

August 2013

## Final Report

# Perceptions of Extension Personnel as Brand Managers for UF/IFAS Extension

IFAS Information and Communication Services

Katie Belton & Dr. Quisto Settle



Center for Public Issues Education  
IN AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

**UF**IFAS

PIE2012/13—16A

## Suggested Citation

Belton, K., & Settle, Q. (2013). Perceptions of Extension Personnel as Brand Managers for UF/IFAS Extension. PIE2012/13-16-A. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education.

## About the Authors

**Katie Belton** – Intern, UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education

**Quisto Settle** – Post-doctoral associate, UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education

## Acknowledgments

The development and implementation of this project, as with any endeavor, was a group effort. This project could not have come to completion without the help of the following individuals:

**Matt Benge** – Alachua County 4-H youth development agent, UF/IFAS

**Ruth Borger** – Assistant vice president, UF/IFAS Information and Communications Services

**Diane Craig** – Coordinator, UF/IFAS Program Development and Evaluation Center

**Liz Felter** – Orange County commercial horticulture agent, UF/IFAS

**Lauren Hrcirik** – Highlands County 4-H youth development agent, UF/IFAS

**Tracy Irani** – Director, UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education

**Alexa Lamm** – Assistant professor, UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education

**Nick Place** – Dean and director for Extension, UF/IFAS

**Joy Rumble** – Assistant professor, UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education

**Cindy Sanders** – Alachua County Extension director, UF/IFAS

## Contents

Suggested Citation .....	2
About the Authors.....	2
Acknowledgments .....	2
Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction.....	4
Findings .....	4
Recommendations .....	4
Background .....	6
Methods .....	6
Results .....	6
Demographics.....	6
Internal Communications.....	8
External Communication.....	11
Overall Perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension.....	18
Perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension Functions .....	25
Perceived Importance of Audiences.....	34
Mission Statement & Differentiation .....	35
UF/IFAS Extension Communication Materials .....	37
Employee Impact.....	40
Employment Perceptions.....	41
Findings .....	43
Internal Communications.....	43
External Communication.....	43
Overall Perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension.....	44
Perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension Functions .....	44
Perceived Importance of Audiences.....	44
Mission Statement.....	44
UF/IFAS Extension Communication Materials .....	44
Faculty vs. Non-faculty.....	44
County Faculty vs. State Faculty .....	45
Recommendations.....	45

## Executive Summary

IFAS Information and Communication Services  
AUGUST 2013

### Introduction

Due to limited resources, public sector organizations must often rely on their employees to convey the organizational brand to target audiences. County level employees of state Extension systems, however, live and work in their local counties but also must represent the state Extension system as a whole and even the university. One of the major branding challenges for state Extension services across the country have often dealt with the conflicting nature of Extension agents working in the counties but also being representatives of the university. This study was conducted to help IFAS, IFAS Communications Services (ICS) and state and county Extension faculty and staff understand the perceptions and needs of the people representing the UF/IFAS brand across the state of Florida.

A questionnaire was developed to address employee perceptions of communications and branding of UF/IFAS Extension. In June and July of 2013, personnel working with Extension were surveyed online through Qualtrics. The online survey was distributed to 829 faculty and staff who work with Extension. After incomplete responses were removed, there were 435 responses to the survey (52.5%). Members of the sampling frame were sent successive waves of emails until new responses were too low to justify further contacts. Data were analyzed for simple descriptive statistics.

### Findings

- Email was the most used and most preferred means of getting information about UF/IFAS Extension
- Workshops, websites, and word of mouth were considered the most used and most important channels for UF/IFAS Extension to communicate about its programs to public.
- “Education,” “training,” and “providing solutions” were the most effective words for explaining Extension personnel’s work to the public.
- Respondents believed external communications were important, but had neutral evaluations of the effectiveness and consistency of Extension's external communications.
- Employees had high overall perceptions of the organization, though accessibility was the lowest-rated attribute.
- Extension personnel believed the public and county leaders had relatively high perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension, though not as high as the Extension personnel’s own perceptions.
- The respondents tended to view providing research-based information, helping to solve problems, providing training for clientele, and expertise as the core functions of Extension.
- Clientele and funders were considered the most important opinions to UF/IFAS Extension.
- Extension personnel liked the mission statement but did not view it as particularly strong for differentiating UF/IFAS Extension from other organizations.
- County personnel had relatively neutral evaluations of the importance of differentiating between county offices.
- Extension personnel believed good design/branding were important, but they were not well aware of the resources that were available to them.
- Although still positive, state-level faculty had lower evaluations of UF/IFAS Extension and its functions than the other employee groups.

### Recommendations

- UF needs to be clearly linked to Extension when communicating about Extension to benefit from the associations with the university.

- UF/IFAS Extension needs to enhance efforts to increase public understanding of the organization, including increasing its communication with the public to improve awareness, which was indicated as a problem by Extension personnel.
- UF/IFAS Extension’s social media use should continue to increase. Social media offers the opportunity to reach a wider audience, including those who have been missed by traditional Extension efforts.
- The avenues deemed most important for communicating with the public were ones that effectively reach a specified audience, but this limits the ability to reach new audiences to increase overall awareness. Clarification of target audiences could aid communication with new audiences, including appropriate choice of communication tools and messages.
- UF/IFAS Extension and its personnel need to consistently represent the brand when using key messages and branding materials to increase the likelihood the public will remember the brand and its attributes.
- UF/IFAS Extension needs to ensure employees know what communication and branding resources are available to help ensure employees brand within UF/IFAS Extension’s guidelines.
- The results of this study indicate employees believe the organization’s core functions are providing research-based information, helping solve problems, providing training, and expertise. If these are not the core functions UF/IFAS Extension wants to represent, UF/IFAS Extension needs to work with Extension personnel to represent the most important functions in communications with external audiences.
- Focus on core functions in broader communications, such as brand materials and messages going out to large groups. The other functions are still important and need to be represented once external audiences begin searching for more in-depth information, but the core functions increase the simplicity of messages and make it easier for the messages to be remembered.
- When communicating with the public, formally or informally, personnel in Extension need to keep the scientific information relatable so the public can see the immediate benefits of Extension.
- The keywords reported by Extension personnel as most effective were education, training, and providing solutions. “Extension” as a term was not highly evaluated. While the name of the organization is unlikely to change, the key words could be useful when explaining what Extension is to new audiences.
- To avoid confusion, every UF/IFAS Extension county’s website should be consistent, simple, accessible and updated frequently, so the public can easily utilize it as a valuable tool.
- UF/IFAS Extension should continue using e-mail to relay information to employees because most employees prefer e-mail communication. UF/IFAS Extension supervisors should also relay important information face-to-face in addition to e-mail, particularly for non-faculty personnel.
- UF/IFAS Extension should make an effort to improve the connection between state-level faculty and Extension because state-level faculty had consistently lower views than the other respondent groups.
- The brief branding guide available on IFAS Communication’s website is a good start for improving employees’ brand management skills, but that resource should be actively distributed to Extension personnel
- Those interested in a more in-depth understanding of branding can pursue the branding course available through eXtension.org.

