

ENGAGING OUR CLIENTELE: DIVERSITY

Diversity is defined as having variety in several characteristics. For this review, issues related to the ways Southeast District Extension responds to diversity in ages, races/ethnicities/cultures, and socioeconomic statuses will be examined. It is recognized that diversity is an issue that falls within all programming areas but also needs to be highlighted separately. The Southeast District Diversity Team views diversity from two perspectives:

1. External, which examines the Southeast District's counties, communities, and clientele.
2. Internal, which examines the Southeast District's staff and staffing issues.

Current Situation – External Issues

Income

The 2000 census indicated that persons living within the Southeast District's 28 counties had a per capita income in 1999 of \$20,621 as compared to \$19,315 for Nebraska. The per capita income by county in the Southeast District ranges from \$16,394 to \$22,879. Statewide, the range by county for per capita income is \$10,951 to \$22,879. Of the 65 counties not part of the Southeast District, 38 have a per capita income lower than any county in the Southeast District.

USDA Economic Research Service estimated 2003 county-level poverty rates showed that over two-thirds (19) of the Southeast District counties had poverty levels lower than 10% with the remaining counties (9) ranging from 10.1 % to 12.1%. The rate of poverty for the whole of the Nebraska population was 10.0%. A number of programs target limited resource families in the Southeast District. Building Nebraska Families (BNF), Nutrition Education Program (NEP) and other programs reach many lower income families. In addition, after school programs provide opportunities for varying types of education for youth including those from lower income families.

Surveys collected from Southeast District staff indicate that middle income audiences for the most part comprise the primary audience. Furthermore, staff indicated that upper income families generally do not utilize programming but serve as our connection to resources and clientele in the communities.

Awareness and Accommodation

The awareness and accommodation of needs of clientele is a critical issue and will continue to be monitored on an ongoing basis. Staff reported that special needs are being met when necessary. Offices have access to equipment to accommodate various physical disabilities through University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Several counties reported that specific programs are offered to accommodate people with disabilities. For example, a horse club provides opportunities for youth with special needs to participate, county fair judging is adjusted for ability levels, interpreters are available to facilitate communication with participants who are hearing impaired, and translators are available for participants who are non-English speaking.

Ethnicity/Race/Culture

The U.S. Census 2000 data in the chart that follows show that the total population of the Southeast District counties is 1,197,460 which accounts for 70% of the state's population.

Race and Ethnicity:			<i>% of</i>			<i>% of</i>
U. S. Census 1990 and 2000	1990	2000	<i>2000</i>	1990	2000	<i>2000</i>
Racial/Ethnic Group	Southeast District			Nebraska		
Total Population	1,078,339	1,197,460	<i>Total</i>	1,578,385	1,711,263	<i>Total</i>
Not Hispanic or Latino:	1,055,571	1,138,356	<i>95.1%</i>	1,541,416	1,616,838	<i>94.5%</i>
White alone	983,720	1,031,289	<i>86.1%</i>	1,460,095	1,494,494	<i>87.3%</i>
Black or African American alone	55,754	66,014	<i>5.5%</i>	56,711	67,537	<i>3.9%</i>
Native American Alone	4,852	5,375	<i>0.4%</i>	11,719	13,460	<i>0.8%</i>
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	10,541	20,011	<i>1.7%</i>	12,026	22,324	<i>1.3%</i>
Some other race alone	704	1,136	<i>0.1%</i>	865	1,327	<i>0.1%</i>
Two or more races	N.A.*	14,531	<i>1.2%</i>	N.A.*	17,696	<i>1.0%</i>
Hispanic or Latino:	22,768	59,104	<i>4.9%</i>	36,969	94,425	<i>5.5%</i>
White alone	12,822	24,599	<i>2.1%</i>	20,463	38,767	<i>2.3%</i>
Black or African American alone	647	875	<i>0.1%</i>	693	1,004	<i>0.1%</i>
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	378	821	<i>0.1%</i>	691	1,436	<i>0.1%</i>
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	331	349	<i>0.03%</i>	396	443	<i>0.03%</i>
Some other race alone	8,590	28,515	<i>2.4%</i>	14,726	46,518	<i>2.7%</i>
Two or more races	N.A.*	3,945	<i>.3%</i>	N.A.*	6,257	<i>0.4%</i>

When looking at past and current population figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, it is apparent that the white population continues to be the predominant race not only in the state but in the Southeast District. Statistics also demonstrate that all races remain fairly stable except for those of Hispanic/Latino origin. The Hispanic/Latino population is growing more rapidly than any other ethnic group within the Southeast District.

The 2004 Extension accountability report data suggest that all Southeast District Extension staff reach an ethnically diverse audience. The highest percentage of contacts was with white audiences.

