

August 2, 2015

Chancellor Cathy Sandeen  
Provost Aaron Brower  
Dean Richard Klemme  
Dean Kathryn VandenBosch  
Associate Dean John Shutske

As chairs in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) at UW-Madison, we read with interest the Mission Change Proposal and Vision for UWEX that was circulated to state specialists recently. While we applaud new approaches and educational opportunities for Wisconsin citizens, we were very concerned by the language in the proposal (highlighted below) that indicated UWEX would be relying extensively UW-System faculty with joint UWEX appointments to develop curricula and contribute to the teaching of these new degree programs.

CALS has a unique relationship with UWEX, particularly through Cooperative Extension. CALS faculty with UWEX appointments operate under contractual obligation to serve the needs of key constituencies through outreach and research activities. These activities, by contractual design, consume all of their time. Though a small number have instructional commitments, most extension faculty do not participate in classroom instruction (consistent with Cooperative Extension's preference) to allow them to meet their obligations toward extension programming. To imagine that these faculty would now be further obligated to develop curricula and administer instructional programs would mean a tremendous loss of their outreach and research activities for which they were hired.

Co-funded positions within the UW-System are a delicate balance, particularly when resources are scarce. UWEX's proposed mission change suggests it will compete with sister campus initiatives (e.g., UW-Madison's Educational Innovation), and that is potentially problematic. Furthermore, UWEX has long contended that extension specialists NOT engage in undergraduate instruction as it could weaken the core extension / outreach mission. That UWEX would now look to those same faculty to support and lead this UWEX instructional initiative seems contradictory.

We strongly recommend that some consultative process be undertaken with UW Extension specialists, their department chairs, and deans before moving this proposal forward. We do not see how a program like this could succeed given the roles UW Extension faculty members currently play in our college. Nor do we think it advisable that these faculty members be diverted from their primary missions.

Sincerely,

Ian Coxhead, Professor and Chair, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics  
Irwin Goldman, Professor and Chair, Department of Horticulture  
John Harrington, Professor and Chair, Department of Landscape Architecture  
Patricia McManus, Professor and Chair, Department of Plant Pathology  
Susan Paskewitz, Professor and Chair, Department of Entomology  
Scott Rankin, Professor and Chair, Department of Food Science  
Mark Richenbach, Professor and Chair, Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology

Daniel Schaefer, Professor and Chair, Department of Animal Science  
William Tracy, Professor and Chair, Department of Agronomy  
Kent Weigel, Professor and Chair, Department of Dairy Science

"UW-Extension has tenured and tenure-track faculty in the divisions of Cooperative Extension and Continuing Education, Outreach and E-Learning. About one-third of UW-Extension's 415 faculty members have dual appointments with the other UW campuses; the tenure homes for the rest are exclusively in Extension. The structure and role of UW-Extension faculty is one of many examples of the interconnectedness of Extension across the entire UW System.

To offer degrees, UW-Extension will proceed through the same processes as any degree-granting institutions in the UW System; i.e., degrees will first have to be approved by faculty governance, then approved at the UW System level, then by the UW Board of Regents, and finally by the Higher Learning Commission. In the case of direct assessment competency-based programs, those programs will also have to be approved at the federal level by the U.S. Department of Education. This final approval is an additional step in the degree approval process beyond that of nearly all other UW degrees.

To ensure content relevance in fast-moving fields, UW-Extension will engage faculty from across the UW System (with approval from campus departments and deans) and employers to work together to develop curricula that are robust and relevant, targeted, current, and of high quality. Degrees will be reviewed annually, with formal reviews conducted every 5 years. To assure ongoing content expertise and oversight, one idea could be the creation of "virtual departments" which join UW-Extension faculty and content experts from across the UW System. Maintaining the high quality standards of a UW degree is to all of our benefit; it is our competitive advantage in this marketplace."

August 25, 2015

Provost Aaron Brower  
UW Extension

*-Sent via email-*

Dear Aaron:

Thank you for taking time to meet with us last week to discuss the Mission Change Proposal and Vision for UWEX. In our letter to you and Chancellor Sandeen dated August 2, 2015, we recommended a consultative process be initiated with UW Extension specialists and others before moving this proposal forward. While we appreciated the opportunity to meet and discuss the proposal with you, we realize that there is very little time left in which to influence its content since it will be presented to the Regents within a few weeks.

We were relieved to see the overly broad mission in the earlier versions of the proposal circumscribed now to focus solely on business and management. And we were similarly relieved to see the statements dropped concerning the potential involvement of UWEX Cooperative Extension faculty in the degree program. We also appreciate that UWEX seeks to serve a population of citizens who might benefit from having a college degree, but are currently unable to attend traditional college courses and might be at risk of being victimized by for-profit colleges. However, two primary concerns surfaced from our meeting, and we would like to enumerate them here for your consideration:

1. The proposal is not well known within the community of UWEX specialists. Different versions of the proposal have been circulated and there is confusion about the actual contents of the proposal itself among UWEX specialists and administrators within our college. You mentioned that the proposal will be vetted through UWEX shared governance committees, yet the very rapid advance to the Board of Regents seems to conflict with the pace normally afforded to important shared governance procedures.
2. Some \$20 million has been spent on the proposal thus far. When we questioned this sum, your response focused on the fact that these were only one-time dollars. Many of the mission areas of UWEX could have certainly made good use of such dollars. As you know, a number of key areas in UWEX have lost funds in recent years, leading to concerns among specialists, departments, and our college about meeting stakeholder needs. We are concerned that these stakeholder needs should be considered among the

highest priorities for UWEX funding and are not sure why UWEX feels that dollars are better spent creating a new degree program. We were also left wondering about the strength of the financial model that underpins the proposal and remain unconvinced that enough analysis has been conducted on this aspect.

We do appreciate your efforts to talk with us and wish only that this conversation had begun much earlier as the proposal was being developed. We understand that in order to offer this new degree program, UWEX must draw upon the expertise of faculty throughout the UW System. We remain puzzled as to why UWEX needed degree granting authority to collaborate in new degree programs, while it did not need such authority when it collaborated on the nursing program with UW-Milwaukee. In our minds, the argument has still not been made that such degree granting authority is necessary or in the best interest of UWEX and its stakeholders.

Sincerely,

- Dominique Brossard, Professor and Chair, Department of Life Sciences Communication
- Ian Coxhead, Professor and Chair, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics
- David Eide, Professor and Chair, Department of Nutritional Sciences
- Ken Genskow, Professor and Chair, Department of Urban and Regional Planning
- Irwin Goldman, Professor and Chair, Department of Horticulture
- Gary Green, Professor and Chair, Department of Community and Environmental Sociology
- John Harrington, Professor and Chair, Department of Landscape Architecture
- Patricia McManus, Professor and Chair, Department of Plant Pathology
- Susan Paskewitz, Professor and Chair, Department of Entomology
- Scott Rankin, Professor and Chair, Department of Food Science
- Doug Reineman, Professor and Chair, Department of Biological Systems Engineering
- Mark Rickenbach, Professor and Chair, Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology
- Daniel Schaefer, Professor and Chair, Department of Animal Science
- William Tracy, Professor and Chair, Department of Agronomy
- Kent Weigel, Professor and Chair, Department of Dairy Science

cc:

Chancellor Cathy Sandeen

Dean Richard Klemme  
Dean Kathryn VandenBosch  
Senior Associate Dean Richard Straub  
Associate Dean John Shutske

