

Regional Directors Meeting (via Centra)
May 11, 2009

Participating:

Tim Cross
Herb Byrd
Clyde Chesney
Connie Heiskell
Tim Fawver
George Smith
Herb Byrd
Joan Ratledge
Linda Tinch
Mike Gordon
Sandra Lane
Roy Bullock
Thelma Sanders
Herb Lester
Brenda Voiles

1. Fiscal Topics (Fawver)

a) The county cost sharing for equipment purchases ends May 15 for the current fiscal year. The cost sharing program will only resume next year if sufficient funding exists.

b) Each Regional office will have a new E account for stimulus program. Any person who takes the post retirement appointment will be paid 35% from the appropriate regional stimulus account. The remaining 15% will be paid from the existing county R account. Anyone selecting a retirement date after June 30, effective July 1 will have their UT salary part paid on the regional stimulus account. Their county distribution will not change.

c) The special funding that paid part of Milton Orr and J.W. McGuire salary has ended. Effective 7/1 they are back 100% on county E and R accounts. An adjustment was made to their county travel dollars. Each received 1/2 of the travel funding.

d) FCS program leaders will no longer have part of their salaries paid by the EFNEP program. Their salaries will be paid 100% by regional funds.

e) Several staff considering the retirement incentive are partly paid from TNCEP matching funds. We are not sure what adjustment will have to be made next year to fully match the TNCEP contract. Without the matching dollars, the TNCEP monies are not available.

f) The 20% reduction in operating budgets will continue for the foreseeable future. This is part of our recurring budget adjustments. The Dean office, the Regional offices and the department's operating budgets were all reduced by 20%.

g) All vacant positions' salaries were budgeted at the starting salary level. Hiring at higher starting salaries will reduce the number of positions that can be filled.

h) Travel is moving to 100% electronic submission. Starting July 1, counties or departments submitting travel reimbursement requests by paper should send an e-mail to Alex Bradley. Paper copy travel submissions that are to be paid from current year's funds must be in the Dean's office by July 1. Electronic travel submissions must be approved in IRIS no later than July 3. Dr. Cross commended everyone for making the electronic submission of travel run smoothly.

i) Please remind your staff to use the form on the University HR web site for fee waivers. They need to put the correct accounts numbers on the forms.. If they are not sure of their payroll account number(s), please have them contact the regional HR person. The fee waiver program is a very important benefit to our employees. It is important that they use the correct form and complete it correctly.

2. Out of State Travel Policy (Cross)

We no longer need T-18 approval by the Dean prior to submitting out of state travel. IRIS travel requests still need to be submitted.

3. eXtension Summary Report for Tennessee (Cross)

An eXtension Summary Report has been sent out showing information on site visits, cities visiting site, average time spent on site, etc. This will be helpful to us in the future. There is a great deal of information being published, and it will grow in the future. If you haven't seen the report, let Cross know and he will forward to you.

**4. Tennessee State University
(Chesney)**

- Graduation was held on May 9
- A retirement and service award event was held last week. Several Extension personnel received awards.
- There are many vacancies during transition.
- President has announced strategic plan that has been approved.

(Bullock)

- John Farrell received the outstanding agent award.
- Have completed the review for TSU agent positions in Loudon, Claiborne, Monroe and Knox counties, and program assistant in Hamilton County.
- Small Farm Expo is scheduled for July 31. There is an addition this year where overall winner will be given incentive trip to national conference in Springfield IL and other winners will receive scholarships to conference in 2010. Information has been sent to all agents and various agencies, and nominations are due June 30.

(Sanders)

- FCS met on May 11 about integrating academics, extension and research. Would enhance communication where we could improve programs and comprehensive followup with alumni. Will keep us apprised of progress.

5. **Middle Managers Conference (Regional Directors)**

Heiskell was involved in planning of conference. Regional directors reported they learned a lot, shared information and considered it a valuable conference.

Byrd reported that KY has a similar interest in developing training on Succession Planning and he plans to meet with them. Will update group after the SEAL conference.

6. **\$50/Month Tobacco Surcharge (Cross/Byrd)**

Tobacco users will be assessed an additional \$50/month for medical insurance. We should emphasize to employees that they will have access to a variety of resources to help them quit using tobacco.

7. **Adding 2 Ratings to Performance Review Document (Cross)**

Cross thinks we need to consider adding 2 ratings to our performance review document. Faculty evaluation form has been revised to include 5 ratings. The justification is that we have a few that are at upper end and a few at lower end and majority in the middle. Perhaps we could differentiate by having 2 more ratings.

The group felt adding 2 ratings would give us more flexibility in rating and be more fair. Sanders thinks there will be some revisions to TSU's document and hopes it will be similar to UT's.

This item will be on agenda for June meeting. Byrd will share what we have suggested and work on developing a process and benchmarks for ratings.

8. **Service Breaks for Retirement Program Participants (Smith)**

Smith has heard a number of questions concerning service breaks for our retirement program participants, and what is their status during this break. Cross said during the 30 day service break, they are civilians. When they return to work, they are fully capable of delivering Extension programs. They should be on a volunteer list if they work at fairs during the 30-day break.

As we receive the signed agreements, we need to make plans on how to handle assignments during the service breaks.

9. **Other Items**

a) Gordon reported West TN had flooding damage and some crops will have to be re-planted.

b) Lester reported camp attendance numbers are down. Linda Tinch will receive 40 year service award. Bathrooms are finished.

- c) Heiskell reported state 4-H conference held in Eastern Region last week was a real success. Have hired another switchgrass specialist. Ray Burden has done homeland security meeting and got positive comments.
- d) Heiskell asked about county emergency plans. They should follow local county plans. An emergency plan was drafted but not sure it was ever finalized. Counties should plan to communicate with each other.
- e) Several counties are holding retirement celebrations for those retiring June 30. Cross said he will rely on regional directors to keep Dean's Office informed on dates for retirement celebrations. UT will pay up to half the cost for retirement celebrations for county employees (cost is limited to \$750 maximum).

Next Meeting - June 8, 2009 via Centra
1:00 PM (Eastern) 12:00 (Central)
Program Leaders will be invited to participate.