



A joint effort to focus future programming efforts that will benefit all of Michigan's citizens

In 2005-2006 MSU Extension (MSUE) and the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station (MAES) conducted a comprehensive statewide process to determine what Michigan citizens saw as the most pressing issues that could be addressed by the organizations' research and educational programs.

The issue identification process included MSU faculty members (both those with MSUE and MAES appointments and other campus faculty members), administrators, partner organizations and citizens. In addition, each county MSUE office conducted a local assessment of needs, and the results of those efforts were synthesized into the overall outcomes. Citizens, faculty and staff members all provided input during the process.

The strongest message that was repeated by multiple audiences throughout the process was that both organizations should work to strengthen Michigan's economy. This theme emerged from detailed analysis in eight areas:

- Preparing youth for the future
- Promoting healthy lifestyles
- Building strong families
- Strengthening communities
- Promoting responsible land use
- Sustaining Michigan's natural resources
- Enhancing agricultural industries
- Encouraging economic diversification and sustainability

The theme of working to strengthen the state's economy will guide our research and program delivery through 2010. We will focus our efforts and impacts on five strategic priorities developed from the eight themes and we are committing ourselves and our resources to conduct research and produce unbiased, educational programs that continue to make a positive impact on the lives of families, communities and businesses across Michigan.

To better direct the use of our strengths and capitalize on opportunities, we will direct our efforts to target these strategic priorities that capture the cross-cutting nature of our work.

The five strategic priorities are:

- Developing entrepreneurs
- Promoting healthy lifestyles
- Preparing for the expanding bioeconomy
- Educating and supporting decision makers
- Building leaders for today and tomorrow

While our program efforts will be directed toward articulating our mission and strategic vision around these cross-cutting priorities, we are also deeply committed to working at the intersections of community, family and industry needs – what MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon likes to call the “sweet spots” of our assets. For that reason, we are very excited about the possibilities that exist for research and Extension initiatives for these priorities.



What do these priorities mean for our future?

The 21st century world is a rapidly changing place. Having an issues identification process that is systematically updated allows the MAES and MSUE to ensure that programming efforts are efficiently and effectively targeted to meeting the changing needs of Michigan's youth, families, agricultural and natural resources audiences. Both organizations are positioned to direct their resources to address current needs and emerging trends.

Our greatest strength will continue to lie in our community-based approach to delivery and our unwavering efforts to serve the needs of families, industries and communities, regardless of whether they are urban, suburban or rural. We promote healthy lifestyles for all, we build leaders for the present and the future, and we equip decision makers for each setting and in all of our programming contexts.

As we continue to work to apply the model of transformational education, we help people apply knowledge and research so that they can make positive changes in their lives. They use what they've learned to transform communities, open new businesses and wisely manage our natural resources. Our strong partnerships with volunteers produce young people who are capable and well positioned to enter the workforce. We prepare decision makers in the public and private realms and resource managers from foresters to farmers with the information tools that they need to achieve sustainable goals. We'll also empower families with the knowledge and tools they need to make healthy choices so that they can make contributions to their communities, their counties and their country.

Finally, it's important to recognize that even before anyone had heard the term "knowledge economy," MAES and MSUE were established contributors. We are both thriving examples of Michigan's best public higher education assets. We represent unique investments that are community-based, and focused on the discovery and application of science-based information to the practical needs of a society in pursuit of a strengthened economy and enriched quality of life.

As the issue identification process ends, we will all begin working to develop the action plans to support the five strategic priorities through such efforts as educational initiatives, AoE team program development and research. We look forward to discussing how we will all move forward with these plans in the upcoming regional and campus forums.

The meeting dates are: campus, October 30; Central Region, November 1; North Region, November 2; Upper Peninsula Region, November 3; Southeast Region, October 24; and Southwest Region, November 10.

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