

TO: Jeff Hecker, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs & Provost

FROM: Lisa Phelps, Interim Director, Cooperative Extension

RE: Strategic Vision and Values

DATE: February 12, 2019

Executive Summary

The Extension Leadership Team (ELT) of Cooperative Extension invited all Cooperative Extension Faculty and Staff to respond to a survey that presented each of the three value statements, and asked respondents to comment on:

1. How well the statements capture a strategic value that should guide the university's development?
2. If there are additional strategic values that should be considered or alternative ways of articulating the university's strategic values.
3. Whether the statements as a whole capture the strategic values that should guide the university's development?

In addition to the responses received the Extension Leadership Team also discussed the value statements and additional comments from faculty and staff passed along informally, outside of the survey. While we did ask faculty and staff to identify which program area within Extension they support (Maine Food Systems and 4-H Youth Development) there were not many unique/distinct programmatic differences reported so we have provided one summary for each statement rather than a breakdown by the two program areas. If there is feedback that is more relevant to one of our two program focus areas it is highlighted in the statement responses below.

The overall response to the statements individually and as a whole was positive (“good” or “very good”), with few suggestions for revisions, and none that could be considered as consensus recommendations. That said, here are some individual statements worth considering:

Statement #1: Fostering Learner Success

- Consider referencing UMaine as Maine's Land Grant and Sea Grant university in the first value identified in the plan rather than in the second. The strategic vision

needs to address our mandate, and commitment to ensuring the research and resources of UMaine are directly serving the needs of Maine's communities, and that Cooperative Extension and Sea Grant serve as key liaisons for these responsibilities - as recognized by the US Congress through USDA and NOAA. As such, Cooperative Extension and Sea Grant play a central role in achieving the university's mission.

- Add language that reflects education to prepare students and community members to engage in problem solving and solutions for the real life issues facing Maine.
- Depending on the audience for this vision statement, some of the language used (such as "academic and co-curricular pathways") may not be familiar and may need further explanation.
- The adjective “rich” appears a couple of times, and you might consider replacing it with “fulfilling”.
- This guiding statement encompasses all learners - and is applicable across the state, from pre-K-12 to university students (traditional and nontraditional learners) to adults doing career training. It is a strong statement that reflects the purpose of a public university well.
- Consider condensing this strategic value statement into 3 sentences rather than 6 to help increase effectiveness of the statement.
- The intent - fostering learner success - is positive and admirable, though the language seems overly broad. Consider adding more direction, focus, and clarity of meaning.
- How can the value of fostering learner success statement be briefer and include information about the noticeable, positive difference (for the individual) that can be achieved?

Statement #2: Creating and Innovating for Maine and Beyond

- Consider adding language to make it more robust and inclusive. Perhaps something like: “As Maine's Land and Sea Grant University we are committed to creating and sharing knowledge that impacts the social, cultural, educational, environmental and economic well-being of the state”.
- The creation of new knowledge is indeed a core part of the university mission. This statement could be improved with more clarity and focus on knowledge gains. It seems a bit like it's trying to justify the creation of knowledge for business purposes - which is probably NOT what is intended, but is what the term "innovation" has become affiliated with.
- Perhaps add "growers" or "farmers" to the list the community encompasses.
- “New knowledge” may not be the most effective way to phrase the intention behind the statement. Perhaps replace this with phrases such as innovation, creative thinking/problem solving.

- The terms 'creating and innovating' bring to mind exploring and risk-taking; seeing and experiencing the world in diverse ways, being open to diverse perspectives and recognizing the strength brought by different skills and viewpoints. Being open, engaged, and curious.
- Would health, educational and environmental concerns be considered under “social or cultural well-being” if not then they may need to be included in this statement?
- An appreciation of the last sentence about the application of the work and service in terms of sharing it with the greater community, country, world.

Statement #3: Growing and Stewarding Partnerships

- This is a great part of the vision statement. Consider adding the K-12 education community, as well as the individual community member as a partner with the university. Perhaps add education and the people of the state of Maine as community partners. Or, leave out the list of partners altogether to avoid neglecting to mention one.
- Of course focusing on the collaborative aspects of the university are hugely important and dropping the line about them not being obvious would be helpful, or at least articulating it more metaphorically like a web, or something that holds things together but is not very visible would be better stated. Also, perhaps explaining, beyond the mission why it's important to have these partnerships, i.e. 'because the university system is dedicated to the enrichment, education, and well-being of the state of Maine, it's people, land, and future...' The explanation more because it's “part of our duty” could be enhanced, have more impact and reflect “the gusto” so many staff put into their work.
- Could this statement be expanded to also include environmental stewardship and Youth Development/Educational aspirations for younger community members?
- This statement seems to lack connection with the rest of the assertions and could benefit from more clarity: “From my experience working in Cooperative Extension and all of the different partnerships I have and have seen I think that we and the university serve as almost a net, or a grid that helps connect and support the work of many organizations, and especially our ability to receive funding/resources through finances, materials, etc. is a huge asset to the entire state and helping to promote the fact that the university and cooperative extension is everywhere!”
- This is the clearest of the three statements and could also benefit from greater clarity and intent - is advancing the interests of partner entities, even if the impact on the university's mission isn't obvious, the only way UMaine demonstrates being a good steward of resources? How does UMaine grow partnerships? Consider describing this more clearly.

Overall Feedback regarding the three statements

- Find a way to recognize agriculture.
- Either as part of an already existing strategic value, or as another one, consider having language and space given to cultivating the health and well-being of the state, it's land, people and future are pivotal parts of the work that the university and cooperative extension does.
- There is a heavy emphasis on learning but not on research. Is this intentional?