

News Release Issued By Virginia Cooperative Extension:

BLACKSBURG, Va., Oct. 7, 2010 – Alan Grant, dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech, announced a plan to restructure Virginia Cooperative Extension to better meet the needs of its clientele and address a cumulative reduction of \$10.3 million since 2007 for Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station. The plan was presented to Extension faculty and staff during a live Web conference today.

“This plan allows Virginia Cooperative Extension to reduce costs, maintain a local presence across the commonwealth, and continue to provide high-quality, science-based educational programming for Virginia. This will allow us to shift resources to the highest-priority needs of the state and localities,” Grant said. “In addition, the plan will provide local governments the opportunity to customize programming based on the needs of their community.”

According to Grant, the restructuring plan provides an infrastructure that will enable Extension to fulfill its land-grant mission and preserve delivery of critical programs related to agriculture and natural resources, youth development, and families and communities.

“The new structure improves Extension’s program delivery model by establishing issue-based program teams that will design educational programs to be delivered to audiences by the locally based field staff,” Grant said. “These teams will be composed of Extension educators and specialists, other Virginia Tech and Virginia State University faculty, and other collaborators.”

To ensure effective implementation and delivery of programming in the field, area program leaders will train, supervise, and mentor the Extension educators (formerly known as Extension agents). Area program leaders will have a high level of expertise in a particular subject matter.

The plan also consolidates Extension’s administrative field staff into a regional structure that includes locally based Extension educators clustered around a “business center” in a three- to five-county region. The business center will house support staff as well as one or more state-funded Extension educators who will serve the region. In addition, each locality will be offered the option of housing one or more Extension educators, based on local needs. At least one educator will be funded in partnership with Extension and the locality. Localities may elect to fund additional Extension educators to work on specific programs.

“This structure will allow Extension to continue to meet high-priority needs with the ability to grow and contract as funding changes,” Grant said.

During the announcement, Grant stressed that the restructuring plan was only a “blueprint” for future planning and analysis of program implementation.

“We have a lot more work ahead of us as we move into the implementation phase of this restructuring process,” Grant said. “Over the next six months, we will be meeting with our local partners to discuss their programming needs and develop a plan to transition to this new structure. We will also implement the program priorities identified in the strategic plan.”

Grant, who assumed temporary leadership of Extension in May, explained that the restructuring plan is a culmination of a planning process that also included the development of a five-year strategic plan that identifies the organization’s programming priorities. This comprehensive process involved not only Extension faculty and staff, but also numerous internal and external stakeholders, including government officials, Extension volunteers, and industry representatives.

“While we are restructuring our administrative functions and updating our programs, our focus continues to be on the delivery of high-quality, research-based educational programs designed to serve Virginians,” Grant said.

“This plan builds on the long tradition of Extension excellence and creates a modern organization that transfers and applies the research at Virginia Tech and Virginia State University. This unique ability of Extension to bring research developments to the benefit of local communities has been, and now can continue to be, a cornerstone for growth across the commonwealth.”

The [restructuring and strategic plans](#) can be viewed on the Extension website.

[Virginia Cooperative Extension](#) brings the resources of Virginia's land-grant universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, to the people of the commonwealth. Through a system of on-campus specialists and locally based educators, it delivers education in the areas of agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, community viability, and 4-H youth development. With a network of faculty at two universities, 106 county and city offices, 12 agricultural research and Extension centers, and six 4-H educational centers, Virginia Cooperative Extension provides solutions to the problems facing Virginians today.

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