

ACES  
Policy Manual



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# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Purpose of the Manual**

The purpose of the manual is to familiarize all Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) employees with the policies and other relevant information necessary to manage the System and further its mission. The policies and guidelines explained in this handbook apply to all System employees regardless of their institutional affiliation.

To the Alabama Agricultural Mechanical University & Auburn University, the System has attempted to make its policies and procedures compatible with those of both AAMU and AU. However, this was not always possible. Due to the special requirements mandated by the Federal District Court Order and the Federal Extension partnership, there are some specific areas to which special System policies or additional guidelines and operational procedures apply. As a general rule, if an area is not specifically addressed in this manual, the policies and procedures of the affiliated institution will apply. Therefore, all System employees should become familiar with their affiliated university policy documents in addition to this handbook. If specific policy and procedure questions arise which are not answered in any of these references, they should be addressed to the System's Administrative Office in charge of the referenced area.

All product names, brand names and the like mentioned, depicted or used in this manual are either trade names, service marks, trademarks or registered trademarks or copyrights of and owned by the respective owners.

The ACES Policy Manual is designed to be used as the first reference when interpreting and communicating human resources policies as well as basic policies covering communication, technology, finance, extramural funding, and marketing, to the employees of ACES. Additionally, the manual will be periodically updated to reflect changes consistent with the applicable institutional, state and federal laws, as well as other rules or guidelines that may emanate from the entities that directly impact ACES employees.

ACES reserves the right to interpret, modify, change, add, or delete all or part of the provisions of this manual at any time.

## **1.2 Organizational Statement**

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System operates as the primary outreach organization for the land-grant functions at Alabama A&M and Auburn Universities.

## **1.3 Mission Statement**

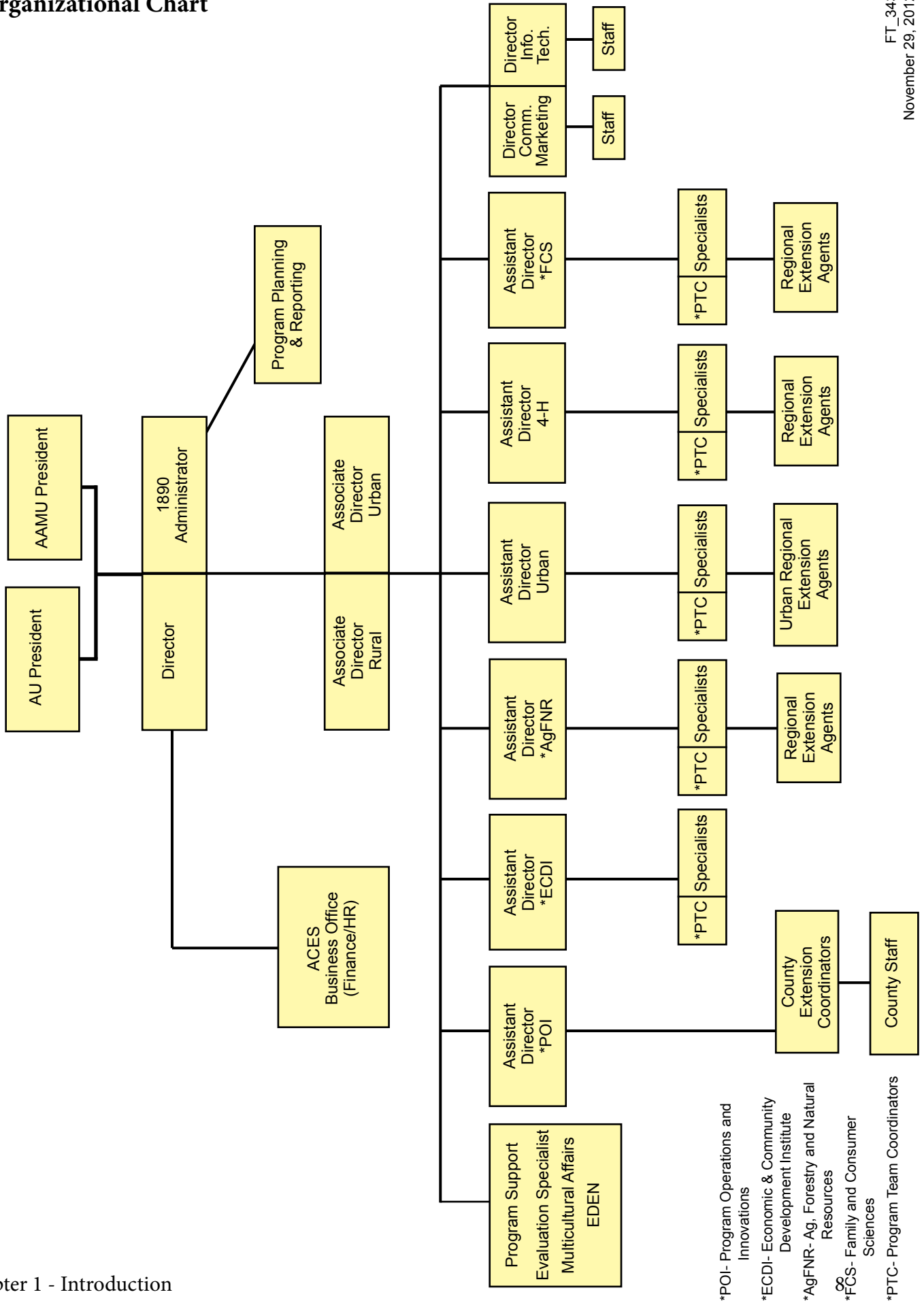
The Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the primary outreach organization for the land-grant mission of Alabama A&M University and Auburn University, delivers research-based educational programs that enable people to improve their quality of life and economic well-being.

## **1.4 Vision Statement**

To be a world-class educational organization providing real-life solutions to improve the lives of all Alabamians.

# Organizational Relationships Alabama Cooperative Extension System

## 1.5 Organizational Chart





## **2 EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**

ACES will recruit, hire, transfer, and promote according to established Equal Employment Opportunity - Affirmative Action policies. Policies and procedures are established to comply with Federal and State laws, Executive orders, and university guidelines in all areas of employment. ACES strives to enhance opportunities for qualified candidates to apply and be considered for job openings within the System.

The recruitment and selection of new hires and the promotions of current employees will follow established Federal and State law and Executive orders. ACES is committed to developing, maintaining, and following programs designed to provide equal opportunity for employment and promotion throughout the System.

## **2.1 Procedures**

A completed “System Request for Staffing” with appropriate approvals begins the recruitment process to fill vacant positions in ACES.

## **2.2 Position Announcement**

A position announcement will be prepared by the ACES Business Office with input from the supervisor. After the final draft is approved by the appropriate university office(s), it will be placed on the ACES website and used as a basis for other external advertisements.

## **2.3 Advertisement**

Appropriate advertising strategies will be used to announce vacant positions based on the position attributes. All ACES vacancies will be advertised on the ACES website . Position advertisements will include a brief description of the duties and responsibilities; minimum education, and experience levels required for consideration; specific knowledge, skills and abilities; special licenses; an organizational unit; salary range (optional); application review date; and instructions for applying. Positions may also be announced in local/regional and national print media, trade and professional journals, bulletin boards, and sent to prospective trade organizations. All advertising strategies will be coordinated by the ACES Business Office and the Alabama A&M or Auburn University Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity office.

## **Application Forms**

Completed application forms ([www.aces.edu/hr](http://www.aces.edu/hr)) are required for all positions so that the ACES Business Office can fully and totally evaluate applicant’s qualifications. The search committee or hiring supervisor will typically require a personal resume and a letter of application for each applicant. Failure to properly complete the applicant data form and other required forms shall result in the candidate being rejected from further consideration. Once the application pool has been reduced to a manageable number of candidates, the hiring supervisor or search committee chair is encouraged to request the names of the professional references of the candidate(s). The hiring supervisor or search committee should obtain permission from the candidate to make contact with the references provided or other officials having job-related information.

## **2.4 Job Description**

Supervisors should review the job description and minimum qualifications prior to initiating recruitment. Any concerns with the appropriateness of the documented job content or minimum qualifications should be brought to the attention of the ACES Business Office for review and resolution.

## **2.5 Reference and Background Investigations**

To minimize the probability of hiring unsuitable candidates for employment, background checks will be con-

ducted on all persons selected for Auburn University affiliated ACES who are new to the system. Background checks will include but may not be limited to criminal history including conviction and driving records, verification of education, and verification of occupational and professional licenses. Driver's licenses will be checked/validated whenever such action is job related. In all cases, reference and prior employment information shall be obtained by the hiring supervisor or search committee chair. Consideration for employment as an AU affiliated ACES employee will be contingent upon meeting all hiring criteria including eligibility to be bonded as defined by Auburn University's bonding company.

## **2.6 Tests and Skills Assessments**

Certain occupations, licensure, and identified jobs may require job-related tests, skills assessments, and post-offer physical examinations. Jobs subject to these requirements will be identified on ACES list of job openings.

### **Supervisor's Recommendation**

When the search process is completed, the supervisor will forward a recommendation through the chain of command for approval and review by the ACES Business Office.

### **Final Approval**

The Director will give final approval after the ACES Business Office's review of the documents which support the supervisor's recommendation and other appropriate university office(s) approve the hiring decision. Following the Director's review, for AU affiliated ACES vacancies, the final approval will be made following approval from the appropriate University office(s).

## **2.7 Responsibility**

Hiring supervisors are responsible for conducting recruitment and selection activities consistent with current policies and procedures. The Extension Director has final authority and is ultimately responsible for all human resource functions within the System. The Director, Human Resources & Strategic Initiatives, is responsible for providing leadership for human resource functions within the System.

## **2.8 Nepotism**

Information concerning employment of family members for AAMU affiliated ACES employee may be viewed at:

[http://www2.aamu.edu/Hr/hr\\_handbook.html](http://www2.aamu.edu/Hr/hr_handbook.html) (Section 3.5.3)

Information concerning employment of family members for AU affiliated ACES employee may be viewed at

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/AuburnUniversityNepotismPolicy.pdf>

## **2.9 Reemployment of Former Employees**

For AU affiliated employees:

An employee who resigns or is discharged by the University may not reapply for regular Administrative/Professional or University Staff positions earlier than six months after termination. Any extenuating circumstances which might justify an exception to this policy are subject to review by the Director of Employment Services and approval by the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources. Reemployment through Temporary Employment Services is subject to payroll system restrictions of two weeks for former University Staff employees and one calendar month for former Administrative/Professional employees. Certain employees may be affected by ethics

law that extends the reemployment period to two years. (See 2.11.2 Revolving Door).

- **Revolving Door**-All University employees are subject to compliance with the Alabama Code of Ethics for Public Officials, Section 36-25-13 - Revolving Door. In accordance with this statute, any employee who leaves from a position of authority from the University cannot return to work in a new position earlier than two years from the date of departure from the University. Generally, an individual who, within the context of the job from which he or she departed, had hiring and firing, purchasing, or contracting authority, etc. shall be considered to have been in a position of authority. However, any employee who wishes to return to his or her prior position may do so without being subject to the revolving door two-year time restriction.

It is the responsibility of individuals to determine whether or not the revolving door provision of the Alabama Ethics law applies to them, and they should contact the Ethics Commission for guidance.

Should a retired ACES employee be re-hired, a memorandum of understanding will be agreed upon prior to the effective date of the reemployment.

For more information regarding reemployment of former AU Affiliated employees see Section 2.12 at: <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/EmploymentPoliciesandProcedures.pdf>

## **2.10 Job Changes**

**Definition** - A transfer is the movement of an employee from one position to another position and may involve a change in job titles or job categories. The changes can occur through a reclassification, promotion, or demotion.

**Circumstances Leading to Employee Transfers, Job Changes or Reclassifications** - A change in job classification may be initiated by either the supervisor to meet the operational needs of the unit; requested by the employee; or made as a result of application by the employee for consideration of an open vacancy. For changes initiated for operational reasons, the ACES Administration will attempt to find reasonable alternative job assignments for consideration by the employee.

A position may be reclassified when lower level duties and responsibilities are assigned due to reassignment of an employee or elimination of work to accommodate restructuring; elimination of the currently assigned position; changes in technology or methods; inability of the employee to perform the higher level work; or upon request by the employee. Additionally, a position may be reclassified to a lower grade as a result of reevaluation of the assigned job responsibilities.

All changes in classifications will be facilitated by the appropriate Department of Human Resources on the AAMU or AU campus.

**Transfers Initiated by the Organizational Unit** - A transfer within an organizational unit may be initiated by the unit head at the convenience of the unit, generally to satisfy the needs of the unit or to serve the best interests/wishes of the employee. Transfer between two organizational units may be made by mutual consent of the heads of both units for the same reasons. Generally, the wishes of an employee will be considered prior to a supervisor initiated transfer; however, the unit head reserves the right to make transfers to meet the business needs of the

unit even when the employee may not favor the change.

**Transfers Initiated by an Employee** - A transfer may result from the application and selection process for open, announced vacancies. Employees must meet the same eligibility requirements as outlined in the recruitment announcement. Hiring decisions will be made by the selecting supervisor in accordance with policies and procedures. Employees wishing to transfer but not through application of open, announced vacancies may make their wishes known to the supervisor. The supervisor may initiate a transfer as described in paragraph above.

**Transfers Facilitated by ACES Administration through the Department of Human Resources** - Whenever it appears that the mutual interest of ACES and the employee will be best served, the respective Department of Human Resources may facilitate and coordinate transfers following generally accepted principles and procedures for effective personnel management.

**Special Consideration** - Prior to initiating a job change as covered in the language above, supervisors will request assistance and guidance from the Department of Human Resources to ensure that such actions are according to current policies and generally accepted human resource management principles and will not result in a promotion or demotion as described in the policy manual.

**Timing** - Effective dates of transfers will be subject to mutual agreement by the respective supervisors. Special, or extraordinary cases not resolved at lower levels will be referred to the respective President for resolution.

**Salary Adjustment** – Salary adjustments, if any, as a result of a job change, will be made in accordance with the procedures in the University of affiliation guidelines.

**Forms and Reports** - The ACES Business Office working jointly with the respective Department of Human Resources will assist supervisors by providing appropriate information and guidance for completing job assignment changes.

For non-tenure faculty that change job classifications, the following will be utilized regarding probationary status:

- Voluntary changes with no change in job classification = no probationary status.
- Voluntary changes with job classification change = probationary status.
- Involuntary job classification change between or within job classifications = probationary status

## **2.11 Probationary Period Employees: Promotion/Transfer through competitive recruitment**

Current ACES employees that are in probationary status must inform their supervisor of their interest in applying for current vacancies with final approval being required by the Administrative Team prior to submitting application materials.

# **3 EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES**

### **3.1 Coverage**

All ACES employees are covered by this manual. Jobs designated as exempt under the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) are Administrative/Professional, Non-Tenure Track Faculty and Tenure Track Faculty. Jobs designated as nonexempt are University Staff, and these positions are subject to the overtime pay provisions of the FLSA.

### **3.2 Terms and Conditions**

Employment is subject to a variety of terms and conditions as identified by ACES and its affiliated Universities needs and generally accepted personnel management practices. Employees will be designated either regular or temporary, full-time or part-time, limited term or continuing term, and nine months or 12 months. Additionally, they will be assigned positions designated as exempt or nonexempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), and paid either monthly or biweekly. These terms are described below, and additional policies and procedures concerning the application of these terms are provided throughout this manual.

### **3.3 Definition of Terms**

Status

- a) Regular - One who has successfully completed an initial probationary period. Regular employees are subject to limited term or continuing appointments and are paid either biweekly or monthly.
- b) Temporary - One who is scheduled to work less than 20 hours per week on a continuing basis or who is scheduled to work 20 hours per week or more but for a period of less than 11 months. Temporary employees are employed on a day-to-day basis, paid biweekly, and are not eligible for the employee benefit package accorded regular employees.

### **3.4 Work Schedule**

- a) Part-time - One whose normally scheduled work week is for an average of less than 40 hours.
- b) Full-time - One whose normally scheduled work week is 40 hours or more.

### **3.5 Duration and Probationary Period**

- a) Limited Term - One whose appointment is for a specific period of time, generally governed by the duration of a project, contract, or grant. Duration will be specified at the time of employment.
- b) Continuing Term - One whose appointment is for an unspecified time but still subject to the availability of funds, rules of performance, and the business needs of the ACES.
- c) Probationary Period

General - All employees hired for regular employment will complete an initial probationary period. Continued employment is conditional and subject to satisfactory performance during this probationary period. Hiring supervisors will continually review the performance and suitability of the new employee and, prior to expiration of the probationary period, decide to conclude the probationary period or terminate the employee. The employee may be terminated at any time following the initial date of employment. Employees terminated during the probationary period will not have access to the employee's grievance procedure. After satisfactory completion of the probationary period, continued employment is conditional, consistent with other University regulations and rules. Performance standards continue after successful completion of the probationary period.

Probationary Period - The probationary period is three calendar months commencing with the initial date of employment for those employees that are classified in Administrative Professional and University Staff classifications.

Table 1: Probationary Period by Employee Classification

<b>Employee Classification</b>	<b>Probationary Period</b>	<b>Probationary Period Extension (Determined by Supervisor)</b>
Administrative Professional	3 calendar months	3 additional months
Administrative Support	3 calendar months	3 additional months
County Extension Coordinator	1 year from initial date of hire	1 additional year
Non-tenured Extension Specialist	1 year from initial date of hire	1 additional year
Program Assistant	3 calendar months	3 additional months
Regional Extension Agent	1 year from initial date of hire	1 additional year
University Staff	3 calendar months	3 additional months

The probationary period is one year commencing with the initial date of employment for those employees that are classified in County Extension Coordinator, non-tenured Extension Specialists, and County/Regional Extension Agent classifications. Probationary periods for County Extension Coordinators, Extension Specialists, and County/Regional Extension Agents may be extended for one additional year.

