


June 25, 2009

To: Colorado County Commissioners

From: Deborah J. Young



Associate Provost and Director, Colorado State University Extension

Re: CSU Extension 2009 County Commissioner Survey

Thank you for your input regarding satisfaction of CSU Extension. Two primary measures are used to track the success of Colorado State University Extension. First, we track the number of client contacts annually. In 2008, we reached 833,000 Colorado residents; 82,090 youth participated in 4-H programs; 10,682 volunteers donated hours to our communities.

Second, we measure the degree of satisfaction of the County Commissioners. The third annual County Commissioner Satisfaction Survey was conducted from April 21 to May 27, 2009. The design and methodology were reviewed and approved by CSU human subjects department. A five point scale was used for evaluation. The variables studied include: (1) the quality of programs and services provided by local Extension offices; (2) the expertise and knowledge of Extension personnel; (3) the responsiveness and service level of county Extension personnel; (4) the perceived value to citizens of Extension programs and services; (5) the relative importance of various program areas to the local citizens as perceived by the commissioners; (6) demographic information; (7) subject insights and comments regarding CSU Extension. In order to elicit more precise input, new questions were added, asking specifically about program areas.

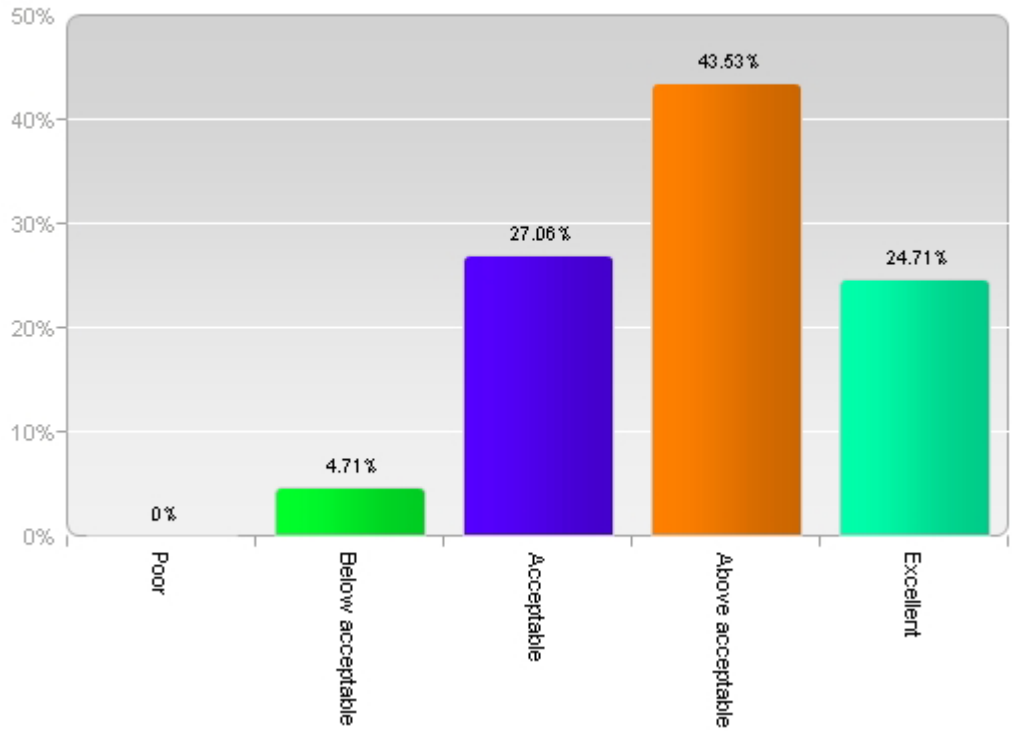
While the survey was designed by Extension, the survey was conducted out of the Office of the Vice Provost for Outreach and Strategic Partnerships, with Dr. Louis Swanson as the primary investigator. Participants received a letter directly from the Vice Provost containing the link to take the survey online and a hardcopy of the survey offering the choice to complete a paper survey. The letter stressed the importance of the input, the confidential nature of the survey and the voluntary nature of the survey. Two weeks after the initial letter a second reminder letter was sent. All results were received and compiled in the VPOSP office.

A total of 205 surveys were sent to all commissioners/council members in counties where CSU has Extension offices or provides Extension services. The total number of responses received was 93 (89 complete), for a total response rate of 45.4 percent (30 percent is considered a 'good' response rate for mail-in or online surveys).

