

# Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service

## *Plan of Action in Response to United States Department of Agriculture 1999 Civil Rights Compliance Review Recommendations*

### **Extension Program**

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#### **Recommendation 1**

*Develop and implement procedures to conduct comprehensive training to ensure all staff are familiar with civil rights requirements, i.e., complaint procedures.*

#### **TAES Action**

Intensive Civil Rights training will be conducted in the Fall of '99 and Spring of 2000 for Extension Leaders in each District. This training will be an expanded version of the 2-hour orientation. Extension Leaders will be expected to relate this information to their county staff. EEO counselors in each district will be included on the program.

In addition, UTAES and TSU will cooperate in developing methods and materials which will be effective in training staff statewide. Some of these training materials are already on a web site and this site will be expanded to increase its effectiveness as a reference and training tool.

The USDA booklet "Unlocking the Barriers" will be distributed to all staff members.

#### **Recommendation 2**

*Implement steps that will strengthen and improve the program participation data system for setting targets for the delivery of program benefits. The system should insure that all audiences are included, both traditional and new (Hispanic and Asian) minority groups.*

#### **TAES Action**

TAES has a working committee currently in place to evaluate our current data collection and reporting system and to formulate future needs. This recommendation will be communicated to this group for inclusion in their planning process. It will be expected that the new system will adequately measure participation of these groups and give adequate feedback to regularly monitor participation and also to set participation goals.

### **Recommendation 3**

*Continue efforts to ensure that all Tennessee Cooperative Extension facilities and programs are accessible to the disabled.*

#### **TAES Action**

TAES will encourage county governments in the 10 offices which are currently inaccessible to consider renovations to improve accessibility. When new facilities are available or considered, handicap accessibility must be incorporated in that plan.

As a part of New Employees Orientation, agents will continue to be trained in making educational programs available to the disabled. Training will include using accessible facilities when at all possible and offering public announcements of alternative delivery when inaccessible. Uses of printed materials, listening aids, interpreters, caregivers and other methods of accommodation will be discussed. Training will also include discussion of alternative delivery methods including holding meetings in other accessible locations, making home visits, using written or telephone communications or other effective means.

Handicap accessibility will be evaluated and monitored through the annual Civil Rights Compliance Review Report and through on-site reviews. District Supervisors, Program Leaders and State level Administrators are to be involved in the evaluation, education and monitoring process.

### **Recommendation 4**

*Develop a system to address the low level of minority participation on committees. The system should include the comprehensive consideration of new populations in the State.*

#### **TAES Action**

Tennessee has established a statewide Extension Advisory Council which is demographically representative of the state. This council of 14 males, 8 females, and 7 minorities is a model for each TAES unit.

County committee make-up will be monitored in the annual Civil Rights Compliance Review and in Annual Employee Performance Reviews. Written advisory committee guidelines are in place and set forth guidelines for including the diversity on committees which is present in current county demographics. County personnel will therefore be advised a minimum of two times per year of their need for inclusion of diversity on committees, once as a part of the compliance review process and again as this is considered in their performance rating. When any new committee members are added or changes made, agents will be expected to include minority representation on committees. These efforts will be monitored by the Dean's office.

### **Recommendation 5**

*Develop and implement procedures to insure increased levels of minority and gender diversity in the Agriculture and Family and Consumer Education Programs.*

#### **TAES Action**

TAES is committed to reaching a diverse audience with educational programs.

In agriculture, TAES will change the way we target potential audiences to more accurately plan and measure contacts. Commercial agriculture potentials will continue to be compared to the latest Census of Agriculture data. Agriculture programs which are delivered to the general non-farm public will be monitored against the county household data from the last available county census.

To increase minority and male participation in family and consumer sciences programs the process of ARE, All Reasonable Efforts, will be continued with a renewed emphasis. Programs which target minorities and males will be expected. In fact, in family and consumer sciences programs, TAES is continuing a major change in emphasis and restructuring which was begun in 1990. Family and Consumer Education Clubs are becoming a very minor part of our programming. The highest priority is now given to Workshops, Priority programs, Named programs and other means of delivery which are offered across entire county demographics and not in club settings.

### **Recommendation 6**

*Develop and implement procedures to insure increased levels of overall participation with emphasis on minorities in camp and 4-H activities.*

#### **TAES Action**

TAES is committed to increasing diversity of participation in District, State, Regional and National 4-H events and activities. District supervisors and program leaders will continue to be actively involved in planning with county staff to develop strategies for improvement where participation is low. Greater emphasis in the 1999 County Compliance Review has been added. In particular, camp attendance and other attendance figures are now listed. Participation will be discussed with agents and strategies for improvement will be agreed upon where improvement is needed. Emphasis will be increased in the area of using more minority judges, volunteer leaders and in placing minorities in other high visibility roles. We will continue to use scholarships and other incentives to increase minority participation in 4-H activities and events. Increased efforts will be made to monitor county participation in camping and other 4-H events by district and other supervisory staff. Where minority participation is low, the District staff will work with county staff to develop strategies to increase minority participation. These strategies will be outlined in the Civil Rights Compliance Review form.

