



# Impact Statement

## Project Titles:

1. Identifying How We Can Attract and Retain Effective Extension Employees
2. Increasing Extension's Outreach on the Texas A&M University Campus

## Issues:

(1) Nearly one-half (48%) of County Extension Agents employed with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service have been with the agency less than five years; 29% have been employed less than 2 years. Employee turnover can be costly due to the expenses related to the hiring and training of new Agents. There is also a loss of program delivery between the time that one Agent leaves and his/her replacement is hired and on board. While employee turnover within Extension tends to be lower than other state agencies, hiring and retaining effective County Agents is critical for sustaining Extension program delivery at the local level.

(2) Interactions with on-campus organizations and students strongly suggest that AgriLife Extension is a “well-kept” secret on the Texas A&M University campus in College Station. Students may have heard of programs such as 4H or Master Gardeners but they don't connect them with Extension. A 2015 campus survey on food security found that there is strong interest among students in educational programs related to topics such as nutrition, healthy cooking, food budgeting, and gardening. With more than 60,000 students enrolled at A&M, this presents a unique opportunity to develop and market Extension programs to young adults (along with faculty and staff) who not only represent an untapped clientele base but potential decision makers with respect to Extension's future (i.e. clientele, voters, future legislators, etc.).

## What has been done:

**Issue 1.** Initially we looked at exit interviews from employee resignations to identify the most common reasons why Agents left Extension. Next, working with Extension's Organizational Development Unit and a team of graduate students, we surveyed current employees to better understand the factors that brought them to work for Extension as well as the challenges and factors that might push them to leave the agency. Results from both studies were shared with Extension Administration and used by one student for her Master's thesis.

**Issue 2.** We challenged two student workers in our Extension Foods and Nutrition Unit to develop, market, and implement student-centered educational activities on the A&M campus. This included short YouTube videos (<http://tinyurl.com/ycpztkqd>), social media engagement (<https://www.facebook.com/tamufn/>), and face-to-face programs on topics such as dorm room cooking and mini-fridge makeovers.

### **Impacts/New Partnerships:**

Both of the projects have given me the opportunity to work with individuals in other units as well as our Extension Administration. Through our on-campus Extension project, we have been able to work with organizations, campus leaders, and students to maximize our outreach efforts during this initial phase. The campus outreach project has also provided an opportunity for students within our unit to increase their leadership skills and gain confidence as they enter the workforce and/or graduate school.

### **Outcome of Project (societal impact/ measure of increased quality of life)**

Issue 1. Findings from our employee studies have provided additional information to Agency Administration as they continue to identify strategies that will enable AgriLife Extension to remain relevant and viable for future generations.

Issue 2. Success with our initial on-campus activities has led to the hiring of a full-time Program Assistant who will be responsible for developing, marketing and implementing Extension programs targeted towards young adults on the A&M campus.

### **How has your project been aided by your FSLI experience?**

Both of these projects required the collaboration with other individuals and units; this also meant working with individuals from diverse backgrounds and taking projects from the initial stages of development through actual implementation. The strategies and tools learned through FSLI have helped with the development of teams in a way that three years ago would have been much different. When it comes to making decisions in my unit, I find myself getting input from others more often and considering all possible solutions and consequences when addressing problems and issues. Thanks for a wonderful experience and invaluable learning opportunity!

### **Contact information:**

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