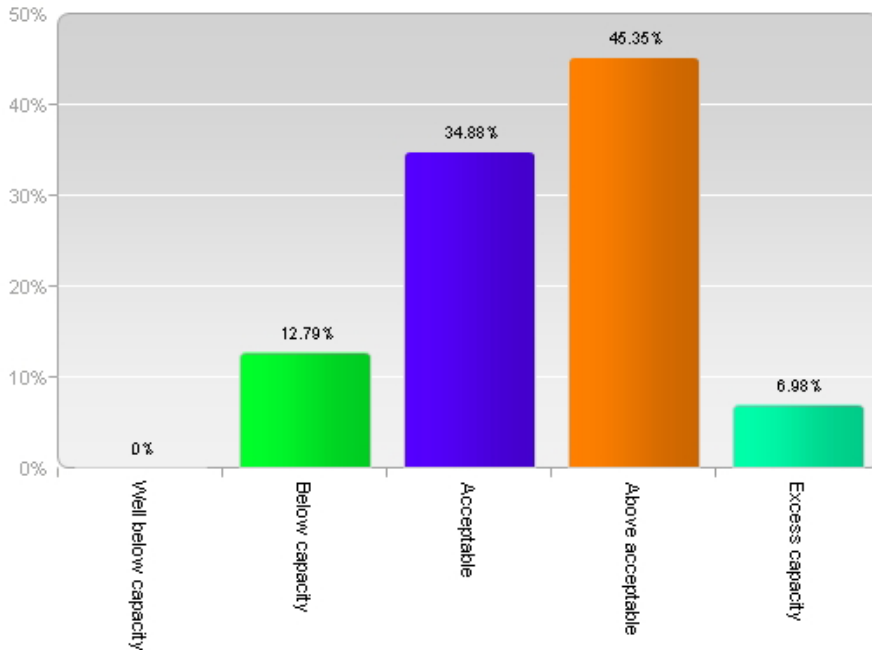
Summary of Results

Statewide, **overall satisfaction** with the service citizens receive was 95.3% acceptable, above acceptable or excellent; with 24.71% as excellent.

Q33. Rate your overall satisfaction with the service the citizens receive from your local county/area Extension office.



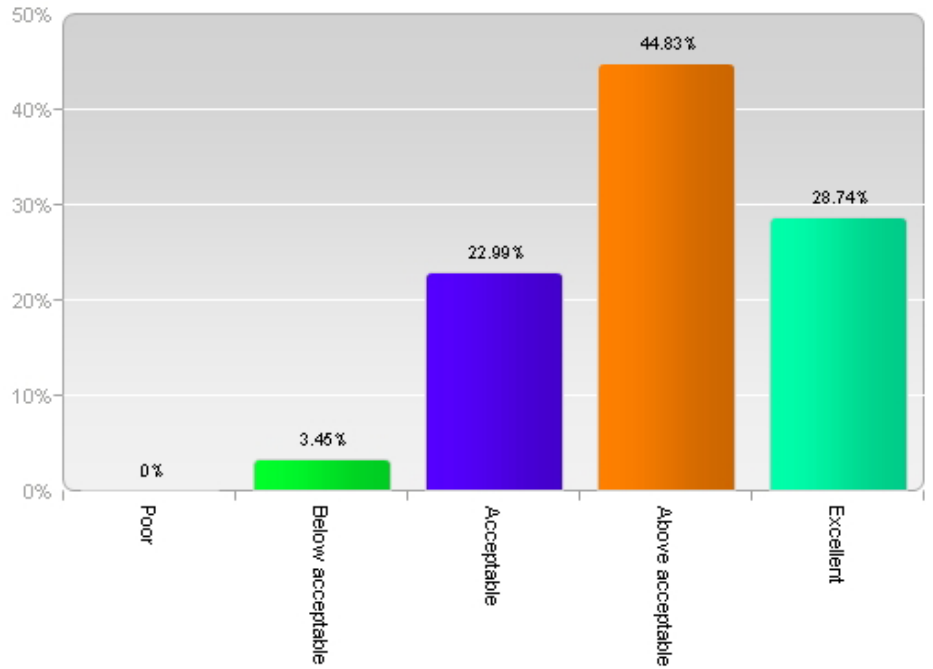
Q7. Please rate the local offices' ability to meet the needs of your county.



