The West Central Regional Advisory Council meeting was called to order on September 25, 2007 at the West Central Region Office, Springfield.

**In attendance:**
West Central Region Director, Dr. Ryan Hobson  
Adams-Brown, Robin Walker  
Christian County, Marvin Hughes  
Fulton County, Richard Spangler  
Logan County, Susan Adams  
Logan County/ESAC, John Sutton  
Macoupin, David Humphreys  
McDonough County, Lee Trotter  
Montgomery County, Mary Galer  
Pike County, Jody Heavner  
Pike County/ESAC, Lynn Curry  
Sangamon-Menard, George Becker  
Sangamon-Menard, Lambert Fleck  
Sangamon-Menard, Barbara Rogers  
Tazewell, Crystal Deppert

**Not in attendance:**  
Calhoun-Jersey  
Cass-Schuyler  
Greene County  
Hancock County  
Mason County  
Morgan-Scott  
Peoria County  
Woodford County

Following introductions, the minutes of the March 6, 2007 meeting were approved as written. Motion to approve by Richard Spangler, seconded by Lee Trotter. Ryan Hobson then discussed the purpose of the Regional Advisory Council.

**OFFICER ELECTION**  
Lambert Fleck, Chair  
Susan Adams, Vice-Chair  
Robin Walker, Secretary
ESAC Update, Lynn Curry and John Sutton

- ESAC has not met since the March 6, 2007 Regional Advisory Council meeting.
- As the national conference held in Washington, D.C., three areas to discuss with legislators were identified:
  - Research and Extension capacity – base funding from federal government
  - FANP
  - Land-grant programs
- Still need to educate legislators on what Extension does for their districts and constituents. Where the money goes and how it affects their area. As elections create a turnover, it’s an ongoing process to educate. Extension partners make a huge difference on the state level as well as the national level. Lynn Curry encourages our involvement and membership in this endeavor.
- John Sutton asked for any items to be added to the state council meeting agenda.

UNIT UPDATES

Adams-Brown, Robin Walker

- Partnerships to fund positions continue to enhance the role of Extension in the community and expand services.
- Locally Grown initiative continues to be popular.
- Ag in the Classroom demand is so high staff cannot keep up with requests. Getting some good response to sponsorship requests for classrooms, so cost of programming can be offset.

Cass-Schuyler, JR Blair

- County Director is participating in state and regional water supply planning committee. The goal is to ensure adequate and reliable supplies of clean water at reasonable cost for all users.
- CED in Schuyler County recently received a grant to produce a visitor’s guide for Schuyler County.
- An area beef seminar is being planned for February, 2008 in Rushville. This is a popular program.
- The Spoon River College and Extension project in Rushville is moving into the final pre-construction phase. Spoon River College plans to build next to the Extension office. Extension’s landlord will use funds generated by the sale of the property to Spoon River to renovate the office occupied by Extension. Both organizations are located close to the middle and high school.
- Wellness in the Workplace was completed at two locations. The program, developed by the County Director and two educators, addresses nutrition and exercise needs of employees while at work.
- Nature Day – this program is being planned for kindergarten youth in Virginia and Beardstown, involving 7 presenters.

Christian County, Marvin Hughes

- Bio-fuel from perennial grasses will be used to heat the Extension Office in Taylorville. Bales of miscanthus and switchgrass from the Dudley Smith Farm near Pana have been processed into pellets to fuel the furnace in winter 2008.
Ag Literacy at the Fair Expo featured “Claude’s Got the Scoop on Soil,” a unique interactive computer game, the new “Machines” magic kit, a “Make Your Own Moo Juice” booth, and a pancake and sausage breakfast fundraiser with over 125 in attendance.

Fair Week was packed with 4-H activities. Members took part in the 4th of July parade in Taylorville, held a swimming party, and then helped prepare the county fairgrounds for the fair. Over 500 pounds of food were collected and distributed through the “4-H Can Make a Difference Food Drive.” More than 20 riders took part in the 4-H Horse Show, and the General Show had more that 150 exhibits. 4-H Week ended with a pizza party, the Ag Olympics, and the 4-H Auction.