For non-tenured faculty that change job classifications, the following will be utilized regarding probationary status:

- Voluntary changes with no change in job classification = no probationary status.
- Voluntary changes with job classification change = probationary status.
- Involuntary job classification change between or within job classifications = probationary status

Hiring supervisors will provide leadership and training to support employees through the probationary period. Whenever the new employee fails to show satisfactory progress and to demonstrate work habits and an aptitude necessary for success in the job during the probationary period, the hiring supervisor may initiate action to terminate the employee. Also, the hiring supervisor may, at his or her option, extend the 3-calendar-month period for up to an additional 3 calendar months for Administrative Professional staff and/University staff employees; one year for County Extension Coordinators, non-tenured Extension Specialists, and Regional Extension Agents. Supervisors will keep employees informed of their progress, either good or poor, during the probationary period. The supervisor is encouraged to seek the assistance and guidance from the ACES Business Office whenever he or she plans to terminate the employee or extend the probationary period.

The ACES Business Office will provide supervisors with forms and instructions for review of the employee's performance during the probationary period, monitor progress reports, assist supervisors upon request, and maintain a permanent file of records regarding probationary period decisions.



### **3.6 Annual Schedule**

- a) Nine month - One who is appointed to a regular schedule for a specific calendar period of nine months under the ACES and affiliated University's nine-month program for pay and benefits.
- b) Twelve month - One who is appointed to a regular schedule for twelve months.

### **3.7 Pay Method**

- a) Monthly - One who is paid once each calendar month.
- b) Biweekly - One who is paid every two calendar weeks.

### **3.8 FLSA Designation**

- a) Nonexempt - One whose duties and responsibilities, and salary level does not meet the criteria for exemption under the FLSA and is not agriculture exempt. Employees in this category are subject to working time records and overtime payments (either cash or compensatory time off) at premium rates (one and one-half time).
- b) Exempt - Typically refers to one who serves in a position having duties, responsibilities and a salary level which meet the FLSA criteria for exemption as either an executive, professional, or an administrative employee. Such employees are not subject to working time reports or overtime pay.

### **3.9 Hours of Work**

- a) The established regular hours of work comprising full-time employment for a nonexempt employee of the ACES is 40 hours per week.
- b) The established ACES -wide standard work week begins at 12:01 a.m. Sunday and ends at 12:00 midnight the following Saturday.
- c) All offices on the campus of AAMU and AU shall be open during the hours of 7:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. to 4:45 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on official University holidays. Changes in this schedule must have prior approval of the Director and/or appropriate supervisor.
- d) Office hours for county Extension offices will be established by the County Extension Coordinator in consultation with the Assistant Director, Program Operations and Innovations. Any changes or deviations from the normal office hours for county staff must be approved by the County Extension Coordinator.
- e) When a county office is closed by directive of the county governing body on days not recognized by the System as holidays, exempt employees are to devote time to field work. Unless otherwise specified, non-exempt support personnel may be granted administrative leave by the appropriate supervisor.
- f) Time sheets must be posted daily by every nonexempt employee.
- g) Exempt employees are expected to work as long as it takes to get the job done and will work additional hours when necessary without compensatory time. Non exempt employees must have the permission of the immediate supervisor prior to working overtime and/or accruing compensatory time. This should only be requested under extraordinary circumstances.

### **3.10 Work Breaks**

Supervisors may authorize two 15-minute breaks, one mid-morning and one mid-afternoon for nonexempt employees. Employees may leave their work area during their break unless notified otherwise by their supervisor. Where it is necessary to have someone on duty at all times, care should be taken to make sure the work assignment is covered. Breaks are not accumulative and employees cannot forego a break time to use later.

## 3.11 Exceptions and Special Cases

### Volunteers

Occasionally people may serve the University as volunteers. The Universities as a public institution, may accept the services of volunteers as long as the individual receives no salary or wages and the services are not the same type of service the individual normally performs for the University as a University employee. A volunteer may be paid expenses and nominal fees without establishing an employee-employer relationship. Volunteer work by nonexempt employees will be closely monitored by the home department to ensure compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act.

### Multiple Positions

For AU affiliated ACES employees, Administrative/Professional and University Staff employees, upon appropriate approvals, may engage in University activities for extra compensation. Such activity must constitute an employer/employee relationship, and will be titled as a multiple job. Multiple jobs shall not be considered as consulting, but rather a bona fide employment opportunity within Auburn University which is eligible for compensation. The primary department will be responsible for all payroll processing. Form HR 12 must be processed for approval prior to the beginning of the assignment. A sample form may be found in and detailed information is accessible at [www.auburn.edu/administration/human\\_resources/forms](http://www.auburn.edu/administration/human_resources/forms).

### Independent Contractors

The ACES and its affiliated Universities may engage independent contractors to perform professional type services for a fee. These contracts are subject to strict federal regulations and guidelines regarding employee-employer relationships. Department Heads are responsible for ensuring that an employee-employer relationship does not exist and the contract is executed in accordance with federal guidelines, policies, and procedures. For further information, please refer to the Auburn University Spending Policies and Procedures in the Auburn University Financial Policies and Procedures Manual.

### Job Titles and Pay Grades

All AU affiliated ACES Administrative/Professional and University Staff employees will be assigned a distinguishing job title and pay grade. A listing of job titles, along with unique job class numbers, and applicable pay grades is provided at [www.auburn.edu/administration/human\\_resources/compensation/ccp/jd/jd-title.htm](http://www.auburn.edu/administration/human_resources/compensation/ccp/jd/jd-title.htm).

AAMU:

[AAMU Staff Handbook, 8.3.4 Termination for Cause, page 67](#)<sup>1</sup>

AU Employment Policies:

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universypolicies/Policies/EmploymentPoliciesandProcedures.pdf>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/Documents/AAMU%20Staff%20Handbook%20-%20September%2016%202011.pdf>

# **4 ORGANIZATIONAL EXPECTATIONS**

## **4.1 Requirement to Maintain Microsoft Outlook Calendars**

Every exempt ACES employee is required to maintain his/her individual work calendar using the Systems's official communications software (currently Microsoft Exchange) and to share their work calendar (via "read" privileges) with their immediate supervisor(s). The individual work calendar will show where the employee is any time they are not in the office, and any work they are doing after hours such as night meetings or weekend activities. The individual work calendar should also show any time and dates that the employee is on leave (medical, annual, holiday, etc.), and any time that they have been granted "professional scheduling" time-off during normal working hours by their supervisor.

During normal working hours, an employee is expected to be in the office and accessible at the county office, if the employee's individual work calendar does not show that he/she is out of the office or on leave. Therefore, it is NOT necessary for an exempt employee to show the time he/she is in the office--only when he/she is NOT in the office. However, employees are encouraged to use their individual work calendars for all of their work scheduling and can put other in-office appointments and work done in the office on the calendar if they choose to do so.

Every UREA/REA must share (read privilege) their individual work calendar to the Administrative Support Associate and CECs in the counties which they serve as a means of knowing whether the UREA/REA is in her/his home office, in another specific location working, or on leave. CECs and Administrative support associates are not responsible for monitoring or verifying the whereabouts of UREA/REAs—read proxy of UREA/REA calendars is provided for informational and accessibility purposes only.

Supervisors are required to periodically review the individual work calendars of the people whom they supervise to ensure they are following the proper procedure.

## **4.2 Cell Phone Accessibility**

Every ACES employee who has been provided an ACES-funded cell phone is required to have this phone with them and turned on anytime they are out of their office during normal working hours, unless the employee is on official leave (annual, sick, etc.) or has been approved granted professional scheduling time by their supervisor.

Cell phone numbers must be posted in the contact data section of each employee's individual page in the on-line personnel directory. These numbers are public information and can be given out to clientele. Each UREA/REA should ensure that the CECs and Administrative Support Associate in the counties which they serve know their cell phone numbers and that these are readily available for use in referring clients. Voicemail messages should be established by each employee issued a cell phone.

## **4.3 E-mail Accessibility**

Each ACES employee is required to check her/his e-mail regularly and on a frequent basis during normal working hours unless the employee is on leave or is in a location where e-mail access is not available for an extended period.

## **4.4 Employee Signatures on Official Correspondence**

All forms of official communication including letters, newsletters and e-mail service is provided to employees in support of the educational mission of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Under federal law, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, comprised of Alabama A&M University and Auburn University, is an equal opportunity educator and employer. This means it is the responsibility of every employee to create a welcoming

Extension environment for people of all beliefs and backgrounds.

The e-mail messages which are developed and sent through the ACES system represent the formal electronic communications of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. As such, it is appropriate for signature lines to include the following information about the sender:

- Name
- Title and Unit
- Alabama Cooperative Extension System
- Address
- City/state/zip code
- Office telephone
- Mobile telephone
- Fax
- E-mail address
- [www.ACES.edu](http://www.ACES.edu)
- Optional – centrally approved ACES marketing messages. For example, the specially developed mark used in celebration of the Extension Centennial Celebration.

Important note: It is not appropriate to include non-ACES information in the signature block, such as the sender's personal statement of beliefs, a quote from a well-known person or book, a personal view on a contemporary social issue, or other similar information, as that information may be misconstrued to represent the viewpoint of ACES. Alabama Extension encourages employees to use personal e-mail and other personal communication venues to share their personal values during non-work hours.

Example

John Smith  
Lee County Extension Coordinator  
Alabama Cooperative Extension System  
600 S. 7th St, Suite 4  
Opelika, AL 36801  
(334) 749-3353 – Office  
(334) 555-0000 – Cell Phone  
[jns0001@aces.edu](mailto:jns0001@aces.edu)  
[www.ACES.edu](http://www.ACES.edu)

#### **4.5 Staff Conferences**

CECs are required to conduct regular (e.g., weekly) staff conferences. One of the purposes of staff conferences is to facilitate good internal communication, and these conferences are the mechanism to disseminate important information related to System and county policies and procedures, and to schedule the use of facilities, and for discussing work agendas. It is suggested that an office have two office conferences per month. Early in the year, dates for office conferences should be blocked out on every staff persons' calendar. Dates are expected to be honored. A casual conference during coffee breaks will not give the results of a more formal meeting. You will need to decide as a staff how you will handle office calls and walk-ins during your conference.

UREA/REAs are expected to participate in county staff conferences as schedules permit. Effort should be made for UREA/REAs to attend at least one county staff conference within their region of responsibility annually.

The following items are usually covered in office conferences:

- Calendars: The better informed staff are of all programs, the better they are able to help promote them, be unified in what they tell others and to help each other. Reviewing calendars should not be the sole purpose for office conferences, nor should it dominate the time.
- Work Load: Find out who has major projects, priority items, etc. Newsletters take time to type, print and mail. Try to reach consensus on whose work will be done in what priority. This also gives staff a reminder on the lead time needed for major projects. Find out about additional "outside of county" workload that is being done for regional agents and multi-county programs.
- Media: Regular radio and/or TV time and/or newspaper space may be available to the county extension programs. Decide in advance who is doing what. Using the media is an excellent way to boost county programs as well as being more organized with the media outlets you have.
- Develop a guideline for reporting results of extension activities.
- Items for the County Commissioners: Discuss written reports and who will be giving oral reports and the topics.
- Program Plans: This is an excellent time to bounce ideas off one another for recruiting, program content, etc., and to determine visual aids needed, assistance needed.
- Utilization of social media: Discuss ways to reach clientele on a broader base. Review resources and marketing of the county office and programs.

On a periodic basis, the office conference should include:

- A total county office situational analysis and (annually), needs assessment.
- At least one meeting where you share program development plans, directions, goals, and methods discussion.
- Discussion of Civil Rights, ADA issues, emergency response plans, and preventing sexual harassment --take it seriously and so will others.
- Encourage careful planning of new or potentially risky programs.
- Mutually celebrate successes and recognize others' program success whenever possible.
- Discuss the budgetary process and time sequence with all staff. Solicit their ideas and be sensitive to their needs.
- Sharing of planned leave with attendees.

Other suggestions for successful office conferences:

- Be interested in, not dominate, other's programs.
- Take the lead in facilitating communication with others.
- Invite assigned regional agents housed in other counties to participate.
- Recognize successes and be supportive when colleagues are working through problems.
- Plan annual leaves and encourage people to take them.
- Rotate facilitation of office conferences among staff.
- Develop, with staff assistance, a procedure for handling work.
- After each county staff conference, meet with the office assistant to plan the work load.
- Conduct an annual performance review with each county staff employee.
- Be a positive example.
- Work diligently to create a supportive and stimulating atmosphere

## **4.6 Personnel Directory Information**

Every ACES employee is personally responsible for the accuracy and completeness of their individual data in the on-line ACES personnel directory. Each employee must check this information on a regular and frequent basis to ensure its accuracy, and must facilitate changes/corrections to the ACES Business Office when necessary. Each ACES employee must post a recent picture in the on-line personnel directory, and must provide adequate information about their program responsibilities, specialty areas, and credentials.

#### **4.7 University Teaching by ACES Funded Employees**

There are strict federal regulations and restrictions regarding the use of ACES funding to support formal classroom teaching at land grant universities. Non-Extension funding must be used to cover an appropriate percentage of the salary and fringe cost for any ACES employee who teaches a for-credit course at AU or AAMU. To ensure that we do not violate these regulations and restrictions, any ACES employee or ACES-funded faculty who teaches a “for-credit” course at either Auburn University (AU) or Alabama A&M University (AAMU) must receive prior written approval from their immediate supervisor. Request to teach courses at AU or AAMU must be made in writing to the employee’s immediate supervisor with a copy going to the Director or 1890 Administrator of ACES and to the ACES Business Office. Employees and ACES funded faculty on teaching assignments must also post the times that they will be in-class teaching on their individual work Calendars. The appropriate use of salary savings resulting from ACES employees teaching courses will be determined by the Director or 1890 Administrator of ACES, and will be reviewed and subject to change each academic term.

ACES employees who consistently teach for-credit courses at AU or AAMU will need to have their ACES appointments changed to accurately reflect split Extension/Teaching appointments. The determination of what constitutes a split teaching-Extension appointment will be made by the Director or the 1890 Administrator.

#### **4.8 Teaching at Alabama Community Colleges or Public/Private Schools**

ACES employees may not teach at Alabama community colleges or public or private schools as a contracted employee for personal gain in subject matter areas related to programs offered by any ACES unit. Community college or public/private school teaching aligned with ACES programs should be performed as either an Extension fee-for-service or ACES contractual activity.

#### **4.9 Resolving Internal Conflicts between Employees**

Under the current organizational structure various classifications of employees with different supervisors work in the same offices in close proximity and the nature of their work requires cooperation and coordination. This gives rise to the possibility of work-related conflicts. Given that employees have different lines of supervision, it is prudent to have a clear understanding of how working relationship conflicts and issues will be handled.

Our goal is for any work-related conflict between two or more employees to be resolved as quickly as possible and at the lowest level possible. Ideally, these conflicts should be resolved by the individuals directly involved without the need for involvement by higher level supervisors. In those cases where the individuals involved are not able to resolve the conflict or situation satisfactorily, the individuals who are having the conflict should notify their immediate supervisor about the conflict.

Anytime a supervisor becomes aware of a working relationship issue or conflict that has the potential to negatively impact the organization and/or productivity of the people involved, the person who is aware of this situation will immediately notify the appropriate supervisors of all individuals involved (i.e.,assistant directors). This will be done verbally whenever possible.

The immediate supervisors of all of the individuals involved will take steps deemed necessary to gain a full understanding of the situation (i.e., get the facts from all sides-- sometimes there are more than just two sides!), agree on a plan for resolving the problem, and proceed immediately with implementing the plan. If it is not possible for the immediate supervisors to do the above, the matter will be referred to higher levels of supervision for resolution, but this will be done only after the immediate supervisors have attempted and failed to resolve the conflict/situation.

#### **4.10 Professional Expectations**

The term “professional” is regularly associated with an individual Extension staff member’s approach to his or her assignment. The concept of “being a professional” is recognized as necessary to effectively fulfill ACES programming role.

All ACES personnel must acquire and practice the following criteria and personal traits generally associated with professionalism:

- Placing service to others over personal gain
- Developing a strong sense of public responsibility
- Developing proficiency in a field of specialization and in communicating that knowledge
- Being dedicated and loyal to our parent institutions and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System
- Working toward self-direction on the job
- Working toward the improvement of colleagues’ welfare
- Pursuing personal professional improvement plans
- Working within acceptable ethical standards
- Being knowledgeable of professional literature in specific Extension program and subject matter areas
- Adapting Extension methods and programs when warranted
- Exchanging information with colleagues
- Understanding and practicing the language of the Extension profession
- Creating a positive image in the community
- Belonging to and supporting appropriate professional organizations and subscribing to professional journals
- Practicing personal grooming and appropriate dress for tasks at hand

For the Dress Code at AAMU see the link below:

[http://www2.aamu.edu/human\\_resources/dress\\_code\\_procedure.aspx](http://www2.aamu.edu/human_resources/dress_code_procedure.aspx)

As professionals, the normal work week for ACES agents will be at least 40 hours per week and the anticipation is that the average will likely exceed 40 hours per week with no allowance for compensatory time.

