

THE  
COMPREHENSIVE  
ALABAMA  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
SYSTEM

*PLAN OF WORK UPDATE*

FISCAL YEAR 2005 -- FISCAL YEAR 2006

***ALABAMA A&M UNIVERSITY\*\*AUBURN UNIVERSITY\*\*TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY***

**FY 2005—FY 2006 Plan of Work Update**  
**The Comprehensive Alabama Cooperative**  
**Extension System**  
(Alabama A&M University, Auburn University, and Tuskegee University)

**INTRODUCTION**

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System is a publicly-funded, non-formal, continuing education system that links the educational and research resources and activities of Alabama's Land-Grant Universities to the residents of the sixty-seven counties in the state, the communities of Alabama, and to the people of this nation and the world. As its stated mission, "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." The System vision is: "To be a world-class educational organization providing real-life solutions to improve the lives of all Alabamians."

The primary purpose of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System is the provision of practical education for Alabama citizens to apply to the critical issues that have an impact on their daily lives and the future of Alabama. Cooperative Extension educational outreach is heavily dependent upon the services of paraprofessionals and citizen volunteers who work with the professional faculty and staff of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System to amplify the impacts of our programming. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System works in partnership with public and private agencies to extend and encourage the application of research based knowledge, information, and technological innovation via a network of local county Extension offices. The wealth of external linkages is critical to the Alabama Cooperative Extension System's strength and vitality.

The above stated mission and vision serve as the philosophical basis for this Update to the Comprehensive State of Alabama Cooperative Extension Plan of Work. The current Alabama Cooperative Extension Plan of Work continues to represent the vast majority of Cooperative Extension programming efforts in the state of Alabama, and is inclusive of the AREERA Goals and all federal formula funded programs.

## **PLANNING OPTION**

AREERA provides the opportunity for states to select a planning option. This option defines the formula funded components within the state included in the Plan of Work. Consistent with the most recent guidance from CSREES the Comprehensive Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University, Auburn University, and Tuskegee University) has elected to extend, essentially unchanged, the original FY 2000 – FY 2004 AREERA Plan of Work. This Plan of Work Update is a two-year prospective plan that expands the FY 2000 through FY 2004 program planning period to include FY 2005 and FY 2006. As such, the Plan of Work will continue to detail Cooperative Extension educational programs conducted by Alabama A&M University, Auburn University, and Tuskegee University.

## **CERTIFICATION OF THE PLAN OF WORK**

AREERA requires that the Plan of Work must be signed by each individual administratively responsible for the work described therein. By separate letter, certification of the Comprehensive Alabama Cooperative Extension System AREERA Plan of Work Update is validated via the signatures of: the 1862 Extension Director and the 1890 Extension Administrator, for the Unified Alabama Cooperative Extension System, and the 1890 Extension Administrator, Tuskegee University.

## **PLANNED PROGRAMS**

Planned programs in the areas of Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources, Family and Individual Well Being, 4-H and Youth Development, Community and Economic Development, and Urban Affairs and New Non Traditional Programs will continue for the current Fiscal Year (2004) as described in the System ARRERA Plan of Work.

The Alabama A&M University / Auburn University components of the Comprehensive Alabama Cooperative Extension System are currently in the process of a major restructuring. [This restructuring process is not inclusive of the Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension Program.] Significant changes in the planned program area are anticipated to be implemented for FY 2005 and FY 2006. When such changes are finalized the System will submit to CSREES a Plan of Work Update that will detail the new programming directions. In the interim the below will provide a general overview of, and the anticipated outcomes to be derived from, the restructuring process.

Over the past two decades, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) has experienced many very significant changes. These changes are a result of both external factors and internal factors. The major external factors are reduced funding, increased operating costs, changes in the numbers and types of clientele served, increased complexity of the areas in which we work, tremendous advances in technology, and court orders. These external factors have led to significant changes in the resources available to the System and the way the System does business.

Probably the most significant changes are the great reduction in the number of System employees on continuing appointments and the shift toward more temporary employees working on specially-funded programs. All of these factors make it necessary to implement significant, fundamental changes in the way the Alabama Cooperative Extension System is structured and the way the System serves the people of Alabama.