**Recommendation 7**

*Develop and implement procedures to increase participation of White potential clientele in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Programs (EFNEP).*

**TAES Action**

To increase participation of white clientele in EFNEP programs TAES District supervisors will work with county, area and state staff members to target areas which will meet the educational goals and clientele criteria of the program where more whites will be reached. In addition, staff (EFNEP agents and program assistants) will be advised of the need to look at each situation individually with a goal to reach a more diverse clientele base.

# **Equal Employment Opportunity Program**

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## **Recommendation 1**

*Integrate the 2 hour civil rights training component to reach all Extension employees who have yet to receive this comprehensive training. This ensures that all of Extension has the most current information and training in EEO/Civil Rights.*

### **TAES Action**

Intensive Civil Rights training will be conducted in the Fall of '99 and Spring of 2000 for Extension Leaders in each District. This training will be an expanded version of the 2-hour orientation. Extension Leaders will be expected to relate this information to their county staff. EEO counselors in each district will be included on the program.

In addition, UTAES and TSU will cooperate in developing methods and materials which will be effective in training staff statewide. Some of these training materials are already on a web site and this site will be expanded to increase its effectiveness as a reference and training tool.

The USDA booklet "Unlocking the Barriers" will be distributed to all staff members.

## **Recommendation 2**

*Advance affirmative action efforts to fill vacancies in District/counties which have never employed racial/ethnic minority extension agents.*

### **TAES Action**

TAES has shared hiring goals for minorities or under-represented groups with District Supervisors and will continue this practice annually. District Supervisors and selection committees will be made aware of current demographics when positions are advertised. In turn, District Supervisors will be asked by the Dean to establish hiring goals and target counties in their respective districts based upon these hiring goals. Areas of particular need will be communicated by the Director of UTAES and the Administrator of TSU to District Supervisors, Section Leaders, and County Extension Leaders where changes are particularly needed.

## **Recommendation 3**

*Reassess the UTAES recruitment program to improve the efforts to recruit and hire minority professionals for State and county positions. Target those Extension categories of major professional occupations where under-representation and underutilization has existed for the last four reporting years. The TSU should also review the areas whereby racial/ethnic group members are conspicuously absent or under-represented.*

### **TAES Action**

The UTAES Recruitment Program will continue to evaluate progress through recruitment contacts and the racial/ethnic group make-up of approved applicants. In addition, recruitment methods will be expanded by developing "Recruitment Teams" in each district. Teams will consist of District Staff and agents selected for their potential

effectiveness in reaching specific groups, particularly minority employees. Training in recruitment goals and methods will be conducted with these teams. Teams will target assigned colleges and universities which offer degree programs required for county positions. Specifically, annual visits to 1890 schools will continue, including establishing stronger ties with 1890 Program Administrators.

**Recommendation 4**

*Issue a written statement over the signature of the Administrator of 1890 programs which sets forth the legal obligation and policy for EEO as well as a visible commitment to nondiscrimination.*

**TAES Action**

Dr. Clyde E. Chesney, Administrator, TSU Cooperative Extension Program will issue a written statement setting forth EEO policy and legal obligation and a statement of commitment to a policy of non-discrimination.

**Recommendation 5**

*Review and improve the accessibility of restrooms for disabled individuals in Morgan Hall on the UT campus.*

**TAES Action**

All Morgan Hall doorknobs will be changed in 1999 to improve accessibility to disabled individuals. A strobe light system will also be installed to accommodate individuals with a hearing-impairment. Mike Keel, Director of Services for the Institute of Agriculture has been advised of needed renovations to Morgan Hall restrooms not corrected by the change in doorknobs and strobe light system. In addition, it is expected that Morgan Hall will be renovated as soon as funds are available. The University of Tennessee is well aware of the problem and is making efforts to correct the problem.

**Recommendation 6**

*Consider showcasing the award that recognized efforts and accomplishments in enhancing workforce diversity in Extension. Publicly recognize Extension managers, supervisors, and employees who make outstanding contributions to promoting the recruitment, advancement, and retention of a diverse workforce.*

**TAES Action**

Beginning in 1999, TAES staff members who receive EEO awards will be recognized in Section Leader and District Supervisor meetings in the presence of their peers. Current practice using letters of commendation and recognition in "Third Thursday," the newsletter of the Institute of Agriculture, will be continued. Annual recipients of the State EEO Awards will be encouraged to submit an entry in the USDA Diversity Awards Program.