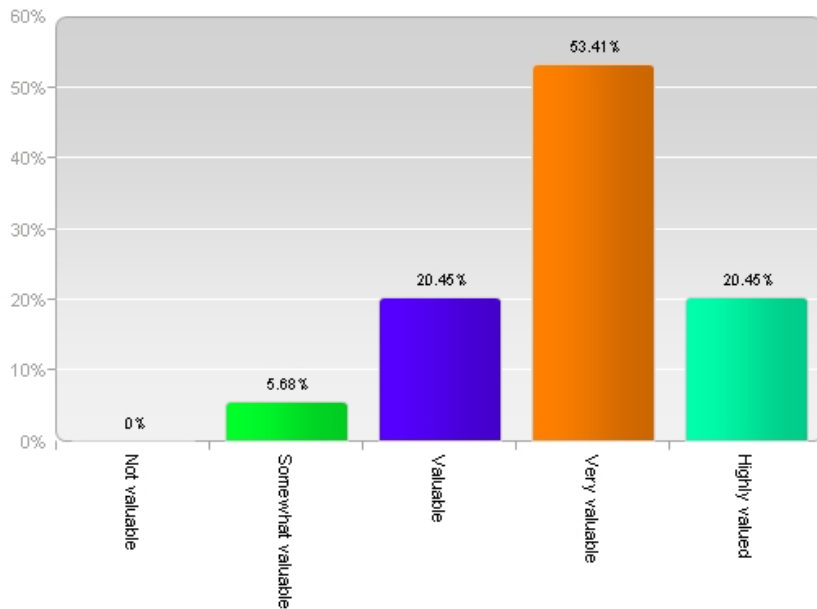
Commissioners were also satisfied with the **local offices' ability to meet the needs of each county**, with 87.21% rated acceptable, above acceptable or excess capacity.

Commissioners rated the services provided from local Extension office favorably, with 96.56% rated as acceptable, above acceptable or excellent.

Q5. Rate the quality of the programs and services provided from your local Extension office.



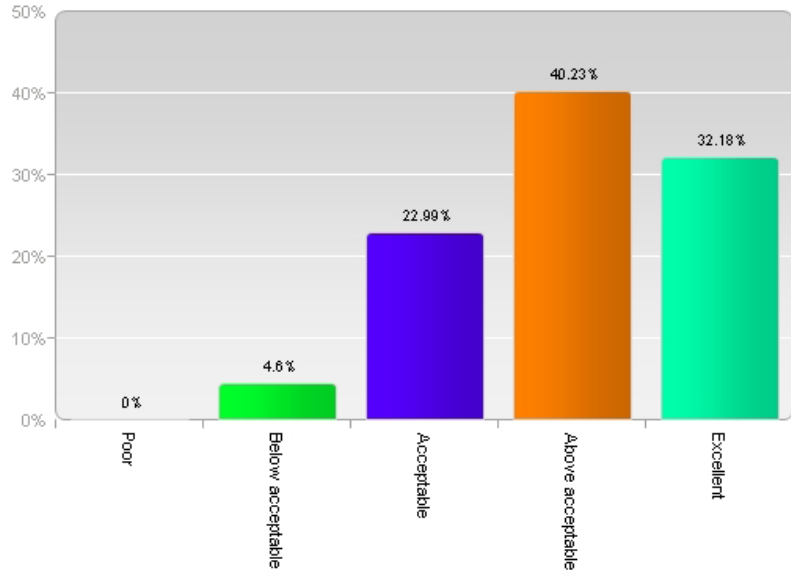
Q10. How would you rate the value received by the citizens of your county from programs and services delivered by Extension?



The value received by the citizens from programs and services delivered by Extension: was valuable, very valuable or highly valued according to 94.31% of the respondents.

The **responsiveness and service level** of Extension personnel in meeting the needs of citizens was found to be 95.40% acceptable, above acceptable or excellent. One commissioner noted: “Agents/personnel are very open to public and go the extra mile to help people.” Another said: “Be a little more adept to change and not just the traditional model.”

Q14. Rate the responsiveness and service level of your county Extension personnel in meeting the needs of your county citizens.



Participants were asked to rate existing programs in our three main focus areas; these programs are supported by our federal funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Programs in 4-H youth development were universally supported by 98.87% of respondents, who rated this program as important, very important or critical. One participant noted, “4-H is the program that carries the day for Extension...”