Extension programs and work with other community groups and agencies will require evening and week-end hours. Agents are expected to become an integral part of the community. Each agent’s schedule of activity and location must be recorded on the system email system.

Agents must avoid work habits which could create doubt about whether they are conducting business other than Extension business during regular office hours, i.e., working at home, keeping irregular hours, conducting busi-



ness other than Extension at the office, or shortening office hours to conduct personal business.

#### **4.11 Professional Employee Work Schedule Guidelines**

Extension administrators, agents, county extension coordinators, and specialists are expected to fulfill their job responsibilities and, as professionals, maintain some flexibility of their work schedules. ACES supports the appropriate balance of work and personal life of all employees. The work schedules of professional educators in Extension are often dictated by the availability of clientele and the nature of educational programs.

Extension administrators, agents, county extension coordinators, and specialists are expected to meet their work objectives and as professionals, are entrusted with the flexibility of balancing their work schedules. This is not a formal policy statement. Rather it is a philosophy or guideline for professionals to use in approaching their work. An assumption is made concerning this principle: a full-time Extension professional's responsibilities typically require more than 40 hours per week or portion thereof (for part-time professionals) and often at non-routine work hours. Professional scheduling is not designed to equitably compensate (hour for hour) for work outside the normal 8 am – 5 pm workday or 40 hour work-week. Performance of professionals is a top priority and professional scheduling is intended to support and strengthen performance. It is the individual's responsibility of controlling one's schedule to meet the needs of clientele while achieving a balance in professional and personal time that is healthy for both the individual and the organization.

For AAMU Affiliated employees:

[AAMU Staff Handbook, 5.0 Employee Attendance and Leave Benefits, pages 35-37](#)<sup>2</sup>

[AAMU Staff Handbook, 6.1 Group Medical Insurance, page 51](#)<sup>3</sup>

#### **4.12 Definition of Professional Employee Work Scheduling**

Professional time scheduling reflects a fundamental characteristic of salaried, exempt positions which involve an organizational commitment to put in the hours needed to accomplish agreed upon work responsibilities, even if doing so means working hours outside the standard office work schedule.

An Extension professional's responsibilities often require more than 40 hours per week and often at non-routine office hours. Professional scheduling should not be confused with compensatory time. Exempt employees are not eligible for compensatory time. These guidelines are not designed to equitably compensate (hour for hour) for work outside the normal workday. All employees are accountable to their immediate supervisors for their time and also for fulfilling the assigned job responsibilities.

Extension administrators, agents, county extension coordinators, and specialists are accountable for their own time and also for fulfilling the assigned job responsibilities and completing objectives delineated in the chosen plans-of-work and extension team projects.

Personal time off should be taken at the convenience of the organization and the individual. Professional courtesy requires that employees discuss this in advance with their immediate supervisor.

It is the employee's responsibility to develop and maintain his/her professional calendar. Scheduling activities outside the normal work day is at the discretion of the employee. The key is fulfilling the objectives, the chosen

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2 <http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/Documents/AAMU%20Staff%20Handbook%20-%20September%2016%202011.pdf>  
3 <http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/Documents/AAMU%20Staff%20Handbook%20-%20September%2016%202011.pdf>

plans-of-work, and extension team projects and meeting expectations as identified in the job description.

As a general guideline, System professionals working excessive hours at night and on weekends should schedule some personal time. However, this does not mean a professional must work a certain number of hours per day or week to be eligible to use professional scheduling.

Supervisors will not negotiate with employees a specific number of days off in lieu of professional scheduling. Rather, professional scheduling is primarily the responsibility of the employee.

Professionals should always keep support staff apprised of their work schedules. Professional courtesy requires that extension personnel communicate with their office team in advance when they will be taking time off by posting the time on their respective individual work email calendars. Controlling one's schedule to best meet the needs of clients, while achieving a balance in work and personal time, is not only healthy for the individual, it is healthy for Extension as an organization.

# **5 EMPLOYEE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

## 5.1 Recognition and Awards

Employees are the most important resource to the ACES. To assist in recognizing and rewarding our employees, ACES has several award programs.

Further programs are conducted by AAMU and AU's Department of Human Resources for ACES employees affiliated with each university.

## 5.2 Employee Conduct and Job Rules

General – The System's rules concerning employee conduct and job performance are simple, common-sense guidelines. They are necessary to ensure that all employees can work in an orderly, efficient, economical manner, free from disturbances which hinder job training, job production, and job enjoyment. It is the full responsibility of each employee to know what rules and regulations exist and to observe them at all times.

Each supervisor is responsible for establishing and maintaining a work culture where employees can improve their job performance. The supervisor's continuing emphasis on developing correct work habits through effective orientation, training, and performance review and on regular and meaningful communication is essential in contributing to the productivity as well as well-being of employees and developing good employee/management relations.

## 5.3 Classification of Rules and Regulations

Rules and regulations are classified by degree of severity so that corrective action can be consistently administered. The classifications of severity and the rules are intended as general guidelines to good judgment and fair treatment. All employee rules regulations are not restricted to those listed below, for some are covered by specific unit regulations which will be discussed with the employee by the supervisor. Employees shall know and understand what these other regulations contain as well as the general conduct and job performance rules listed here.

Group I - Employees found in violation of these rules and regulations will be subject to immediate discharge:

- Intimidating or intentionally imposing on the rights and privileges of other employees.
- Drinking intoxicants or using illegal drugs on System property,
- Changing or otherwise falsifying or forging any System records, permits, time cards or time sheets, licenses, certifications, passes, badges, or the approving signatures thereon.
- Indulging in grossly offensive, obscene, or immoral conduct.
- Deliberately restricting production output and/or University operations
- Deliberately concealing defective work.
- Stealing or misappropriating System property or property belonging to other employees.
- Intentionally defacing or damaging System property or the property of other employees.
- Fighting on System property or creating disturbances which adversely affect morale, production, studies, or discipline.

Any other actions not listed above but considered by the System as constituting major misconduct, insubordination, gross negligence, or gross disregard of obligation to the System. Such actions will include violation of another employee's protection against discrimination or harassment as stated in the Equal Opportunity Affirmative Action Policy.

Special Note: Under certain circumstances, being convicted of a criminal offense outside of the System could lead to discharge. Specific action will be determined by the nature of the offense and the employee's job performance.

Group II - Employees found guilty of these actions, except where the circumstances are extremely aggravated, will be given a last Formal Written Reprimand which will show that any repetition of the violation or further violation of System's rules, generally within six months, could result in discharge. Such written reprimands will be posted to the employee's individual record.

- Sleeping while on duty during working hours.
- Continually or intentionally disregarding any appropriate unit or System rules.
- Reporting to work under the influence of intoxicants, illegal narcotics, or drugs.
- Refusing to obey reasonable and necessary orders or job assignments or using abusive or threatening language.
- Indulging in horseplay or malicious mischief in any form.
- Smoking in nonsmoking areas.
- Disregarding any System security or fire regulations.
- Leaving System premises prior to the end of any normal work period without prior notice or approval.
- Failing to return to work at the end of an authorized leave period unless supervision has been advised of the reason for delay.
- Having continued absences or tardiness from scheduled work for which the reasons for absence or tardiness are not considered valid.
- Failure to report inappropriate youth contact.

Group III - Employees who are guilty of these actions listed, except where circumstances are extremely aggravated, will be (in order and as repeated violations occur)

- Given an oral reprimand.
- Given a written formal reprimand.
- Given a last formal reprimand showing the employee was advised that future offenses could be subject to demotion, suspension or discharge.

These actions are:

- Failing to immediately report to the employee's supervisor all injuries or illnesses occurring at work.
- Continually disregarding normal safe work practices.
- Contributing to poor housekeeping or unsanitary conditions.
- Practicing poor personal hygiene.
- Distracting or annoying other employees while they are performing assigned duties.
- Damaging System property and equipment through improper use or lack of care.
- Abusing sick leave privileges.
- Failing to notify the employee's supervisor each day of any absence from scheduled work.
- Failing to comply with a dress policy.
- Having continued absences or tardiness from scheduled work for which the reasons for absence or tardiness are not considered valid.

Special Note: Employees serving in their probationary periods of initial employment or re-employment are considered to be on a trial basis: therefore, could be formally disciplined and/or discharged for any conduct or job

performance rule violation during this probationary period. They also do not have a right of appeal except for grievances pertaining to pay matters or those based on claims of discrimination or harassment because of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin, or veterans status.

## **5.4 Progressive Disciplinary Action**

ACES encourages open and informal discussion of complaints and problems between supervisors and employees. Supervisors should encourage employees to discuss their complaints and problems with them.

When an employee fails to follow ACES or unit standards, steps will be taken to correct the situation and prevent further occurrences. If a conflict between supervisors and employees cannot be resolved through normal channels, one or both parties may seek resolution and advice from ACES Business Office-Office of Human Resources.

Wherever possible, counseling should be used before formal corrective action is taken. The supervisor needs to ensure that employees under his or her supervision have been informed in advance of poor performance, negative/improper attitudes and behaviors or inappropriate job conduct, so that if an occasion occurs that requires corrective action, there should be less of a chance for any misunderstanding on the employee's part concerning the action taken. Before determining what form of corrective action to take, a supervisor should follow these procedures for progressive discipline:

Identify the job performance problem, attitudes or behaviors and discuss it with the employee as soon as possible; and use discretion: One single incident may not necessitate action, but deviation from acceptable job performance patterns should be identified early.

Be specific in describing the performance problem; make sure the employee understands exactly where he or she needs to improve and to what extent; and explain the consequences of continued job performance deterioration. Keep discussions focused on job performance problems and keep emotions in check. When reprimands are given, ask the employee what action he or she will take to solve the problem: Follow-up discussions should determine whether the employee is actually taking action, particularly in cases where the performance continues to deteriorate. The supervisor may use his or her discretion in deciding how direct to be in these matters. Avoid diagnosing personal problems as causes of unsatisfactory job performance; and leave diagnosis to the professionals who are qualified to conduct assessments and provide referrals.

If a relapse occurs, treat it on an individual basis, depending upon the employee's progress and attitude.

In cases of dismissal, make sure the employee has a pre-termination hearing in order that they may give their side of the situation.

## **5.5 Problem with the Employee**

- Review the problem (attendance, job performance, general behavior, etc.) with the employee; listen to the employee since there may be mitigating circumstances of which the supervisor is unaware, and be sure that the employee understands what is expected of him or her and point out your expectations in order to gain understanding.
- Document the discussion for future reference.
- If improvement occurs, advise the employee accordingly.

### **Written Reprimand**

- Review the problem with the employee and make sure that he or she understands that the action is taken

because of unsatisfactory job performance or workplace behavior.

- Review what is expected of the employee and why; explain to the employee why his or her performance is unsatisfactory or below required standards; and offer suggestions and set goals for improvement.
- Document the discussion; furnish a written copy of the reprimand to the employee within one week covering the points discussed during the meeting; ask the employee to sign the reprimand: The employee's signature does not necessarily mean agreement with the reprimand, but that the employee is aware of it; and send a signed copy of the reprimand to ACES Human Resources to be placed in the employee's file.
- Establish a follow-up date to review progress with the employee and document whether steps have or have not been taken toward correction. The appropriate time frame will vary with each employee, depending on his or her abilities and the severity of the problem. Note: It is important in these first two steps to encourage the employee to give his or her views on the performance problem in order to avoid any misunderstandings. The supervisor should encourage the employee to acknowledge that there is a current job performance problem on his or her own or with normal supervisory guidance. The supervisor should not assume that personal problems are the cause of low performance, nor should the attempt to diagnose such problems.

#### Written Final Reprimand

- If the problem is not corrected, issue a written final reprimand to the employee; make sure the employee understands the significance of the written reprimand and why he or she is receiving one; ask the employee to sign the reprimand and send a signed copy of the reprimand to ACES Business Office to be placed in the employee's file
- The written final reprimand must outline steps for improvement of the employee's work performance and state that without significant improvement, action for dismissal, demotion, or suspension will be taken.
- Establish a follow-up date; and review progress with the employee on the established date and document that progress or the lack thereof.

#### Job Action

- If previous steps have not resulted in improved job performance, specific action should be taken. It may take one of these forms:

#### Suspension

- Occurs when an employee is not allowed to work for a specific period of time. This is usually without pay. However, there are times when an investigation of an employee is alleged wrong doing is needed, and in these cases the employee may be suspended with pay until the investigation is completed and a decision is made.

#### Demotion

- May be appropriate when an employee is otherwise in good standing but is in a job for which he or she is not qualified to perform. It may also occur as part of the result of corrective action that is taken against an employee. A demotion results in a downgrade in classification and/or pay.

#### Dismissal

- Occurs when an employee is relieved of his or her duties as an employee of ACES. Dismissals should be closely coordinated with ACES Business Office and the appropriate Department Head, Director or 1890 Administrator before termination of an employee is completed.

An employee who receives formal written reprimand, or is suspended or discharged, has full recourse through the appropriate ACES grievance procedures. Individual counseling and corrective actions are necessary motivating steps for employees to improve their conduct or job performance. It is equally important that full recognition be given to employees who make real and successful efforts to correct their deficiencies.

The supervisor is responsible for establishing and maintaining a work environment where employees can improve their job performance. The supervisor's continuing emphasis on developing correct work habits through effective orientation, training, and performance review and on regular and meaningful communication is essential in contributing to the productivity and well-being of employees and developing good employee/management relations.

Contact ACES Business Office if you have questions about this policy or if you would like more information.

## **5.6 Grievance and Complaint Procedures**

### **Statement**

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System encourages open and informal discussion of complaints and problems between supervisors and employees. Supervisors should encourage employees to discuss their complaints and problems with them. When a conflict between supervisors and employees cannot be resolved through normal channels, one or both parties may seek resolution and advice from the System Business Office. Absent a resolution at the point of origin of a problem or disagreement, the supervisor and employee are requested to use the following procedures to seek redress.

### **Complaints**

It is assumed that employees will, at times, have various concerns regarding their work, salaries, leave, travel, etc. Whenever any Extension employee has a concern, the following internal procedure must be followed before going beyond the System to get the complaint addressed. An employee or supervisor, who opts not to follow the ACES procedures and proceed directly to their affiliated university, forgoes the privilege of utilizing the ACES redress procedures. In other words, an employee or supervisor cannot use both channels of redress at the same time.

### **Steps**

Contact the immediate supervisor, in writing, regarding the concern. The supervisor will acknowledge receipt of the communication and answer the complaint within five working days.

If the complaint or concern is against the supervisor, the complainant should be filed with the next level supervisor.

If the employee is not satisfied with the answer or information received and wishes to appeal, the employee must notify the supervisor in writing of the intention to appeal the decision to the next level of supervision, within five working days after receipt of communication from the supervisor. If the employee wishes to request a conference at this level, that fact should be stated in the letter. However, specific information must be given relative to the reason for the conference. The employee's supervisor will attend the conference.

The supervisor holding the conference should notify the employee of the decision regarding the complaint



within five working days after the conference is held.

If the employee is not satisfied with the decision at this level, the employee must inform the supervisor who held the conference of the intention to further appeal, and any such appeal must follow the grievance procedures.

An employee must not appeal or resort to levels beyond the System until he/she has been given due process by the System, unless the employee can document refusal of due process by persons within the System.

For any complaints filed, a copy should be forwarded to the ACES Business Office. All complaint files are kept separate from the personnel files.

### **EEO Complaints**

Any staff member who feels that he/she has been discriminated against based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability or veteran status may file a complaint with the ACES Business Office or AA/EEO Office at the university of affiliation.

### **Grievance Procedure**

A grievance is an allegation by an employee that there has been a violation, misapplication, misinterpretation, or unreasonable application of a System policy, procedure, regulation, or rule regarding the employee's employment conditions. A grievance may be filed by an individual employee or any number of employees who believe that they have been adversely affected by the same action or actions. The grievance may be directed against the action of one or more administrators, supervisors, coworkers or subordinates. Except as otherwise stated in this section, all grievances shall be processed in accordance with the procedures set forth below.

The grievance process is NOT a formal court proceeding. It is an attempt to determine which allegations are factual and to resolve the issues. Therefore, no legal representation will be allowed during the grievance process.

### **Grievance Committee**

The System will appoint a standing Grievance Committee made up of at least 15 members appointed at-large from all job classifications within Extension. A fair distribution of members among all job classifications shall be maintained. The committee appointments shall be made by the Director with input from the administrative team and program team. The committee shall be formulated as follows:

- Administrative Team (1)
- Assistant Director (1)
- County Coordinator (2)
- Rural Regional Agent (2)
- Urban Regional Agent (2)
- Administrative (1)
- Technical (1)
- Professional (1)
- Specialist (2)

Members of the Grievance Committee are expected to be discrete, impartial and able to dedicate the necessary

time and thought to the grievance process. The Grievance Committee will select one member to serve as Chair for a two-year term.

### **Grievance Committee Responsibilities**

- Receive complaints
- Screen complaints against existing policies and procedures
- Coordinate mediation hearings
- Coordinate grievance hearings
- Formulate recommendations regarding the disposition of a complaint with the appropriate administrative officials

### **Initial Grievance Procedure**

The grievance must be filed in writing within **21 working days** after the event giving rise to the grievance or within **21 working days** after the employee(s) knew or reasonably should have known of the event giving rise to the grievance. The written grievance shall indicate the action being grieved; the rule, regulation, practice, or procedure allegedly violated; and the remedy being sought.

The grievance must initially be filed with the immediate supervisor. If the grievance is against the immediate supervisor, the grievance should be initially filed with the next higher supervisor.

