



Oklahoma State Report

ASRED Meeting August 22-26, 2016

Nashville, Tennessee

Administrative Changes

Dr. Ross Love retired as of April 30, 2015, but continued to work part-time until March 31, 2016. As of March 1, 2016, Dr. Randy Taylor was hired into this position. Dr. Taylor was previously a professor in the Biosystems and Ag Engineering Department at Oklahoma State University.

Jim Ansley was recently hired as the Department Head in Natural Resource Ecology and Management (NREM). Previous to accepting this position, Dr. Ansley worked for Texas A&M University at the Vernon Research/Extension Center located in northern Texas.

Budget

The state budget for Extension was cut by 16.1% as of July 1, 2016. Over the past 6 years we have had budget cuts and unfunded salary programs that have added to about 15%. Hence, this year's cut brings our total state budget losses over the past 7 years to a little over 30%. In my observation two factors have caused this large cut. The first is the impact of lower oil prices on the state's economy. The second is a very conservative Republican dominated legislature and similar Republican governor.

Because of the declines in our budget over the past 7 years, we started a county-staff downsizing program a year ago. As previously described in ASRED reports, we were funding 2 Educators and 1 secretary in each county. We are now phasing in, over a four year period, a plan to fund only 1.5 Educators and 1 secretary in each county. Counties were given the option to increase their contributions to our salary budget (increase their payments by 1/8th of the amount of salary and benefits for an Educator each year for the next four years) or have their staffing reduced. About 2/3rds of the counties entered into this plan. I anticipate some of these counties will drop out of this plan before it is completed.

Those counties who did enter into the plan are sharing Educators across two counties. That is, two counties now have a total of three Educators. The sharing arrangements vary from case to case, but in most cases all three Educators work to some extent in both counties.

It now appears that the above described "4-Year 1.5 Plan" as it is being called, will be inadequate to cover the 16.1% cut we received this year. Various options for increased downsizing are being considered. Most options require many Educators to cover more than two counties. In addition, a number of fee programs and cost-sharing arrangements have been, or are being, developed.

- 1) A 4-H programming fee of \$20 per 4-H club member is being collected.
- 2) A fee is being charged for court mandated "Co-Parenting Divorce Counseling" conducted by FCS Educators.



- 3) We are co-funding two agribusiness development positions with the Small Business Development Council (SBDC) which is funded by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce.
- 4) In a number of counties, we are contracting with the Oklahoma Conservation Commission to provide secretarial and Educator services for them.
- 5) Our “Pride Program” (which trains individuals on customer service and community promotion) is now predominately funded via fees.
- 6) Fees have, or will be, increased on most of the certification courses we teach.

On campus, what amounts to nearly a hard hiring freeze currently exists for vacant faculty positions. A buyout does not appear to be a part of the solution to this budget cut. Reserves will be used to cover deficits and attrition via retirements and resignations will be used to cut the budget. Over the past 6 years, cuts to the campus budget have absorbed almost all of the total budget cuts. This has resulted in Extension faculty FTE's declining by about 30% over the past 6 years.

A possible partial reprieve from our budget cut exists with the passage of a “one-cent” sales tax for Education. This tax is on the November ballot and would add about 8% to our budget if passed. A recent poll shows it passing with a 62/38 margin.

Programming Highlights

OCES is expanding its urban Extension efforts in partnership with the George Family Kaiser Foundation. We funded the Extension portion of three Kaiser Endowed Chair faculty positions in Family & Consumer Sciences on the OSU Tulsa Campus. These positions will be housed on the OSU Tulsa Campus but will collaborate with our Tulsa County Extension office. The positions focus on child & family resilience, child development, and family & community policy. These research/extension positions are for the purpose of improving family, child and policy outcomes in Tulsa and Oklahoma.

Our “Insect Adventure” traveling “Insect Petting Zoo” has recently been recognized by National Geographic and Lonely Planet (see links below):

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/07/insects-spiders-petting-zoos-animals/>

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/news/2016/08/03/meet-woman-behind-travelling-insect-petting-zoo/>

The program has an on-campus facility that displays/houses a variety of insects. It conducts an open house every 1st and 3rd Saturday with a program for youth of all ages (and adults too). During the week, the “Zoo” goes on tour in a dedicated project van that transports the Zoo's insects and display equipment. During the past year, the Insect Petting Zoo made 600 presentations to an estimated 40,000 individuals. It is a great way to reach non-traditional audiences and a perfect enhancement to school curriculum. Children are curious about bugs and when parents are present with them, we make sure to publicize the broad mission of Extension. This program's website may be viewed at:

<http://insectadventure.okstate.edu/>