## Background

The Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (PIE Center) was contracted in March 2013 by Dr. Ruth Berger, IFAS Information and Communication Services (ICS) assistant vice president, to survey personnel working with UF/IFAS Extension as to their perceptions of their roles as brand managers. Due to limited resources, public sector organizations must often rely on their employees to convey the organizational brand to target audiences. Employees of state Extension systems, however, live and work in their local counties but also must represent the state Extension system as a whole and even the university. This study was conducted to help IFAS, ICS, and state and county Extension faculty and staff understand the perceptions and needs of the people representing the UF/IFAS Extension brand across the state of Florida.

## Methods

A questionnaire was developed to address employee perceptions of communications and branding of UF/IFAS Extension. The questionnaire was adapted from research implemented in 2011 with the Florida Forest Service (Settle, 2011), with revisions and additions to meet the needs of ICS.

In June and July of 2013, personnel working with UF/IFAS Extension were surveyed online through Qualtrics. The online survey was distributed to 829 state and county faculty and staff who work in Extension. There are Extension agents located in all 67 counties of Florida. The list of Extension personnel was aggregated from four sources: 1) a list of Extension maintained by the UF/IFAS Program Development & Evaluation Center, 2) a list of state Extension faculty maintained by IFAS Human Resources, 3) a list of county faculty maintained by UF/IFAS Extension, and 4) a manual search of every UF/IFAS Extension county office website for staff and faculty. Duplicates were removed if they existed on multiple lists. Members of the target population were sent an initial e-mail soliciting participation, followed by up to three reminder e-mails if they had not completed the survey. The survey opened on June 20 and closed on July 3. After incomplete responses were removed, there were 435 responses to the survey, for a 52.5% response rate. Data were analyzed for simple descriptive statistics. Responses included four categories of respondents: county-level faculty ( $n = 224$ ), county-level non-faculty ( $n = 41$ ), state-level faculty ( $n = 151$ ), and state-level non-faculty ( $n = 18$ ). One respondent did not answer this question, so their responses are included in the overall results but not when results are split into response groups.

## Results

The results will generally be displayed in the following manner: A description of the results will be given. Then the results of all respondents, followed by results split by employment status (i.e., county faculty, county non-faculty, state faculty, and state non-faculty) will be presented.

The results are organized according to the following constructs/topic areas: demographics, internal communications, external communications, overall perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension, perceived importance of UF/IFAS Extension functions, perceived importance of audiences, mission statement, UF/IFAS Extension communication materials, a comparison of faculty and non-faculty results, and a comparison of county and state faculty results.

## Demographics

The respondents who completed this survey had worked for UF/IFAS Extension an average of 11.8 years. The majority of respondents were county-level faculty, followed by state-level faculty (Table 1). Non-faculty respondents were less than 15% of the total responses.

*Table 1. Type of position with UF/IFAS Extension*

Position	%
County faculty	51.6
County non-faculty	9.4
State faculty	34.8
State non-faculty	4.1

Responses were relatively even between administrative districts for county-level respondents (Table 2).

*Table 2. Administrative districts of respondents*

District	%
Northwest	17.2
Northeast	22.5
Central	21.8
South Central	21.0
South	17.6

Extension Agent I was the largest group of county faculty respondents (Table 3). Extension Agent II and III were the next highest response group for county faculty respondents.

*Table 3. Position title of county faculty respondents*

Title	%
Extension Agent I	40.1
Extension Agent II	21.6
Extension Agent III	20.6
Extension Agent IV	14.4
Non-tenured county faculty (including Courtesy and Program Extension Agents)	3.2

Program assistants and secretaries were the largest group of respondents for county non-faculty (Table 4).

**Table 4. Position title of county non-faculty respondents**

Title	#
Program Assistant	15
Administrative Secretary	12
Office Coordinator	2
Customer Service Representative	2
Office Specialist	2
Other	14

The majority of state faculty respondents were professors and associate professors (Table 5).

**Table 5. Position title of state faculty respondents**

Title	%
Professor	32.7
Associate Professor	32.0
Assistant Professor	16.0
Other	19.3

### Internal Communications

This section addresses the internal communications of UF/IFAS Extension, including where respondents receive the majority of their information about UF/IFAS Extension and their preferred sources of information about the organization.

In general, most respondents reported that they received the majority of their information about UF/IFAS Extension through e-mail and the majority preferred this communication channel (Table 6). Less than 8% of respondents received the majority of their information about UF/IFAS Extension from others sources. Face-to-face from other employees and face-to-face from supervisors were the next highest categories. Less than 13% preferred an information source from somewhere other than e-mail. Face-to-face from supervisors (6.0%) was the next most-preferred information source.



*Table 6. Comparison of current and preferred sources of information for information about UF/IFAS Extension*

Source of Information	How do you CURRENTLY receive most of your information about UF/IFAS Extension? (%)	How would you PREFER to receive most of your information about UF/IFAS Extension? (%)
E-mail	92.9	87.7
Face-to-face from fellow employees	3.0	2.1
Face-to-face from your supervisor(s)	2.8	6.0
News media	0.9	0.7
Phone	0.2	0.5
Social media (Facebook, Twitter)	0.2	1.9
Fax	0.0	0.0
Printed memo	0.0	1.2

Both state and county non-faculty respondents received more information about UF/IFAS Extension from supervisors than state and county faculty respondents (Table 7). While state non-faculty respondents were evenly split between the number of respondents receiving the majority of their information from fellow employees and from supervisors, county non-faculty respondents were twice as likely to be receiving the majority of their information from a supervisor than from fellow employees.

*Table 7. Current source of information about UF/IFAS Extension, split by employment status*

	County faculty (%)	County Non-faculty (%)	State faculty (%)	State Non-faculty (%)
E-mail	95.1	75.0	95.4	88.9
Phone	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Fax	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Printed Memo	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter)	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0
News Media	0.9	2.5	0.7	0.0
Face-to-Face from your supervisor	1.3	15.0	1.3	5.6
Face-to-face from fellow employees	2.2	7.5	2.0	5.6

The most preferred source of information was through e-mail, especially for faculty member respondents (Table 8). The next highest response for all groups was face-to-face from a supervisor, though non-faculty respondents were more likely to select this option than faculty respondents. Less than 3% for all groups wanted phone, fax, social media, news media, or face-to-face from fellow employees to be their primary source of information about UF/IFAS Extension.

*Table 8. Preferred source of information about UF/IFAS Extension, split by employment status*

	County Faculty (%)	County Non-faculty (%)	State Faculty (%)	State Non-faculty (%)
E-mail	87.4	82.5	90.6	83.3
Phone	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Fax	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Printed Memo	0.9	0.0	1.3	5.6
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter)	1.8	0.0	2.7	0.0
News Media	0.5	2.5	0.7	0.0
Face-to-Face from your supervisor	6.3	12.7	3.4	11.1
Face-to-face from fellow employees	2.3	2.5	1.3	0.0

### External Communication

This section includes questions about where respondents believe the public receives the majority of its information about UF/IFAS Extension, the importance of different sources of information for relaying information about UF/IFAS Extension to the public, the effectiveness of different words and phrases for describing respondents' work to the public, overall perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension's external communications, and an open-ended question about how UF/IFAS Extension can improve its communications with the public.

In response to questions in these areas, respondents believed the public received the majority of its information about UF/IFAS Extension from workshops, demonstrations, and presentations; word of mouth of referrals from others; and websites (Table 9). The remaining options were selected by less than 10% of respondents. TV, radio, social media, outdoor advertising, and webinars received less than 1% of the responses each.