The supervisor must respond to the grievance in writing within **20 working days** of receiving the grievance.

If the supervisor fails to respond within the required period or if the response is unacceptable to the employee(s), the grievant may request that the Grievance Committee provide informal mediation.

### **Informal Mediation**

The informal mediation process is an initial step that may be used by the complainant to resolve an issue before a formal grievance hearing is requested. The request for an informal mediation session shall be forwarded to the Chair of the Grievance Committee. The information required shall be the same as that which would be filed for a formal grievance.

When responding to a mediation request, the Chair of the Grievance Committee shall designate three committee members to comprise the Mediation Team. The Chair shall appoint one of the team members as team leader.

The mediation process will be informal, with the Mediation Team attempting to facilitate a resolution of the problem quickly by whatever techniques and procedures the Team believes to be appropriate. Every effort will be made to maintain an informal atmosphere that encourages an expeditious, cooperative resolution of the problem. The Mediation Team may meet privately with either of the parties or with other informed persons in order to explore the possibility of finding a mutually acceptable resolution.

The mediation process will continue until a settlement is reached or until the Mediation Team or one of the parties decides to stop mediation. When a decision to stop mediation is made, it is the responsibility of the Mediation Team to inform all parties, in writing. After receiving notice that mediation efforts have stopped, the grievant who desires a formal grievance hearing has 21 working days in which to request a formal grievance hearing.

## **Formal Grievance Hearing**

### **1. Requesting a Formal Grievance Hearing**

A grievant who wants a formal hearing of his/her grievance, initiates the process by a written request to the Grievance Committee. The grievant must provide the Grievance Committee with a written statement of the grievance which shall include the action being grieved; the rule, regulation, practice, or procedure allegedly violated; and the remedy being sought.

The Grievance Committee will determine whether the situation warrants a formal hearing and the decision of the Grievance Committee shall be final. The Committee shall base its decision to convene a formal hearing on an evaluation of the content provided in the grievant's formal request and on recommendations received from the Mediation Team should there be any. The Committee action shall be decided by a majority vote of those committee members present. Grievances based upon the termination of a non-probationary employee or the significant or continued reduction of pay as a result of disciplinary action qualify automatically for a hearing if a timely request is made by the grievant.

### **2. Grievance Hearing Panel**

The Grievance Committee will oversee formation of a Hearing Panel. The Hearing Panel shall consist of five members. A list of eligible Grievance Committee members will be provided to the grievant and the supervisor. The grievant and supervisor will each have two days to select two persons from this list to be members of the Hearing Panel. In the event that the grievant and supervisor select the same candidate(s), the Chair of the Grievance Committee will appoint the additional panel member(s). The fifth panel member will be selected randomly from the list of eligible Grievance Committee members. The Hearing Panel will elect its own Chairperson. No Committee member who has served on the Mediation Team for a grievance may serve on the Hearing Panel for the same grievance.

A Grievance Committee member may refuse to serve on the Hearing Panel only if there are strong reasons for refusal. Valid reasons may include recent service on a large number of hearings, prior commitments or knowledge of the parties or issues that could make impartiality difficult.

Each member of the Hearing Panel shall avoid any discussion of the case with the parties or their advocates before the hearing. Panel members are obligated when considering evidence, to restrict their attention only to evidence presented at the hearing.

### **3. Liaison**

The System Business Office will provide a Liaison to serve the Hearing Panel. The Liaison will assist the Hearing Panel by arranging for any facilities needed by the Panel, arranging for witnesses to be available, and providing the routine support that may be needed during the hearing. The Liaison will arrange for witnesses or Hearing Panel members to be excused from work or to receive compensatory time. The Liaison will play NO role in the hearing other than providing necessary support services.

### **4. Arrangement of Grievance Hearings**

Formal Grievance Hearings will be closed. No witness (except for the parties themselves) will be allowed to hear the testimony of any other witness.

The Hearing Panel or Liaison will consult the parties before setting a time for the hearing and may, with the consent of the parties, hold joint pre-hearing meetings with them in order to:

- clarify the issues
- provide for the exchange of documents or other information
- achieve any other objective in the pre-hearing period that will contribute to a fair and expeditious hearing.

The Hearing Panel shall ensure that **20 working days** occur between the official announce date and the actual hearing date to allow for the preparation of statements. The panel may extend that time period for valid requests by either party.

## 5. Statements

The grievant will be given **ten working days** from the announce date to supply the Hearing Panel and the supervisor with a final written statement describing the grievance. The grievant's statement will describe the facts and issues he/she wishes the Hearing Panel to consider. This statement may differ from the original grievance but must be based on the same complaint presented to the original Mediation Team and for which a formal Hearing was first requested. On receipt of the grievant's statement, the supervisor will be given **ten working days** to supply the grievant and the hearing panel with a written response to the grievant's statement.

## 6. The Record

An official record of the hearing will be made by the Hearing Panel and filed in the System Human Resources Office. A copy will be made available to each party upon request. All grievance files are kept separate from personnel files.

## 7. The Hearing

The Hearing will be informal and not a formal court hearing. Therefore, no legal representation will be permitted during the System grievance process. The panel will admit any evidence it considers to be relevant, credible and of sufficient importance to determine the issues. The panel may ask the parties to produce witnesses and evidence on specific issues and may also examine witnesses of its own selection. Each party will have the right to ask questions of all witnesses appearing at the hearing and may rebut any evidence heard by the Panel.

Witnesses will not be required to testify under oath, but the Chair of the Hearing Panel shall inform each witness who is a System employee that any deliberate falsehood can result in a separate grievance and/or disciplinary action against the witness.

The Panel may grant adjournments of reasonable length to investigate evidence if it believes newly introduced evidence has created an undue element of surprise in the grievance hearing.

Both parties and the System administration will cooperate with the panel and the Liaison in obtaining witnesses

and making documents and other evidence available as needed by the parties or the panel unless it is determined by the Director that the information sought is confidential and not subject to release.

The panel will be obligated to announce to both parties when it has begun its final, formal deliberation.

The Panel will base its findings and recommendations solely on relevant facts surrounding the issues and material presented to the panel. The panel's official findings and recommendations shall be prepared and submitted in writing. In the event of dissenting opinions within the panel, the dissenting opinions will be prepared and submitted as well.

The Hearing Panel will report its findings and recommendations to the full grievance committee for final deliberation and recommendations to the Director within 15 days.

## 8. Final Disposition

The final disposition of the grievance shall be made known in writing to the grievant, the supervisor and the Grievance Committee Chair by the Director within 30 working days of the filing of the Hearing Panel's report. In unusual instances in which a decision cannot be reached within 30 working days, the Director shall give written notification to the persons involved and indicate a date on which a decision can be expected.

## 9. Withdrawal of a Grievance

Employees who request a Formal Grievance Hearing may withdraw their grievance at any time. The request for withdrawal must be submitted in writing to the Grievance Committee Chair. Such withdrawal shall be without prejudice.

## 10. Reprisals

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System will not tolerate reprisals of any kind against any person for participating in any way in a grievance procedure. Such reprisals may be grounds for disciplinary action.

## 11. Beyond the Grievance Procedure

If the grievant is unhappy with the final disposition within in the System of his/her grievance, he/she may continue the grievance process through the affiliated University. See the University Handbooks for procedures.

Auburn University Affiliated employees classified as Administrative & Professional and University Staff are covered by Section 8.6 Administrative & Professional and University Staff Grievance Procedures. More details are at:

AU:

[http://www.auburn.edu/administration/human\\_resources/manual/sect08.htm](http://www.auburn.edu/administration/human_resources/manual/sect08.htm)

AAMU:

AAMU university affiliated employees classified as staff are covered by Section 8.0 Disciplinary Actions, Grievance Procedures and other policies. Further Details can be found at:

[AAMU Staff Handbook, 8.0 Disciplinary Actions, Grievance Procedures, and Other Policies, page 65<sup>4</sup>](#)

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/Documents/AAMU%20Staff%20Handbook%20-%20September%2016%202011.pdf>

## **5.7 Layoff Policy**

If layoffs are required, ACES will follow the layoff procedures outlined in the policies of the affected employee's university of affiliation. ACES recognizes that at certain times layoffs are necessary to meet the needs of the organization. Respective university policies and procedures are designed to promote respect for the individual throughout the layoff process.

Alabama A&M University:

[http://www.aamu.edu/Hr/hr\\_handbook\\_section\\_2.html](http://www.aamu.edu/Hr/hr_handbook_section_2.html)

Auburn University:

[http://www.auburn.edu/administration/human\\_resources/manual/sect08.htm](http://www.auburn.edu/administration/human_resources/manual/sect08.htm)

## **5.8 Termination of Employment**

Individuals who leave employment with ACES are expected to provide adequate notice, return University property, and satisfy outstanding financial or other obligations before the last work day.

Separation from employment, whether voluntary or involuntary, must be handled in a responsible manner by all individuals involved.

## **5.9 Notice of Separation**

Employees who leave ACES are expected to provide written advance notice. Minimum requested notice is one pay period.

## **5.10 Return of Property and Satisfying Financial Obligations**

Individuals who terminate employment must return all Extension property to the appropriate supervisor and satisfy all financial obligations on or before the last work day. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Identification cards, keys to buildings, vehicles, and equipment
- beepers, pagers, cellular telephones, and other communications equipment
- Policy manuals and other confidential material
- Books and other materials owned by ACES, library books, computers, software, documentation, supplies, and other computer-related materials.
- Uniforms and tools issued by ACES.
- Credit, telephone, and other cards.
- Tuition grants, outstanding advances, library and parking fines
- Project data

Supervisors and managers are responsible for ensuring that all Extension property is obtained from terminating employees and financial obligations are satisfied.

## **5.11 Access to Computerized Information Systems**

Upon termination, supervisors must make appropriate arrangements to discontinue an employee's password and/or access to all Extension information systems. This may include but is not limited to financial, employee, departmental local area networks and county systems.

# **6 OTHER EMPLOYMENT RULES, REGULATIONS, AND GUIDELINES**

## 6.1 Drug Free Campus and Workplace Policy

AAMU:

[AAMU Staff Handbook, 8.7 Drug-Free and Alcohol-Free Work Place Policy, pages 77-78](#)<sup>5</sup>

AU:

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/ADrugFreeCampusandWorkPlacePolicy.pdf>

## 6.2 Smoking Policy

AAMU:

[AAMU Staff Handbook, 7.4 Smoking Policy, pages 57-58](#)<sup>6</sup>

AU:

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/SmokingPolicy.pdf>

## 6.3 Fleet Safety Policy

AAMU: Non-applicable

AU:

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/FleetSafetyPolicy.pdf>

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5 <http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/Documents/AAMU%20Staff%20Handbook%20-%20September%2016%202011.pdf>  
6 <http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/Documents/AAMU%20Staff%20Handbook%20-%20September%2016%202011.pdf>



## **7 CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND COMMITMENT**

Alabama Cooperative Extension System personnel adhere to the policies of their respective University affiliation regarding conflicts of interest and commitment (COIC). These policies are available through the following links:

AAMU policy:

AU policy:

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/ConsultingPolicy.pdf>

## 7.1 Aspects Unique to Extension

Some applications of COIC Policy and Procedures are more prescriptive for ACES personnel. The work of ACES requires considerable direct public contact and Extension educational services are delivered throughout the State of Alabama and beyond. Because of the outreach function and the location of service delivery, it is critical that ACES employees be particularly sensitive to the potential for real or perceived COIC. All Extension employees must be especially careful in their private activities to avoid any perceptions:

1. they are asking for or receiving private payment for services that are normally a part of their position responsibilities;
2. any services that they provide privately are affiliated with or endorsed by Extension; or
3. they are advertising or promoting their private services while performing their Extension duties.

Activities that give the perceptions above could be considered a misuse of their positions and/or a violation of state ethics laws that prohibit using ones public position for personal gain.

For these reasons, the following rules and considerations apply while employed, in part or wholly, by ACES or employed using ACES funding:

## 7.2 Private Consulting

Extension employees, because of their special knowledge, education, or research activities, may be involved in providing technical expertise outside of their normal job assignments. These consulting relationships often can provide a valuable method for transfer of expertise and technology. However, private consulting activities that involve fees for personal gain should be carefully examined for potential or perceived COIC.

1. Private, in-state consulting for a fee for services normally within the scope of an employee's duties is not allowed for ACES employees, including joint appointments, because the provision of such education and services is considered and deemed part of their employment.
2. In-state consulting for a fee in a subject area not related to the ACES faculty member's position but otherwise provided by ACES still can be perceived as a COIC. If the subject matter is related to services offered by another ACES unit, it can give the perception to the public that the services are affiliated with or endorsed by Extension.
3. If ACES provides services outside the State of Alabama through a regional or national initiative, extension units and individual extension faculty should avoid providing like consulting services in that region or nationally. However, if ACES does not provide the service or expertise requested at a regional or national level, it may be acceptable to provide the private consulting service.
4. Out-of-state private consulting for a fee in the ACES faculty member's subject-matter expertise may be acceptable after receiving the approval of their supervisor. Any ACES developed materials used during such consulting work must be acknowledged. In addition, care must be taken to avoid the perception that

the employee is using his or her Extension position to advertise or promote his or her private services. Use of ACES equipment, facilities, or support services are not allowed.

ACES employees should consult with their supervisor prior to engaging in any consulting and complete the appropriate consulting forms.

### **7.3 Judging at County, Regional, and State Fairs in Alabama**

ACES employees may not serve as fair judges for a fee in the State of Alabama. If fair judging is part of an educational activity and part of an ACES employee's job responsibility, the judging may be pre-approved by their supervisor. Any financial compensation must be done as either an ACES fee-for-service or ACES contractual activity according to Business Office protocol.

### **7.4 Second Jobs/Financial Managerial Interests in Outside Organizations**

Some individuals employed by ACES may become involved with outside organizations including personal and private or nonprofit business ventures, or they may accept second jobs that demand time away from the work of the position of appointment or limit program involvement. Such time and energy away from work may either require the actual physical absence of the employee or may divert, or be perceived as diverting, the employee from full and earnest performance of duties. Examples include, but are not limited to stores, nurseries, real estate firms, farms, commission services, and contract services. Such involvement may also be financial in nature. These financial investments may be in companies that might benefit from doing business with ACES or the Universities it represents or may compete with businesses that do business with the ACES or the Universities it represents.

A total commitment is expected from each professional employee holding a full-time position with ACES. Any ACES employee who engages in a personal or private business or accepts a second job with an outside organization must meet with their immediate supervisor, taking the steps to determine if there is a possible conflict of interest or commitment. Any staff member employed by an outside organization must be off probation

### **7.5 Use of System Services and Resources**

ACES employees have access to services and resources necessary to conduct their job assignment. Opportunities exist to utilize these services and resources for the employee's personal gain or what may be perceived as being the employee's personal gain. Examples include, but are not limited to, use of equipment, personal services, telephone services, and letter or other material preparation, computers, and emailing.

ACES employee shall not use any county, state, federal, university, or System service or resource for his/her personal gain. The use by an ACES employee of public services and/or resources for personal gain is strictly prohibited. Extension System—USDA regulations prohibit printing and distribution of proceedings of any organizations even if the subject matter is related to Cooperative Extension areas of work or subject matter.

Government-owned supplies or equipment must not be used for non-governmental purposes. Therefore, all supplies and equipment purchased with Extension funds must be used only to enhance the function and operation of ACES.

### **7.6 Expert Testimony Policy Statement**

It is ACES's position that it should be neutral in litigation among its clientele, and therefore, ACES employees

should not agree to act as expert witnesses in Alabama. When ACES employees are asked to examine an issue that involves several parties with different viewpoints, ACES employees should indicate as soon as possible in the conversation that they will not testify as an expert witness regarding this matter. Furthermore, ACES employees should state that they are required to maintain confidentiality about the situation and will only provide an analysis of the situation to the parties directly involved. Consequently, ACES employees should never provide a copy of their analysis to an attorney or insurance company representative; rather they should direct the representatives to their client for the information from ACES.

When ACES employees are asked to appear as an expert witness in court in Alabama, the employee should decline unless their service as such a witness has been approved by their supervisor. The employee should respond to the request in the following manner: “It is the policy of ACES that staff members should not serve as an expert witness.” Normally testimony will be allowed only if the employee has been appointed as a friend of the court (*juris amici*), by the court.

If a subpoena is issued or a lawyer informs you that a subpoena will be issued, the ACES employee should contact their supervisor who will then contact the respective Associate Director who will contact University Legal Affairs. ACES employees should not encourage the issuance of subpoenas, as this may require the University’s counsel to appear and seek to void the subpoena.

In determining whether an ACES employee should appear, a determination should be made whether the employee is asked to appear as a fact witness or expert witness. Litigants have a greater right to the evidence of fact witnesses. However, when the fundamental reason for seeking the ACES employee’s testimony is his or her expertise, normally the employee should not appear. If the request is made on behalf of a public agency, ACES will be more willing to provide assistance.

When expert testimony is approved, the ACES employee will provide objective, unbiased testimony. ACES employees should carefully follow the instructions of the court and be mindful to avoid discussing the case with the parties litigation without the court’s and the other party’s knowledge. The University may collect reimbursement for the lost time for providing the service, but the ACES employee may not accept any fees personally. Witness fees should be returned to the respective University.

## **7.7 Guidelines for Political Activity**

As citizens, employees of ACES have the full right to actively engage in the political process. However, as a state institution and non-profit organization, ACES must abide by federal and state restrictions regarding the use of its property and facilities for political purposes. While recognizing ACES’s educational mission is fundamental to a democratic society, public trust requires that ACES and its resources not be used to promote partisan political causes and candidates.

