



NACAA Futuring Committee Report Executive Summary

Presented to

NACAA President, Officers, and Board of Directors

From

NACAA Futuring Committee

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NACAA Futuring Committee Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NACAA Futuring Committee was formed by President Glenn Rogers in January 2005 and charged to evaluate the organization's future. Specifically the committee's charge was to focus and address nine issues and concerns that are listed below.

The Futuring Committee met over a 16-month period conducting in-depth discussions and data discovery. These efforts included review of the NACAA organizational mission and goal statements, past Futuring Committee report, past AM/PIC Review Committee report, Board of Director meeting minutes and other materials. Our goal was to develop recommendations that did not solely focus on contemporary issues but also the core mission and goals of the organization. In addition, we perceived our role as including debate and discussion of our organization's form and function to determine if they best suit the emerging needs of the membership and the profession. Five surveys were developed and administered to gather data, input and opinions from the following functional groups: State Committee Chairs, National Committee Chairs and Regional Vice Chairs, State Association Officers (via the state president), NACAA members, and Life Members (retirees). All of the input and data were compiled to generate the body of the report, which includes statements on issues and concerns, and 62 recommendations. Following is a summary of the recommendations by thematic area; note that each recommendation is followed by a number that corresponds to the numbered recommendations in the full report.

Increasing (younger) membership and involvement: NACAA must attract and maintain potential, new and current members by demonstrating the relevance and benefits associated with membership. These include efforts to further determine the needs of Cooperative Extension employees (1), and demonstrate that NACAA offers affordable (5) and valuable benefits of professional improvement and recognition (2, 3). State associations must play a vital role in assisting with this effort and should work with NACAA State Relations Committee to develop and conduct a membership campaign (6) that includes up-to-date, multi-media informational materials (2, 3). The membership drive should also focus on expanding and increasing the participation of Extension workers from the 1890 and 1994 Institutions (16). Communication with Life Members must be maintained and increased by both the NACAA national office and state associations (15). In addition, state Extension Administrators must be continually educated that NACAA is a premier professional improvement organization (4).

NACAA must evaluate the current list of benefits, products and services offered and focus on those that are cost-effective, and relevant and useful to the membership. In addition, new methods, products and services should be developed (12). Specifically, NACAA should reconsider the publication of the Annual Report, or scale back the contents and associated effort to reduce workload (7). In addition, NACAA should develop and utilize a database for recording and reporting annual information (award recipients, presenters, etc.) which can be used for historical documentation and data

analyses for planning and promotional purposes (7). NACAA must increase the visibility or members' knowledge of the goods and services we offer to members (8, 11), and utilize technologies (web site, e-mail, member database, list serves) to share information and resources (9, 10, 14) and enhance communication among members (12, 13).

Efforts must continue to further enhance the professional improvement opportunities offered at the Annual Meeting and Professional Improvement Conference (AM/PIC), and increase member participation and satisfaction. NACAA should expand advertising for the AM/PIC through cost-effective methods such as e-mail, and include specific details on speakers, training sessions, etc. at the upcoming meeting (28). NACAA should insist that bidding states select dates that are not during the same week or month each year (17) and should further explore whether or not the AM/PIC should be held beyond the summer months (18). The AM/PIC length should not be shortened (18). NACAA should work to reduce costs of lodging (19), and continue to provide a reasonable registration fee (20). To encourage "first timer" attendance, NACAA should continue the registration fee waiver for this group, but it should be available regardless of the number of years the first-time attendee has been employed by Cooperative Extension (21). A buddy program should be developed, assisting first timers get oriented at the AM/PIC by partnering with an experience member (22). Life Member programming should follow historical program content and opportunities for social interaction and professional improvement (23). Family emphasis at the AM/PIC should continue as long as the costs do not place the organization at a financial disadvantage nor place an increasing financial responsibility or burden on the host state (24). An alternative 'a la carte' fee schedule should be considered for spouses and the Sons and Daughters Program (25), and spouses programs that are of interest to female and male spouses must be developed (26). NACAA should investigate the liability issues of providing market-value childcare or informing members of local childcare services that would be paid fully by the member (27).

Building Relationships with JCEP and other Professional Associations: NACAA must work together with Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP) to advocate for Cooperative Extension and the needs of our members. In addition, educational materials and opportunities that address common needs and issues should be jointly developed with our sister associations (29). New and relevant collaborations with non-Extension associations or professional societies should be pursued (30) particularly with groups that have desirable goods and services that would benefit NACAA and its members (31). In addition, NACAA should pursue jointly held meetings, co-sponsored workshops, etc. held in concert with or separate from the AM/PIC on a multi-state, regional or national level (32).

Different staffing patterns and effects on clientele: NACAA has little impact on the conditions that have lead to difference staffing patterns across the United States. However, NACAA should play a role in developing educational workshops or programs that deal with issues and topics that come from such staffing patterns and are being faced by members (33). Mechanisms using technology should be developed to allow

members to dialogue about issues or situations throughout the calendar year, not just at the AM/PIC (34).