The “Snacks in Space” nutrition program partnered with this summer’s library theme, “Mission Read: To the Library and Beyond,” to provide nutrition education to youth in Taylorville and Stonington.

**Fulton County, Richard Spangler**

- Currently in the process of hiring a new County Director. This transition could potentially cause diminished continuity of problems being addressed and rectified.
- There are some physical, airborne problems with the building, possibly mold.
- CED position is funded, but has not yet been filled. There is some conflict between Canton CED and what Extension CED should handle.
- Immersion Trip – a professional development opportunity for 15 candidates to go to China. These Extension staff members will visit several universities, with representatives from those universities visiting U of I Extension in the future. China is very interested in the 4-H concept.
- Spoon River Watershed encompasses 9 counties. They are partnering with Extension.

**Logan County, Susan Adams**

- Field Crop Scouting Series – the 17th season has just concluded. The series combines classroom education and hands-on scouting experience for area producers and agribusiness professionals every other week during the growing season. This year 98 attended and 54 received continuing education credits. Six different farms or agribusinesses hosted sessions.
- Master Gardeners – completed their third training session this year. There are 54 active Master Gardeners providing over 2000 hours of volunteer service each year for community projects.
- Water Company Training was provided for a local water company with 12 participants.
- Youth GPS Workshop was offered in the summer. Extension staff will be working with a school computer class this school year on GPS mapping of utilities and landmarks.
- Lego Robotics kits will soon be received. They will be used with small groups of students.
- Science, Engineering and Technology (S.E.T.) will be the big push in the county this year.
- Website – 4557 hits in January, 9,595 hits in July. Expected number of hits for August is over 10,000. John Fulton’s blog and 4-H photos are credited for the increase in hits.
- Hartsburg Test Plots – did field trials on isoline and rootworm corn varieties.
Macoupin County, David Humphreys
- A GPS workshop, featuring a geocaching scavenger hunt, was held at Beaver Dam State Park for 4-H teens.
- Macoupin on the Move – “Fit for the Future,” was offered to more that 275 local residents. The three-month programs sponsored by Extension and the Macoupin County Public Health Department, encouraged participants to improve their lifestyle by increasing physical activity, making better food choices and monitoring their progress.
- Agriculture, 4-H and Safety – 27 children from a Macoupin County Child Care Center spent the day at the Fair. Extension staff, 4-H members and volunteers presented sessions on agriculture, horticulture, livestock, 4-H, and fire safety.
- Career Exploration – this program is presented through on-site visits to local businesses and schools. Teen participants attend academic sessions on career assessment, interviewing, resume writing and work ethics.
- Andy’s Project – this computer education program targets farmers who feel the computer generation has left them behind. Instructors guide participants through basic operation of a computer including file management, spreadsheets, e-mail, using the internet and downloading programs from the internet. All examples are ag-related. Graduates also learn to utilize the FAST tools on the U of I Farmdoc site.

McDonough County, Lee Trotter
- County has not had a Foundation
- Proceeds from the 4-H Auction – kids kept ½ the money and the other ½ went into a scholarship fund. The pies sold well.
- In 2006 there was an alcohol problem with youth at the fair, but no problems this year. Youth were notified of the rules prior to the fair, and police did random drive-bys.
- The Extension office was broken into recently, but nothing was taken.
- A 4-H Youth Activity Summer Report was handed out detailing activities and schedules for staff members Connie Lincoln and Tessa Hobbs-Curley.

Montgomery County, Mary Galer
- Farm Safety Day – reached all 5th grade students in the county.
- Camp Clover – this is the second year for this summer program. It was expanded in 2007 to 4 communities, and reached a total of 125 youth.

Pike County, Jody Heavner
- A newsletter update was distributed that focused on:
  - Pike County groups have joined forces to investigate renewable energy sources for the area
  - Sharlene Peter, new staff member, is addressing community wellness issues and coordinating efforts with the Pike County community Health Partnership.
  - Increased revenue at the 2007 4-H Livestock Auction was the result of Extension and local radio station WBBA working together to enable the 4-H members to promote sale, and tape “thank-you” ads after the sale.
  - A child care provider workshop was held in conjunction with the Pike County Health Department. The workshop focused on managing asthma in children and
in methods proven to reduce the incidence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome among infants one month to one year old.