The following general guidelines will help employees and administrators understand the boundaries of involvement of ACES in the political process. If you have more specific questions, please contact the Director or 1890 Administrator.

1. Employees may speak and act as individual citizens but must not say or imply that their views are the views of ACES. If there is a chance of confusion whether the employee is speaking for ACES or as an individual, the employee should clarify that he or she is speaking individually.
2. Employee participation in political activities in support of candidates or ballot measures must be only on

their own time and with their own equipment.

3. ACES computing systems and e-mail accounts are provided to employees for business purposes. Broadcasting campaign e-mail from an ACES account or otherwise using e-mail systems in a concerted effort to support a candidate or ballot measure is not permissible.
4. Advocacy on behalf of ACES must be approved through the Governmental Relations Office of the respective University.
5. ACES employees may serve in nominally remunerative local and county elective offices provided the duties and responsibilities of such offices does not interfere with their duties and responsibilities of such offices does not interfere with the proper performance of the duties of such employees to the institution. In such cases, it will be the duty of the employee, before qualifying for such nominally remunerative local or county elective office, to receive the approval of ACES. Such approval will depend only upon the effect of the elective office on the employee's ability to perform his or her ACES duties. However, in no case will such approval carry with it any obligation of Auburn University to support any such candidate. Approval will require a letter of understanding signed by the ACES Director."
6. ACES employees can be appointed to appropriate boards that include local Chambers of Commerce, Board of Education Steering Committees, and other boards and/or advocacy groups that support communities and citizenry engagement.

Provisions governing use of federal property, in addition to the standards indicated above, restrict federal property and equipment from being used for campaign solicitations. Posting of political signs and stickers on equipment or in ACES facilities is not allowed.

Federal law requires equal and fair access to ACES for all candidates. For example, if a candidate or speaker on a particular ballot issue is invited to speak at a program or on campus, opposing candidates and speakers must be provided the same opportunity on the same terms. Not all candidates or speakers may take advantage of the opportunity, but the opportunity must be there nonetheless.

## 7.8 Political Activity

The political activities of Cooperative Extension staff members are governed by federal and state law and university policy. Due to the unique position that staff occupy as a cooperative agency representing federal, state and county governmental agencies, careful judgment must be exercised with regard to political activities. Specific questions or situations related to political activity need to be addressed directly to the Director or 1890 Administrator.

For more information see the links at:

AAMU:

[http://www2.aamu.edu/Hr/hr\\_handbook\\_section\\_2.html](http://www2.aamu.edu/Hr/hr_handbook_section_2.html)

AU:

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/Forms/employment.aspx>

## 7.9 Policy statement

The federal Hatch Act prohibits federal employees from participating in certain types of political and politically

related activities. The Office of General Counsel, USDA has held that employees of the Cooperative Extension Service are not covered by the Hatch Act restriction concerning political activities. However, Cooperative Extension Service employees remain subject to the criminal restraints of the Hatch Act. They are codified in the following sections of U.S. Code, Chapter 18:

594 Intimidation of voters

595 Interference with nominations or elections

598 Coercion by means of relief appropriations

600 Promise of employment or other benefits for political activity

601 Deprivation of employment or other benefits for political activity

604 Solicitation from persons on relief

605 Disclosures of names of people on relief

# **8 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

## **8.1 Performance Management Philosophy**

The overall purpose of the performance management is to build, encourage, and promote the highest form of service that an employee can render and, simultaneously, to provide the employee a rewarding professional career through continuous professional growth. The ACES understands the importance of evaluation and enhancement of an employee's professional development. With their supervisors, employees should develop plans to enhance skills and prepare for continually evolving responsibilities in their positions.

ACES policy requires that all regular employees receive written notification of the supervisor's expectations for future performance, be given feedback at least annually about the supervisor's assessment of the employee's performance compared to those expectations, and be assisted or guided to improve any deficiencies that are identified. Expectations will be communicated through written standards or statements related to assigned responsibilities, and periodic reviews will assess the achievement of these written standards. The evaluation conference should focus on the employee and ensuring that they have at least one hour of face-to-face time; written comments are provided on the evaluation form especially for those that need to enhance their performance levels; and there should be discussion on the professional development of the employee. A mid-year review is encouraged for those in non-tenured faculty roles that include: County Extension Coordinators, UREAs, REAs and Specialists.

The performance evaluation (appraisal) process can improve the employee's job performance by identifying those elements which indicate strengths and those where there is evidence of a need for improvement. The results of the evaluation are useful in that they let the staff member know more definitely how he/she is getting along in the organization, and they provide an opportunity for counseling between supervisors and staff members. This should encourage and promote professional growth and development.

## **8.2 Performance Cycle**

The performance cycle is one calendar year beginning January 1 and ending December 31.

For more information visit:

AAMU:

<http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/pages/forms.aspx>

AU

[http://www.auburn.edu/administration/human\\_resources/compensation/ccp/pm\\_forms.htm](http://www.auburn.edu/administration/human_resources/compensation/ccp/pm_forms.htm)



## **9 EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**

## **9.1 Benefits**

Auburn University Affiliates

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/EmployeeBenefitsPoliciesandProcedures.pdf>

[http://www.auburn.edu/administration/business\\_office/payroll/](http://www.auburn.edu/administration/business_office/payroll/)

Alabama A&M University Affiliates

<http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/benefits/pages/default.aspx>

## **9.2 Leave**

Auburn University Affiliates

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/LeavePolicies.pdf>

Alabama A&M University Affiliates

<http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/benefits/Pages/Leave-Accrual.aspx>

ACES Leave Policy  
December 2014

	AU	AAMU
Annual Leave	Approval in Advance mutual convenience of the department.	Staff members must request Annual Leave at least two (2) weeks in advance to ensure their absence will not interfere with the work of the department or unit.
Sick Leave	Notification prior to the beginning of the scheduled workday; employee assumes full responsibility for notification to supervisor. Supervisor may request written documentation as to circumstances.	Employees must report to their supervisors prior to an absence related to sickness or injury, or at their earliest opportunity, giving the reason for the absence and the expected date of return. Supervisors who have reason to believe that Sick Leave is being abused or claimed under false pretense may require evidence of illness or injury in the form of medical certificates or statements from a physician. In such cases, the department head or supervisor has the option to grant tentative approval of sick leave pending receipt of evidence or to enter "Leave Without Pay" on the time sheet until satisfied that the absence was due to illness or injury. Submission of a Personnel Action Form as posted on the Human Resources website to the Office of Human Resources is also required to affect the status of "Leave Without Pay." Evidence of abuse of Sick Leave is grounds for disciplinary action. Failure to communicate with the supervisor for three (3) consecutive days of absence will be considered job abandonment. The positions may then be considered vacant and action will be initiated to recruit replacement.
Court and Jury Duty	Employees will be granted leave with pay when legally required to attend court when summoned for jury duty. Evidence of attendance (including applicable dates and time of service) in court is required before payment by the University. This documentation should be attached to the HR-8 form. Employees are expected to return to work if released from court prior to the end of their scheduled work day. Reasonable travel time will be allowed. Need court notice in advance.	Staff members who are selected for terms as jury members will be given administrative leave. Prospective jurors must furnish to department heads and/or supervisors the official statement from the court which assigns them jury duty and which indicates the days of service. Payments received for services as jury members are the property of employees serving on juries. The regular pay of employees assigned jury duty will not be affected while they are administrative leave.
Poll Workers	Alabama Act 2002-412 requires employers to grant unpaid leave to employees who serve as poll workers. Advance notice is required. Employees may request annual leave to work as poll workers. It is preferred that employees exercise their right to vote before the work day begins or after the work day ends.	Alabama Act 2002-412 requires employers to grant unpaid leave to employees who serve as poll workers. Advance notice is required. It is preferred, that employees vote prior to the start of the work day or after the end of the work day. Employees may be granted up to two hours of administrative leave to vote if conditions are such that it will create a hardship, before or after working hours.
Military Leave	Advance notice is required; Copy of orders is required	Except from 5.7.1 Advance notice of military service is required, unless the military prevents such notice or it is otherwise impossible or unreasonable. Notice should be provided as soon as possible to the employee's supervisor and to Human Resources.
Funeral Leave	*Approval in Advance	Listed Below
Professional Scheduling	Accountable to immediate supervisor in advance	Accountable to immediate supervisor in advance
FMLA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Birth of a child and to care for the newborn</li> <li>b. Placement of a child through adoption or foster care and to care for the newly placed child</li> <li>c. To care for an employee's seriously ill parent, spouse, or child under the age of 18. (A parent may also request time for the serious medical illness of a child who is older than 18 and "incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical condition.")</li> <li>d. When the employee's own serious health condition makes the employee unable to work</li> <li>e. A covered family member's active duty or call to active duty in the Armed Forces (spouse, son, daughter or parent).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Birth of a child and to care for the newborn</li> <li>b. Placement of a child through adoption or foster care and to care for the newly placed child</li> <li>c. To care for an employee's seriously ill parent, spouse, or child under the age of 18. (A parent may also request time for the serious medical illness of a child who is older than 18 and "incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical condition.")</li> <li>d. When the employee's own serious health condition makes the employee unable to work</li> <li>e. A covered family member's active duty or call to active duty in the Armed Forces (spouse, son, daughter or parent)</li> </ul>

	f. An employee is also eligible for a leave up to 26 weeks in a 12-month period to care for a service member who is injured or ill, with the injury or illness being sustained while on active military duty. Need reasonable notice.	f. An employee is also eligible for a leave up to 26 weeks in a 12-month period to care for a service member who is injured or ill, with the injury or illness being sustained while on active military duty. Need reasonable notice.
Leave without pay	Must be approved in advance by Asst VP for Human Resources; Leave Without Pay - Leave without pay (LWOP) has three major categories: a) Extended sick leave without pay. See section 5.8.3. b) Voluntary leave without pay, which refers to employees who have exhausted applicable paid leave time, but who, for approved reasons, are not immediately returning to work.	Leave without pay is mentioned in Section 5.2 and FMLA Procedure 6.7. Section 5.2: Attendance and Timekeeping: Annual leave hours shall be taken for hours of work missed or the employee shall be on leave without pay for such hours. FMLA Procedure 6.7: An employee must use any accrued Annual and Sick Leave during an approved FMLA leave. If an employee's accrued Annual and Sick Leave is exhausted but the employee is still eligible for additional leave under the FMLA, the remainder of the employee's FMLA leave will be unpaid.
Job abandonment	When an employee has unreported unscheduled/unauthorized absence for work for three (3) or more consecutive days,	1. An employee who has not received prior written authorization to be absent from work for sick, annual, compensatory, or an alternate form of authorized leave at Alabama A&M University and is unable to report to work at the designated time is required to notify his or her immediate supervisor prior to the beginning of his or her shift on the date of an unscheduled/unauthorized absence from work. Employees who fail to report to work for three (3) or more consecutive business days without notifying his or her immediate supervisor of the absence at any point during the absence will be
*Funeral leave:	Immediate family member includes spouse, son, daughter, parents, stepchild, stepparent, brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister, half-brother, half-sister, father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandchild, grandparent, and grandparent-in-law. Eligible employees may be granted paid leave up to three working days for the funeral of an immediate family member. One additional day may be granted for travel purposes when the funeral is more than 100 miles from the regularly assigned work site or two additional days (i.e., five days total) when the funeral is more than 200 miles distant from the work site. Mileage will be determined using the University travel regulations	5.9.7: Bereavement Leave Full time and regular staff members who are in active work status (e.g. regularly reporting to work at the time of the request for leave) shall, upon written request, be granted up to three (3) workdays of Administrative Leave (bereavement leave) upon the death of an immediate family member as defined in section 5.5.1. These workdays must be consecutive, and the period of time off must encompass the day of the funeral. If additional days of absences are necessary, employees may request sick leave, indicating the extenuating circumstances. "Immediate family member includes spouse, spousal equivalent, children, step-children, children-in-law, parents, step-parents, parents-in-law, brothers, brothers-in-law, sisters, sisters-in-law, grandparents, grandparents-in-law, and grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and first and second cousins. Other relationships are excluded unless there is a guardian relationship."

Outlook Calendar -- Shared with immediate supervisor - should show times and dates employee is on leave and professional scheduling

UREA/REA -- Must share work calendar to the Admin Support Associate and the CECs in the counties which they serve

# 10 FINANCIAL POLICIES

## 10.1 Budgeting Process

The unified budgeting process will include and account for all anticipated ACES revenues and expenditures of both AAMU and AU from all sources (i.e., county, municipal, AAMU state funding, AU state funding, 1890 federal funding, grants, contracts, and other non-appropriated sources) in the development of the System's budget. The following steps will be included in that process:

1. The ACES Budget Advisory Committee consisting of representation from both AAMU and AU will meet and recommend budget guidelines which will be forwarded to the Director and 1890 Administrator.
2. If budget guidelines include salary increases based on merit as a recommendation, the Administrative Team should agree on how the salary increases will be administered.
3. The Administrative Team should agree on which vacant positions will be funded.
4. The Administrative Team should determine how operation and maintenance costs will be shared between AAMU and AU.
5. If budget guidelines include increases/decreases in maintenance allocations, the Administrative Team should agree on how the increases/decreases will be distributed.
6. The proposed budget will be reviewed by the Associate Directors, Programs prior to its submission to the Director and the 1890 Administrator.
7. The Director and the 1890 Administrator will approve the System Budget and submit it to the Presidents of AAMU and AU.
8. The Presidents of AAMU and AU approve the System Budget which becomes operational on the designated date.
9. Final approval must be received from the Board of Trustees of both Universities.

## 10.2 Account Responsibility

The Director of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System is the CEO, and in concert with the 1890 Administrator is ultimately responsible individual for the fiscal operation of the System.

ACES employees noted as responsible person for a financial account (typically, county extension coordinators, assistant directors, and project principal investigators), are responsible for periodic reviews of each account assigned to them. These reviews should ensure that all expenditures are an appropriate use of System resources.

Accounts maintained and managed by the System must be for the sole purpose of promoting, supporting, and/or enhancing legitimate System educational programs, projects, events or activities. The use of funds placed in such accounts is subject only to the decisions of the professional staff and conditioned only by any legitimate parameters stated and agreed to by System personnel and donors, funding organizations, and/or contributors.

Accounts to receive and disburse funds by non-profit groups, either legally incorporated or loosely knit ones, used primarily for the benefit of its members are not allowable System accounts. These accounts should be maintained and managed by duly elected or appointed representatives of the group. This applies even though the activities of such groups relate to and may be supportive of the System's educational programs.

Examples:

- Accounts devoted to the support of private non-profit functions such as local fairs, community/county fund raising events, civic functions and the like.

Accounts to facilitate the activities of farm organizations, TVA Resource Management/ UTD associations, commodity groups, marketing associations, bull and boar testing stations, homemakers' clubs and other organized fund-raising activities by adult or youth groups.

Accounts have been established at Auburn University for each county office. Monies appropriated by county commissions and/or local communities in support of the county extension program are deposited into this account. Appropriate operational expenditures to run the county program are charged against this account. The County Extension Coordinator has responsibility of managing these accounts.

Each county office also maintains funds in a local checking account and may have funds in savings accounts and/or certificates of deposit. The County Extension Coordinator also has responsibility for managing these accounts. Please refer to the County Financial Transaction Manual for additional information on the management of these accounts.

### **10.3 Spending Policies**

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System has a fiduciary responsibility to insure System resources are used responsibly and that individuals do not incur inappropriate or excessive expenses, or gain financially from the System. ACES employees are expected to follow the Business Office policies of the institution processing the document (travel voucher, purchase requisitions, etc.). Information regarding the Spending Policies at both Universities can be found at the following links:

AAMU:

[http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/irpsp/sponsoredprograms/Documents/Travel\\_Request\\_Form.pdf](http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/irpsp/sponsoredprograms/Documents/Travel_Request_Form.pdf)

AU:

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/SpendingPoliciesandProcedures.pdf>

These spending policies include general spending guidelines, as well as information on preferred vendor contract, professional service contracts, purchase orders, honorariums, etc.

### **10.4 Preferred Vendor Contracts**

Both AAMU and AU have contracts in place for particular items, such as computers, printers, office supplies, etc. ACES employees are expected to utilize these contracts when purchasing items. The source of funding will dictate which University's contract to follow. More information on these contracts can be found at:

AAMU:

<http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/business-and-finance/property/Documents/Property%20Management%20Manual.pdf>

or by contacting the AAMU Purchasing Department @ 256-372-5227.

AU:

[http://www.auburn.edu/administration/business\\_office/pps/contracts.html](http://www.auburn.edu/administration/business_office/pps/contracts.html)

### **10.5 Purchasing Cards**

Purchasing Cards are issued through an Auburn University program. Cards are available to all ACES employees. The Auburn University Purchasing Card was designed to ease the purchase of relatively small dollar items (un-

der \$2500). Use of the card is not, however, intended to replace the bid process where that process is appropriate. Cardholders should be aware of and sensitive to the State Bid Law.

Additional information on purchasing cards policies and procedures can be found at the following link:  
<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/PurchasingCardPolicy.pdf>

Submission of purchasing card documentation (receipts, etc.) should be routed through the appropriate supervisory channel.

## **10.6 Travel**

All official travel should be prudently planned so that the best interests of ACES are served at the most reasonable cost. Anyone traveling on ACES business is expected to exercise the same economy that a practical person would exercise when traveling on personal business. Excessive costs or unjustifiable costs are not acceptable and will not be reimbursed. The individual requesting reimbursement from ACES is responsible for insuring that his/her expense and related reimbursement request complies with all applicable policies, is properly authorized, and is supported with necessary receipts and documentation.

