OSU Extension has the ability to particularly address the economic conditions in families, natural resource industries, and small businesses—especially those in rural areas—as well as the nature and economic opportunities of rural communities.

### **Initiative - Strengthening the Economic Capabilities of Oregon Families and Businesses**

Oregon's economy has been struggling throughout the 1980's, and will likely continue into the new decade. Because of continuing high unemployment, job dislocation, and other economic instability, Oregon's individuals, families, and businesses need to improve their abilities to manage their financial and business affairs. OSU Extension educational programs include: improving management capabilities of family farm, forestry, and other home-based businesses, and new businesses; helping families to cope with or adjust to lifestyle changes as a result of socio-economic conditions such as retirement, unemployment, or age-oriented transitions; and aiding other service groups in providing help to individuals, families, and businesses.



### **Initiative - Revitalizing Oregon Communities**

The Oregon economy remains highly dependent on natural resource-based industries, which have been hurt by domestic economic policies and foreign and domestic competition. Layoffs, plant closures, and business and farm failures have affected Oregon's vitality. Yet Oregon's many other strengths—its great natural beauty, its agricultural and fisheries diversity, its concern for the environment and history of receptivity to small business, and its geographic situation on the Pacific Rim—can become the foundation for the State's economic recovery. OSU Extension, in cooperation with the Western Rural Development Center and the Office of Tourism Research and Development, is in a position to play a vital role in helping communities evolve strategies to more profitably employ their human, capital, and natural resources.

### **Initiative - Identifying Economic Alternatives for Oregonians**

Limited markets for agricultural and timber products, decreasing foreign exports, and higher unemployment and job dislocation mean a constant search for new alternatives for Oregon business. OSU Extension can provide support through new product and market assessment; evaluation of competition and costs; entrepreneurship education of youth and other audiences; and product development assistance.

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# Human Development

*Develop skills and values that will lead to improved social and physical well-being of families and individuals of all ages.*

**O**regon's strength relies more on the capability and vitality of Oregonians than on anything else. The investment in human capital plays an important role in OSU Extension's history and future. Improving the individual's ability to address problems within the family and business environments is a major element of Extension's focus in human development.

## **Initiative - Strengthening Oregon Families: Parent Education**

The modern family's ability to provide an ideal parenting situation has been jeopardized as Americans set records among developed nations for the highest rates for divorce, teenage parenting, and children living in poverty. Oregon is no exception. Among the 40,000 children born annually in Oregon, more than half have teenage mothers, more than 7,000 of whom are unwed. Single-parent families account for one-fourth of all family groups, and one in six children live in stepfamilies. While public resources for parent education dwindle, the needs of and pressures on parents and children increase.

OSU Extension can help parents cope. Through educational publications, video tapes, news

articles, and Extension programs on parenting and caregiving, and through the Master Parenting volunteer program, OSU Extension provides invaluable information for the parents of Oregon's greatest natural resource—its children.

### **Initiative - Building Family Strengths**

Economic and employment instability play a hand in altering family goals and lifestyles. Staggering job losses in farming, forestry, and fishing-related occupations in Oregon have only partially been replaced by new jobs in service industries. Families and communities face demoralization and reorganization of work roles, family routines and relationships, educational and leisure activities, and buying practices. Death rates from stress-related causes, suicide, homicide, alcoholism, and accidents are highest in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations. Extension advisory committees cite educational needs in communication skills, intergenerational understanding, decision-making, stress resolution at home and in the work place, chemical dependency, and community support for families.



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## Natural Resource Conservation and Management

*Enhance the ability of individuals and groups in making decisions for the use of natural resources, considering societal concerns and competing demands and values.*

**O**regon is built on a superb base of natural resources: coastal, mountain, valley, desert, rangeland. Oregonians are interested in the concepts of multiple use, conservation, prudent management, and employment and income needs both today and in the future. Use conflicts, fluctuating prices and technology, and a continuing need for research and education on the alternatives and consequences of managing these resources all indicate the importance of Extension's involvement in this critical statewide issue. Major portions of Oregon's income are derived from natural resources industries or from tourists who visit Oregon because of its natural resources. With 56 percent of State lands publicly owned and widespread citizen interest in resource management, Extension education faces a broad challenge.

