Direct Line

These are challenging times in the Alabama Cooperative Extension System as we struggle to maintain quality educational programming and adapt to serious gaps in state funding. It has been heartening to see each of you deal with changes and pull together as a team to find creative solutions that make Extension more effective.

These changes have included the loss of 113 positions since 1995 due to reduced funding. By December 31 of this year, we will lose another 71 positions as these employees separate from Extension. We have kept everyone informed of these changes through weekly e-mails about the Employee Severance Plan. These separations will recoup the funds needed to cover the budget shortfall expected at this point and will provide for salary adjustments according to the universities' guidelines for 2004. Therefore, we will not have to make further reductions at this time.

Our focus now shifts to other points of change.

Reshaping Extension

First is the issue of how we will do our work of providing Extension education programs with substantially fewer people. The Strategic Directions Action Team has been hard at work to provide recommendations in three critical areas: (1) reshaping Extension through redirection and reallocation of resources and staff; (2) internal training; and (3) identifying and acquiring additional or new funding for programs.

Drafts of the work groups’ recommendations are on our Extension Web site at http://www.aces.edu/sdat/sdat-reports.htm for everyone in Extension to review and provide input. It is critically important that everyone take time to read, study and respond to this opportunity. These recommendations will provide the basis for profound changes in how we do our jobs as educators—possibly the most significant in recent times and in the foreseeable future.

The reports are formatted so you can provide comments on each section. We need your recommendations to make our new directions work. If you have a concern, tell us what it is and how it can be addressed.

Tax Reform and Accountability

Another issue getting our attention is Gov. Riley’s tax reform and accountability package that will go to a vote of the people of Alabama September 9. Here are several key points about the referendum.

Increased revenue is expected to be good for education, producing better qualified graduates resulting in improved economic well being in Alabama. We expect to be able to seek funds for Extension programs from the Excellence Initiative Fund created by the amendment.

Increased accountability is also expected to be positive for education. Extension continues to increase accountability. Our accomplishments and impacts are well documented through the success stories you have provided. We have eliminated programs and positions and redirected funds. In the near future, Extension will reorganize to provide greater expertise in priority areas and more efficient utilization of resources received.

Consequences of continued revenue decreases from the failure of this reform or some other state source will have a severe impact on Extension programs. Since Extension does not benefit from tuition or a similar revenue stream, decisions about positions beyond the 184 already lost will have to be made in future years. Funding from state resources is necessary to maintain core staffs to obtain extramural resources (now at 21 percent of our budget) for Extension programs.
I urge everyone to participate in the referendum. Become informed on the consequences of a yes vote and a no vote. Determine how the changes will directly and indirectly affect you and your family as well as the future economic well-being of our state. Most importantly, VOTE. And, encourage others to participate also.

In addition to the intense media campaign now underway, several ways to evaluate the impact of the referendum are available to us. A two-part satellite videoconference featuring faculty members/specialists in the Auburn School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, College of Agriculture and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System is set for August 26 and August 28. Both segments will air on both days.

Segments on forestland taxation, farmland taxation, residential property taxation and income taxes will be included. Specific details on program coordinates will be distributed to all Extension employees and through media outlets in the very near future.

Web sites that provide information on how the reform will affect individuals are available:
—Alabama Governor's Office
  http://www.governor.state.al.us
—Alabama Legislative Fiscal Office
  http://www.lfo.state.al.us
—Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama
  http://parca.samford.edu

Extension in Alabama and across the nation has faced serious challenges of many types before. Each time, Extension has risen to the occasion, adjusted to the challenges and continued to thrive. Keeping focused on delivery of relevant education programs at the local level with statewide impact has been the key ingredient in all these times. We can and will do so now and in future times. Thanks for your continued commitment to the economic well-being of the people of Alabama.

Other News

Alabama continues to be the powerhouse in national forestry and wildlife judging competitions. Congratulations to both Coosa County, national champs in forestry, and Tuscaloosa County, national champs in wildlife judging!

On a related note, at the recent Governor’s Conservation Achievement Awards program sponsored by the Alabama Wildlife Federation, two of the winners had ties with Alabama 4-H. Tuscaloosa County’s Amy Farnsworth, who was on last year’s national champion forestry judging team, was named Youth Conservationist of the Year. Richard Bryars, who works with the Baldwin County 4-H Shooting Sports Club, was named the Hunter Safety Instructor of the Year.