*Table 9. Where employees believe the public receives the majority of its information about UF/IFAS Extension programs*

Medium	%
Workshops, demonstrations, and presentations	25.7
Website	16.9
Word of mouth or referrals from others	13.7
Search Engines (Google, Yahoo, etc.)	9.5
E-mail	7.4
Newspapers and magazines	7.4
Newsletters	6.3
Personal visits, excluding workshops, demonstrations, and presentations	6.0
Flyers, posters, handouts, and brochures	5.6
TV	0.7
Radio	0.5
Social media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.)	0.5
Outdoor advertising, such as billboards or signs outside of buildings	0.0
Webinars	0.0

More non-faculty respondents believed workshops, demonstrations, and presentations were the main source of information about UF/IFAS Extension for the public than faculty respondents (Table 10). State faculty respondents were relatively split between websites and workshops, demonstrations, and presentations as the primary sources of information for the public. State faculty respondents were also more likely to perceive search engines as the primary source of information for the public than the other respondent groups. County faculty respondents were more likely than the other respondent groups to select word of mouth as the primary source of information.

*Table 10. Where employees believe the public receives the majority of its information about UF/IFAS Extension programs, split by employment status*

	County Faculty (%)	County non-Faculty (%)	State Faculty (%)	State non-faculty (%)
Workshops, demonstrations, and presentations	24.6	40.0	20.1	50.0
Website	14.3	17.5	21.5	11.1
Word of mouth or referrals from others	16.5	10.0	10.7	11.1
Search Engines (Google, Yahoo, etc.)	6.7	0.0	16.8	5.6
E-mail	8.5	2.5	5.4	0.0
Newspapers and magazines	8.9	7.5	4.7	11.1
Newsletters	5.8	7.5	7.4	11.1
Personal visits, excluding workshops, demonstrations, and presentations	7.1	7.5	4.7	0.0
Flyers, posters, handouts, and brochures	6.7	2.5	5.4	0.0
TV	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0
Radio	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.0
Social media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.)	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Outdoor advertising, such as billboards or signs outside of buildings	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Webinars	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

The respondents believed that workshops, demonstrations, and presentations; websites; word of mouth or referrals from others; search engines; and e-mail were important for communicating UF/IFAS Extension's programs to the public (Table 11). TV, radio, webinars, and outdoor advertising were considered the least important for communicating about UF/IFAS Extension's programs to the public.

*Table 11. Perceived importance of channels for communicating about UF/IFAS Extension programs*

Activity	Unimportant (%)	Slightly Unimportant (%)	Neither Unimportant Nor Important (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Important (%)	M
Workshops, demonstrations, and presentations	0.2	0.2	2.3	15.2	82.0	4.79
Websites	0.0	1.4	3.7	19.4	75.5	4.69
Word of mouth or referrals from others	0.2	1.4	5.6	16.8	75.9	4.67
Search Engines (Google, Yahoo, etc.)	0.7	2.6	6.7	23.2	66.8	4.53
E-mail	0.7	2.3	7.2	24.8	65.0	4.51
Personal visits, excluding workshops, demonstrations, and presentations	0.9	4.4	7.9	27.4	59.3	4.40
Flyers, posters, and handouts	0.9	5.5	10.1	39.4	44.0	4.20
Newsletters	0.5	6.8	11.9	40.7	40.2	4.13
Newspapers and magazines	2.6	5.8	13.7	33.5	44.4	4.11
Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.)	0.9	5.3	10.0	31.8	42.9	4.10
TV	5.1	10.7	19.2	33.6	31.3	3.75
Radio	5.4	8.5	19.1	40.6	26.4	3.74
Webinars	3.7	11.7	27.3	35.0	22.2	3.60
Outdoor advertising	10.8	16.2	21.1	32.9	19.0	3.33

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Unimportant to 5 = Important.

State faculty respondents reported lower levels of importance for every communication channel than county faculty and county non-faculty respondents (Table 12). All respondent groups considered workshops, demonstrations, and

presentations the most important. County faculty and non-faculty respondents reported a higher level of importance for word of mouth or referrals than state faculty and non-faculty respondents reported, though this activity was among the higher choices for all respondent groups.

*Table 12. Perceived importance of channels for communicating about UF/IFAS Extension programs, split by employment status*

Activity	County faculty (M)	County non- faculty (M)	State faculty (M)	State non-faculty (M)
Workshops, demonstrations, and presentations	4.83	4.88	4.69	4.76
Websites	4.71	4.83	4.62	4.72
Word of mouth or referrals from others	4.79	4.80	4.45	4.65
Search Engines (Google, Yahoo, etc.)	4.51	4.68	4.55	4.24
E-mail	4.61	4.76	4.30	4.44
Personal visits, excluding workshops, demonstrations, and presentations	4.52	4.39	4.20	4.47
Flyers, posters, and handouts	4.38	4.54	3.83	4.22
Newsletters	4.21	4.34	3.98	3.94
Newspapers and magazines	4.26	4.29	3.81	4.41
Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.)	4.28	4.17	3.81	4.41
TV	3.90	3.88	3.48	3.88
Radio	3.82	4.70	3.51	3.82
Webinars	3.62	3.71	3.53	3.71
Outdoor advertising	3.52	3.73	2.84	4.00

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Unimportant to 5 = Important.

Table 13 shows a list of words that could describe work Extension personnel do that was developed by the researchers and the expert panel. The majority of respondents believed that “education,” “training,” and “providing solutions” effective words and phrases for describing their work to the public. The next tier included “outreach,” “assistance,”

“communication,” and “extension.” “Leadership development,” “engagement,” “civic engagement,” “capacity building,” and “intervention” were the least effective words among the respondents’ choices, though none of the words were considered ineffective by a majority of respondents.

*Table 13. Perceived effectiveness of descriptors for describing employees’ work to the public*

Activity	Ineffective (%)	Slightly Ineffective (%)	Neither Ineffective Nor Effective (%)	Slightly Effective (%)	Effective (%)	M
Education	0.2	0.5	4.9	16.6	77.9	4.71
Training	0.2	3.3	7.2	25.2	64.1	4.50
Providing Solutions	2.8	1.6	6.6	24.4	64.6	4.46
Outreach	2.8	4.9	13.5	31.0	47.8	4.16
Assistance	3.3	5.4	12.9	28.7	49.8	4.16
Communication	2.3	6.3	14.7	34.1	42.5	4.08
Extension	6.3	8.4	16.8	25.4	43.1	3.91
Leadership Development	5.6	10.4	25.0	35.4	23.3	3.60
Engagement	9.5	11.4	28.2	26.8	24.2	3.45
Civic Engagement	13.2	16.2	33.9	22.1	14.6	3.09
Capacity Building	18.8	15.3	34.4	18.6	12.9	2.92
Intervention	24.2	16.8	32.7	19.2	7.1	2.68

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Ineffective to 5 = Effective.

Table 14 shows perceived effectiveness of words split by employment status. “Education” was considered the most effective by all response groups, though state faculty respondents responded with a lower level of effectiveness than the other employee groups. Non-faculty respondents generally reported a higher level of effectiveness for all of the descriptors than faculty respondents. This difference was most pronounced with “providing solutions,” “outreach,” “communication,” and “extension.”



