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TO: County Managers
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FROM: 
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DATE: September 6, 2006

SUBJECT: New Memorandum of Understanding between County
Governments and North Carolina Cooperative Extension

We are pleased to deliver a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to you. As you know, this document serves as the structure of the cooperative relationship created between local, state, and federal governments committed to bringing research-based knowledge from NC A&T State University and NC State University to the citizens of each county, the Cherokee Reservation, and the entire state of North Carolina through North Carolina Cooperative Extension (NCCE).

Times change, and as such, our cooperating entities are called upon to give due diligence to having a sound basis for how our respective operations work together. Jointly, we must periodically review our partnership to ensure we are working from an accurate reflection of the relationship. To accomplish this review, a team representing the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC), the NC Cooperative Extension Program at NC A&T State University, and the NC Cooperative Extension Service at NC State University, has met regularly over the past two years. Our goal was to identify

North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.

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each entity's needs and concerns as it relates to the operation of our partnership, as well as to scrutinize the underlying MOU document itself. Through these meetings, we collaboratively updated the document for a more effective MOU that is simultaneously reflective of our strong collaborative partnership.

This new MOU is presented to you now for your implementation. We are delivering this package of information to all County Managers and all County Extension Directors today. County Managers, you can expect the County Extension Director in your county to make an appointment with you within the next three weeks to discuss this important document. County Extension Directors, you are tasked with the responsibility of setting this meeting and addressing any concerns or questions. Together, each of you is asked to ensure that this document is presented to your Board of County Commissioners for its timely approval and adoption.

Enclosed you will find the new MOU itself. We have included a synopsis of the changes made between the former MOU and Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and this updated version. In reviewing it, you will see that the new MOU is a combination of the two former documents, but other than that, does not differ significantly from the past versions.

A significant change in the MOU is that it begins to move all Cooperative Extension employees to one uniform payroll system. This change is critical to reduce benefit and policy disparities between NCCE employees across the state. The decision was made collaboratively and retains the option for counties to continue to control their portion of salary increases.

The new document requires all Cooperative Extension new hires to be payrolled through either NCSU or NCA&TSU. This process is called "send-in." All current Extension employees in non-send-in (known as "regular") payroll arrangements as of October 1, 2006, will have two open-window options in which to convert from "regular/non-send-in" to "send-in" per their respective individual choices. The two open window periods will coincide with the State of North Carolina's NCFlex Open Enrollment period in Fall 2006 and Fall 2007. The effective date for the change would then be the January 1 of the following year.

The new MOU must be signed no later than November 1, 2006, for a January 1, 2007, implementation, or no later than October 1, 2007, for a January 1, 2008, implementation. After October 1, 2007, the transitional windows will not be available again unless the total number of "regular" employees across the state drops below fifty (50) as determined yearly on March 1. If the total number of

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“regular” employees across the state is less than 50 at that time, then respective County Boards will be contacted to notify of the need to switch these remaining employees to “send-in”.

In addition to the actual document, we have included other information you may find helpful in your upcoming discussions and implementation of this new document. Please know that members of the Committee are available to answer questions about the changes in the new MOU and how its implementation will affect Extension operations within your county.

Through the discussions we have had in this review process, we felt that keeping this form of positive, joint problem solving and communication going into the future was important and beneficial. To this end, a Joint NCACC and Cooperative Extension Partnership Committee is established in the implementation of this new MOU. The Partnership Committee’s membership will be comprised of representatives from all three organizations, and will meet at least twice a year to enhance future communications and to cooperatively address mutual issues and needs. This Partnership Committee is a testament to the value this collaboration brings to the people of North Carolina. Of all the items in the new MOU, the establishment of this joint committee is perhaps our most important accomplishment.

We would be remiss if we did not take this opportunity to acknowledge and extend our appreciation to the members of the Committee who have served over the past two years. They are:

Charles Abernathy, County Manager, McDowell County
Ron Aycock, former Executive Director, NC Association of County Commissioners
Donald Cobb, District Extension Director, North Central District
Ed Emory, County Extension Director, Duplin County
Brent Henry, County Extension Director, Wake County
Randy Keaton, County Manager, Pasquotank County
Tom Lundy, County Manager, Catawba County
Larry Meadows, County Manager, Jones County
M. Ray McKinnie, Administrator/Associate Dean for Extension, NC Cooperative Extension Program
Jon Ort, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Associate Dean and Director, NC Cooperative Extension Service
Vicki Pettit, Executive Assistant, NC Cooperative Extension Service

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Jacqueline Roseboro, County Extension Director, Columbus County
Mike Ruffin, County Manager, Durham County
Rodney Sawyer, County Extension Director, Currituck County
Sheri Schwab, Associate Director of CALS Personnel, NC State
University
Celia Stovall, Associate Director, NC Cooperative Extension Program
David Thompson, Executive Director, NC Association of County
Commissioners
Joseph Zublena, Associate Director and Director of County Operations,
NC Cooperative Extension Service

Again, we celebrate with you the accomplishment of this new document and what it represents: a strong and successful Cooperative Extension program that continues to positively impact the citizens of North Carolina.

DT:MM:JO/ss
Enclosures