Faculty Tenure Review Statement of Accomplishments. Impacts, Challenges and Future Program Directions

As a faculty member in the University of Wisconsin Extension Department of Agriculture and Life Sciences I serve in a rather unique position. My programming efforts, partnerships and collaborations allow or require that I work in a rather large geographic area with quite a variable range of agriculture, horticulture and business-related activities. These efforts find me serving more and more as a regional educator working with clientele in up to 6 counties. My reporting and administrative responsibilities however are directed toward Burnett, Washburn and Sawyer Counties. I serve as Department Head for the Spooner Area UW-Extension office and work very closely with the staff at the Spooner Agriculture Research Station where I have shared responsibility on several projects.

Agriculture is rather diverse in the region with a good representation of both smaller and midsize farming operations consisting of dairy, beef, crops, cranberry, small scale commercial fresh fruit & vegetables, greenhouse/nursery and other mixtures or enterprises. Agriculture enterprises are not all that different from other areas of the state; they are just more spread out and interspersed between rather large tracts of forested lands, lakes and rivers. Agriculture ranks behind tourism and forestry in jobs and income and there are a substantial number of seasonal residents and tourists. These demographics combined with two Native American tribal bands provide a rather diverse clientele base.

My office and that of my counterpart Otto Wiegand are located at the Spooner Ag Research Station. Otto’s programming covers dairy, beef and other livestock, farm management, beginner farmer and grazing. We share a variety of other common programs and activities and collaborate substantially in many areas.

I am an active member of the Fruit and Horticulture Team and less so with the Nutrient Management, Forage and Grains Team. I have also been ‘following’ the Small Farm and Sustainability Team. I am currently the NW region vice-chair and serve on the mentor teams of four faculty members.

To help frame my programming efforts, here is a statement that I have included on nearly all my written reports that I submit to the County partners.

All activities are intended to make our rural communities stronger by promoting volunteerism, community activism and networking, encouraging self-sufficiency, business development and helping rural property owners generate income from their lands.

Goals of Projects/Initiatives (not listed in any order of priority)

1. Continue providing support and education to Master Gardener Volunteers
2. Encourage and support agriculture direct marketing and local food initiatives
3. Provide horticulture education to home owners and commercial business
4. Support agriculture business development

Commercial horticulture development specifically: commercial fruit (grapes, small fruit, and tree fruit) and fresh market vegetables.
Research projects: Located at Spooner Ag Research Station

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<td>Spotted Winged Drosophila</td>
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**Cold-Climate Grape Development:** for over 10 years, I have been the ‘go to’ UW-Extension resource for cold-climate grape information in NW. I continue to be an active member of the UW-Extension Fruit team and have worked closely with colleagues, state specialists, regional businesses and growers. I have attended both the MN Cold Climate Grape Conference and the WI Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Conference, the SW Michigan Viticulture Day and various UW-Extension sponsored vineyard walks, grower schools, fruit clinics and other events. I am a member of the Wisconsin Grape Growers Association (WGGA) and past member of the MN Grape Growers Association (MGGA).

I have taken a lead role in holding grape management and pruning workshops, hosting and organizing regional vineyard walks and grape IPM workshops, and hosting various grape/wine webinars. I maintain a regional grape grower’s email list that is used extensively to promote my grape educational programs and share other appropriate information coming from the multi-state Extension sponsored Northern Grape Project, WGGA, MGGA or industry news.

My advocacy for cold hardy grape research and information has resulted in the development and planting of a wine-grape variety trail at the Spooner Ag Research Station. This trial is part of a state wide effort with similar research trial vineyards at West Madison and Peninsular Ag Research Station. The Fruit Team is listed as the Primary Investigator (PI) on the project in Spooner; however, I have significant oversight and collaborative on-site management responsibilities.

This trail vineyard was established in 2008, however due to establishment challenges planting of varieties weren’t completed until 2010. As of 2013, 41% (79/192) vines are well enough established to be harvesting fruit, 25% (48/192) vines are still establishing, and 34% (65/192) vines are dead. I shared this and other preliminary data from the trial with colleagues and a handful of growers. Dean Volenberg used this information in a presentation titled Wine Grape Variety Trials What We Have Learned at the 2014 Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Conference. In the coming years more data and observations will validate those varieties that are indeed hardy to our Zone 3 site conditions.

