May 12, 2016

Dear Extension Board Members,

As we are planning for the next year and beyond, Kansas State University and K-State Research and Extension are facing significant state cuts and challenging budget years ahead. We anticipate a budget reduction again this next fiscal year beginning July 1. However, we may not know the overall size and impact of such reductions for some time. As you all know, Kansas budget revenues have not been sufficient to meet budgeted expenditures. This resulted in the recent call-back of funds from all units supported with state funds, and we believe that further reductions will be necessary.

It is important for you and your board to understand that large reductions have occurred in our state appropriated funds during the past few years, and the impact such reductions have had on our programs. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the State of Kansas currently provides funding for higher education that is 21% below pre-2008 levels. With 92% of our state, federal and main campus funds invested in people, the impact of cuts on the K-State Research and Extension budget has been a significant reduction in personnel. With more than a 20% cut in state funding, we have reduced personnel in administration, faculty / specialist positions, and University support staff positions. Extension is down 22% in administrative positions. We also have 10% fewer full time Extension specialist positions and 25% fewer University support staff positions at the area and state level.

Over the years, we have not received any state support to offset increasing operational costs. In fact, we have not had any increase from the State of Kansas in operating funds for many, many years. Faced with increased costs and continuing programmatic needs, we have kept doing what we do by significantly increasing our revenues from outside funding sources, such as grants, contracts, gifts, fees, and sponsorships. We have utilized faculty innovation and creativity to maintain and grow programs in a time of declining state support. And we have benefitted from increased main campus funding to support our K-State Research and Extension budget.

During this past decade, with state budget reductions and personnel cuts, we have continued to support local units. Our support to local units actually increased by 8.3% since 2007. But, we have reached the point where change is necessary, if we are to provide the best possible Extension programs and improve the lives of Kansans. As much as we have done, we must do more to develop alternative funding sources for our programs.

State budget cuts will reduce our flexibility and further erode our ability to meet our programmatic obligations. The amount of funds provided to local units will be negatively impacted by the State of Kansas funding decisions.
We must all work together during these difficult times and remain focused on developing and delivering quality educational programs. We must not allow the current budget challenges to detract us from our vision to provide a world class Extension system.

Thank you for your service to K-State Research and Extension as a member of the elected local board. Your teamwork in this process is very much appreciated. We welcome your ideas and suggestions as we work together in fulfilling our mission.

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