2004 Educational Contact Totals for Southeast District Staff

Total	White	Black	Native	Hispanic	Asian
442,757	399,302	20,546	1,644	17,170	4,095
100%	90%	4.6%	.03%	3.8%	.01%

Age

The age range with the largest population in Nebraska is the 35-54 age group as estimated by U.S. Census Projections 2005. This age group comprises 28% of the total state population. In 25 of 28 Southeast District counties the second largest age group is 45-54 (13.7%). Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy Counties' second largest population group are those in the 25-34 age range. Eighteen out of the

28 counties within the Southeast District have 15% or more of their population who are 65 and older. Statewide, 12.6% of population is 65 and older.

Urban and Rural

There continues to be a shift in the population from rural to urban/metropolitan areas within Nebraska and within the Southeast District communities. The U.S. Census data for 2000 indicate that the rural population has remained fairly steady from 1990 to 2000 but the metropolitan population has continued to grow. The most urbanized counties in Nebraska are located in the Southeast District.

Nebraska population estimates for the 2005 U.S. Census Bureau indicate the cities surrounding Omaha and Lincoln are the fastest growing in the state (Omaha World Herald, June 24, 2006). Gretna grew 106.4% between 2000-2005. Elkhorn and La Vista grew 34% during that time period. Hickman and Papillion grew 25% between 2000-2005. Omaha grew by 6.3% and the neighboring counties of Washington and Cass grew by 4.8% and 3.7% respectively.

Emerging trends/issues – External Issues

The issues that became the focus for the Southeast District Diversity Team to address were those areas which seemed to have the most change or might have the most impact within the next five years. All of the issues are important but addressing those that are the most emerging seemed to be a way to better focus time and resources.

Ethnicity/Race/Culture

Based on trends, census data projected the Hispanic/Latino population in Nebraska to increase by 25% from 2000 to 2004. In the Southeast District counties from 1990 to 2000 the Hispanic/Latino population increased 160%. Significant increases (higher than state average increases) in minority population were as follows, according to race and the number of counties showing a significant increase in that particular minority population: Asian, 5 counties; Black/African American, 2 counties; Native American Indian, 1 county; Hispanic/Latino, 3 counties and mixed race, 6 counties.

Age

According to state population projections (U.S. Census Projections 2005), the most significant population increase in Nebraska in the next 5 to 15 years will be in the age groups that range from 50-65 years old. Those 65 years and older will also show an increase but will not be as significant as the increase in the 50-65 age groups.

Urban and Rural

The trends indicate that there will continue to be an increase in the urban population and a decrease in the rural populations (U.S. Census 2000, reported September 2003). In the Southeast District, the projection from 1990 to 2020 indicates a 33% population increase in the urban areas. In contrast, trends indicate a decline in the overall population in rural communities. Projected county populations indicate that 11 of the 28 Southeast counties will decrease in population. The 17 counties that are projected to increase in population are those considered urban areas or located closest to metropolitan areas.

As the urban population increases, it appears there is a parallel increase in diversity in ethnicity and race. In contrast, there is a decrease in the rural populations overall with indications of a decrease in the white population but an increase in other ethnicities and races. Ten Southeast District counties had a decrease in the white population from 2000 to 2004 estimates, while minority populations showed a projected increase or at least maintaining of population numbers during the same time period.

The following information is reflective of population changes in the 28 Southeast District Counties from 1990 to 2004:

- 10 counties showed a significant increase in population (8.6 – 30.4%); 5 were rural counties and 5 were urban counties. The 5 rural counties were adjacent to urban counties.
- 9 counties showed a decrease in population (4.9 – 21.7%); all 9 counties were rural with none being adjacent to an urban county.
- Significant increases in minority population are referred to in the Ethnicity/Race/Culture section above.

Implications for Extension – External Issues

According to statewide and national population projections, there will be continued growth in the urban population, the 50-65 year old age groups, and in the ethnic minority populations. Projections imply that some of those emerging groups will be different than groups currently being served therefore it is implied that they will have different needs.

