

## EPSILON SIGMA PHI



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*Knowledge for  
Life*

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER-JENNIFER WILSON

When the clock struck midnight on January 1, 2020, I doubt that any of us envisioned the way the first six months of the year would unfold. I never dreamed that a world-wide pandemic would bring about quarantines, social distancing and pretty much shut down life as we knew it, nor did I expect that our nation would go through dark days of blatant racism, social unrest and political tension. Would I have suspected I wouldn't see the inside of my office for months, or the campfire circle at Rock Springs would be silent, or that we'd even dream of cancelling a county fair? Absolutely not.

But it's happening, and for a while now I've been pondering the purpose in all this chaos. I can't help but think—what if 2020 happened for a reason?

What if it's just what we needed to make us slow down and examine what's really important? What if it's a lesson in not taking simple things for granted? What if it's an opportunity to take stock in the way we've been doing things and open our eyes to another world of possibilities? What if it's a reminder that the physical and emotional well-being of people is more important than baseball or blue ribbons? What if it's a message that no matter how far we've come in racial equality and respect for differences there's still so much more that needs to be done? What if it's an unprecedented opportunity to grow?

I'm a firm believer in making lemonade when handed lemons, and K-State Research and Extension has opened the biggest lemonade stand in organizational history over the past 4 months. We've been nimble and quick to respond to critical issues. We've facilitated crucial but difficult conversations. We've made years' worth of progress in digital education delivery in a matter of weeks. We've innovated and we've celebrated our wins, big and small.

We didn't accomplish these things without some moments of panic and pain, but discomfort leads to growth. How have you grown over the past few months? How will you continue to grow and develop your skillset in the post-COVID world?

Global organizational change strategists at McKinsey and Company suggest that for employees to respond well to change, a specific set of skills is important.

These skills include:

- the ability to operate in a fully digital environment,
- critical thinking and problem-solving skills which allow employees to respond to critical issues with creativity, innovation and top-notch project management skills,
- strong social and emotional skills for effective collaboration and inclusion,
- and
- adaptability and resilience skills.

ESP members have several opportunities coming up to grow their skillset. Applying for an ESP Program Innovation Grant is a great way to use critical thinking, problem solving, innovation and project-management skills. The [grant applications](#) are due August 15. Past grants have been used for all kinds of innovative

*Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP) is dedicated to fostering standards of excellence in the Extension system and developing the Extension profession and professional.*

**HAPPY 90TH BIRTHDAY!  
ALPHA RHO CHAPTER  
OF EPSILON SIGMA PHI**



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER CONTINUED...

programs. This year's in-person national ESP conference has been cancelled due to COVID-19, but there will still be an opportunity to participate virtually. Check the [national ESP website](#) for information as it becomes available. National ESP's webinar series continues August 25 with *Social Marketing Principles to Increase Behavior Change Among Extension Clients*. Be sure to [register](#) in order to receive the webinar link. Lastly, consider broadening your knowledge and skillset in the area of inclusion by participating in the ESP Urban and Culturally Diverse Audiences Affinity Group. Marlin discusses this in detail in his president-elect report.

While 2020 is nothing like we expected, we'll keep making lemonade as long as lemons come our way. In each of those lemons search for your opportunity to grow.

*Jennifer Wilson*  
Chapter President



## Past-President Reflections

What a year 2020 has been, so far! Despite on our ongoing challenges related to COVID-19, I have been proud to see the work of ESP continuing and thriving across our state and country. To that end, the ESP Endowment board received three applications in the Spring of 2020 for professional development funds. All three applications were fully funded, totaling \$3,750. However, due to COVID-19 traveling restrictions and the cancellation of conferences and events, it is likely that only a small fraction of these funds will be used to cover any available virtual conference options. On behalf of the endowment board and myself, we want to commend those who applied for funds and their continued dedication to professional development. In other news, the nominations committee secured a great slate of (current) officers for 2019-2020 and we are looking forward to hearing from volunteers who want to serve the organization, advance their own skills and professional development, and join in on the fun in the upcoming 2020-2021 ESP calendar year! Be safe and stay well, friends! We're all in this together.