*Table 14. Perceived effectiveness of descriptors for describing your work, split by employment status*

Activity	County faculty (M)	County non-faculty (M)	State faculty (M)	State non-faculty (M)
Education	4.81	4.85	4.51	4.89
Training	4.54	4.68	4.39	4.39
Providing Solutions	4.46	4.76	4.36	4.71
Outreach	4.14	4.59	4.05	4.33
Assistance	4.21	4.51	3.97	4.33
Communication	4.08	4.49	3.92	4.44
Extension	3.86	4.24	3.84	4.17
Leadership Development	3.71	3.93	3.31	3.76
Engagement	3.48	3.66	3.33	3.38
Civic Engagement	3.13	3.44	2.90	3.19
Capacity Building	2.78	3.03	3.04	3.18
Intervention	2.62	3.10	2.63	2.76

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Ineffective to 5 = Effective.

Table 15 shows the results of semantic differential questions. A semantic differential scale allows respondents to select responses on a scale that has opposing adjectives on either end. The respondents had a generally neutral view of the effectiveness and consistency of UF/IFAS Extension's external communications, but they believed that external communication was important.

*Table 15. Personnel perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension's external communications*

	1	2	3	4	5	M
Ineffective-Effective	6.3	18.3	31.6	32.7	11.1	3.24
Inconsistent-Consistent	6.7	22.2	31.9	25.0	14.1	3.18
Unimportant-Important	0.7	2.0	16.4	26.9	53.3	4.29

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Ineffective, Inconsistent, Unimportant to 5 = Effective, Consistent, Important.

County faculty respondents had lower perceptions of the effectiveness and consistency of UF/IFAS Extension’s external communications than the other respondent groups (Table 16).

**Table 16. Personnel perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension’s external communications, split by employment status**

	County faculty (M)	County non-faculty (M)	State faculty (M)	State non-faculty (M)
Ineffective-Effective	3.13	3.61	3.29	3.35
Inconsistent-Consistent	3.06	3.61	3.23	3.06
Unimportant-Important	4.32	4.46	4.19	4.35

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Ineffective, Inconsistent, Unimportant to 5 = Effective, Consistent, Important.

#### *How can UF/IFAS Extension improve its communications with the public?*

This question was open-ended. Responses were analyzed for recurring themes. The most common response from participants indicated that effective branding with a consistent message is necessary for UF/IFAS Extension. Respondents said IFAS and Extension logos change too often and vary throughout the state. Another significant response was that web presence and social media are very important, and Extension offices needed to improve their web communication channels (website consistency, website accessibility, social media presence). Participants were concerned that the general public has no idea what IFAS or Extension are, and that they do not associate it with UF or a learning tool other than for agriculture. Advertising was also a major concern. Respondents indicated that TV, radio, newspaper, and billboard advertising needed to significantly increase.

#### **Overall Perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension**

This section used a semantic differential scale to address respondents’ perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension, respondents’ beliefs about the public’s perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension, and respondents’ beliefs about county leaders’ perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension. A semantic differential scale allows respondents to select responses on a scale that has opposing adjectives on either end. Results include respondents’ perceptions of individual attributes, as well as a grand mean that indicates overall perceptions of the organization.

The respondents’ perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension were high, particularly for it being important, valuable, and beneficial (Table 17). While not low overall on the scale, the attributes with the lowest responses were for accessibility, bias, objectivity, and reliability.

*Table 17. Personnel perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension*

	1	2	3	4	5	M
Unimportant/Important	0.0	0.5	2.8	12.8	84.0	4.80
Not Valuable/Valuable	0.0	0.2	2.6	15.2	82.0	4.79
Not Beneficial/Beneficial	0.2	0.5	1.9	17.0	80.5	4.77
Unhelpful/Helpful	0.0	0.5	2.6	19.3	77.7	4.74
Useless/Useful	0.2	0.5	2.3	20.9	76.1	4.72
Bad/Good	0.2	0.7	3.7	19.4	75.9	4.70
Negative/Positive	0.2	0.5	4.6	20.6	74.1	4.68
Unethical/Ethical	0.0	0.9	4.9	21.4	72.7	4.66
Not Believable/Believable	0.0	0.5	4.0	24.6	70.9	4.66
Unreliable/Reliable	0.0	0.9	6.5	32.7	59.8	4.51
Not Objective/Objective	0.5	1.6	9.8	26.0	62.1	4.48
Biased/Unbiased	0.5	2.1	9.3	28.1	60.0	4.45
Inaccessible/Accessible	0.5	4.7	17.2	35.8	41.9	4.14
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>4.62</b>

*Note.* 1= Bad, Unethical, etc., and 5 = Good, Ethical, etc.

Table 18 shows respondent perceptions split by employment status. State faculty respondents had lower perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension than the other personnel groups. With the exception of accessibility being the lowest rated attribute by all personnel groups, there was a fair amount of variability between personnel groups for the individual attributes, though the grand means of responses were similar between all of the personnel groups, except for state faculty respondents.

*Table 18. Personnel perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension, split by employment status*

	County faculty (M)	County non-faculty (M)	State faculty (M)	State non-faculty (M)
Unimportant/Important	4.87	4.85	4.67	4.94
Not Valuable/Valuable	4.86	4.85	4.66	4.89
Not Beneficial/Beneficial	4.86	4.88	4.59	4.89
Unhelpful/Helpful	4.83	4.83	4.59	4.78
Useless/Useful	4.82	4.83	4.53	4.83
Bad/Good	4.79	4.85	4.50	4.94
Negative/Positive	4.75	4.78	4.52	4.83
Unethical/Ethical	4.70	4.80	4.53	4.94
Not Believable/Believable	4.75	4.83	4.46	4.78
Unreliable/Reliable	4.60	4.76	4.33	4.44
Not Objective/Objective	4.55	4.68	4.27	4.82
Biased/Unbiased	4.55	4.61	4.23	4.61
Inaccessible/Accessible	4.22	4.49	3.93	4.06
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>4.70</b>	<b>4.77</b>	<b>4.45</b>	<b>4.75</b>

*Note.* 1= Bad, Unethical, etc., and 5 = Good, Ethical, etc.

Respondent beliefs about the public's perceptions were relatively high, though not as high as the respondents' own perceptions (Table 19). Respondents believed the public's perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension were highest for the attributes of being ethical, helpful, believable, and good. Accessibility and importance were the lowest attributes respondents believed the public perceived about UF/IFAS Extension.

*Table 19. Personnel beliefs of public perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension*

	1	2	3	4	5	M
Unethical/Ethical	0.2	0.9	10.0	31.1	57.8	4.45
Unhelpful/Helpful	0.2	0.9	9.7	35.0	54.1	4.42
Not Believable/Believable	0.7	0.5	8.4	39.7	50.8	4.39
Bad/Good	0.2	0.2	16.7	29.2	53.6	4.36
Negative/Positive	0.2	0.7	14.6	35.0	49.5	4.33
Unreliable/Reliable	0.7	0.9	11.1	40.7	46.5	4.31
Useless/Useful	0.5	1.2	15.5	36.0	46.9	4.28
Not Valuable/Valuable	0.5	0.7	14.9	38.0	45.9	4.28
Not Beneficial/Beneficial	0.0	2.6	14.6	40.1	42.7	4.23
Biased/Unbiased	0.9	3.9	14.2	33.6	47.3	4.23
Not Objective/Objective	1.4	2.3	16.0	35.2	45.1	4.20
Unimportant/Important	0.0	5.3	25.8	33.6	35.3	3.99
Inaccessible/Accessible	0.2	6.5	27.7	45.6	20.0	3.79
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>4.25</b>

*Note.* 1= Bad, Unethical, etc., and 5 = Good, Ethical, etc.

