

Kentucky Extension Advisory Council Meeting

February 28 – March 1, 2023

Meeting Summary Points

- Delegates participated in an optional tour to The Food Connection, a local food systems center at University of Kentucky. Chef Tanya Whitehouse facilitated a hands-on food preparation activity and shared information about The Food Connection’s work. The center is hiring three regional value chain coordinators who will work with producers and Extension across the state to advance local food systems. Learn more about The Food Connection at <https://foodconnection.ca.uky.edu>.
- Kentucky State University administrative updates (Dean Kirk Pomper and Dr. Allison Young) highlighted KSU’s mission to resolve agricultural, educational, economic, and social problems of the people of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, especially limited-resource or socially disadvantaged persons and families in rural and urban settings. Dean Pomper and Dr. Young showcased the West Louisville Project, a state-funded initiative to provide Extension outreach in West Louisville communities. Dr. Young shared new directions in programming, including disaster education, community arts, and agriculture technology. Five new faculty have been hired in the past year and hiring is in progress for additional faculty. Regional and area centers (described later in this summary) are expanding programming capacity. Fifteen new Extension professionals, including co-located agents and regional center positions, recently completed onboarding training. A new grant will fund work force development programming for youth. Follow Kentucky State University Cooperative Extension on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/kysuCEP>) for details regarding the monthly Third Thursday workshops, summer 4-H programs for youth, small farm conferences, and more.
- University of Kentucky administrative updates (Dean Nancy Cox and Dr. Laura Stephenson) noted thanks to County Extension Councils and Extension District Boards for the continued local support for agent positions that helped navigate state budget cuts with loss of few positions. Dr. Stephenson shared that the hiring timelines for agent positions, in most cases, has been cut to 2-3 months; faculty hiring in key areas is in progress; and agent compensation remains at competitive levels in the southern region. Facility recovery and rebuilding at the Research and Education Center in Princeton and Robinson Center for Appalachian Resource Sustainability (RCARS) in Jackson is moving forward. Updates on behalf of Dean Cox featured the UK Engage visioning process along with new and expanded collaborations with UK HealthCare, the College of Public Health, the College of Social Work, the College of Fine Arts, the UK Alumni Association, UK Human Resources and UK’s Economic Development Collaborative.
- The council discussed the question, “How can Kentucky State University and University of Kentucky best work together to meet local needs?” Council delegates shared thoughts for consideration as well as feedback from county Extension councils.

- Dr. Ken Jones, Director of Program and Staff Development with UK Cooperative Extension, provided an overview of the next Extension plan of work cycle and community assessment process. The plan of work is a joint UK and KSU endeavor. County Extension Council input is a key component. Preparations are beginning now, with data collection later this year and into 2024. County plans will be finalized in spring 2025 and implemented beginning July 1, 2025.
- A panel presentation highlighted Kentucky Extension work related to disaster preparedness, response and recovery work in East Kentucky counties impacted by extreme flooding in July 2022. The panel highlighted how Extension personnel facilitated support for farms and farmers; partnered with health providers to travel in the counties to provide tetanus vaccinations; supported families displaced by flooding, many of whom continue to live in alternative housing; and assisted with distribution of relief supplies. Extension personnel are engaged with long-term recovery teams and continue to link Extension programming and university expertise with recovery efforts. The panel presentation also shared the direct impacts to the University of Kentucky's facilities at the Robinson Center for Appalachian Resource Sustainability (RCARS) and Robinson Forest, and the rebuilding and recovery efforts that are moving forward at these locations. Council delegates discussed key opportunities for Extension in relation to disaster preparedness, initial response, and long-term recovery.
- Janey Cline, West Regional Extension Director with Kentucky State University, shared highlights of the new regional and area centers that KSU has established in Bowling Green, Morehead, and West Louisville, along with plans for an area center in Northern Kentucky. The centers will be led by a regional or area director and staffed with agents, associates and other personnel who will lead and deliver programming targeting specific needs identified through Kentucky State University and in line with the KSU Extension mission. In addition, KSU is hiring additional agents co-located in county Extension offices, primarily targeting two-agent counties. Councils and boards have been very supportive of these staff additions.
- Through the 2019 community assessment, mental health was identified as a priority issue statewide. Kentucky Extension has been leading and providing a wide collection of programs to increase mental health awareness, expand understanding, address stigma, and normalize conversations about mental health, depression, and suicide. The following programs were showcased.
 - *Bringing Awareness Right Now (BARN)* – This program focuses on mental health and well-being through a two-part community intervention, a workshop and a community dinner theater. Participants in the workshop learn about stress and mental health, then write scripts for skits for the community dinner theatre. A toolkit will be available later this year for counties interested in conducting this program. Special thanks to Chloe Ebelhar, Apollo High School FFA Member and BARN participant, who shared her speech on farm stress, mental health and suicide.

- *Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network* - The purpose of the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) Program is to establish a network that connects individuals who are engaged in farming, ranching, and other agriculture-related occupations to stress assistance programs. As part of the Southern Ag Exchange Network, Kentucky Extension is developing a resource library and additional program offerings related to mental health.
- *QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) for Farmers and Farm Families* – QPR is focused on increasing community awareness of suicide, learning how to identify people in distress, and developing confidence and comfort to intervene and provide referrals. More than 390 Kentuckians have been trained in QPR, and certified gatekeeper trainers are available through Extension to provide training sessions.
- *Post-disaster and Trauma Mental Health Support for Minority Populations* – Kentucky State University has received grant funding for a project focused on mental health awareness and access following disasters/trauma, with emphasis on East Kentucky flood impacted counties with higher minority populations. KSU is looking broadly at mental health with a health equity lens in connection to natural disasters and trauma.
- *Mental Health First Aid* – Mental Health First Aid is a national program focused on training individuals to be able to recognize and respond to a person experiencing a mental health challenge. Similar to how first aid is the initial care provided for someone with an injury or health emergency, mental health first aid is the initial help offered to a person developing a mental health or substance use challenge or experiencing a crisis. Certified trainers with Extension have provided the 8-hour training to more than 2,000 people.
- *Kentucky 4-H Social, Emotional and Behavioral Health Programs and Curricula* – Kentucky 4-H is implementing new programming and curricula focused on post-disaster stress, social and emotional learning, mindfulness, and mental health. Youth Strong training scheduled April 11 and 12 in Shelby County is open to Extension agents, staff, and leaders, [with online registration at this link](#). In addition, 4-H is partnering with the UK College of Social Work to design exercises to help youth thrive at 4-H Camp and to provide mental health support on-site at 4-H summer camps.
- The council business meeting included reports from the Bylaws and Council Engagement Committees. The Bylaws Committee will complete a review and bring forth potential amendments for consideration. The Council Engagement Committee proposed holding webinars for the State Extension Advisory Council in April, June, November, and January, with potential for the April session to focus on Extension agent hiring at Kentucky State University.
- Delegates were asked to share the call for nominations for the 2023 Randall Barnett County Extension Council Award. All counties are welcome to submit a nomination and the winning council will receive a plaque along with a \$500 monetary award. Additional information is available at <http://psd.ca.uky.edu/randallbarnett>.