- Twenty-five Pike County youth participated in U of I Extension’s Camp Clover – Youth Summer Fun Adventure. The 3-week long day camp was held in conjunction with the Barry Summer School program.
- Enhancing Web-based Marketing – Extension has provided technical assistance to several area businesses and organizations to help them determine what it takes to get their websites noticed.

**Sangamon-Menard, Lambert Fleck**

- The Sangamon County office is cramped and very preliminary discussions have taken place at Extension Council meetings to discuss potential solutions. Now that Extension is paying rent on the building, more consideration is being given to the possibility of finding a more spacious facility.
- Chris Anderson, Youth Development Educator, will be taking a leadership team to Milwaukee in October for a Goal Setting Seminar.
- Dining with Diabetes for the Holidays has been scheduled for October 25.
- Healthy Heart Cooking is being held in November.
- Horticulture – the State Master Gardener Conference was held in Springfield in September. There were 388 attendees, which is close to the record for a downstate site. The silent auction raised $4600. The Plant a Row for the Hungry effort collected over 28,000 pounds of produce this year. Dry weather was responsible for a drop in production.
- Ag Ed Partnership – provides educations to classrooms in Sangamon and Menard Counties. Topics this year included: wheat, apples, pumpkins, corn, sheep, pork, sugar cane, sugar beets, popcorn, beef and soils.

**Tazewell County, Crystal Deppert**

- The 4-H sleepover for girls held at the local hospital went well. The program helped the girls realize career opportunities for them in the medical field.
- The Youth Educator position is being affected by budget cuts. Some creative thinking is being worked on in an attempt to save the position.
- The fair was really good. The community worker and youth educator did a good job organizing it.
- Talent Show – the park district partnered with Extension to open the talent show to those outside of 4-H. The show was very successful.
- Master Gardener program is growing rapidly.
- FNP served many youth over the summer who normally receive reduced or free lunch during the school year.

**UNIT CONCERNS:**

- 4-H projects were taken down early this year at the State Fair and were not available to the public for the last 3 days of the Fair. These 3 days had the most attendance due to weather.
• Conference judging is not being done for all 4-H projects at the State Fair. Youth are potentially losing out on a higher learning experience by not being able to participate with the judges and discussing improvements that could be made to the project.

• Concern was raised at the last Council meeting about youth showing livestock having a premise number. A question was raised as to whether this was voluntary or mandatory. It is believed to be a Department of Agriculture mandate, and is still unclear what Extension’s responsibility will be in educating the participants.

• The Governor has promised $250,000 to the 4-H and FFA programs. Where is it? To date, it has not been paid.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR UPDATE, RYAN HOBSON

Staff Updates
- Keith Worner has accepted the County Director position in Tazewell County. We will be starting the search process to fill the County Director in Mason County.
- County Director position in Woodford County is being advertised for the third time. Closing date is October 15. Two previous rounds of interviews have been conducted.

Performance Appraisals
Individual performance conferences with all academic staff within the West Central Region were conducted in March through May. A 2.5% salary pool was used for merit raises across the region. Thank you for your comments that were incorporated into the performance reviews.

State Master Gardener Conference
The WC Region hosted the State Master Gardener Conference in Springfield on September 7, 2007. Staff and approximately 100 volunteers from the West Central Region assisted with the conference. Staff or volunteers from the following Extension units assisted in some way with the conference: Sangamon-Menard; Macoupin; Montgomery; Adams-Brown; Hancock; Mason; Fulton; McDonough; Christian; Logan; and Peoria.

Program Reviews
Program Reviews are held in the region throughout the year. For a Program Review staff members from other offices and regions in the State come into a specific unit office and learn about the programs and work being conducted by that specific unit. Staff members serving on the Program Review Teams always comment that they learn so much from being a part of this process and take things back to their county.