Impacts and implications of this cold hardy variety trail are still evolving. Having this trial at Spooner Station validates my commitment to support and provide regional growers with valid research based information. In the coming years, I will be collecting more survival data and begin to document fruit yields and grape quality. I will continue to share this information with colleagues and growers, and develop appropriate factsheets or research briefs and/or presentations. I will continue to use the vineyard as an outdoor classroom for field days and workshops and encourage new and existing growers to stop by see how vines are doing.

Other impacts of my efforts in grapes have been an increase in understanding of cold climate grape production and pest management. I have spent many hours consulting with individual...
growers on the phone, through email, at conferences, at field days and vineyard walks and while visiting their vineyards. I have observed and received many comments (see unsolicited email responses Exhibit 1) from growers as they gain experience and learn and apply proper production & IPM strategies.

The challenge in developing this niche wine grape industry in NW Wisconsin remains in the abilities of growers to successful produce a marketable crop. Growers will need information on pruning and IPM practices suitable for our northern climate. Best management practices and variety selection will remain important as will learning how to market and harvest quality grapes suitable for wineries. This industry is still small and immature and will require cooperation between growers, wineries, industry, and others.

My plans are to continue to support this new and emerging niche industry by providing non biased information to current and future grape growers. I will be actively involved in research and outreach efforts at the Spooner Ag Station with the cold hardy grape variety trial vineyard. I will continue to develop my expertise and experience with grape production, management and marketing through networking and professional development. I will continue to work cooperatively with UW-Extension colleagues to provide grape information and outreach to regional growers.

Small Scale Commercial Fruit Development; in the past five years I have increased my efforts to help interested property owners develop viable small scale commercial fruit businesses. This need is in part due to the increased interest and demand for local food and property owners looking for ways to supplement their incomes. While NW Wisconsin is not noted for its commercial fruit industry (excluding cranberry) we are seeing increases acreage and signs of successful small scale fruit businesses. (See commercial fruit success story Exhibit 2)

Growers need production, marketing and risk management information. I have addressed this need through one-on-one consultation, workshops and field days, trainings and site-visits. I have also facilitated grower peer support through networking and group discussion. While these growers may be small in size, their businesses do add to the diversity of our local agriculture industry and they do contribute to the local economy.

To help aspiring commercial fruit growers a six part series on the business of small scale fresh market fruit was held. This series was part of the 4th annual Farming for Profits workshop series sponsored by colleagues in six northern counties. The series was held on six consecutive Monday evenings from 6-9 pm using live on-site instruction that was broadcast via webinar. I was the primary organizer of this series along with Jason Fischbach.

My participation in the state-wide spotted winged drosophila (SWD) monitoring project and fall raspberry season extension using high tunnel is another example of my efforts to support commercial fruit production. The SWD monitoring is in cooperation with Christelle Guedot, has confirmed the presence of this new pest in far NW Wisconsin and has helped Christelle in providing SWD management recommendation to state fruit growers. The high tunnel was proving to be very effective in season extension for fall raspberry, unfortunately SWD has greatly reduce the economic viability of high tunnels for commercial raspberry production.

I will continue to support small scale commercial fruit growers. Their success will be dependent on having a good understanding of production practices and a thorough understanding of IPM. I
will continue to help these growers understand their local marketing options and how to minimize risk as they continue to grow their businesses.

**Agriculture Development:** Specifically cover crops and soil quality, nutrient & pest management, organic production, Farming for Profits series, local foods and Farmers’ Markets. I’m also an advocate for the CALS Spooner Agriculture Research Station, promoting its resources and services to staff, organizations and the community.

**Cover Crops and Soil Quality:** In 2012 I assisted Nick Schneider, former Waupaca Co. Ag Agent with the cover crops garden at Farm Technology Days, and in 2013 I took the lead in organizing both tent display and the outdoor cover crops garden at FTD. I have since hosted two webinars on cover crops and will be working with Rusty Burgett, sheep researcher at the Spooner Station to incorporate cover crops into some of their pasture management. A cover crops field day is also being plan at a cash crop farm in Burnett Co for summer of 2014.

