

Extension in Reappointment and Promotion Packets: Guidance for CANR faculty at MSU

Many faculty members in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University have a formal extension component to their appointment. Others have no formal extension appointment but are actively contributing to the outreach mission of the college and university. This aspect of the faculty member's work should be clearly documented and discussed in the promotion application materials provided for review by the CANR Promotion and Tenure committee (the committee) and by the administration. The MSU Form D provides limited opportunity for reporting on the scope and impact of this important role of many CANR faculty, so we encourage discussion of extension quality, scholarship, impact, and philosophy in the Reflective Essay as appropriate for the applicant's appointment. Our aims in preparing this document are two-fold:

To emphasize that the extension component of a faculty member's activity is evaluated carefully by the committee and by CANR leadership, and that we expect to see documentation of performance appropriate to the appointment and rank.

To provide guidance for MSU CANR faculty in documenting their performance in extension during the reporting period.

There is no single blueprint for how to build an extension program and so the committee encourages applicants to express their individual strengths and unique contributions to MSU Extension when applying for promotion. We recognize that stakeholders have varying needs and that extension information can be disseminated in many different ways. The Reflective Essay provides an opportunity to present a personal reflection of how an individual has developed their own extension program and delivered meaningful outcomes within these realities, and their plan for this aspect of their program in the future.

As CANR faculty members at MSU, there is an expectation that scholarship is at the core of what we do, and this applies to extension as much as to other components of the mission. Extension scholarship is defined as "*The systematic generation, integration, and application of knowledge based on both concepts and practice with the intent of improving peoples' lives*".¹ Scholarship of extension takes place through an interactive, dynamic, and expanding process in which both concepts and practice are advanced through a continuing process for improved knowledge that is validated by peers. Extension scholarship can be accomplished in many ways. One of the important strengths of MSU Extension is its flexibility in the use of multiple approaches that are best adapted for developing, integrating, applying, and teaching knowledge in a variety of ways to benefit stakeholders. Some of these mechanisms of accomplishing extension scholarship include the following activities: oral presentations such as talks, speeches, seminars, workshops, radio and TV programs; visual materials including slide sets, computer-based audio-visual presentations; written materials such as articles, papers, reports, bulletins, handbooks, fact sheets, newsletters, notebooks and journal articles; electronic media such as websites, blogs, social media; working with clientele organizations including boards, councils, committees, task forces and workgroups in problem solving activities; providing information and educational aspects regarding policy development, etc. In the promotion packet it is critically important for a faculty member to look beyond activities though, and to clearly communicate the scholarship forming the basis of their extension program.

¹ Some material presented here has been extracted and adapted from the 2003 report of the MSUE Working Group on Scholarship of Extension.

Instances of extension delivery can be reported and counted in Form D, but the committee is also interested in evidence of why a faculty member has structured their extension program and activities the way they have. How were priorities identified, how were activities developed, what was delivered, and how have these programs helped address stakeholder priorities? How does the extension component of the appointment link to the research and/or teaching component of the activities? Form D is the place to provide lists and summary statistics of extension output, but it is important to complement this in the Reflective Essay with information to help the reader understand the rationale, outcomes, and impact of the activities. This can provide context for the committee to understand why a program is structured the way it is. For example, if the majority of extension effort has been in only one approach to information delivery, the faculty member may then justify why that is the most appropriate method to reach the target audience. If cutting-edge approaches or technologies have been used for information delivery, the reflective essay can describe why it was done that way and how that has supported the programs' goals and impact. We expect faculty to be leaders, so discussion of involvement in campus based Extension Institute planning, or redesigning units' interactions with extension educators and growers, or leadership related to advising commodity/stakeholder groups, are appropriate to include in the Reflective Essay.

While a higher number of documented extension activities would be better than fewer, there is no target number. Rather, the committee is looking for evidence of a positive trajectory in terms of developing scholarship, impact, and leadership in extension over time. Expectations are higher for the scope of extension programs at promotion to Associate Professor than at Reappointment, and at promotion to Full Professor than at Associate Professor. There are many ways that such a trajectory can be documented, for example through greater geographic spread of impact, increasing funding for extension activities, greater change in an outcome metric of relevance, higher attendance at your workshops, etc. For early-stage faculty preparing for reviews by the committee, we encourage development of some program evaluation metrics that will help them demonstrate a positive trajectory of their extension program.

Based on the 2012 university-wide policy regarding review letters for reappointment, promotion, and tenure decisions, outside letters to include in the application packet should be from 4-6 established faculty of higher rank at peer institutions. Letters from other types of institutions must be carefully justified in the supporting material provided by the chair or director. For CANR faculty with extension appointments, one or more of the names provided to the chair or director should be a faculty member with an extension appointment or someone with experience evaluating extension faculty for promotion and tenure at their own institution. Input from commodity group representatives or other stakeholders can be solicited by the chair or director, but this information should be included in their cover letter to address evidence of meeting stakeholder needs, as this type of letter cannot be used as a review letter.

Ultimately, the faculty member and department chair/director are responsible for the delivery of an application packet that includes thorough documentation of the research, teaching, and extension activities during the reporting period. Each packet will be evaluated by the committee based on the material presented and in the context of the appointment. Our goal in preparing this document has been to highlight the need for thoughtful reporting of how extension activities fit into the overall goals and direction of a faculty member's program, and there are many ways to do that. Through this document we hope to help demystify the process of Reappointment, Tenure and Promotion review in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University.

CANR Reappointment, Promotion & Tenure Committee
Spring 2012