The System will continue to maintain an office in every Alabama County, which provides office space and a minimum level of funding to support part of the salary for a County Extension Coordinator position. The System will also use all other county funding to support Agent and Agent Assistant positions that work exclusively in the county providing the funding. All positions other than the County Extension Coordinators and 100% locally funded positions will work on regional assignments. These regional positions will continue to use county offices as their bases of operation.

All Extension Agents and Specialists on continuing appointments will specialize in one of the following areas:

1. Agronomic Crops
2. Animal Science and Forages
3. Aquaculture and Recreational Pond Management
4. Family and Child Development
5. Community Resource Development
6. Consumer Science and Personal Financial Management
7. Farm Management and Agricultural Enterprise Analysis
8. Food Safety, Preparation and Preservation
9. Forestry, Wildlife and Natural Resource Management
10. Commercial Horticulture
11. Home Grounds, Gardens and Home Pests
12. Human Nutrition, Diet and Health
13. 4-H and Youth Development

The mission of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System will remain the same. However, with fewer employees working across larger multi-county geographic regions, methodologies for serving the public will be different. The primary emphasis will be on regional, educational programs and group activities that allow the System to help as many people as limited human and fiscal resources will allow.

In order to fully understand the rationale for many of the anticipated changes and the decisions that have led up to these necessary changes, it is helpful to have information about what the Alabama Cooperative Extension System is, its' mission, vision, legal mandates, and other relevant factors.

Cooperative Extension has been around for close to 100 years, and was created by federal legislation (The Smith-Lever Acts of 1862 and 1890) authorizing the partnerships of federal, state and county governments to "*aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information ....*" (Source: Smith-Lever Act of May 8, 1914). However, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System as it now exists was actually created in 1995 by a federal court order combining the Auburn University (AU) based Alabama Cooperative Extension Service with the 1890 Cooperative Extension Education Program of Alabama A & M University (AAMU) to create a new entity. Under this order, the two universities are to focus on serving different segments of Alabama's population. The AAMU-funded portion of the System focuses its resources on serving urban and nontraditional clientele, and the AU-funded portion of the System focuses its resources on serving the rural or traditional clientele.

The judge also directed the two universities to form a unified System to ensure that all of Alabama's population is appropriately served within the total resources available. Therefore, the primary objective of this restructuring plan is to better coordinate the programs of both parts (AAMU and AU) of the System to facilitate a more unified total Extension program where the separate components

complement each other, especially on statewide areas of high priority where issues affect both rural and urban residents.

The court order creating the “System” is scheduled to end in August 2005, and the federal judge that monitors this order has instructed the Director of Extension, the 1890 Administrator from AAMU, and the presidents of the two universities (AAMU and AU) to ensure that there will be appropriate statutory authority in place by August of 2005 to maintain the Alabama Cooperative Extension System as a legally mandated entity. This process is progressing and all indications are that the System will continue to function in a unified manner much the same as it currently operates with respect to full collaboration between AAMU and AU.

The mandate to change the structure of the System emanates from the realities of change—not only change in the environment in which we live and work, but also, probably more importantly, changes that have occurred over time inside the organization itself. The internal and external environments of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System have evolved over time. The most significant recent internal and external factors that have influenced the way we operate are:

1. The “merging” of Auburn University Extension Specialists into academic units in the mid 1980s and the resulting changes in the way these employees are funded and supervised.
2. The unification of the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service with the Alabama A&M Cooperative Extension Program to form the Alabama Cooperative Extension System in 1995.
3. Several state and federal funding crises which resulted in voluntary retirement incentives and separation programs that were implemented in 1995, 1999 and 2003. These programs resulted in almost 200 fewer continuing employees.
4. The creation of Urban Extension Centers in the mid 1990s to meet the court order to serve urban clientele.
5. The attempt to create functional Regional Research and Extension Centers in the late 1990s.
6. The increased emphasis and reliance on non-continuing special funding such as the NEP grant CTF grants, special funding agreements and contracts with other organizations, and numerous other extramurally funded programs. Approximately one-fourth of the System’s employees are currently on some type of special funding arrangement and can work only in the areas allowed by the funding agreements.

