



Commitment to Community Engagement

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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What community engagement means for the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

There are three core dimensions that define extension and community engagement in the University of Delaware's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR). The **purpose** of the scholarship must be to benefit society, broadly defined, as opposed to developing new knowledge solely for its own sake. The **process** must be collaborative, but the overall level of engagement among faculty, students and community members will vary depending on the degree of collaboration at each stage of the scholarly endeavor. The **impact** of engaged activities must benefit society and extend beyond making a difference only within an academic field.

In CANR it is important to distinguish among Extension, Outreach and Service largely due to accountability of funders.

- **Extension** work is based in the community and is focused, sustained, programmatic efforts that are designed to achieve changes in behavior and practice. Extension can be thought of as a blend of applied research and teaching with many common elements of both. It is conducted within the framework of a state plan of work that is built upon community needs assessment and stakeholder input and based upon research within this and other land grant institutions across the country. It may often involve multi-state and multi-disciplinary resources. The 4-H program is the youth component of Extension. Success is measured by levels of change (impact) in the community. Extension is funded by some combination of federal, state and local funders as well as grants and contracts.
- **Outreach** is similar in that it consists of reciprocal community involvement and focuses on community change. Unlike Extension, it is not necessarily programmatic and incorporated in a plan of work but more often opportune in nature (i.e., when a discovery is made, an event requiring relevant expertise arises, technical assistance is requested by industry, community group's desire for research to inform decision-making). Outreach does involve engagement beyond the boundaries of the university and in service to the public and is also measured by levels of change (impact) of community members. This work is most often funded on some combination of university base budgeting, grants, and contracts.
- **Service** is not the same as Extension or Outreach; serving on committees, engaging with professional societies, or serving the department/college in various capacities is not programmatic, but is a responsibility of all faculty and essential to the operation of the university.

Scholarship excellence in extension and outreach creates knowledge that is validated by peers in the discipline, communicates that new knowledge in forms that are long-lasting and accessible by those who might build on it to advance the discipline, and is valued by those for whom the work was intended. (<http://compact.org/initiatives/trucen/>)

In summary, for research, teaching and extension appointments in CANR to be designated as scholarship, the work must meet three key characteristics: "it should be public, susceptible to critical review and evaluation, and accessible for exchange and use by other members of one's scholarly community." (The Carnegie Teaching Academy. *Shulman, 1998, pp. 9-10*).

Scholarship occurs in all three missions of CANR: teaching, research and extension.

How community engagement relates to the mission and responsibilities of CANR

The University of Delaware designation as a land-grant institution underscores the mission to serve people of the state in meaningful ways. With an economic impact of over 9 billion in Delaware, the work of CANR as an economic engine of the state is obvious. The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources is also home to UD Cooperative Extension and the Experiment Station, carries an additional responsibility of community engagement through the federal Smith-Lever, Hatch, and McIntire-Stennis Acts.

Cooperative Extension, established by the passage of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914, established a mechanism to enable scholars in land-grant institutions to expand and sustain their engagement in the “actual work of the world” (Rasmussen 1989). A critical context of extension work is that it is designed to not only be of value for the development of individuals and communities but also as being valuable to the development of better colleges due to the vigorous reciprocity. “It not only carries knowledge from the university to the people, but it also works in reverse: it carries from the people to their College practical knowledge whose workability has been tested...in communities.” (Smith, 1949)

The Hatch Act (1887) established similar responsibilities in research that supports needs of the state in the broad areas of agriculture and the environment. Importantly, Hatch funding supports a nationwide network of agricultural experiment stations that work in concert to adapt basic science to local and regional settings. The McIntire-Stennis Act of 1962 furthered the reach of agricultural experiment stations to the disciplines of forestry, watershed management, wildlife ecology and outdoor recreation.

This historical role of applying skills, resources and energy to address the challenging issues in society is part of the culture of CANR. The three central missions of the College are teaching, research and extension and scholarship of outreach is considered a component of each.

How community engagement relates to the strategic priorities of CANR

CANR master plan includes five unique strengths that are addressed through the teaching, research, and extension functions:

- Sustainable food systems, landscapes and ecosystems
- Genetics and genomics for plant, animal, and ecosystem improvement
- “One Health” initiative—animal, plants, human ecosystems
- Human dimensions of food, agriculture and natural resources
- Climate change—impacts, mitigation and adaptation

All outreach and extension efforts are aligned around these unique strengths. Research priorities are further informed by the outreach and extension programs. Due to state and federal funding resources that support the extension and research components of CANR, indicators for each of these five strengths are documented annually at the national, state and local level.

Statement updated Summer 2019