For programs in the agriculture, natural resources and horticulture field, ratings ranged from 89.78% to 77.64% important, very important or critical, in the following order: agriculture and business management, master gardeners and horticulture, crop and livestock production, water quality and quantity, and forestry and range (which includes fire protection and weed management). One person commented, “Extension is integral to the success of our local agricultural businesses and farms and paves the way for future ag business. With the large leap in small acreage farms in our county, the offerings of the CSU Extension office are more critical than ever.”

For programs in the family, consumer and health science field, ratings ranged from 77.65% to 59.99% important, very important or critical, in the following order: nutrition education, health promotion/disease prevention, healthy homes, family financial management, food safety and wellness, home energy, healthy aging/gerontology/aging issues, parenting and child

development, and consumer science and housing. One commissioner noted that a much needed program is, “how to survive in today's economy.”

Funding and resources will continue to be limited. It is clear that concerns continue on funding for personnel and that CSU Extension does not have the funding necessary to do all the programs requested. (This basic comment appears many times in the 2008 and 2009 survey). One commissioner noted, “Programs are above excellent, but there are budget constraints that prevent them from doing some of the activities requested of them.”

We responded to last year’s survey as follows:

- Commissioners urged CSU to reinstate funding for Extension and fill vacant positions. We hired eight new agents in 2008—up until October 2008—when CSU Administration mandated a hiring freeze. A presentation on Extension funding is available and posted on the Extension website to provide transparency. We hope that the economic situation in the state will improve so that we can again fill vacancies in the coming year.
- A continuing concern is the CSU hiring process. We reviewed and updated policy and criteria for hiring. We have made some adjustments in hiring, such as hiring program associates with a B.A. /B.S. degree instead of agents with a M.S. degree in some situations. We are making every effort to expedite the paperwork.
- You asked us to better market services, reach more people, and make people aware of CSU Extension. CSU Extension participated in a nationwide Extension survey, noted below. We found that awareness of CSU Extension is higher—at 50 percent—in Colorado than in other states (38%). Additionally, awareness of 4-H in Colorado (77%) is much higher than awareness of Extension (50%). Awareness of the master gardener program is lower (22%) than awareness of Extension. Very few people know that 4-H or master gardener is part of Extension.
- We have updated the Extension website (www.ext.colostate.edu), produced new publications and updated 104 fact sheets. We are exploring new ways to introduce Extension to new audiences, such as billboards at various airports around the state. We are working with Colorado State University to enhance awareness and increase exposure of Extension on campus (with 30,000 employees). We are growing our partnership with alumni and admissions.
- Last year’s survey recommended that we develop mission, vision, strategic plan and local programming in the context of today’s critical needs, other services available and funding constraints. The 2009–2014 strategic plan is complete and available at www.ext.colostate.edu/staffres/strat-plan.pdf.

In 2008, CSU Extension also participated in a nationwide Extension survey to provide more input on program, image and branding both nationwide and Colorado-specific. This survey addressed the general public and provided a different perspective. It is interesting to note that programs in the family, consumer and health sciences are more strongly supported in this survey than in the commissioner survey. When asked to indicate agreement or disagreement on the types of programs needed by consumers, the top two programs noted were (1) programs that teach people how to better manage finances (80%) and (2) programs that help youth develop leadership skills (83%). If consumers sought help from some resource in the areas Extension focuses on, the top three areas sought were: (1) personal health (54%), (2) personal finance (39%), and (3) gardening and landscaping (30%).

Action steps for the coming year:

- Work with County Commissioners, advisory boards and stakeholders to determine subject matter expertise and location of new positions. All agents will be asked to serve more than one county, as we structure our organization to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
- Continue to manage the hiring process to decrease the amount of time needed. An analysis showed that this process ranged from two to nine months in the last two years.
- Increase awareness of CSU Extension through continued marketing, including developing the message that 4-H and master gardener are Extension programs.
- Work with other outreach and engagement units on campus to provide maximum service and information to the people of Colorado.

Colorado State University Extension is committed to meeting critical locally defined needs and to continuous improvement. We look forward to the ongoing input, dialogue and progress with the state's County Commissioners as a critical foundation for those goals.

If you have questions or would like more information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Cc: Tony Frank, President
Rick Miranda, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President
Bill Farland, Senior Vice President for Research and Engagement
Lou Swanson, Vice Provost for Outreach and Strategic Partnerships