Helping members understand issues better: Broadly defined, helping members understand issues better includes helping them learn and utilize skills to do their job back at home. This is currently and primarily accomplished through the training and workshop opportunities provided at the AM/PIC. NACAA must adopt, develop and offer new and expanded programs, products and services beyond the AM/PIC to reach the over 80% of members that do not attend the AM/PIC. A NACAA refereed journal should be considered, allowing members to publish their work and bring them recognition among their peers (35). However, NACAA should continue its historic investment in and representation on the *Journal of Extension* board, and encourage members to publish in this journal (36). NACAA must expand educational opportunities for members by developing in-depth synchronous and asynchronous training opportunities beyond the AM/PIC (37). These should be developed alone or in cooperation with other professional organizations, be held on a multi-state, regional or national level, and include topics beyond those that primarily focus on traditional production agriculture (38).

The roles of our national committees should be expanded or fine-tuned, and should not solely focus on AM/PIC workshops or review of award applications. Their year-round duties should be expanded to develop and offer instructional materials that can be shared with members through the state committee chairs using convenient and cost effective methodologies (39). NACAA corporate sponsors should also provide training materials on their products or services that can be shared through this mechanism (40). The membership database could be used by the national committees to develop list serves, blogs or other mechanisms to foster discussion on issues and topics amongst Extension peers and other professionals (41).

Is the NACAA mission changing?: The mission of NACAA is not changing; rather the methods used to carry out this mission must be evaluated and adapted over time to ensure that NACAA remains effective and relevant. Relevance should focus not only on where we fit in the Extension system and with sister Extension organizations, but also to the members of the organization. NACAA should be the best at delivering what is needed to fulfill our mission to those who have joined the organization. In addition, the diversity of our workforce – in assignments, responsibilities and work function, as well as demographics including race, religion, etc. – is changing. NACAA must meet the needs of this workforce and do so in a way that is fair, inclusive and welcoming (42).

NACAA should maintain the current name of the organization. Rather than focus on what we are called, energies should be focused on what we do to meet the educational and professional improvement needs of our members (43). To that end, NACAA must do a better job to educate the members and state association leadership of the committee structure and the roles and responsibilities that each council and committee has in the organization. Member familiarity and comfort with the structure must increase (44). All of these efforts require greater interaction and involvement of state

officers and state committee chairs in the decision making and activities of these committees (45). NACAA must revisit the current committee structure and determine if a large and complex system of national, regional and state chairs are needed. Committee missions and objectives must be clearly defined and current activities and programming effectiveness in meeting these goals must be evaluated. This would increase understanding of the roles of these leadership positions and establish a performance standard that is expected to be met (46). The financial cost of the committee structure should be audited to determine its financial sustainability, and how to make it more effective and more cost-efficient (47). In order to bring new expertise to the committees, NACAA should adopt a policy that prohibits a retiring national chair or vice chair from serving on any other committee (not including upward movement to a council chair position or chairmanship of the current committee a vice chair is serving on) for a period of two or more years. These experienced vice chairs and chairs should assist in filling vacancies from the state chairs they have worked with (48).

NACAA must develop mechanisms or institutional changes that reduce the real or perceived concerns about block voting or other region-centered actions. Increased communication at the AM/PIC through joint regional meetings, time for discussion at the AM/PIC prior to the voting delegate session, etc. should be instituted. A realignment of states into regional groups that provide a more equal distribution of member numbers should be explored (50). NACAA should develop a mechanism by which states can seek approval to merge state associations within the same region if they have low membership numbers or an inability to remain viable (51).

Increased Relationships with USDA – CSREES, and What role does NACAA play as a leader in the changing Extension System?: NACAA must clearly define their relationship with USDA-CSREES as a separate organization and in concert with our sister organizations via JCEP. NACAA should be proactive in making the concerns, issues and needs of agricultural and natural resources Extension workers and their programs known. This outreach should be directed to USDA-CSREES administration and Program Leaders (52, 53), federal and state level decision makers (54), and University administrators and NASULGC (55). NACAA should develop materials, which compliment those of NASULGC and their lobbying group, that deliver budget information and other pertinent messages of need, accomplishment, activity and impact of the agricultural Extension workers across the United States (56).

Increasing Your Support for Promotion and Tenure Back Home: NACAA can best support members in the promotion and tenure process at home by being a premier professional improvement organization. Our awards programs and related recognition, leadership and service opportunities, and publication and presentation opportunities are of particular value to members. The NACAA Councils should review the existing award announcements and application procedures to enhance understanding and participation (57), and consider allowing peer nomination of award applicants to circumvent humility or lack of confidence of the agent that might prevent their self-nomination (58). For future planning efforts and to offer information to support members, NACAA should track participation numbers for all awards, pre-post conference seminars, etc. to assist

members (who in your state won what?), alerting state administrators, and to analyze data trends of participation to assist in determining what we do with various award programs in the future (59). The development of a mentoring program or informational resources on mentoring for use by state associations should be explored by the Early Career Development Committee (62).

NACAA must continue to improve the professional improvement opportunities offered to members by the NACAA committees. This requires improved communication on all levels – from council chairs, to national committee chairs and regional vice chairs, and state committee chairs. NACAA must also conduct an in-depth survey to gather data from members of what topics, issues, and themes or needs they have and develop relevant programming (60). NACAA must look to develop new outreach methods and venues such as meetings and workshops beyond the AM/PIC, and technology and media based outlets for interaction and learning (61).