

Internationalizing the Curriculum of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension

Purpose:

- To develop strategies to globalize the Cooperative Extension educational content and resources used in educational programs.
- To explore resources aimed at building an organization that reflects global interdependence.
- To strengthen the connection between global knowledge and experience with diversity and multiculturalism efforts in Cooperative Extension.

Activities: The primary activity supported by the grant was a one-day workshop held on September 17, 2004, attended by 40 participants representing all areas of Cooperative Extension.

The tone for the workshop was set first with a keynote address by Dr. Binaya Subedi, Assistant Professor in the School of Education, Ohio State University, who outlined the components of a global educational institution. Those components being: 1) community outreach and dialogue, 2) issues oriented curriculum and teaching, and 3) social action in the public arena. After the keynote address, a panel consisting of the former director of the Wisconsin Rural Leadership Program, a dairy farmer and an international dairy consultant added a local perspective by discussing the importance of a global perspective on the well-being of Wisconsin communities.

Participants were then divided into small groups and each group described a preferred future by responding to one of three statements:

- A global Cooperative Extension professional would...
- A global Cooperative Extension organization would...
- A global cooperative Extension community would...

The groups then performed a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis identifying the positive and negative forces for achieving the desired future for professionals, the organization or communities. The groups then brainstormed action items to achieve their future ideal, the resources needed to help along the way and the individual and organizational commitments needed to achieve success.

Results: Participants responded that the workshop identified achievable goals and set a direction for Cooperative Extension, motivated them to bring a global perspective to their work and do more to globalize the organization. Most responded that the workshop helped them understand what it means to create a global Cooperative Extension.

Since the workshop, new partnerships have developed between Cooperative Extension and the Office of International Programming in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at UW-Madison. Cooperative Extension and the Global Environmental Management Education Center at UW-Stevens Point have collaborated on a speakers series.

Future: The Cooperative Extension International Committee will use the workshop input and action plan suggestions to develop a new plan of work at a retreat on January 28, 2005.