

Stand for Nothing-Fall for Anything

"An organization that stands for nothing, falls for anything," is a thought that comes to mind when I think of the need to update the philosophical base of the Extension System. Yes, I do agree. Extension needs to not only update its philosophical base, it needs to ensure that the philosophy, once updated and adapted by the system, truly acts as the foundation on which the organization and all of its activities are based.

As a 25-year employee of the Extension System, I have seen many changes occur in the system-some good and some not so good. One of the not-so-good changes has been the loss of a commonly defined and publicly stated philosophy Extension System personnel can identify with and from which all practice programs and activities emanate. I have heard lots of talk; but I have seen very little action. When one checks the practices of the Cooperative Extension System's administrators and professionals with the principles that supposedly undergird these practices, a vast gap often appears. How many of you have "Extension Strategic Plans" with carefully worded statements of values and philosophy lying on your shelves or in your files? Do these plans and statements guide your actions and those of your system's administration? From my viewpoint, these have too often been empty words reflecting the need to have a document, because it's the popular thing to do, but not to truly guide the behavior of the organization.