Open Meetings Act
The Open Meetings Act has added a section on holding a meeting via electronic technology. County Extension Councils may not meet by electronic means because they are involved with spending tax dollars. Regional Extension Councils can meet electronically because we are not dealing with spending of tax dollars or making policy decisions.
Section 2.06 of the Illinois Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120/2.06) has required in the past that public bodies keep written minutes of all of their closed sessions of meetings. However, effective January 1, 2004, Public Act 93-523 replaced this requirement in the Illinois Open Meetings Act with a requirement that public bodies keep a verbatim record of all their closed meetings in the form of an audio or video recording.

**Budget**

- College of ACES expenditures by primary function of teaching, research, and Extension. Extension was 48% and 50% of the budget in 05 and 06, respectively.
- FY08 budgets before Governor’s signing of the budget.
  - GRF was $15.843 million ($15.495 in 07). Approximately $6 million was departments and $10 million was Extension.
  - CBM was $12.8 million ($11.603 in 07) while county funds were $12.952 million ($12.425 in 07). We proposed $13.4 million.
  - Federal 3b-3c was $8.966 million and 3d was $2.495 million ($8.621 and $2.534 in 07, respectively).
  - State Youth Development line was $1.693 million ($1.659 in 07). We proposed $2.7 million.
  - Cook County Initiative was $5.055 million ($5.0 in 07). We requested $5.2 million.
- Extension has been growing. It was a $59.8 million operation in FY07. It was $76 million if you add grants, ICR, cost recovery, campus departments, etc.

**State Funded 4-H Youth Development Line**

Friends and volunteers have been testifying across the state at Speaker Madigan’s listening sessions. Thank you to those who have participated. Speaker Madigan has called on the House to meet as a committee of the whole on October first. Extension Partners will be testifying at that time. The Speaker is also holding a rally in the Rotunda of the Capitol on Wednesday, October 3, at noon. We would encourage people to attend that rally. It is scheduled to begin at noon, but of course, these things are subject to change at a moment's notice. Let me know if you or a group will be attending, it would help to know an approximate number.

The five units that lost state funding for the position in the region are Cass/Schuyler, Calhoun/Jersey, Peoria, Tazewell, and Macoupin.

**New hiring policy/process**

An overview of the new process effective August 16, 2007 as follows:

In general, searches are handled by the regional director with the assistance and guidance of ACES HR. In summary, the search involves the following procedures handled by the regional director: develops the job description obtains the approval of the associate dean to fill a position, reviews the job description with ACES HR, appoints a search committee and develops a search plan, advertises the position collects the applications, sends applicants the EEO form, directs a search committee to evaluate the applications and to interview top candidates, obtains associate dean approval to offer a position at a proposed salary level. ACES HR will assist the regional directors in this process including serving as a liaison between the regional offices and the Extension Affirmative Action Officer.


Third Year Review Guidelines for Level I Staff
Each regional director may use his/her own procedures for third-year reviews, within the following general guidelines:

Each aspect of the individual’s performance that will be gauged in the promotion process to Level II should be evaluated, and the third-year evaluation should include an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses within each category.

The third-year review will include a “horizontal” evaluation from peers and others, such as council members, agency contacts, etc.

Third year reviews may play a pivotal role in contested promotion cases. Fairness to the candidate requires that the review be as candid as possible about shortcomings so the candidate has an opportunity to correct his or her performance before an ultimate recommendation must be made. Strengths similarly should be stated. Expectations for the coming years should be clearly laid out in the written evaluation report.

The academic professional must be informed in writing of the results of the third-year review, and a copy of the results of the review should be made a part of the academic professional’s official (campus) personnel file with a copy to the associate dean. Regional directors may seek outside letters of evaluation and any other material that may be useful for such an evaluation on an as needed basis. The results of such evaluations do not necessarily determine future decisions on promotion to Level II.

Regional Directors need to carefully use the review as a check point for ensuring the quality of the organization. Letters need to be objective, clear, and detailed.

OTHER:
The next meeting will be held at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, March 4, 2008 at the Morgan-Scott office in Jacksonville. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Walker