Recommendations – External Issues

The three emerging areas identified in this document that will be addressed under the recommendations section are: 1) increased audiences of Hispanic/Latino origin, 2) increased number of clientele in the 50-65 year old age ranges, 3) and a growth in the urban population paralleled with a decrease in rural population. Southeast District Extension staff need to:

- Partner with the diversity committees from other districts with a strong consideration for working with the Northeast District committee. They are currently involved in the review process and reflect similar emerging areas.
- Receive and provide ongoing professional development in the area of ethnic diversity.
- Challenge each work group to develop programming, staff development, and partnerships within each of the targeted issues. This needs to include methods for reporting evaluation and accountability. This will particularly be critical in the area of ethnic diversity especially for the Hispanic/Latino population.
- Consider refocusing one or two current staff members to coordinate and provide leadership for developing a comprehensive program addressing the growing ethnic population. This staff might serve in a partial appointment in this focus while maintaining some of their current focus or make this their major focus. Depending upon the percentage of the focus, this staff could serve in a district, multi-district, or state capacity. Their role might include staff training, identifying staff training, needs identification, etc.
- Identify a staff member to coordinate and provide leadership for developing a comprehensive program addressing the growing ethnic population. This staff member might serve in a statewide capacity.
- Secure monetary resources to expand programming to meet the needs of each of the diverse audiences. This would include but not be limited to: providing funding for staff, curricula, professional development, re-examining and adjusting delivery methods, and so forth.
- Change program and delivery methods to meet the needs of those groups within the emerging areas. Focus groups with these populations should be conducted to gather information to include but not be limited to: educational topics, preferred method of delivery, meeting location, marketing strategies, and so forth.

- Form external advisory groups to tackle issues related to each emerging population to help provide and implement recommendations of the focus groups as well as those from the advisory group.
- Encourage advisory group and focus groups to address the issue of hiring minority faculty and staff. What does Extension need to do? Why can't we hire minorities?
- Expand and build collaborations and partnerships to help provide and increase research, resources, and curricula.
- Market educational expertise through collaborations and partnerships with outside agencies.
- Identify UN-L faculty who have expertise in the cited emerging issues for guidance and direction.
- Create an environment within Extension to provide opportunities for sharing ideas for working with diverse audiences.

Current Situation – Internal Issues

Staff

The Southeast Research and Extension Center faculty and staff combined are 94.85% White/Non-Hispanic, 1.47% Black/Non-Hispanic, and 3.68% Hispanic. They are 72.06% female and 27.94% male. Within the University the combined faculty and staff are 90.36% White/Non-Hispanic and 9.64% minority. They are 51.76% male and 48.24% female.

The average age for Extension Educators is 50, and the median age is 53. The average age of the Extension Assistants is 39, the median age is 37. This does not include the county paid staff for which this information is not available.

Emerging trends/issues – Internal Issues

Staff

There are several emerging issues that are going to need to be addressed simultaneously. With the median age of Extension Educators being 53, projections are that there will be a large group of staff retiring in a short period of time and probably within the next five to ten years. In addition the demographics of the current staff do not currently reflect the emerging demographics of the population of the Southeast Research and Extension Center counties. These demographics include the urban shift as well as the dramatic increase in the Hispanic population.

Implications for Extension – Internal Issues

- With the retirement of experienced staff there will be a need to hire and train new staff with the intent of keeping Extension viable. Focused Educators (staff) to meet needs geographically (urban) and demographically should be recruited. All Extension staff, whether they are new hires or more experienced staff, will need to receive professional development training and education that will better equip them to respond to the needs of the rapidly changing populations. The populations identified in the external issues include: 1) increased audiences of Hispanic/Latino origin, 2) increased number of clientele in the 50-65 year old age ranges, 3) and a growth in the urban population paralleled with a decrease in rural population.

- With increasing emerging population needs and a lack of additional funding for positions, there will need to be continued and increased collaboration and assistance from other agencies and organizations that might have common areas of interest.

Recommendations - Internal Issues

- Based on needs assessments and priority programming issues, develop a staffing pattern to fit the changes in the three emerging areas.
- Implement a flexible transition plan for filling vacant positions as staff retires to provide an ongoing, uninterrupted, viable, relevant Extension program which is current with the emerging needs in the District. Assess and identify needs of each position prior to vacancy by looking. This is currently being done but will need to be ongoing utilizing multiple strategies which might include a map which show current program offerings, a map showing where focused areas are currently located and demographics highlighting population, ethnic diversity, rural, metropolitan, etc. This is complicated but needs to be addressed with the current issue of staff retirements in the future.
- Market Extension to help build a strong candidate pool for filling positions.
- Encourage partnerships and networks in all work group areas to leverage additional financial support for staffing.
- Seek grant or special funding to expand a specific targeted issue.
- Offer ongoing professional development to all Extension staff and administration, in order to recognize, understand, and respond to changing programming needs.
- Use current research from the Change Agent States Project for diversity as well as other research to develop our model for diversity staffing. The Change Agent States Project initiated by the National Association of State University and Land Grant Colleges is a catalytic step in beginning the transformation of the land grant system to support diversity. Research from this project as well as other issues facing extension in the area of diversity can be found in the Journal of Extension.