State-level respondents had lower beliefs about the public's perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension than county-level respondents (Table 20). County-level respondents believed the attribute the public perceived as the highest was Extension being helpful, while state-level respondents believed the public perceived the highest attribute as ethical. Accessibility was rated the lowest by all personnel groups.

*Table 20. Personnel beliefs of public perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension, split by employment status*

	County faculty (M)	County non-faculty (M)	State faculty (M)	State non-faculty (M)
Unethical/Ethical	4.53	4.61	4.28	4.47
Unhelpful/Helpful	4.61	4.63	4.10	4.22
Not Believable/Believable	4.49	4.56	4.26	3.94
Bad/Good	4.52	4.41	4.11	4.22
Negative/Positive	4.45	4.54	4.11	4.11
Unreliable/Reliable	4.44	4.46	4.13	3.88
Useless/Useful	4.41	4.54	4.05	3.89
Not Valuable/Valuable	4.39	4.59	4.07	4.00
Not Beneficial/Beneficial	4.33	4.41	4.03	4.11
Biased/Unbiased	4.35	4.32	4.04	3.94
Not Objective/Objective	4.26	4.34	4.10	3.94
Unimportant/Important	4.10	4.27	3.77	3.72
Inaccessible/Accessible	3.89	4.05	3.59	3.41
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>4.37</b>	<b>4.44</b>	<b>4.05</b>	<b>3.99</b>

*Note.* 1= Bad, Unethical, etc., and 5 = Good, Ethical, etc.

County-level respondents reported their beliefs about county leaders' perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension in Table 21. Respondents believed county leaders' perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension were high, with ethical and believable being the highest-rated attributes. The lowest-rated attributes were for UF/IFAS Extension being valuable and important.

*Table 21. Personnel beliefs of county leaders' perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension*

	1	2	3	4	5	<i>M</i>
Unethical/Ethical	0.0	0.4	6.9	27.1	65.6	4.58
Not Believable/Believable	0.0	0.8	6.1	28.9	64.3	4.57
Negative/Positive	0.0	1.1	9.9	28.1	60.8	4.49
Unreliable/Reliable	0.0	0.4	8.4	32.7	58.6	4.49
Biased/Unbiased	0.0	1.1	7.6	32.1	59.2	4.49
Not Objective/Objective	0.0	1.1	8.4	31.6	58.9	4.48
Unhelpful/Helpful	0.0	1.1	8.3	33.0	57.6	4.47
Bad/Good	0.4	1.1	9.8	29.5	59.1	4.46
Not Beneficial/Beneficial	0.0	2.3	13.7	34.6	49.4	4.31
Useless/Useful	0.4	1.5	14.0	34.5	49.6	4.31
Inaccessible/Accessible	0.4	1.5	15.2	33.8	49.0	4.30
Not Valuable/Valuable	0.8	2.3	16.1	37.5	43.3	4.20
Unimportant/Important	1.9	1.5	22.0	31.1	43.6	4.13
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>4.41</b>

*Note.* 1= Bad, Unethical, etc., and 5 = Good, Ethical, etc. These results only include responses from county-level employees.

County faculty respondents were more likely to believe the county leaders had higher perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension than county non-faculty respondents (Table 22). The ranked order of the means for the attributes was fairly similar between the two groups.

*Table 22. Personnel beliefs of county leaders' perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension, split by employment status*

	County faculty ( <i>M</i> )	County non-faculty ( <i>M</i> )
Unethical/Ethical	4.60	4.46
Not Believable/Believable	4.59	4.41
Negative/Positive	4.51	4.34
Unreliable/Reliable	4.52	4.32
Biased/Unbiased	4.51	4.37
Not Objective/Objective	4.51	4.34
Unhelpful/Helpful	4.49	4.37
Bad/Good	4.47	4.37
Not Beneficial/Beneficial	4.34	4.12
Useless/Useful	4.35	4.12
Inaccessible/Accessible	4.30	4.24
Not Valuable/Valuable	4.23	4.05
Unimportant/Important	4.15	3.98
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>4.42</b>	<b>4.27</b>

*Note.* 1= Bad, Unethical, etc., and 5 = Good, Ethical, etc.



Table 23 shows respondents' perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension compared with their beliefs about public and county leaders' perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension. The respondents' perceptions were higher than their beliefs about the public's or county leaders' perceptions, though those perceptions were not low when considering the whole scale of potential responses.

*Table 23. Perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension, including employee perceptions and employees' beliefs of the public's and county leaders' perceptions*

	Overall	County Faculty	County Non-faculty	State Faculty	State Non-faculty
Employees' perceptions	4.62	4.70	4.77	4.45	4.75
Beliefs of public's perceptions	4.25	4.37	4.44	4.05	3.99
Beliefs of county leaders' perceptions	4.41	4.42	4.27	NA	NA

*Note.* 1= Bad, Unethical, etc., and 5 = Good, Ethical, etc.

### Perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension Functions

This section included respondents' perceptions of the importance of various functions of Extension, respondents' beliefs about the public's perception of the importance of the functions, and how informed respondents' believed the public was about the functions.

The majority of respondents perceived all of the listed UF/IFAS Extension functions as important, except for leadership development and staff management, which more than 40% of respondents believed were important (Table 24). Research-based information, helping to solve problems, providing training for clientele, and Extension's expertise were rated the highest in level of importance.

*Table 24. Perceived importance of Extension functions*

	Unimportant (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Neither Unimportant nor Important (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Important (%)	<i>M</i>
Research-based information	0.0	0.0	1.2	7.6	91.2	4.90
Helping to solve problems	0.0	0.0	1.9	9.3	88.9	4.87
Providing training for clientele	0.0	0.0	1.6	10.0	88.4	4.87
Expertise	0.0	0.0	1.8	12.0	86.1	4.84
Creating informational materials	0.2	0.2	2.6	16.5	80.5	4.77
Connection to university	0.0	1.2	2.1	15.0	81.8	4.77
Adult Education	0.2	0.9	3.9	16.6	78.3	4.72
Showing value of Extension	0.0	1.4	3.7	17.0	77.9	4.71
Youth Education	0.0	1.4	4.6	17.8	76.2	4.69
Marketing Extension programs	0.2	1.4	5.1	18.0	75.3	4.67
Providing technical assistance	0.2	0.5	5.1	21.8	72.5	4.66
Planning of Extension programs	0.7	0.7	3.9	22.0	72.6	4.65
Management of Extension activities	0.5	2.3	8.4	29.5	59.3	4.45
Initiative for change	0.9	2.1	9.0	28.1	59.9	4.44
Conducting research	1.2	5.3	8.3	25.9	59.3	4.37
Serving as community leaders	0.2	3.7	12.6	32.3	51.2	4.30
Community development	0.9	4.0	10.7	33.7	50.7	4.29
Leadership development	0.5	4.2	12.3	33.6	49.4	4.27
Staff management	1.6	3.3	17.8	34.3	43.0	4.14

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Unimportant to 5 = Important.

