

UNH Cooperative Extension

Employment Status of Professional Field Staff

Occasionally there is some confusion regarding the employment status of Extension Educators and Program Associates located off the campus of the University of New Hampshire. This confusion is understandable due to the rather complex organization of Cooperative Extension that involves federal, state, and county governments.

The purpose of this statement is to explain the employment status so confusion might be minimized in the future.

Many of our field staff hired prior to 1987 hold a federal appointment. This means they participate in the Civil Service retirement program and qualify to participate in the federal benefits program. Since 1987, all new Extension Educators joining Cooperative Extension were no longer given a federal appointment but rather a University of New Hampshire appointment, eligible for University benefits.

Each land-grant university throughout the United States has Cooperative Extension. The land-grant university thus serves as the employer and the "home base" of all Cooperative Extension professionals throughout the state. County Extension Educators and Program Associates are, thus, subject to policies of the University of New Hampshire System Board of Trustees as well as certain policies of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Since our field staff are housed off the campus, they are, many times, identified as county employees. This, too is understandable since our counties provide all of the direct support costs of our staff in the field, and a portion of each salary.

It is important, however, that it is understood that Extension Educators and Program Associates have but ONE EMPLOYER. The maintenance of a state organization helps assure equity of all staff members, both on and off campus, as equity may relate to salaries, performance appraisal, promotion, fringe benefits, etc.

Maintaining a strong partnership, however, between federal, state and county governments in the conduct of Cooperative Extension work is essential.

In all counties, our County Advisory Councils play a very important role. Councils not only become involved in helping to establish program priorities, but are also directly involved in the hiring process.

Each county council is responsible for the expenditure of funds provided by each county delegation. Specific arrangements for budget management may vary from one county to the other, but the councils provide that essential link with county governments.

In order to maintain a statewide organization, it is essential that there be close communication between the Office of the Director and each UNH Cooperative Extension County Advisory Council. This is accomplished through the County Office Administrator, the UNH Cooperative Extension State Advisory Council, and through direct communication between the Office of the Director and council members.