



# **SUS Planning for a Post-COVID World: Lessons Learned, Best Practices, and Future Considerations**

**Bret S Danilowicz, Provost, FAU  
Chair, Innovation & Online Steering Committee  
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The mission of the State University System of Florida is to provide undergraduate, graduate and professional education, research, and public service of the highest quality through a coordinated system of institutions of higher learning, each with its own mission and collectively dedicated to serving the needs of a diverse state and global society.

# What is Cooperative Extension?



- Partnership between federal, state, and county governments to translate scientific research and expertise through a university into public education and action, with a focus on supporting rural and urban communities.
- In Florida, the Cooperative Extension (CE) mission is represented by UF and FAMU as land-grant institutions. Extension offices are present in every one of Florida's 67 counties.
- The focus of CE is on agricultural and natural resources, community resource development, family and consumer issues, and youth development (e.g. 4-H).

# Key Questions:



- Is the SUS response going to be a return to the status quo or adapting to sustained change? How do we build excellence and greater resilience for the future?
- What inherent limitations and weaknesses, and potential opportunities, has the global pandemic revealed across the SUS and how successful have we been in addressing them over the past year?
- What are the most significant “lessons learned” with relevance to higher education? What “best practices” have emerged across the SUS that we may wish to share and adopt?
- What might the post-COVID “new normal” look like for higher education in Florida, and what innovations are most likely going to gain traction and sustain in the mid- to long-term?
- How can the 12 SUS institutions collaborate most effectively in anticipation of a potential paradigm shift in higher education?

# Planning Framework:



- Establish Framework: *SUS Planning for a Post-COVID World. Lessons Learned, Best Practices, and Future Considerations* [January 2021],
- Academic Planning [March 2021],
- Faculty Success [March 2021],
- Student Access, Progression and Learning (academic continuity) [June 2021],
- Strengthening Campus Communities [June 2021],
- Preventive Health [August 2021],
- Administrative and Budgetary Considerations [August 2021],
- Cooperative Extension [October 2022]
- *Final Report and Recommendations* [January 2022].

# *Cooperative Extension in a Post-Pandemic World*

## Challenges:



- The need to maintain a presence with, and connection to, county government and clients virtually
- Decline in engagement from clients that prefer face-to-face interaction
- Decreased engagement with 4-H due to schools teaching remotely
- Limited broadband access for clients and some extension faculty

# *Cooperative Extension* Lessons Learned and Best Practices:



- Connect to new audiences as county borders could be crossed virtually
- Access to community health officials allowed clients to be provided critical health information through extension agents
- Reduced commuting time for extension staff allowed them more time to write grants and publish work, and allowed more creativity around how to distribute work hours to better support their clients
- Online consultations increased, and these were more efficient time-wise and often as effective as face-to-face visits
- The virtual world facilitated more agent collaborations.

# *Cooperative Extension in a Post-Pandemic World*

## Recommendations:



- Develop extension agent expertise and skill sets for hybrid/HyFlex education
- While maintaining face-to-face programming, permanently transition a portion of extension to a remote format
- Use extension agents as educational first responders to fill communication gaps during state crises.
- Through the new virtual modalities, explore how to assist with new educational areas like workforce development to health equity through telemedicine



# Next steps:



- Final report and recommendations [January 2022].
- Report is being drafted by provosts on the Steering Committee, with the following sections being included:
  - Executive Summary
  - Delivering a Quality Student Experience
  - Creation of New Knowledge and its Application
  - Engagement with Our Communities
  - Operating an Efficient Enterprise



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