A 'Request for Authorization to Travel' (R.A.T.) is required for out-of-state travel. If you frequently travel over the Stateline to meet with Extension colleagues in FL, GA, MS, TN, you may request, in writing, a letter from the Associate Director authorizing continuous approval. Please provide a description and justification of travel associated with Extension programming that involves neighboring states. A copy of the letter will be placed in your permanent personnel file.

A 'Request for Authorization to Travel' (R.A.T.) is not required for in-state travel outside your assigned region. Please be creative in generating resources to cover travel in and out of your region. Examples include: charging a cost recovery fee sufficient to cover travel expenses, including travel expenses in grants or contracts that support programming, asking the entity requesting the program to cover travel costs, and requesting travel assistance from campus units.

While policies are consistent at both Universities, procedures for travel reimbursement may vary slightly between the two Universities; therefore, ACES employees should follow the travel policies of the University in which they are affiliated. The appropriate policies and procedures can be found at the following links:

AAMU:

AU:

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/TravelPolicies.pdf>

## **10.7 Equipment Inventory**

Property and Inventory control policies and procedures apply to all moveable equipment or property acquired by ACES costing \$5,000 or more, with a useful life of more than one year. Property acquired under a contract, grant, or sub-award, either by direct charge or in part as required for cost sharing, as well as property furnished to ACES by any federal sponsor, is subject to the sponsor's property management requirements as well as OMB circular A-110 and FAR part 45.



A physical inventory of equipment is performed at least once every two years. At the scheduled time, AU Property Services will provide a current inventory report, which must be verified, signed, and returned within 30 working days. Newly purchased items are placed on the inventory system by location from the purchase orders and vendor vouchers.

Inventory transfers and/or disposals are to be reported to the ACES Business Office by property control number or serial number, with description of items, giving location transferred to and from or the method of disposal. Based on the information provided, appropriate updates will be made to the inventory system.

For additional information on Auburn University's policies and procedures related to equipment inventory, please see:

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/MoveableEquipmentPolicy.pdf>

## 10.8 Guiding Principles for Revenue Generation

Programming is the “product” that ACES provides to enhance our stakeholder's quality of life. The federal, state, and county partnership provides resources for ACES to develop and deliver programming. ACES will be more successful in fulfilling our responsibilities and addressing stakeholder expectations when we collaborate, with trust and respect for our colleagues and partners, to augment our resources through revenue generation. The term “revenue generation” encompasses fee-for-service activity, grants and contracts, match on grants and contracts, and gifts.

### Principles:

- The purpose of revenue generation is to bring new resources into ACES to enhance our programming ability.
- Revenue generation must be consistent with mission of ACES.
- Regional programming and activities are encouraged.

There are two program categories:

1. Programs offered to clients at no charge. These programs/services are fundamental to the mission of ACES.
2. Programs for which clients are charged to participate. These programs provide private good value to the participants beyond the public good value created. The charge may include fees for variable expenses, tuition for development and delivery, costs for certification, and fees for service.
  - The decision to hold an activity and its registration fee should be based on programming and client needs and not solely on its revenue potential.
  - Provisions must be in place to reduce or waive fees with individuals, families, or organizations based on special circumstances.
  - The mechanics of cost recovery should be simple to minimize administrative cost. The budgeting tool, is recommended to generate cost estimates and revenue sharing discussion.
  - Grants and contracts may determine revenue generation or sharing for specific programs.

Sharing of revenue between ACES units will reflect the contributions of each party. If one party assumes all the costs and risks, that party is entitled to all the revenue.

## **Sharing Revenue:**

If revenue is to be shared between two or more parties, the following guidelines are recommended:

- Pay variable expenses first. If revenue is less than variable expenses, then split the revenue in proportion to the share of variable expenses provided.
- Pay fixed costs next. If the remaining revenue is less than fixed costs, then split the revenue above variable expenses in proportion to the share of fixed costs provided.
- Pay travel next. If the remaining revenue is less than travel, then split the revenue above fixed costs in proportion to the share of travel provided.
- Split the remaining revenue above travel at a pre-negotiated rate, which could be determined in proportion to the share of salary provided by each party, as equal partners, or by other agreed upon terms.

## **10.9 Risk Management - Loss or Theft of System Owned Property**

System employees are expected to take reasonable precautionary measures to safeguard System property in their custody. Money, publications for sale, cameras, projectors, and similar items should not be left in unlocked vehicles, or on top of desks overnight or when away from the office during the day. System employees may be required to pay for property lost or stolen in cases where they have failed to follow the notification procedure as soon as loss or theft has been discovered and/or when negligence occurs.

When a loss or theft of System property is discovered, all of the known facts and circumstances should be furnished immediately to the appropriate local law enforcement agency (city police, state office, or sheriff's office). Information regarding the loss should be forwarded to the ACES Business Office, who will be responsible for reporting the loss to Risk Management.

## **10.10 Gifts and Non-Cash Donations**

It is the policy of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System that individuals are not to accept money, gifts or donations of non-cash items without prior approval of the ACES Business Office. If a person or company wishes to donate items, please provide the ACES Business Office with specific details including the name and address of donor, description, expected use, condition and the estimated market value of the item. You will be notified when approval been granted. After official approval, the ACES Business Office will complete the appropriate paperwork to add the donated item to the System inventory.

## **10.11 Other Agency or Company Requests**

ACES employees, particularly County Extension Coordinators, Specialist, and Agents are often requested by representatives of other agencies to complete questionnaires, sign project proposals, supply mailing lists, and endorse programs. ACES employees are not free to sign documents, complete questionnaires, endorse programs, supply mailing lists or agree to devote significant blocks of time to another agency or companies unless it is in accord with the provisions of an understanding agreed to by the ACES administration and the other agencies, in advance of the request. Therefore, ACES employees should not automatically respond to questionnaires or sign documents from other agencies and organizations without administrative clearance from the ACES Business Office, which serves as the authorized signature for ACES.

## **10.12 Record Retention**

Maintaining records is an on-going problem because of space limitations. Guidelines have been established for us to follow dealing with the length of time records must be maintained. A general rule of thumb is the current year's records plus the prior 4 years; however, the general records schedule for Alabama Universities provides

detailed guidance on several items and should be followed as appropriate. For various records schedule explanation and retention schedule visit the link at:

[http://www.lib.auburn.edu/archive/records\\_schedule.htm](http://www.lib.auburn.edu/archive/records_schedule.htm)

# **11 SALARY ADMINISTRATION**

## 11.1 Philosophy

In order to attract, retain, and motivate well-qualified employees, the objectives of ACES' salary administration program are to accomplish the following:

- a) Set salaries that are equitable among all employees considering each individual's responsibilities; knowledge, skills and abilities; and performance in the work place.
- b) Set salary ranges for all jobs which, in the aggregate, are as nearly competitive with salaries paid for like jobs by other employers in appropriate geographic areas, to the extent permitted by available funds.
- c) Ensure that salary decisions provide equity across all employee subgroups identified by race, gender, ethnic background, national origin, religion, age, disability, or veteran status.

## 11.2 Procedures

When recommending pay grades, the ACES Business Office officials on the campuses of both Alabama A&M and Auburn University, use generally accepted principles and methods for collecting and interpreting market data, ranking jobs according to like or different characteristics, verifying and scoring evaluative factor information, and classifying according to general standards. New or revised job descriptions, pay grade recommendations and supporting documentation will be provided to the appropriate department for all positions.

Salary administration for Auburn University affiliated ACES employees classified as Administrative Professional or University Staff fall under the guidelines of Auburn University Human Resources.

For more information refer to the Auburn University Personnel Manual at:

[http://www.auburn.edu/administration/human\\_resources/manual/sect03.htm](http://www.auburn.edu/administration/human_resources/manual/sect03.htm)

Salary administration for Alabama A&M University affiliated ACES employees classified as Administrative Professional or University Staff fall under the guidelines of Alabama A&M University Human Resources.

For more information on the Alabama A&M University salary schedule, refer to section 3.4.5 of the Personnel Manual at: <http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/Documents/Staff%20Handbook%20-Master%20as%20of%20December%201,%202015.pdf>

### Procedures for Determining Individual Salaries

Individual salaries will be compatible with the salary range for the assigned grade, the formal education, and prior, related work experience that the individual brings to the job and the salaries of current employees similarly situated. Formal education and applicable work experience will be determined by review of available employee application forms, resumes, and the ACES Business Office records.

New Hires for AU affiliated AP/US - Using the applicant's application form and resume, the ACES Business Office at Auburn in conjunction with the AU Office Human Resources will review the selected candidate's work history and education and will recommend an appropriate salary. This will be the "referral" salary provided to the selecting supervisor prior to an offer of employment. In an effort to identify any potential salary inequities prior to establishing new salary recommendations or referrals, the Business Office in conjunction with the appropriate campus officials will consider such factors as the salaries of other employees in the ACES having the same grade and similar jobs within the division, or campus wide, as appropriate.

New Hires for AAMU- Using the applicant's application form and resume, the ACES Business Office at AAMU will review the selected candidate's work history and education and will recommend an appropriate salary. This will be the "referral" salary provided to the selecting supervisor prior to an offer of employment. In an effort to

identify any potential salary inequities prior to establishing new salary recommendations or referrals, the Business Office in conjunction with the appropriate campus officials will consider such factors as the salaries of other employees in the ACES having the same grade and similar jobs within the division, or campus wide, as appropriate.

### **Guidelines for establishing annual starting salaries for non-tenure track faculty: County Extension Coordinators, Regional Extension Agents, and Extension Specialists**

1. Hiring supervisors are to use 'Starting Salary Worksheet for REA, CEA, CEC, and Specialist' to calculate an initial starting salary. The ACES Business Office will provide this worksheet at the start of each fiscal year.
2. Hiring supervisors will work with ACES Administration to determine a starting salary consistent with, but not to exceed, a cohort of ACES employees in the same job classification with similar years of experience.
3. Depending on related professional experience and qualifications of the new hire, hiring supervisors and ACES Administration should negotiate annual starting salaries that offer a promotional opportunity rather than a salary at the highest possible level.
4. ACES Administration provides final approval of all salaries.

Interim County Extension Coordinator-When a CEC position becomes vacant, an agent within the county or other ACES personnel is temporarily appointed as the interim or acting CEC by the Assistant Director of County Operations until that position is filled. No other qualifications (i.e., master's degree, MAP, etc.) are required to be appointed as interim CEC. Interim CEC is a temporary assignment. He/she will receive a salary adjustment of \$2500. This will be treated as a temporary salary increase and the individual's salary will revert to his/her prior salary when the position is permanently filled.

County Extension Coordinators and Regional Extension Agents who earn a master's degree within five years after completing a probationary period will receive a salary increase of \$4,000.

County Extension Coordinators and Regional Extension Agents will not be compensated for advanced degrees beyond the master's degree.

Extension Specialists who earn a doctorate within eight years after completing a probationary period will receive a salary increase of \$12,000.

All salary compensation plan adjustments will be reviewed each year during budget preparation and implemented on October 1. Salary adjustments will become effective at the start of the fiscal year.

## **11.3 Guidelines**

The following guidelines apply to individual salaries:

- a) For all ACES employees classified as Administrative Professional or University Staff all employees will be paid a rate equal to at least the minimum of the range for their job grades.
- b) For all ACES employees classified as Administrative Professional or University Staff salaries above the range maximum may be approved by the Provost or Vice Presidents in special cases, as required.
- c) Salary decisions will be based on a consideration of the salaries of other employees in the unit having the

same grade or similar jobs (in both the same and related job families) within the unit or campus wide, as appropriate.

- d) Salary offers to candidates for selection or recommendations for new salaries for current employees will not be communicated to individuals until final approval is received by the respective Vice President or Dean upon concurrence by the Director of ACES and the President/Provost.
- e) All salary decisions are subject to the availability of current and continued funding.

## **11.4 Other AAMU Compensation Policies**

## **11.5 Other AU Compensation Policies**

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/PermanentBaseSalaryIncreasePolicy.pdf>

## **11.6 Acting/Interim Administrative Appointments**

In order to promptly cover vacancies in a unit's senior supervisory positions and pending recruitment and selection efforts, it is occasionally necessary to give subordinate employees "acting" or "interim" appointments. Acting/interim appointments may be for a specific term or on a month-by-month basis. Employees who are given an appointment to a higher grade may receive a temporary increase in compensation for the newly assigned responsibilities. When the acting/interim period is completed, the salary adjustment will be removed. These administrative appointments will be approved by the respective Vice President/Provost. Any salary adjustment greater than 10% of current salary for acting/interim appointments will require the approval of the President, unless more than a 10% adjustment is required to take the employee to the minimum at the salary grade.

## **11.7 Administrative reassignment**

Should an individual tenured faculty member have their administrative appointment removed, appropriate university policy will be followed.

## **11.8 Responsibility**

The ACES Business Office develops, administers, and interprets the ACES compensation policy in cooperation with the Human Resources Departments of the two institutions.

## **11.9 Salary Increases**

Both the Director and 1890 Administrator may authorize merit increases for System employees based on the employee's performance during the previous year, and written guidelines established by the Presidents of Alabama A&M University and Auburn University. These adjustments are based solely upon the job performance appraisal ratings for the past year and dictated by the presidents of Alabama A&M University and Auburn University. Merit pay is used to reward successful job performance by employees in the organization.

### **Procedures**

Supervisors will recommend whether an employee should receive any increase and, if so, the level of the increase. Increases will be based upon the ACES Budget Committee's guidelines. Increases are awarded within the constraints of the merit budget and other guidelines issued annually by AAMU and AU. Salary adjustments for job family promotions are based on university guidelines for AP/US classifications and on ACES Administration for non-departmental non-tenured faculty positions for career ladder promotions.

Supervisors are responsible for completing performance evaluations for all regular and continuing term employ-

ees on an annual basis. The completed performance evaluation will be the basis for the recommended award. Supervisors are responsible for open communication with each employee and accurately documenting job related factors that determine annual merit. Supervisors will follow the procedures outlined in this policy as administered by the ACES Business Office.

When approved through the annual budget process, actual salary adjustment will not occur until October 1.



# **12 EMPLOYEE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

## 12.1 Philosophy

Learning is expanding our ability to produce the results we truly desire in life. Learning together is continually expanding our capacity to create the future for ACES. Based on this definition, both professional and personal development is learning, and is not distinct, one from the other.

People grow both in their person and their profession as they learn. Individuals learning how to learn builds the capacity for the ACES organization, and is fundamental in being healthy, viable, and client centered. Continuous learning creates staff who can change, generate new solutions to recurring problems, do something they were never able to do, perceive the world and their relationship to it, and extend their capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life.

ACES aspires to be a learning organization, and one that empowers the individual to take responsibility for continuous learning through personal and professional development. Learning is not defined by structured activities.

## 12.2 Organizational Implications

- ACES will support individual learning opportunities and supply organizational learning opportunities. This is congruent with our philosophy, and assures the organization that individuals are receiving learning opportunities needed for strategic improvement.
- ACES may assist with the financial cost of some learning opportunities by providing financial assistance and/or time off with pay, as agreed upon with their supervisor. In addition to this support, staff will be encouraged to use other resources, such as tuition grants and personal resources.
- Because ACES values learning, there is no need for a policy requiring graduate credits. The number of days of in-service education or hours of credit are irrelevant when learning is the central value.
- Because we value empowerment, there is no need for monitoring credits earned or days of in-service education attended.
- Learning is not only receiving new information. Teaching is not only information delivery. And in-service education is not the only way to learn. (Learning is expanding our ability to produce the results we truly desire.)
- We must live this philosophy if we are to be recognized as a learning organization.
- Personal and professional development (i.e., learning) is for all staff.

## 12.3 Policy Statement

Everyone will mutually agree to a Personal Professional Development Plan with his or her supervisor.

## 12.4 Procedures

The format of the plan must meet the need of the individual staff member and the supervisor. The format can be a form, outline, narrative, mind map, process map, or graphic representation of any form.

The elements of the plan should include:

- Staff person's learning need(s)
- Specific learning plan for meeting the need(s)
- A method for recording and evaluating progress

## 12.5 Examples of System Supplied Learning Opportunities

- Learning/Teaching Systems In-service education
- Annual training conferences and computer courses
- Conferences/workshops/seminars

Examples of System supported, not supplied, learning opportunities. These can be non-structured or structured, active or passive, group or individual, formal or informal learning opportunities:

- Study groups
- Extension association meetings
- NELD program
- Mentors
- Visiting companies/organizations
- Fellowships (i.e., Kellogg)
- Volunteer work
- Audio/video tapes
- Synthesizing the work of others
- Journal writing
- Community building groups
- Non-extension association meetings
- Internships
- Computer networks
- Conferences/workshops/ seminars
- Community college classes
- Reading
- Time spent in reflection
- Building own model or adapting
- Problem solving teams
- Graduate credit courses
- Continued education

ACES is committed to enabling all professional staff to reach their fullest potential both as individuals and as members of the Extension system. By supporting staff members in professional growth, both job performance and personal satisfaction are increased.

All employees are encouraged at all times to upgrade their professional competency. This is accomplished through participation in in-service training opportunities and advanced study programs. A significant phase of staff development is keeping staff members informed of professional improvement opportunities and counseling with them in developing individual professional improvement plans. Relevant training and retraining must be provided for its personnel at all levels, if ACES is to remain a viable force in effecting desirable change among diverse audiences. All subject matter, in-service training offerings will be directly related to Priority Program Teams, other in-service training offerings will relate to organizational development, professionalism, communications, civil rights, diversity, equal employment opportunity, computer technology, administrative services, human resources, social media, etc.