County faculty and non-faculty respondents believed providing training for clientele was the most important function (Table 25). State faculty and non-faculty respondents believed research-based information was the most important function. While it was the least important overall, staff management was only the least important function to faculty member respondents. County non-faculty respondents considered serving as community leaders the least important function, while state non-faculty respondents considered leadership development the least important function. The state faculty respondents reported lower levels of importance for 12 of the 19 functions that were rated than any of the other personnel groups.

*Table 25. Perceived importance of Extension functions, split by employment status*

	County faculty (M)	County non-faculty (M)	State faculty (M)	State non-faculty (M)
Research-based information	4.91	4.93	4.88	4.89
Helping to solve problems	4.89	4.85	4.87	4.71
Providing training for clientele	4.94	4.98	4.78	4.50
Expertise	4.89	4.98	4.77	4.61
Creating informational materials	4.78	4.88	4.74	4.65
Connection to university	4.78	4.71	4.81	4.53
Adult Education	4.86	4.93	4.45	4.78
Showing value of Extension	4.77	4.93	4.55	4.82
Youth Education	4.80	4.85	4.46	4.72
Marketing Extension programs	4.74	4.90	4.48	4.72
Providing technical assistance	4.72	4.66	4.60	4.35
Planning of Extension programs	4.76	4.80	4.46	4.50
Management of Extension activities	4.60	4.54	4.20	4.33
Initiative for change	4.48	4.59	4.36	4.22
Conducting research	4.45	4.80	4.13	4.35
Serving as community leaders	4.37	4.46	4.15	4.29
Community development	4.29	4.66	4.17	4.50
Leadership development	4.33	4.54	4.13	4.12
Staff management	4.29	4.49	3.76	4.47

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Unimportant to 5 = Important.

The respondents believed the public thinks expertise, helping to solve problems, and providing training for clientele were the most important functions of Extension (Table 26). The respondents believed the public thought initiative for change, leadership development, and staff management were the least important functions.

Table 27 shows the results split by personnel group. All personnel groups believed the public thought expertise was the most important function. All groups except county non-faculty respondents believed the public thought staff management was the least important function, especially the state faculty group respondents.

*Table 26. Personnel's beliefs of public's perceptions of importance of Extension functions*

	Unimportant (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Neither Unimportant nor Important (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Important (%)	<i>M</i>
Expertise	0.2	0.7	5.6	15.1	78.3	4.71
Helping to solve problems	0.0	1.2	6.5	16.1	76.3	4.67
Providing training for clientele	0.7	1.0	7.2	19.3	71.7	4.60
Research-based information	0.0	1.9	7.7	24.5	65.9	4.54
Providing technical assistance	0.5	0.7	8.9	26.2	63.7	4.52
Adult Education	0.5	2.4	10.4	27.7	59.0	4.42
Creating informational materials	0.5	1.9	12.1	26.0	59.5	4.42
Youth Education	0.2	2.4	12.8	25.1	59.5	4.41
Connection to university	1.4	4.6	15.6	31.5	46.9	4.18
Conducting research	4.1	6.3	19.8	30.4	39.4	3.95
Planning of Extension programs	4.8	6.8	22.2	30.4	35.7	3.86
Showing value of Extension	2.9	8.2	24.8	30.1	34.0	3.84
Community development	2.9	9.7	27.7	34.2	25.5	3.70
Serving as community leaders	3.2	10.0	27.2	33.5	26.2	3.70
Management of Extension activities	4.8	8.0	28.1	30.3	28.8	3.70
Marketing Extension programs	5.3	9.4	27.1	30.3	27.8	3.66
Initiative for change	3.9	9.9	31.2	32.0	23.2	3.61
Leadership development	3.6	11.7	29.1	32.8	22.8	3.59
Staff management	8.8	11.9	37.7	24.1	17.5	3.30

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Unimportant to 5 = Important.

*Table 27. Personnel's beliefs of public's perceptions of importance of Extension functions, split by employment status*

	County faculty (M)	County non-faculty (M)	State faculty (M)	State non-faculty (M)
Expertise	4.75	4.70	4.65	4.59
Helping to solve problems	4.72	4.68	4.63	4.44
Providing training for clientele	4.68	4.68	4.49	4.29
Research-based information	4.53	4.62	4.56	4.39
Providing technical assistance	4.56	4.35	4.54	4.17
Adult Education	4.58	4.70	4.07	4.44
Creating informational materials	4.43	4.50	4.38	4.33
Youth Education	4.49	4.53	4.25	4.39
Connection to university	4.14	4.43	4.19	3.94
Conducting research	3.96	4.40	3.78	3.88
Planning of Extension programs	4.05	4.30	3.35	4.17
Showing value of Extension	3.95	4.13	3.55	4.00
Serving as community leaders	3.79	3.88	3.48	3.65
Management of Extension activities	3.83	4.03	3.36	3.88
Community development	3.66	3.95	3.62	4.06
Marketing Extension programs	3.82	4.13	3.21	3.82
Initiative for change	3.67	3.93	3.41	3.71
Leadership development	3.67	3.78	3.38	3.82
Staff management	3.42	3.80	2.89	3.56

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Unimportant to 5 = Important.

The majority of respondents believed the public was most informed about expertise, providing training for clientele, youth education, and the helping to solve problems functions of UF/IFAS Extension (Table 28). They believed the public was least informed about staff management, initiative for change, management of Extension activities, and community development functions. The majority of respondents also perceived that the public is only at least slightly informed about 9 of the 19 functions listed in the survey.

Table 29 shows respondents' perceptions of how informed the public is of UF/IFAS Extension's functions split by employment status. Only the county faculty respondents believed the public to be most informed about the expertise function. County non-faculty respondents believed the public to be most informed about providing research-based information, state faculty respondents believed the public was most informed about providing training for clientele, and state non-faculty respondents believed the public was most informed about helping to solve problems. All groups except state non-faculty respondents believed the public was least informed about staff management. State non-faculty respondents believed the public was least informed about the initiative for change function.

*Table 28. Perceptions of how informed the public is of UF/IFAS Extension's functions*

	Uninformed (%)	Slightly Uninformed (%)	Neither Uninformed nor Informed(%)	Slightly Informed (%)	Informed (%)	M
Expertise	4.8	8.5	11.6	45.2	30.0	3.87
Providing training for clientele	4.4	10.4	10.2	47.9	27.1	3.83
Youth Education	4.6	11.4	11.6	47.2	25.2	3.77
Helping to solve problems	3.2	11.2	12.7	51.6	21.4	3.77
Research-based information	4.2	13.2	13.0	45.2	24.4	3.73
Creating informational materials	3.9	12.9	17.0	47.1	19.2	3.65
Adult Education	5.3	12.3	15.3	47.0	20.1	3.64
Providing technical assistance	5.6	14.0	18.2	41.6	20.6	3.58
Connection to university	8.5	15.5	16.0	37.3	22.8	3.50
Conducting research	11.4	19.2	20.0	33.6	15.8	3.23
Showing value of Extension	15.0	21.7	25.8	29.7	7.7	2.93
Planning of Extension programs	19.9	16.3	25.5	28.9	9.5	2.92
Serving as community leaders	11.9	25.4	32.0	24.0	6.8	2.88
Marketing Extension programs	16.9	23.9	26.6	25.1	7.5	2.82
Leadership development	15.2	26.8	26.8	25.6	5.8	2.80
Community development	16.9	23.9	30.2	23.7	5.3	2.77
Management of Extension activities	20.8	20.6	29.1	21.3	8.2	2.76
Initiative for change	18.4	20.9	33.5	22.3	4.9	2.74
Staff management	25.9	23.7	30.2	15.4	4.9	2.50

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Uninformed to 5 = Informed.



