



**The University of Tennessee Extension
State Update for
Association of Southern Region Extension Directors
April 25 – 28, 2016 St. Thomas, Virgin Islands**

ADMINISTRATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Increase in Promotion Amounts for Agent Titles

Effective July 1, 2016, the salary increases for UT Extension agents who are promoted from Agent I to Agent II, and from Agent II and Agent III, will be increased by 10% of the employee's base salary on June 30 of the year of promotion. This change in our promotion amounts is possible due to savings resulting from policies implemented January 1, 2014, requiring counties to fund their share of benefit costs for UT county positions.

This change will be another step forward in achieving our strategic goal of investing in UT Extension's human capital. It also helps to address the salary compression that has occurred as our minimum starting salaries for agents have risen. In addition, this provides agents with the same promotion percentage increase that faculty and other exempt professionals receive when they are promoted.

FY17 Budget

The Tennessee State budget is not yet finalized for FY17, and no final compensation plan has been developed. Draft plans, based on proposed state budgets, include a 1.5% across-the-board increase combined with a 1.5% merit/equity increase pool. These increases will be funded by an expected 3.25% budget increase, which will also cover increases in health insurance and other benefits. The overall state economy remains strong.

Human Resource Officer Search

Ms. Izetta Slade, who served as our interim HRO after Dr. Herb Byrd's departure, has accepted a position with the University of Tennessee Office of Equity and Diversity. A search committee has been appointed and a position announcement will be available very soon. Dr. Shirley Hastings has agreed to serve in this role on an interim basis, and is also chairing the search committee. We hope to have a new HRO in place this fall.

New 4-H Center

Lone Oaks Farm in Middleton, Tennessee is our newest 4-H Center. The acquisition cost was approved in the FY16 budget, and we closed on the property December 1, 2015. Three teams are developing business plans for the new facility: youth education and camping, agricultural operations, and activities, events and conferences. Small group meetings, youth STEM camps, environmental programs, and retreats are being conducted at Lone Oaks Farm. Fund-raising will be a major focus for additional capital facilities development. We continue to also invest in our other three 4-H Centers, emphasizing increased participation in summer camping programs as we work towards bringing a fourth camp online. <http://www.loneoaksfarm.com/>

PROGRAM AREA HIGHLIGHTS

4-H Youth Development: Investing in STEM Education

Our 4-H programs go hand-in-hand with STEM curriculum, spurring Tennessee youth to discover valuable skills. Experiential learning opportunities, like our GPS and GIS program, get children job-ready and enhance the future workforce of our communities. Summer 4-H camping programs provide an excellent channel to promote STEM education, while encouraging physical activity and a love of the outdoors. In December, 2015, we added a fourth 4-H facility, enabling more youth to gain valuable camping experiences.

Agriculture and Natural Resources: Focused on Sustainability

Precision agriculture technologies cut waste, leading to increased production and reduced costs on the farm. At UT Extension, we have developed a multidisciplinary program that delivers precision agriculture management strategies to Tennessee farmers. Through our assistance, the adoption of precision ag technologies has reduced off-target application errors on more than 700,000 acres and saved our state's producers almost \$1 million in seed costs.

Family and Consumer Sciences: Aiming for Better Health

At UT Extension, we're targeting the chronic disease epidemic. As the recipients of a nearly \$1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, we're enhancing outreach services in four rural counties (Haywood, Humphreys, Lake and Lauderdale) to reduce rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease and stroke. With Tennessee State University Extension, county health departments and local school districts, we'll improve residents' access to health foods and physical activity opportunities.

Strategic Plan Implementation

The UT Extension Strategic Plan implementation has progressed successfully over the past 6 years. Several of our implementation teams have completed their assignments, and procedures and recommendations from those teams are being institutionalized. A county director training curriculum has been developed, with 30 newly-appointed county directors scheduled to receiving this training. Sixty-nine mentors have been trained, and 30 have already been assigned to mentor new employees. Based on feedback from employees across the state, stress has been identified as a high priority concern. To address this issue, a full-day workshop is being offered to help employees develop skills to manage stress and encourage life balance. Our Enhancing Volunteerism team has created a comprehensive volunteer application and database, and has developed training of ways to recruit and engage volunteers.