Extension lost a friend and supporter recently with the death of C. Beaty Hanna. His work in landscape design transformed Birmingham and other Southern cities. In 2000, Extension’s C. Beaty Hanna Horticulture and Environmental Center at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens was named in his honor. He will be deeply missed.

Heading Back to School?

This is the time of year when most people think of going back to school. If this is your goal, the Human Resources Unit would like to encourage you to review Section 13:11 of the ACES Policies and Procedures Handbook. ACES faculty (county agents, nonaffiliated specialists, etc.) accrue 20 days per year of Professional Improvement Leave (PIL) that can be used toward a degree or for professional improvement.

Applications for PIL can be downloaded from the ACES Intranet (Human Resources Section) and must be submitted and approved at least 10 days before the start of your course work for those requesting part-time leave. Applications for full-time PIL should be submitted and approved at least 30 days before the start of classes. If you would like additional information, please contact the Office of Human Resources at (334) 844-5324.

PERSONNEL
Kudos:
• Jim Armstrong, Extension Wildlife Specialist, has been chosen as chairman-elect of the Wildlife Damage Management Working Group of The Wildlife Society. With more than 9,000 members worldwide, The Wildlife Society serves as the professional and certification organization for wildlife damage management.
for wildlife biologists throughout the United States and approximately 60 other countries.

- **Bill Jones**, Extension Animal Scientist, was the recipient of the 2003 American Meat Science Association Signal Service Award. The AMSA Signal Service Award is given to members in recognition of devoted service and lasting contributions to the meat industry and to the association.

- **Virginia Morgan**, Extension Communications Co-leader, was elected vice-president of the Association for Communication Excellence. After completing her term as vice-president, Morgan will serve as the organization’s president-elect from 2004 to 2005, then as president from 2006 to 2007.

- **Jim Novak**, Extension Agricultural Economist, has been chosen president-elect of the American Agricultural Economics Association, Extension section. He also received the Farm Service Agency/USDA Administrator’s Award for his work with the Farm Bill Education Program.

### Appointments and Transfers

- **Shannon Norwood**, Multicounty Agent, transferred from Colbert County to Tennessee Valley Regional Research and Extension Center, July 14
- **Mary Remenschneider**, transferred from Extension Health Associate, Family Programs, to Extension Subcontract Specialist, ACENEP, July 15
- **Janet Hayes**, ACENEP Agent I, Conecuh County, July 21
- **Joann Baker**, Extension Program Office Associate, Community Resource Development, July 28
- **Randy Brothers**, 4-H Center Assistant Manager, August 1
- **Brenda Moor**, 4-H Center, Cook II, August 1

### Resignations:

- **Jeremy Jones**, Information Technology Specialist III, ACENEP, July 6
- **Peggy Meites**, Extension Specialist, July 10
- **Sharon Boshell**, ACENEP Agent I, Jefferson County, July 18
- **Amy Frost**, ACENEP Agent I, Jefferson County, July 25

- **Doug Wagner**, Information Technology Specialist IV, ACENEP, August 1

### ACES Family Happenings

- Our condolences to **Jean Weese**, Extension Food Scientist, on the death of her daughter, Sara, June 23.
- Our sympathy to **Veronica Austin**, Randolph County Administrative Assistant, whose brother, James Austin, died June 30.
- Our condolences to **Kent Stanford**, St. Clair County Extension Agent, on the death of his grandfather, Doug Kent, July 9.
- Our sympathy to **Rodie Ruffin**, Monroe County Coordinator, on the death of his mother, Lucille Ruffin, August 1.

### Proposals Awarded:

- **Chuck Simon**, Opp City Schools for Covington County School Enrichment, $17,903
- **Sandra Coffey**, Enterprise City Schools for Making Academics Count, $8,000
- **Sandra Coffey**, Elba City Schools for Making Academics Count, $3,500
- **Sandra Coffey**, Coffee County Board of Education for Making Academics Count, $6,000

### Proposals Submitted:

- **Tommy Futral** to USDA for the National 4-H Forestry Invitational, $9,200
- **Vickie Fussell** to Alabama Department of Public Health for Managing Teen Pressures, $60,000
- **Kathleen Tajeu** to Alabama Department of Public Health for Unwed Pregnancy Program, $60,000
- **Sallie Lide-Hooker** to Alabama Department of Public Health for Unwed Pregnancy Program, $16,056
- **Harry Strawn** to Alabama Department of Public Health for State Indoor Radon Grant, $230,000
- **Don Ball** to Internationalizing Extension Mini-Grant Program for Providing a Useful Forage Management Book, $10,000

Gaines Smith, Interim Director