*Table 29. Perceptions of how informed the public is of UF/IFAS Extension's functions, split by employment status*

	County faculty (M)	County non-faculty (M)	State faculty (M)	State non-faculty (M)
Expertise	4.07	3.67	3.64	3.56
Providing training for clientele	3.97	3.77	3.67	3.33
Youth Education	3.90	3.56	3.61	3.65
Helping to solve problems	3.90	3.69	3.57	3.67
Research-based information	3.81	3.84	3.58	3.47
Creating informational materials	3.71	3.64	3.57	3.41
Adult Education	3.89	3.54	3.27	3.56
Providing technical assistance	3.71	3.05	3.55	3.18
Connection to university	3.53	3.44	3.47	3.53
Conducting research	3.26	3.50	3.07	3.35
Showing value of Extension	3.00	3.23	2.65	3.28
Planning of Extension programs	3.00	3.15	2.64	3.33
Serving as community leaders	2.98	2.95	2.71	2.82
Marketing Extension programs	2.89	2.92	2.65	3.06
Leadership development	2.90	3.00	2.53	3.00
Community development	2.76	2.92	2.67	3.12
Management of Extension activities	2.83	3.15	2.48	3.00
Initiative for change	2.77	2.95	2.63	2.76
Staff management	2.58	2.92	2.16	2.89

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Uninformed to 5 = Informed.

## Perceived Importance of Audiences

This section only included a question of how important respondents believed various audiences' opinions were to UF/IFAS Extension.

The majority of respondents believed all of the listed audiences' opinions were important to UF/IFAS Extension (Table 30). The respondents believed the clientele's and funders' opinions were most important to UF/IFAS Extension, and special interest groups' and businesses' opinions were the least important.

*Table 30. Perceived importance of stakeholder groups' opinions to UF/IFAS Extension*

	Unimportant (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Neither Important nor Unimportant (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Important (%)	<i>M</i>
Clientele	0.5	0.5	0.9	7.4	90.7	4.87
Funders	0.2	0.5	3.5	14.0	81.8	4.77
Politicians	1.4	1.2	4.2	19.6	73.7	4.63
General Public	0.2	2.6	5.6	20.3	71.3	4.60
Extension Employees	0.9	4.2	5.6	12.8	76.5	4.60
Media	0.9	3.0	8.2	23.3	64.6	4.48
Businesses	0.7	1.9	7.2	33.6	56.6	4.44
Special Interest Groups	1.4	1.9	9.6	31.9	55.3	4.38

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Unimportant to 5 = Important.

Clientele were considered the most important opinion group by all of the personnel groups, except state non-faculty respondents (Table 31). State non-faculty respondents believed Extension employees' opinions were the most important to UF/IFAS Extension. Special interest groups' opinions were considered the least important by all personnel groups, except state non-faculty respondents. State non-faculty respondents believed businesses' opinions were the least important to UF/IFAS Extension.

*Table 31. Perceived importance of stakeholder groups' opinions to UF/IFAS Extension, split by employment status*

	County faculty (M)	County non-faculty (M)	State faculty (M)	State non-faculty (M)
Clientele	4.91	4.78	4.87	4.61
Funders	4.84	4.63	4.72	4.61
Politicians	4.71	4.45	4.59	4.44
General Public	4.65	4.73	4.50	4.50
Extension Employees	4.65	4.65	4.48	4.83
Media	4.56	4.63	4.32	4.39
Businesses	4.48	4.50	4.37	4.28
Special Interest Groups	4.43	4.33	4.31	4.33

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Unimportant to 5 = Important.

### Mission Statement & Differentiation

Respondents were asked questions related to their perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension's mission statement, and respondents' perceptions related to differentiation between UF/IFAS Extension county offices.

The UF/IFAS Extension mission statement is **"UF/IFAS Extension provides practical education you can trust to help people, businesses, and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future."**

The respondents liked the UF/IFAS Extension mission statement, thought it was an accurate reflection of UF/IFAS Extension, and helped differentiate UF/IFAS Extension from other organizations (Table 32). Non-faculty respondents liked the mission statement more than faculty respondents (Table 33). Non-faculty respondents were also more likely to think the statement helped differentiate UF/IFAS Extension from other organizations than faculty respondents. State faculty respondents were the least likely to believe the statement was an accurate representation of UF/IFAS Extension than the other respondent groups, though the state faculty responses were still relatively high.

*Table 32. Perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension's mission statement*

	Disagree (%)	Slightly Disagree (%)	Neither Disagree nor Agree (%)	Slightly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	<i>M</i>
I like this statement	0.9	3.5	6.7	28.1	60.7	4.44
This statement is an accurate representation of UF/IFAS Extension	1.2	4.2	7.9	27.5	59.2	4.39
This statement helps differentiate UF/IFAS Extension from other organizations	6.3	16.0	16.7	26.5	34.4	3.67

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Disagree to 5 = Agree.

*Table 33. Perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension's mission statement, split by employment status*

	County faculty ( <i>M</i> )	County non-faculty ( <i>M</i> )	State faculty ( <i>M</i> )	State non-faculty ( <i>M</i> )
I like this statement	4.42	4.61	4.42	4.50
This statement is an accurate representation of UF/IFAS Extension	4.45	4.56	4.25	4.50
This statement helps differentiate UF/IFAS Extension from other organizations	3.61	4.00	3.56	4.39

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Disagree to 5 = Agree.

Respondents did not attach a high level of importance to differentiating between UF/IFAS Extension county offices, with the highest response being slightly important (Table 34). Respondents believed the public was fairly neutral as to UF/IFAS Extension county offices differentiating between each other. County non-faculty respondents were more likely to believe differentiating was important to themselves and to the public than county faculty respondents (Table 35).

**Table 34. Perceptions of the importance of differentiating between UF/IFAS Extension county offices**

	Unimportant (%)	Slightly Unimportant (%)	Neither Unimportant Nor Important (%)	Slightly Important (%)	Important (%)	<i>M</i>
You	16.4	10.7	21.8	30.2	21.0	3.29
The Public	16.1	10.7	34.5	25.7	13.0	3.09

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Unimportant to 5 = Important.

**Table 35. Perceptions of the importance of differentiating between UF/IFAS Extension county offices, split by employment status**

	County faculty ( <i>M</i> )	County non-faculty ( <i>M</i> )
You	3.20	3.82
The Public	3.06	3.31

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Unimportant to 5 = Important.

### UF/IFAS Extension Communication Materials

This section included a series of questions indicating respondents' perceptions related to the need for effective branding, their perceptions of access to communication and branding resources, and respondents' primary sources of communication support.

The majority of respondents believed good design is important in communication materials, consistent use of organizational names is important, consistent color schemes and appearances are important, and communicating with the public is a serious problem facing UF/IFAS Extension (Table 36). They also only slightly agreed that they have good access to and knowledge of the communication resources available to them as employees of UF/IFAS, as well as only slightly agreeing that that had a good understanding of UF/IFAS branding policies.