The interests of ACES are best served through the acquisition and development of skilled and highly trained employees who have a clear understanding of the requirements of their jobs, the best methods of performing them,

and the importance of their roles in relation to the goals and objectives of the organizational element. Employees are expected to participate in professional improvement programs that will contribute to the overall objectives of the ACES.

ACES is obligated to provide a program of training and development which improves organizational effectiveness and productivity by enhancing the knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies brought to the position by the employee and necessary for work related success, individual growth, and career development. Supervisors and employees should work with the ACES Business Office to ensure that adequate development opportunities are being offered for employees.

Employees are also encouraged to utilize the professional development opportunities offered on the campuses of AAMU and AU.

## **12.6 Professional Improvement Benefit**

All non-departmental faculty have the opportunity to use the professional improvement benefit. This may be granted to a staff member to engage in graduate work, special studies, or other activities considered to improve usefulness to the System. The use of the benefit is not awarded automatically but will depend upon the approval of the supervisor. Departmental faculty at AAMU and AU will use the sabbatical leave of their affiliated university. For more information on sabbatical leave, see the employee handbook for either AAMU or AU at:

AAMU affiliated ACES employees:

[AAMU Faculty Handbook, 5.11 Leave of Absence, G. Sabbatical Leave, page 86](#)<sup>7</sup>

AU affiliated ACES employees:

[http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/announcements/2012-9-19\\_Professional%20Improvement%20Leave.html](http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/announcements/2012-9-19_Professional%20Improvement%20Leave.html)

After completing one year of employment with ACES, an employee may be allowed to enroll in a maximum of six semester hours of credit courses per semester. Special consideration and approval for exceptions may be granted by the Director or 1890 Administrator.

The benefit should be used for employees to pursue any of the following activities:

- Graduate work related to job assignment.
- Work in other areas may be approved by the Director in special cases.
- Regional Extension short courses or other similar training activities.

Organized study involving field trips or visits to other areas to observe new methods, research, or innovations in agriculture or human sciences when taken through approved programs and when study may be determined by the Director to be of benefit to the System and to improve the performance of the individual.

The request for the professional improvement benefit along with a copy of the plan of study must be submitted to the supervisor for approval prior to enrolling in formal coursework.

### **Tuition Assistance**

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Employees may take advantage of tuition assistance programs as offered by their affiliated University. For further information on tuition assistance programs see the employee handbook for either AAMU or AU.

To obtain further information on taking university courses visit the website at:

AAMU: [AAMU Staff Handbook, 6.4.2 Tuition Grants, pages 52-53](#)<sup>8</sup>

AU:

[http://www.auburn.edu/administration/human\\_resources/hrd/educ\\_opp.htm](http://www.auburn.edu/administration/human_resources/hrd/educ_opp.htm)

To find out more details about the Employee Educational Improvement Benefit, go to this site:

[sites.auburn.edu/academic/education/employeesAsStudents](http://sites.auburn.edu/academic/education/employeesAsStudents)

## **12.7 Participation in Professional Associations**

Federal regulations prohibit the use of Smith-Lever funds or respective matching funds to pay an individual's membership fees to professional organizations. In accordance with this federal regulation, Alabama Cooperative Extension System funds may not be used to pay an individual's memberships fees in professional organizations/associations of any kind; however, if an employee has gift funds available, they may be utilized to offset the associated fee. However, the ACES will support an individual's participation in professional association meetings related to their fields of training or position of assignment. Attendance at professional meetings will be subject to supervisor approval, which will include a review of the employee's role at the meeting, participation in other meetings, and the effect of attendance on the employee's programs. Request for approval should be submitted at least 30 days in advance. Travel policies of the respective University will be followed in relation to designated travel time and reimbursement.

## **12.8 Support to Professional Associations**

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) will provide an annual allotment to facilitate professional development of ACES professionals. Contingent upon available funding, to each of the following six Extension-related associations: Extension Support Personnel Association (ESPA), Alabama Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AEAFCS), Alabama Association of Extension 4-H Agents (ALAE-4HA), Alabama Association of County Agricultural Agents and Specialists (AACAAAS), Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP) and the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service Employees Organization (ACESEO). The allotment amount will be determined by the ACES Administrative Team each year. The allotted funds should only be used to provide professional development opportunities to their members. Allotments will only be made available after the association has submitted and received approval for their requested budget and proposed use of the funds, to include detailed statements of professional development opportunities provided through the use of these funds.

## **12.9 Other Job-Related Activities**

Academic staff may receive official time to participate in special assignments such as County Agents Kitchen, national assignments, Alabama Family and Consumer Sciences Association, Epsilon Sigma Phi, etc., on an individual basis.

Official time and travel requests need to have prior approval through appropriate channels and are to be justified

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/Documents/AAMU%20Staff%20Handbook%20-%20September%2016%202011.pdf>

in view of benefit to the Extension programs. Approval of requests for official time will depend on the availability of funds.

# **13 CIVIL RIGHTS/EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System is committed to ensuring that its programs are available to all people and that there are equal opportunities of employment without regard to race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, sexual orientation or national origin. This commitment includes involving local residents in the determination of program content and program implementation, as well as equal treatment in such areas as recruitment, hiring, professional development, promotion, and salary determination.

Every staff member is expected to exhibit a strong commitment to and compliance with civil rights legislation.

### **13.1 Overview of Federal Civil Rights Legislation**

Civil Rights laws require nondiscrimination in employment decisions and in the delivery of programs, services, or activities by any recipient of federal funds. It is not necessary to understand every aspect of these laws; however, it is necessary to become familiar with key components of the laws and terms that describe how we ensure compliance.

### **13.2 County and State Civil Rights Plans and Responsibilities**

ACES requires the development of comprehensive civil rights and affirmative action plans at the state and county levels. These written plans serve as guides for insuring equal opportunities in employment and Extension educational programs. Affirmative action plans are written at the county level in conjunction with the Plan of Work. Every staff member is expected to exhibit a strong commitment to implementing civil rights strategies at the county, regional, and state levels.

The ACES will conduct ongoing training to assist staff in developing plans to reach affirmative action goals. Periodic county program reviews will include evaluation of civil rights and affirmative action compliance

### **13.3 Affirmative Action in Programs**

Affirmative Action should be a part of our day-to-day planning and delivery as it ensures that our programs are “serving all Alabamians.” Affirmative actions or steps could include:

- Evaluation of past participation in Extension programs and development of goals for reaching a more diverse audience.

Making sure POWs advisory councils and planning committees are representative of the population of the county.

- Holding meetings at various times and locations.
- Utilizing assistance and advice of members of underrepresented groups.
- Public Notification Plan

All staff will follow public notification procedures to insure that the public is aware of ACES’ nondiscriminatory position. Staff must:

1. Display the nondiscriminatory poster and Justice for All.
2. All stationery, newsletters, and news articles must contain the nondiscriminatory statement: Educational programs of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.
3. Promotional materials, photos, and other graphics will portray the diversity of Extension clientele.
4. Extension cannot conduct programs with any organization or group that excludes any person because of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, sexual orientation, or disability.



5. All Extension-sponsored groups must sign a statement of nondiscrimination on an annual basis.
6. The multicultural committee leads efforts on training and guidance on diversity solutions in the workplace.

### **13.4 All Reasonable Efforts**

“All reasonable efforts” consist of a series of approaches that are required of Extension staff to solicit participation of the underrepresented group. These are used in addition to affirmative action procedures, and are required when programs do not meet balanced participation requirements. Some situations that call for “all reasonable efforts” include the following:

- a) an Extension sponsored or assisted group that does not reflect the racial, gender, or socioeconomic composition of the target community,
- b) advisory or decision-making groups that do not reflect the composition of the potential audience, and
- c) program participation in which certain groups are consistently underrepresented.

It is the responsibility of each staff member to implement the steps necessary to attain the goal of balanced involvement in planning, membership, and participation. Leaders in Extension-sponsored or assisted organizations must show good faith in regard to affirmative action to continue receiving Extension support. Written records of letters, phone calls, and visits will be used as documentation that “all reasonable efforts” are being implemented. A file of the documented efforts labeled “All Reasonable Efforts” will be kept in the office. The steps in “all reasonable efforts” must be repeated and documented until balanced participation is met and maintained.

Examples of “all reasonable efforts” may include:

1. Use media outlets that target the underrepresented group to announce programs and events.
2. Develop announcements, flyers, and posters to be placed in locations frequented by the underrepresented group.
3. Write personal letters to and contact members of the underrepresented group to encouraging their participation.
4. Make personal contact with leaders from the underrepresented group to seek their assistance in encouraging participation.
5. Seek assistance from other community groups in encouraging participation.
6. Parity of participation

Parity of participation is reached when the percent distribution of participation by race and gender is proportionate to, or within reasonable limits of their respective percent distribution in the potential recipient audience/population. This percent is a guide for us to evaluate our success in reaching a diverse audience and should be considered as a minimum goal.

### **13.5 Equal Employment Opportunity Policy**

ACES is an Equal Employment Opportunity Affirmative Action employer. It is our policy to prohibit discrimination of any type and afford equal employment opportunities to employees and applicants without regard to race, color, gender, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, veteran status, or disability. ACES will conform to the spirit as well as the letter of all applicable laws and regulations. ACES emphasizes the recruitment of minorities, women, disabled individuals, and Vietnam era veterans.

To achieve its mission, ACES strives to develop a workforce that is representative of the diversity of the society. ACES will use good faith efforts to achieve gender and ethnic diversity throughout the workforce.

A major focus of ACES' affirmative action program is the recruitment of qualified minorities and women to all job groups for which there is underutilization based on availability within the relevant labor pool. If utilization within specified job groups falls short of availability, affirmative action goals will be established to specifically address those cases. If an affirmative action goal exists for a vacant position, the ACES Business Office will notify the hiring department. Every effort will be made to work with the department to identify and recruit qualified minority applicants for such positions depending on the specific goal.

The System recognizes, understands and is committed to its legal obligation, based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to:

Provide educational programs, activities, and other services without discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, sexual orientation, veteran status, or disability. Establish and sustain the criteria of equal opportunity in providing educational programs, information and other services on a nondiscriminatory basis and detect and eliminate any elements of discrimination which may be found to exist.

Accordingly the System will continue to ensure that:

- All educational programs, information and other services are made available on a nondiscriminatory basis.
- Offices, training facilities or other structures are used in a nondiscriminatory manner and will permit accessibility to the disabled as provided by law.
- Any individual or group is not restricted in any way from the opportunity to share benefits or educational experiences open to others.
- Public notification is provided that all benefits of educational programs and activities are open to all and not restricted to any individual or group.
- All employees are trained in and understand policies, procedures and regulations pertaining to nondiscrimination in federally assisted programs, including policies and procedures related to Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action.
- Administrative and supervisory staff are held accountable for ensuring that all actions within their assigned areas of responsibility are conducted in a nondiscriminatory manner.
- Periodic internal reviews are conducted to determine the level of compliance with EEO/ AA policies, procedures and regulations.

The Director of the System and 1890 Administrator is responsible for the supervision of the organization's EEO/ AA program and for monitoring its effectiveness. All departments and county offices should follow the procedures and the spirit of ACES' Equal Employment Opportunity - Affirmative Action policy.

ACES recognizes its ethical and legal obligation to provide a work environment in which employment opportunities are open to all qualified individuals without discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, disability, covered veteran status, or genetic information. As a matter of policy, ACES prohibits sexual orientation discrimination in employment decisions regarding hiring, promotion, and termination. ACES affirms its commitment to this principle and to an affirmative action program which not only establishes the goal of achieving equal opportunity in employment, but which also detects and eliminates any elements of discrimination in employment which may be found to exist within the institution. ACES also commits itself to maintaining on a nondiscriminatory basis the conditions for continuing employment and for individual advancement within the job structure of the ACES.

Details are available at

AAMU:

[AAMU Staff Handbook, 3.1 Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Employment Eligibility, page 24](#)<sup>9</sup>

AU:

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/EqualEmploymentOpportunityPolicy.pdf>

### **13.6 Sexual Harassment Policy**

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and is a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. It is the policy of the ACES that sexual harassment of students, faculty, and staff is prohibited. Complaints of sexual harassment will be treated and investigated in a timely manner with full regard to the University's due process requirements. For more information about the ACES & University policy as well as the complaint procedures are available at:

AAMU:

[AAMU Staff Handbook, 8.2 Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy, page 75](#)<sup>10</sup>

AU:

<http://www.auburn.edu/administration/aaeeo/>

### **13.7 Policy Prohibiting the Harassment of Employees**

Harassment is a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, ACES and University policy. The policy defines and describes harassing conduct on the basis of race, color, or national origin and prohibits University employees from engaging in racial harassment, retaliating against the complainant, or making false accusations. For more information about the policy as well as the complaint procedures are available at <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/PolicyRegardingProhibitedHarassmentofEmployees.pdf>

### **13.8 Complaint Procedure**

Any employee who believes they have been discriminated against may seek resolution through a variety of paths. Discrimination may be reported to supervisor. To initiate a complaint contact the ACES Business Office; or AAMU affiliated employees may contact the AAMU Human Resources Office at (256) 372-5836; or AU affiliated employees may contact the AU Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity at 334-844-4794 or the AU Human Resources Department at 334-844-4145. Additionally, employee or clientele complaints involving any Research or Extension sponsored program or activity may be directed to the USDA, Director Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W Whitten Bldg., 14th & Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 (202-720-5964).

### **13.9 Retaliation Policy**

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System will not tolerate retaliation against employees. Various Federal Laws such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Equal Pay Act all prohibit an employer from retaliating against an employee engaged in a protected activity.

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9 <http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/Documents/AAMU%20Staff%20Handbook%20-%20September%2016%202011.pdf>  
10 <http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/Documents/AAMU%20Staff%20Handbook%20-%20September%2016%202011.pdf>

A protected activity is defined as:

Opposing an unlawful practice prohibited by employment discrimination laws

Participating in any way in an investigation, proceeding or Hearing of an Equal Employment Opportunity charge.

Retaliation includes but may not be limited to:

- Refusal to hire, promotion or denial of promotion, threats or reprimands, negative job performance evaluations, harassment, adverse treatment, limiting or suspending access to an internal complaint or grievance process, and giving a negative job reference.
- Any act of retaliation by a supervisor and/or coworker may result in serious adverse disciplinary action to include termination. Any staff member may file a complaint with the ACES Business Office or AA/EEO Office at the university of affiliation.

### **13.10 AA/EEO Policies & Procedures**

**For AAMU affiliated employees**

<http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/pages/default.aspx>

**The Americans with Disabilities Act Accommodations Policy**

<http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/Documents/Procedure%206.8%20Americans%20with%20Disabilities%20Act%20September%202016%202011.pdf>

**Personnel Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention**

<http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/Documents/6.2 - Personnel Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Policy.pdf>

**Family Medical Leave Act**

[http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/Documents/Procedure%206.7%20Family%20Medical%20Leave%20Act%20\(FINAL\).pdf](http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/hrservices/Documents/Procedure%206.7%20Family%20Medical%20Leave%20Act%20(FINAL).pdf)

**For AU affiliated employees**

<http://www.auburn.edu/administration/aaeeo/policies/policies.html>

**Affirmative Action Policy on the Employment of Individuals with Disabilities**

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/AffirmativeActionPolicyontheEmploymentofIndividualswithDisabilities.pdf>

**Affirmative Action Policy on the Employment of Veterans**

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/AffirmativeActionPolicyontheEmploymentofVeterans.pdf>

**The Americans with Disabilities Act Accommodations Policy**

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/ADAAccommodationsPolicy.pdf>

**Equal Employment Opportunity Policy**

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/EqualEmploymentOpportunityPolicy.pdf>

**Intimate Relations Policy**

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/IntimateRelationsPolicy.pdf>

**Policy Prohibiting Harassment of Employees**

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/PolicyRegardingProhibitedHarassmentofEmployees.pdf>

**Policy Prohibiting Harassment of Students**

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/PolicyRegardingtheProhibitedHarassmentofStudents.pdf>

**Policy on Equal Access to Emerging Technology**

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/PolicyonEqualAccesstoEmergingTechnology.pdf>

**Policy on Web Accessibility Standards**

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/PolicyonWebAccessibilityStandards.pdf>

# **14 VOLUNTEER POLICY**

Volunteers with Alabama Cooperative Extension (ACES) fall into 2 categories: direct and indirect. Definitions for each are as following:

### **14.1 Direct Volunteer**

A direct ACES volunteer has direct contact with youth under the age of 19, the elderly, or disabled and special needs youth and adults. These individuals have day and night responsibilities with or without the presence of paid staff. Examples: chaperoning, spending the night at camps or conferences, chauffeuring to and from events, teaching, serving meals, etc.

### **14.2 Indirect Volunteer**

An indirect ACES volunteer provides a service for an event but does not have direct unsupervised contact with youth under the age of 19, the elderly, or disabled and special needs youth and adults. . These individuals assist with the event, but have no supervisory responsibilities. Examples include competition judges, ringmasters, donors; livestock show directors, and general audience members.

### **14.3 Policy**

All Direct Volunteers affiliated with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) must be registered with ACES Business Office as having completed a comprehensive volunteer selection process prior to engaging in service:

All Indirect Volunteers affiliated with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) will be listed as a volunteer with the program in which they serve as a volunteer. They are not required to participate in the comprehensive volunteer selection process.

