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DATE: November 23, 2020
TO: All Extension Employees
SUBJECT: Extension Internal Audit Overview and Results

NC State University initiated an internal audit last year to help us evaluate the university's Extension-related operations, leadership and strategic direction. The audit is now complete, and I'm both encouraged and energized by the findings, which have shed light on key challenges, timely needs and opportunities for improvement.

I'd like to share an outline of our process and key findings with you below, which can also be found on the [intranet](#).

PURPOSE

The objective of this audit was to assess the effectiveness of key Extension business and operational processes that are coordinated and overseen by NC State, including:

- Strategic planning
- Financial management
- Procurement
- Human resources
- Program delivery
- Training
- Compliance with federal, state and university guidelines

PROCESS

The audit was conducted in partnership with [NC State's Internal Audit Division](#), and involved interviews with 108 personnel representing a broad cross-section of CALS and Extension at NC State, including faculty and staff both on campus (34 interviews) and across 13 N.C. Cooperative Extension county centers in all five districts (74 interviews).

SUMMARY

I was pleased to learn that the personnel interviewed were consistently enthusiastic about their work, dedicated to our mission and optimistic about the future of Extension. And I'm proud that they felt comfortable providing candid feedback and ideas for how we can do better, particularly around three core areas:

1. **Strategic Planning** – need for a long-term Extension strategic plan (a documented plan with goals and tactics) to help guide our respective activities.
2. **Extension Advisory Councils and Program Committees** – need for updated guidance and training for Extension personnel working with volunteer county advisory councils and program committees.
3. **County Departmental PCard Initiative** – need for guidance and training as part of the county PCard initiative rollout.

While these topics rose to the top, your colleagues also were instrumental in helping define other timely needs and opportunities, such as fostering communication between campus specialists and county agents, providing consistent professional development training across the state, marketing Extension programs within diverse local communities, and supporting agent work-life balance, among others.

You may [view the full audit report \(PDF\)](#) on the Extension intranet.

MOVING FORWARD

At the onset of the audit, we had no idea how much our state and the world around us was about to change because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As our families, friends and neighbors try to navigate the challenges and uncertainties ahead, it's more important than ever that Extension rise to the occasion, realize our full potential and continue serving the state as a source of science-based solutions that improve lives in every county and community.

I'm excited to share that we've already begun taking steps in the right direction:

- NC State University has started [the planning process for a new strategic plan](#), which will soon incorporate each college, including CALS and Extension. I have been personally involved in the launch of this process as part of the [task force related to the land-grant mission](#) of NC State.
- Dr. Mark Blevins has been working with our State Advisory Committee for several months now with the goal of understanding and implementing ways to improve our advisory committee processes at all levels.
- The county PCard initiative is well underway – CALS Business Operations (CBO) has [developed training](#) and [guidance resources for county personnel](#), while every county should receive their card(s) by the end of 2020.

Nonetheless, work remains to be done, and I'm committed to sustaining our progress on these and other strategic opportunities. We will continue to learn, adapt and grow our Extension family for the benefit of all North Carolinians.

Best,
RichB



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