Erin Yelland,  
Past-President, ESP Endowment Chair, and Chair of the Nominations Committee

## Historian Report, June 2020

In 2020, the Alpha Rho Chapter of Epsilon Sigma Phi celebrates 90 years. The first Alpha Rho chapter meeting was held on March 21, 1930. Learn more about the first 80 years at <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/esp-alpharho/documents/Placemat-ESP.pdf> Seems like we have a party to plan!

Elizabeth Kiss – Annalist/Historian

## What ESP Means to Me ?

*It has been a pleasure serving as your secretary for the past two years. I joined ESP for two reasons. First, I am so grateful for the professional development opportunities that Extension and ESP offer, encourage and support through time and funding. This is the first employer that I have had who builds this into our daily work. It says to me that the organization and ESP value me and want me to succeed. Secondly, I belong to a number of specific professional organizations so I wanted to find one that encourages diversity and cross programming. I look forward to our meetings at Annual Conference to visit with agents working in other program areas. My hope is that we will be able to have our annual meetings again in person in the future. - Lisa Martin, ESP Secretary*

A professional organization that provides me with professional development and grant funding opportunities. - Candis Meerpohl, Northeast Area Representative



### Retiree Reflections on ESP

As a retiree and Life Member, ESP has provided me the opportunity to stay engaged with, and support, the profession (and it's workers) that I cared deeply about for so many years and that I continue to admire greatly. Staying connected through ESP has been very fulfilling to me in my retirement years, and I highly recommend it! - Doug Beech, Retiree Director, Alpha Rho Chapter

Resource Development and Management Committee Member, National ESP

ESP includes all disciplines and positions, as a member you can meet, share, and learn from professionals across the extension system. In Kansas, we work closely with members in the North Central Region, as well as participation in national activities. Scholarships, grants, and opportunities for recognition are available for professional development including leadership activities and trainings.

I remember hearing one of our previous chapter presidents say after attending National Conference, that he made a point to continue attending that annual event for the professional development it offered—that he did not get through his professional subject matter meetings ! From my personal experience, I would say those opportunities were priceless.

As retirees we can be as involved in ESP activities as we choose to be. At this point, we're still considering what that will mean for this year's virtual annual conference. Stay tuned . . .

## Engaging with ESP Affinity Groups

In 2017, ESP National organized an affinity group around issues related to serving the needs of Latinx Communities. One year later, the layer or urban-serving communities was added to that affinity group. The first time this group met face-to-face was in Manhattan, KS during the ESP National Conference in October, 2018. In April, 2020, the group changed its name to be more inclusive. It is now the ESP Urban and Culturally Diverse Audiences Affinity Group. While revisiting the name, we also took a look at our vision and mission and have updated those statements, as well.

The vision of this Affinity Group is to serve as “a collaborative space that connects and supports Extension Professionals serving urban and/or culturally diverse audiences.” Its mission is to “create a network for Extension Professionals in ESP who seek to extend the resources of our land-grant universities to address the needs of urban communities and/or culturally diverse or underserved audiences.” I encourage you to visit the Affinity Group page at <https://espnational.org/Affinity-Groups> to review the supporting statements that we have assembled to describe how that vision and mission will be achieved.

I admire that this group is focused both internally and externally. We want to provide a sense of belonging to the minority Extension Professional who serves urban communities or is of a non-dominant culture by creating a networking space specifically set aside for these colleagues. We also want to ensure that we are achieving equity, diversity and inclusion in our engagement with all of our communities. Regardless of the demographics of your local unit, your experience as an ESP member and as an Extension Professional will be enriched by participating with this group.

The ESP Urban and Culturally Diverse Audiences Affinity Group meets monthly via Zoom. Please let me know if you are interested in getting connected on those calls. We'll also have two formal gatherings of the Affinity Group at the National Meeting in October (either in Rochester or remotely) that will be a wonderful way to get oriented to the group. I encourage your participation with this relatively young effort of ESP at the national level. Just let me know how I can help you get plugged in!

Marlin Bates, ESP – Alpha Rho President-Elect

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