### **14.4 Procedures**

All potential ACES Direct Volunteers must participate in the comprehensive volunteer selection process:

1. Submit a completed ACES Direct Volunteer application. Specific programs may also require additional completed forms for volunteers
2. Provide contact information and a minimum of 2 names of non-relatives that can serve as references
3. Participate in an interview process \*
4. Submit to and successfully pass a criminal background check
5. Pass a review of the Alabama Sex Offender Registry
6. Complete a volunteer training session and sign appropriate ACES volunteer forms
7. Receive written approval to serve as a Direct Volunteer
8. Receive a written Direct Volunteer position description

\*Interviews may be conducted by CEC or Extension Agent, Volunteer Committee, or combination of Extension faculty and volunteer.

All ACES Indirect Volunteers:

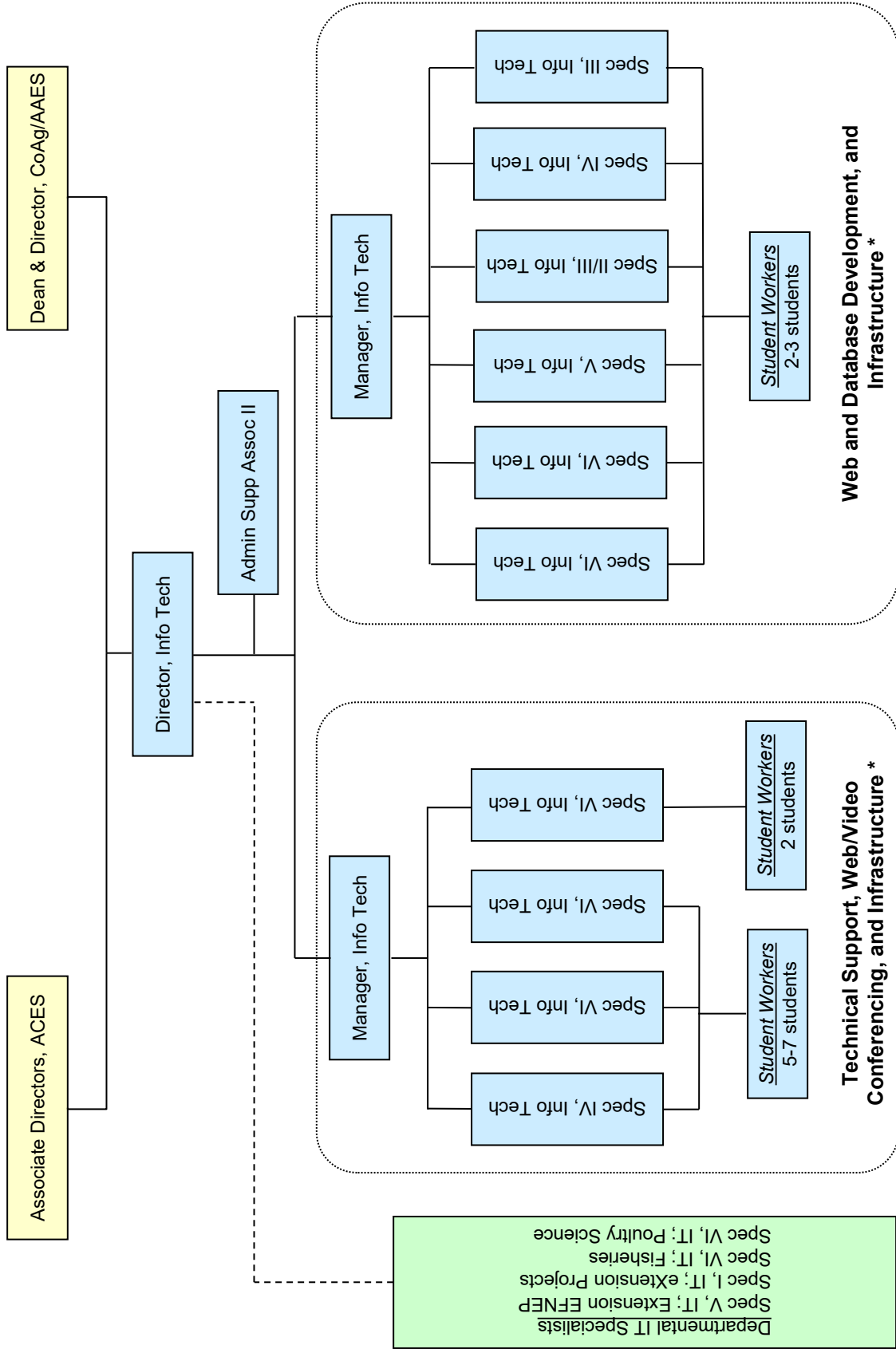
1. Will be asked to sign-in or register prior to assuming responsibilities for the event/function
2. Will receive instructions for the event from the individual in charge of the volunteers for the event/function.

# **15 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**



# 15.1 Organizational Chart

## ACES-Ag Information Technology Unit Organizational Structure



\* Infrastructure (servers and network connectivity) responsibilities are shared

November 20, 2012

As a division of Auburn University and Alabama A&M University, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System leverages technology resources from both universities and is, therefore, subject to the respective IT policies of each institution. The ACES Information Technology Unit is responsible for providing and supporting technology services and resources in coordination with the AU Office of Information Technology and AAMU Information Technology Services. Relevant policies are listed below.

## 15.2 General

[Appropriate Use of Information Technology Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>11</sup>

[Acceptable Use Policy \(AAMU\)](#)<sup>12</sup>

[Cross-Platform Compatibility Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>13</sup>

[Digital Mission and Strategic Plan](#)<sup>14</sup>

[E-Commerce Management Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>15</sup>

[Electronic Privacy Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>16</sup>

[Eligible User Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>17</sup>

[Operating System Current Version Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>18</sup>

[University Wide Information System Software Integration Policy and Procedures \(AU\)](#)<sup>19</sup>

## 15.3 Communications

[Employee Email Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>20</sup>

[Podcasting Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>21</sup>

## 15.4 Network

[Acceptable WIFI Use Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>22</sup>

[Network Terms and Conditions Acceptance Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>23</sup>

[Wireless Networking Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>24</sup>

[Auburn University Network Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>25</sup>

## 15.5 Operational

[OIT Billing Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>26</sup>

[Auburn University Cellular Device and Service Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>27</sup>

[AAMU Cell & Mobile Device Policy \(AAMU\)](#)<sup>28</sup>

## 15.6 Security

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- 11 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/AppropriateUseofInformationTechnology%20Policy.pdf>
  - 12 [http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/information-technology/ITpolicies/Documents/Acceptable\\_Use\\_of\\_Computing\\_Resources.pdf](http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/information-technology/ITpolicies/Documents/Acceptable_Use_of_Computing_Resources.pdf)
  - 13 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/CrossPlatformCompatibilityPolicy.pdf>
  - 14 <https://sites.aces.edu/intranet/it/Documents/Digital%20Mission%20and%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>
  - 15 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/ECommerceManagmentPolicy.pdf>
  - 16 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/ElectronicPrivacyPolicy.pdf>
  - 17 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/EligibleUserPolicy.pdf>
  - 18 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/OperatingSystemCurrentVersionPolicy.pdf>
  - 19 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/UniversityWideInformationSystemSoftwareIntegrationPolicyandProcedures.pdf>
  - 20 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/EmployeeEmailPolicy.pdf>
  - 21 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/UniversityPodcastingPolicy.pdf>
  - 22 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/AcceptableWIFIUsePolicy.pdf>
  - 23 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/NetworkTermsandConditionsAcceptancePolicy.pdf>
  - 24 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/WirelessNetworkingPolicy.pdf>
  - 25 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/AuburnUniversityNetworkPolicy.pdf>
  - 26 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/OITBillingPolicy.pdf>
  - 27 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/AuburnUniversityCellularDeviceandServicePolicy.pdf>
  - 28 [http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/information-technology/ITpolicies/Documents/Cellular\\_and\\_Mobile\\_Device\\_Procedure.pdf](http://www.aamu.edu/administrativeoffices/information-technology/ITpolicies/Documents/Cellular_and_Mobile_Device_Procedure.pdf)

[Active Directory Authentication Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>29</sup>  
[Banner Security System Access and Security Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>30</sup>  
[Computer Authentication Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>31</sup>  
[Copyright Regulations Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>32</sup>  
[Electronic Data Disposal Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>33</sup>  
[ERP Data Integrity and Access Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>34</sup>  
[ERP Data Protection Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>35</sup>  
[ERP Sensitive Data Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>36</sup>  
[Virus Protection Policy \(AU\)](#)<sup>37</sup>

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29 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/ActiveDirectoryAuthenticationPolicy.pdf>  
30 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/BannerSecuritySystemAccessandSecurityPoilcy.pdf>  
31 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/ComputerAuthenticationPolicy.pdf>  
32 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/CopyrightRegulationsPolicy.pdf>  
33 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/ElectronicDataDisposalPolicy.pdf>  
34 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/ERPDataIntegrityandAccessPolicy.pdf>  
35 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/ERPDataProtectionPolicy.pdf>  
36 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/ERPSensitiveDataPolicy.pdf>  
37 <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/VirusProtectionPolicy.pdf>

# 16 WEB

## 16.1 World Wide Web

### Overview

The quality of information published by the System plays an important role in maintaining the strong reputation and image of the System. This policy sets minimal standards that are meant to ensure that information published electronically is visually appealing and well written and follows the same high standards as other forms of published information.

The System recognizes that electronic publication technology is evolving rapidly and that this policy is expected to evolve along with it. This policy will be reviewed as needed by the Director and anyone appointed for this purpose by the Director.

The System recognizes the value of publishing on the Internet, and so allows and encourages faculty to do so. Official System web pages are those publicly accessible electronic documents which represent the System colleges, departments, offices, services, or other units related to the Extension System.

The System home page or top-level web page is <http://www.aces.edu>.

The ACES Information Technology Unit and Communications & Marketing Unit are responsible for maintaining the home page, other menu pages containing links to other Websites, and general information about the System. In addition to the policies set forth below, other applicable standards and guidelines are provided online in the [Web Policies and Standards Guide \(ACES\)](#)<sup>38</sup>

## 16.2 Appropriate Information

System documents on the Web are official communication and are subject to the same quality standards as print publications. Treat the World Wide Web in a professional manner as you would any other powerful information delivery medium.

Follow all applicable laws and university policies and standards regarding nondiscrimination, libel, copyright, offensive materials, visual identity, etc. A page may be considered offensive simply by containing a direct link to a page with objectionable material, including pages which may be maintained by other individuals. Adhere to the general network policies and procedures as listed in the Information Technology chapter of this handbook

Avoid duplication of information and preserve the accuracy of the information. Link to other documents rather than copying them to your page. If you copy a document and the original is modified, your copy will be incorrect.

Link to other websites as appropriate rather than duplicating those efforts on the System site. For example, obtain tourism information from your local Chamber of Commerce rather than collecting and maintaining it yourself.

If you are not sure what is appropriate content for your web page, follow the normal channels and procedures you would use for other media.

Do not use copyrighted material or graphics on your webpage without written permission from the author. Most

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38 <http://www.aces.edu/ctu/techref/policies/web/>

graphics and articles in magazines or newspapers (including comics) are copyrighted. When in doubt, assume that the item is copyrighted and get written permission before using it.

The System web server will not host personal web pages (i.e. pages with family photos, personal hobbies, political or religious views, non-Extension-related material, etc.). Similarly, pages for personal business or personal gain are not permitted. However, professional biographical information is considered to be appropriate content and is encouraged. Anyone wishing to maintain a personal page should obtain space on another university server which allows personal pages or get an account with an Internet service provider.

The System Web Oversight Committee will not actively “police” System web pages to ensure adherence to these policies and guidelines. However, problem situations will be dealt with as they become apparent. If you see a potential problem, contact the person or site responsible for that Web page. The System Web Oversight Committee will discourage severe noncompliance by removing links to offending pages and by working through appropriate personnel channels.

### **16.3 Timeliness**

The individual or unit that posts information is responsible for maintaining those Web pages. Out-of-date information reflects poorly on the System and is discouraged.

Counties and departments should set up their own regular review process to ensure that information is pertinent and professional, and that it remains current.

All publications (numbered and non-numbered alike) should have the date of last modification prominently displayed.

### **16.4 Images (Graphics)**

The use of images is optional. A web page does not necessarily need images to be effective. Images must be in good taste and add meaning to the page.

Many Web visitors use mobile devices. Make sure you meet their needs. Pictures and illustrations should only be used when they carry content themselves. Avoid using complex graphics purely for decoration.

When posting photographs or videos that include young people, get a [photo](#)<sup>39</sup> and/or [video](#)<sup>40</sup> release for each one and keep it on file. A signed release form ensures that if you wish to use the photo or video later in promotional or educational materials, you and ACES have permission to do so.

Avoid “force-feeding” images on users. Instead, consider using a brief description and a pointer (link) to an image rather than having several graphics with many other items. This technique will give your client the chance to decide whether to view a particular image, and by linking images and putting them on different pages, each page will display much faster.

Use “ALT” tags with all images. “ALT” tags provide a text description in place of the image for visitors using text-only browsers or if there is a problem with the image file and it does not load properly.

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39 <https://sites.aces.edu/intranet/comm/Documents/Publications%20Forms/PhotoRelease.pdf>

40 <https://sites.aces.edu/intranet/comm/Documents/Publications%20Forms/VideoRelease.pdf>

All images on the Web are displayed at 72 dpi\*. Even if you scan an image at a higher resolution (e.g. 300 dpi), the Web will still display it at 72 dpi, but the image will be physically larger. An image that is scanned at a higher resolution will result in a larger file size (in bytes), which takes longer to display in a browser. Keep this in mind when you scan an image since a slow display time often discourages clients from visiting or re-visiting your page. To reduce the size (in bytes) of an image and speed up display time, use images that are small with few colors and low resolution where possible.

GIF (.gif) and JPEG (.jpg) are standard image formats for web pages. In general, GIF files are preferred for line art and JPEG files are preferred for photographs.

All personnel are responsible for creating or scanning their own images for general web pages and non-numbered publications; the Information Technology Unit does not perform this function. The Extension Communications & Marketing Unit supplies graphics and artwork only for official, numbered publications (both hard copy and electronic) and other educational materials which are published through Extension Communications & Marketing.

Web pages should be designed to work properly both with and without images.

## **16.5 Rules of Linking**

You are responsible for choosing the sites to which you link. Please link responsibly.

The System, AAMU, and AU are state institutions and cannot endorse specific products or companies. With that in mind, consider how your links could be perceived by the public.

If you have a test page under construction, do not link to it until the page is complete.

Before you link to a site, verify that it is accessible and has useful information for your clients.

Use the following commercial disclaimer statement when linking to commercial sites: “No endorsement of products, services, or firms is intended, nor is criticism implied of those not mentioned.”

## **16.6 Design Guidelines**

### **Required Links and Information**

- Homepages—A homepage is defined as the main page for a county or department. Homepages must include the following:
  - A header identifying the County, Department, or topic name.
  - The System logo.
  - A link to the ACES Legal Disclaimer.\
  - Date of the last revision.
  - Name and e-mail address of the contact person.
  - A link to the System homepage (<http://www.aces.edu>).

Counties, departments, and program teams are provided a homepage template which already meets the requirements listed above. Others should contact the ACES IT Unit for guidance on obtaining a template.

Non-homepages—Underlying Web pages, fact sheets, publications, etc. must include the following:

- Date of the last revision.
- Name and e-mail address of the contact person.

### **Suggested Links and Information**

While not required, these suggested items should be strongly considered.

Counties—(Some of the suggested links and information are already supplied to each county as part of their main page template.)

- Office address, telephone number, office hours, and directions to the office.
- List of agents and staff.
- County commission members.
- Field specialists serving the county, where appropriate.
- Calendar of events and programs.
- County newsletters.
- 4-H information.
- Facts about the county.
- List of cooperating agencies serving the county.
- Departments
- Office address, telephone numbers, office hours, and directions to the office.
- List of faculty and staff.
- Calendar of events and programs.
- Departmental newsletters.
- Links to the affiliated academic departments at AAMU and AU.
- Optionally, curriculum and syllabi of courses.

### **General Design Suggestions**

While not required, these recommendations should be strongly considered.

- Keep pages as simple as possible. Many visitors use mobile devices which may have more limited functionality than a desktop web browser.
- Except for fact sheets and other publications, try to minimize the need for scrolling, especially horizontally. Design your pages so that they look good on a 1024x768, 17” monitor.
- Avoid using complicated background patterns or colors since they can make the text on your page very difficult to read. Some combinations of text and background colors can be completely unreadable by people with color blindness. Different computer monitors will display the same color differently; e.g. a maroon background can be displayed as a range of colors from pink to black, depending on the monitor used. It’s best to stick to a plain, light background with dark text. In the interest of continuity and uniformity, counties should use either supplied backgrounds or plain white.
- Construct pages in such a manner as to enable persons with disabilities to obtain essential information on the page.
- Don’t say “click here” and don’t use an “under construction” sign; both are amateurish, and the Web is always under construction. If your page never changes, it is stale.
- Avoid using non-standard HTML tags and tags not supported by current browsers (Internet Explorer, Chrome, Safari, Firefox, etc.) It is tempting to use the newest and “coolest” features, but if you do, your pages may be unusable by many people. Use frames, applets, and other “bells & whistles” only when they



add to the content and usefulness of your page.

- Include the URL of the page at the bottom of the page so that people who print the page will have a record of where they found it.