I have facilitated Soil Quality workshops in partnership with Kevin Erb, and local NRCS staff and have hosted several webinars. While the concepts of soil quality are not new, there is an renewed interest in using cover crops and improving soil quality for both environmental and profit. Our draughty soils are not well suited for row crops and for our more progressive cash croppers, they see covers crops and perhaps double cropping a way to reduce risk. Our grazing community is also looking at cover crops as a way to improve soil quality and increase forage production. I recently gave a presentation on cover crops and extended grazing options at the NW Graziers Conference. (Workshop Evaluation Exhibit 3)

**Farming For Profit Series:** in an effort to put the focus on profit, a group of us in the NW region developed a workshop series titled Farming for Profits. Each year we select an agriculture enterprise and focus not only on the production aspects, but on the markets and the business of making a profit. This series includes six sessions held concurrently across multiple locations. As the host agents we serve as site facilitator and often co-teach the sessions with guess specialists. This year was our 4th annual workshop series. Topics have included hay production, beef, fresh market vegetables and commercial fruit. This has been a team effort with each colleague responsible for either developing teaching materials or co-teaching with invited guest speakers.

I have been a both a series organizer, presenter and site facilitator every year of this series. In total 81 people have participated with a fairly even mix of beginner and experiences growers and about 40% women and 60% men. Because this is a six part series focused on one topic we have been able to provide more in depth discussion and subject matter content than the traditional ‘one and done’ approach of stand one day workshops or meeting. Since participants meet every week for six weeks there is much more likelihood of participants engaging in discussions and getting to know their fellow farmers.

**Local Food Systems and Farmers Markets:** Successful farmers markets depend on successful managers and cooperation among vendors. I have been advising and helping local and regional farmers market managers navigate through policy, rules guidelines, regulations and promotion. In an effort to help FM manager gain a better understanding of some of these concepts I held a FM mangers conference in Spooner to begin the process of sharing successes and non-successes in managing farmers markets. I have since developed a FM email list and FM resources page on our website. I regularly send out emails to this list updating them on new regulations, sharing example policies, or other relevant information. I also make it a point to attend FM vendor
meetings and make a point to visit with FM managers and vendors during the market season. (See unsolicited emails Exhibit 1)

*Home horticulture* specifically: vegetable and fruit production, composting and sustainable gardening practices. I develop outreach activities for the Spooner Agriculture Research Station Teaching and Display Garden, including variety trails, All America Selections winners, adaptive gardening, perennial landscaping, pruning workshops, annual Twilight Garden Tour, monthly garden meetings, and group tours. (See unsolicited emails Exhibit 1)

*Master Gardener Volunteer Program:* Organize and teach Level 1 MGV training, advisor to North Country MGV Association, assist MGV with school & community garden projects at Spooner, Shell Lake, Hayward, Webster, Northwood, Winter and Birchwood schools, assist MGV with youth education and community outreach at community and organization events, provide leadership training and recognition, assist with fund raising efforts and renovations for the Spooner Ag Research Station Teaching and Display Garden. (See Success story Exhibit 4)

My role as Department Head has provided me an opportunity to work closely with UW-Madison CALS administration, the ANRE program office and surrounding county (Burnett, Washburn, Sawyer and Douglas) UWEX Dept Heads. The Spooner Area UW-Extension Office has a unique relationship with these partners. Our funding, staffing and office space would not be possible without their support.

My programming efforts have provided me with the opportunity to partner and work collaboratively with a wide range of community partners. I have strong working relationships with local agencies and county departments, non-profits, community organizations, and local businesses. My connections to key partners with both St. Croix and LCO tribes and LCO Extension and college farm are strong. I also have earned the trust of MGV, clients and my regional colleagues as a trusted, dedicated and passionate educator. (See summary of 360 degree feedback survey Exhibit 5)

Addressing local needs and working to help county partners address their needs will continue to be top priority. I have been very selective in my broader state programming efforts. My commitments to state and national initiatives are very carefully considered. I often struggled with balancing the demands of direct programming responsibilities for Burnett, Washburn and Sawyer Counties, with demands that come from a larger region. Our association with the Spooner Research Station and our willingness to program a across county lines brings in a much larger regional clientele base. We will need continue to communicate and dialog with our multiple partners in coming up with a suitable working arrangement that best balances local needs with UW-Extension resources.

A future goal is to develop programming and documentation to submit for full Professor. This will require more focus on writing up some of my research project findings and sharing this more widely. My impacts with grape and commercial fruit growers is showing promising impacts, and my leadership with MGV and the award winning Teaching & Display Garden can further be exploited. Cover crops and soil quality programing may also provide scholarly opportunities.