### **Initiative - Managing Oregon Wetlands and Riparian Zones for Multiple Benefits**

Most of Oregon's riparian zones and wetlands, regardless of ownership, have been or will eventually be affected by human activities. Potential costs and benefits originating from these areas are neither well-understood nor fully appreciated by many people. Current use and perceptions of values by other potential users have resulted in

conflicts. These differences often unnecessarily pit one use against another: wildlife and fish vs. livestock, livestock vs. clean water, recreation vs. timber, landowner rights vs. public rights. OSU Extension education efforts will help to resolve the key elements accounting for these conflicts through a variety of educational programs and activities for resource users, managers, decision makers, and others.

### **Initiative - Improving Oregon's Water Quality**

Oregonians are naturally proud of their environment. Quality water in aquifers, streams, lakes, rivers, and sea is a highly prized resource. Expansion of industries, including tourism, relates directly to maintaining or improving the State's water quality. Water needs include household use, commercial and industrial uses, livestock and poultry watering, waste treatment and disposal, irrigation and frost protection for crops, minimum stream flow for recreation and fish, transportation, hydro generation, and scenic beauty.

OSU Extension will provide leadership and develop educational materials on water quality issues. Extension faculty will deliver educational programs for a variety of commercial, home, and youth audiences emphasizing public and private water testing, better management practices, and environmental safety among all water users.

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## Leadership Development

*Help citizens develop leadership skills to facilitate their meaningful participation in their communities and improve their personal productivity.*

**O**rganizations, communities, and governments rely on leadership—largely volunteer leadership—to guide and manage their affairs. Extension in Oregon has worked with communities across the State since the early 1920's to identify issues and then take action to improve the situation. Currently, 4-H, nutrition, home gardening, energy, food preparation and preservation, and leadership development itself are accomplished with volunteers trained and supported by Extension. The challenge facing OSU Extension today is to improve training effectiveness, to expand the scope of its volunteer network, and to assist in the education and development of leadership for a broader range of issues affecting us all.

### **Initiative - Expanding the Oregon Extension Leadership Development Program**

Extension historically has developed leadership among volunteers who have helped deliver educational programs and gone on to other leadership activities in their communities. During a time of decreasing support, Extension needs to stretch its limited resources by recruiting, training, and supervising volunteers who can assist in program delivery. During the past year, Oregon Extension worked with over 24,000 volunteers in seven program areas. These volunteers contributed 500,000

hours of program support valued at \$4.2 million. They reached 125,000 Oregon citizens. With an increased demand for volunteer leaders throughout the State, leadership training for Extension staff and volunteers is more vital than ever. This initiative addresses the need to develop educational materials and involve more Oregonians in Extension education programs.

### **Initiative - Strengthening Oregonians' Decision-Making Skills**

An individual's decision-making skills are essential for virtually every life situation. Each day, individuals are confronted with choices about their personal lives, their jobs, their families, and the broader issues of local and national politics. Extension's goal is to strengthen Oregon's citizen leadership for guiding the State's future. The Extension educational system initiates programs involving key statewide issues such as youth, energy, safety, nutrition, housing, family, water quality, and the environment. Participants and clients in each of these areas need to be exposed to both practical and theoretical decision-making approaches in an effort to enhance their own decision-making capabilities.



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## Extension: Meeting Oregon's Needs

**W**hile these initiatives and educational objectives provide a framework for Extension activities in coming years, Oregon State University Extension's priorities will change as Oregon's needs change. Through continued interaction with Oregonians on State and local levels, through cooperation with government and industry, and through our extensive network of dedicated faculty and trained volunteers, OSU Extension will stay at the forefront of the critical issues facing Oregon today and into the future.



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## OSU Extension's Mission

The Oregon State University Extension Service educates Oregonians by delivering research-based, objective information to help them solve problems, develop leadership, and manage resources wisely.

### Organizational Values

The *credibility of information* from the OSU Extension Service is critical. It should be objective, responsive, and based on University research and experience.

*Program development* should be focused on priorities established with clientele.

*Excellence in educational delivery* is Extension's business. The effective transfer of knowledge and delivery of educational programs is essential for the improvement of individuals and communities as well as for continued public support.

*Effective utilization of resources* is critical. Appropriate integration of disciplines, development of volunteers, and communication with other agencies will significantly increase our accomplishments.