7. The proliferation in technology and its influence not only among our own employees but also more importantly among the clientele with whom we work.
8. The changing demographics and increasing number of urban clientele.
9. The rapidly increasing complexity of the subject-matter areas in which we have traditionally worked and the decrease in the number of clientele in many traditional program areas—especially in agriculture.
10. The increasing expectations and demands from CSREES to do more Multistate Extension / Integrated Research and Extension programming.
11. The continued decrease in county funding as a percentage of System overall funding. This has created difficulties in developing and maintaining a local funding-staffing model that is equitable on the basis of large disparities in local funding.

These factors have created an organization with very unusual and at times difficult staffing and working arrangements. In many cases employees have evolved into different types of ad hoc working arrangements. Some of these ad hoc arrangements are beneficial and need to be formalized. Some of the situations that have evolved are not workable and can only be corrected through a formal restructuring. Below are a list of restructuring objectives designed to address staffing and working arrangement issues.

1. To create statewide program planning, implementation, and evaluation teams for each Priority Program Area. These teams will consist of campus-based and field-based staff that collectively focuses in the same Priority Program Areas. These teams will meet frequently to communicate, and they will design and implement meaningful educational programs that are designed to solve the real world problems at a grassroots level.
2. To facilitate better communication between AU- and AAMU-funded employees who work in the same areas.
3. To allocate and, if necessary, redistribute the field staff to adequately cover the entire state, with the understanding that the way we work will have to be different.
4. To better serve the needs of commercial agriculture by implementing many of the concepts that were part of the regional agricultural research and Extension center concept.
5. To facilitate more extramural funding by having well-defined Priority Program Areas with statewide teams working in each area.



6. To make better use of new and emerging technologies to teach our clientele how to use accurate information to make better decisions. The web is an important part of life and this must be reflected in our new structure.
7. To allow our employees to focus in specific areas and to develop more in-depth expertise in those priority areas.
8. To create stronger links between research and Extension educational programs at the field level. The new structure will also allow for more tangible multi-state work such as training opportunities with the specific Priority Program Teams.
9. To create a county funding-staffing model that will reward counties that provide higher levels of funding while ensuring that all Alabama residents have an appropriate base level of service. The restructured staff plan will allow for even more locally funded Extension positions while ensuring that all county funds are spent in direct support of Extension staff and programs within the county providing the funds.

## **STAKEHOLDER INPUT PROCESS**

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System has a very comprehensive stakeholder input process. The foundation of this process is the statewide network of sixty-seven County Extension Advisory Boards (CEABs) and the hundreds of county and state-level program advisory committees.

Each county has a County Extension Advisory Board. Each CEAB is an organized group of ten to fifteen respected, influential, and knowledgeable community leaders. Board members are progressive thinkers who believe that the researched-based knowledge available through the county Extension office can be applied in their communities to help solve a wide variety of local problems. They understand how Extension education can be used in many different areas to improve the economic, physical, and social well being of all county residents.

Each Board's primary mission is to assist the local Extension staff:

- by identifying issues of widespread public concern within the county,
- in choosing the pertinent issues to be addressed through Extension educational programs, and
- by establishing priorities and planning a well-balanced, total Extension program for the county.

The current Stakeholder Input Process will be extended, intact, for the FY 2005 – FY 2006 planning period.

## **PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS**

The review of this AREERA Plan of Work Update for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System involved several distinct phases. Cooperative Extension System program priority area teams conducted the first phase of review. As in prior years, each team completed a thorough reexamination of the Extension Team Projects associated with each of the priority area goals.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System Leadership team (consisting of the Director, 1890 Administrators, and Associate Directors) and relevant University administrators conducted the second phase of the program review process. This phase was included to ensure that the content of the plan was consistent with the mission of the institutions and the Cooperative Extension entities.

The final and most important phase of program review centers on scrutiny of the Plan by the System Advisory Council. As in prior years the Council assists the Alabama Cooperative Extension System in the identification of broad issues of public concern and in setting specific System programming priorities. The Council plays a role in marketing, and as an advocate for the System, especially in acquiring support and resources. Specific roles for the System Advisory Council include: 1) insure that the System's programs address real needs of Alabama citizens; 2) promote the System's programmatic efforts and accomplishments to key clientele groups and decision makers; 3) provide guidance and assistance in obtaining statewide support for System programs; 4) identify critical issues and problems which might best be addressed by System educational outreach; 5) advise the System on educational needs; 6) advise the System on overall program balance; 7) make recommendations on the System's long range Plan of Work; 8) expand the collaboration and networking capabilities of the System in support of existing and proposed programs; and, 9) advise the System on how best to mesh the County Advisory Board inputs into broad based Cooperative Extension educational programs.

This process will continue for the FY 2005 – FY 2006 programming period.

## **MULTISTATE EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System will continue to operate under the auspices of the Multistate Extension Activities / Integrated Research and Extension Activities Plan, as submitted to CSREES. Current Multistate Extension Activities, as detailed in the 'Plan', and updated in the FY 2003 Annual Report of Accomplishments and Results, will continue through FY 2006.

## **INTEGRATED RESEARCH AND EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System will continue to operate under the auspices of the Multistate Extension Activities / Integrated Research and Extension Activities Plan, as submitted to CSREES. Current Integrated Research and Extension Activities, as detailed in the 'Plan', and updated in the FY 2003 Annual Report of Accomplishments and Results, will continue through FY 2006.

***NOTE: Consistent with comments from the recent Office of Inspector General audit of Multistate Extension Activities and Integrated Research and Extension Activities, CSREES is reminded that the Alabama Cooperative Extension System set 9.8% (\$638,492.00) as our target for Fiscal Year 2001, and for the remainder of the planning and reporting cycle. It is further noted that, consistent with the Final Guidance issued by CSREES, the portion of the Smith-Lever 3 (b) and (c) funds that are used by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System for Integrated Research and Extension Activities are also employed to satisfy the Multistate Activities requirement.***

## **FISCAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

The following represents a composite allocation of fiscal and human resources for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University only). Given that the Alabama Cooperative Extension System has experienced essentially 'level' funding, little if any change in fiscal or human resources is evident. Therefore, the table below remains unchanged from the FY 2003 data.

<b>PRGM AREA</b>	<b>\$ ALLOCATION</b>	<b>FTEs</b>
4H&YD	\$ 3,478,094	57.29
AG	\$ 8,961,320	147.61
C&ED	\$ 534,533	8.80
F&IWB	\$ 2,401,426	39.56
UU&NNTP	\$ 3,093,597	50.96
F&NR	\$ 1,108,906	8.27
ACENEP	\$ 1,869,108	30.79

## **PLAN OF WORK CONTACTS**

The following sections denote System personnel responsible for: administration, signature authority and Plan of Work certification; programmatic content; and, development, preparation, and submission to CSREES.

Administrative and signature authority, and certification, resides with:

- **Velma Blackwell**, 1890 Administrator
- Tuskegee University
- 334-727-8601
- [vblackwe@tuskegee.edu](mailto:vblackwe@tuskegee.edu)
- **Virginia Caples**, 1890 Administrator
- Alabama A&M University
- 256-851-5710
- [vcaples@asnaam.aamu.edu](mailto:vcaples@asnaam.aamu.edu)
- **Gaines Smith**, Interim Director
- Auburn University
- [wsmith@aces.edu](mailto:wsmith@aces.edu)

Overall programmatic responsibility resides with:

- **Chinella Henderson**, Associate Director
- Urban Affairs and New Non-Traditional Programs
- Alabama Cooperative Extension System
- 256-851-5710
- [chenders@acesag.auburn.edu](mailto:chenders@acesag.auburn.edu)
- **Sam Fowler**, Associate Director
- Rural and Traditional Programs
- Alabama Cooperative Extension System
- [sfowler@aces.edu](mailto:sfowler@aces.edu)
- **Atheal Pierce**, Head, Program & Staff Development
- Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension Program
- 334-727-8809
- [apierce@tuskegee.edu](mailto:apierce@tuskegee.edu)

Responsibility for the development, preparation, and submission resides with:

- **Ronald L. Williams**, Extension Head
- Program Planning and Development /
- Law Enforcement Programs
- 256-353-9770
- [rwilliam@aces.edu](mailto:rwilliam@aces.edu)