*Table 36. Perceptions related to the communications and branding for UF/IFAS Extension*

	Disagree (%)	Slightly Disagree (%)	Neither Disagree nor Agree (%)	Slightly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	<i>M</i>
Good design is important for communication materials	0.2	0.5	1.6	16.2	81.5	4.78
Consistent use of organizational names is important in communication materials	0.5	2.5	2.8	18.7	75.5	4.66
Consistent color schemes and appearances are important for communication materials	0.7	3.9	6.9	25.7	62.7	4.46
Communicating with the public is a serious problem facing UF/IFAS Extension	3.5	5.2	10.4	25.0	56.9	4.28
I have good access to communication resources as an employee of UF/IFAS	2.3	14.2	15.3	36.5	31.6	3.81
I have a good knowledge of the communication resources available to me as an employee of UF/IFAS	3.5	15.0	9.5	44.4	27.5	3.78
I have a good understanding of the UF/IFAS branding policies	7.4	15.9	19.6	34.4	22.6	3.49

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Disagree to 5 = Agree.

County faculty respondents were more likely than the other personnel groups to agree that good design is important, consistent use of the organization's names is important, consistent color schemes and appearances are important, and that communicating with the public is a serious problem facing UF/IFAS Extension (Table 37). County faculty respondents were the least likely of the respondent groups to believe they had good access to and knowledge of communication resources available to them. State faculty respondents were the least likely to believe they have a good understanding of UF/IFAS branding policies.

*Table 37. Perceptions related to the communications and branding for UF/IFAS Extension*

	County faculty (M)	County non-faculty (M)	State faculty (M)	State non-faculty (M)
Good design is important for communication materials	4.87	4.73	4.68	4.67
Consistent use of organizational names is important in communication materials	4.79	4.68	4.46	4.72
Consistent color schemes and appearances are important for communication materials	4.66	4.48	4.13	4.67
Communicating with the public is a serious problem facing UF/IFAS Extension	4.36	4.20	4.20	4.28
I have good access to communication resources as an employee of UF/IFAS	3.73	3.85	3.91	3.83
I have a good knowledge of the communication resources available to me as an employee of UF/IFAS	3.64	3.93	3.91	3.89
I have a good understanding of the UF/IFAS branding policies	3.62	3.73	3.22	3.56

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Disagree to 5 = Agree.

The largest source of communication support came from the employees themselves (Table 38). UF/IFAS Information and Communication Services and UF/IFAS Extension county personnel were the next most-used sources. County government personnel were the least used source of communication support.

*Table 38. The source of communication support for UF/IFAS Extension personnel*

Medium	%
Myself	40.1
UF/IFAS Information and Communication Services	21.6
UF/IFAS Extension County personnel	20.6
Other	14.4
County government communication personnel	3.2

State-level respondents were more likely than county-level respondents to use ICS, and faculty respondents were more likely to rely on themselves for communication support than staff respondents (Table 39). Faculty respondents were about twice as likely as non-faculty respondents to rely on themselves for communication support. County non-faculty respondents were the least likely to use ICS. Non-faculty respondents were most likely to use UF/IFAS Extension county personnel as their source of support.

*Table 39. The source of communication support for UF/IFAS Extension personnel, split by employment status*

	County faculty (%)	County non-faculty (%)	State faculty (%)	State non-faculty (%)
Myself	40.4	17.1	47.7	27.8
UF/IFAS Information and Communication Services	18.8	9.8	28.9	22.2
UF/IFAS Extension County personnel	22.9	53.7	6.0	38.9
Other	14.3	9.8	16.8	5.6
County government communication personnel	3.6	9.8	0.7	5.6

### Employee Impact

This section included questions as to what entities respondents believed they impacted public perception of and what entities respondents believed they worked for.

Respondents agreed that they impact the public's perception of UF/IFAS Extension the most (Table 40). They believed they impacted perceptions of the University of Florida and their county (only county personnel responded to this item) relatively equally. They believed they impacted perceptions of the state of Florida the least.



**Table 40. Personnel perceptions of impacting public perception of organizations**

I impact the public's perception of _____	Disagree (%)	Slightly Disagree (%)	Neither Disagree nor Agree (%)	Slightly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	M
UF/IFAS Extension	0.0	0.2	3.7	20.8	75.2	4.71
The University of Florida	0.7	0.9	8.7	22.2	67.5	4.55
My County <sup>a</sup>	0.0	1.5	7.2	23.9	67.4	4.57
The State of Florida	5.2	7.3	27.6	27.4	32.5	3.75

Note. Scale ranged from 1 = Disagree to 5 = Agree

<sup>a</sup>State-level personnel removed from analysis for this item.

County-level respondents believed they impacted perception of UF/IFAS Extension the most, while state-level respondents believed they impacted perceptions of the University of Florida the most (Table 42). County faculty respondents were the most likely to believe they impacted public perception of UF/IFAS Extension. State non-faculty respondents were more likely than the other groups to believe they impacted perceptions of the state of Florida.

**Table 41. Personnel perceptions of impacting public perception of organizations, split by employment status**

I impact the public's perception of _____	County faculty (M)	County non-faculty (M)	State faculty (M)	State non-faculty (M)
UF/IFAS Extension	4.77	4.66	4.63	4.67
The University of Florida	4.49	4.25	4.70	4.71
My County	4.58	4.50	NA	NA
The State of Florida	3.63	3.65	3.89	4.24

Note. Scale ranged from 1 = Disagree to 5 = Agree.

### Employment Perceptions

Table 42 shows the perceptions of all respondents of whom they work for. Responses were highest for working for the people of their county, UF/IFAS, and their county. Responses were lowest for the Florida legislature.

*Table 42. Personnel perceptions of whom they work for*

	Disagree (%)	Slightly Disagree (%)	Neither Disagree nor Agree (%)	Slightly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	<i>M</i>
I work for the people of my county <sup>a</sup>	0.4	0.0	1.1	4.5	94.0	4.92
I work for UF/IFAS	2.1	0.0	0.9	7.0	90.0	4.83
I work for my county <sup>a</sup>	0.4	0.0	3.8	10.9	85.0	4.80
I work for the people of Florida	1.4	1.2	3.7	12.3	81.4	4.71
I work for the state of Florida	6.3	1.4	7.5	19.6	65.3	4.36
I work for the Florida state Legislature	27.2	11.8	26.0	18.7	16.3	2.85

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1 = Disagree to 5 = Agree.

<sup>a</sup>State-level personnel removed from analysis for this item.

For the different employee groups, county faculty respondents identified equally with the people of their county and UF/IFAS, though they had lower perceptions of working for the county itself (Table 43). County non-faculty respondents identified most strongly with their county. State faculty and non-faculty respondents identified with UF/IFAS the most. The lowest response for all groups was the state legislature.

**Table 43. Personnel perceptions of whom they work for, split by employment status**

	County faculty (M)	County non-faculty (M)	State faculty (M)	State non-faculty (M)
I work for the people of my county	4.91	4.98	NA	NA
I work for UF/IFAS	4.91	4.00	4.95	4.71
I work for my county	4.78	4.90	NA	NA
I work for the people of Florida	4.71	4.27	4.84	4.61
I work for the state of Florida	4.37	3.37	4.62	4.39
I work for the Florida state Legislature	3.14	2.44	2.49	3.17

Note. Scale ranged from 1 = Disagree to 5 = Agree.

## Findings

### Internal Communications

E-mail was the highest current source of information for employees and was also the preferred source of most information. Non-faculty were more likely than faculty to prefer face-to-face communication from supervisors.

### External Communication

Employees who responded believed the public received the majority of its information about UF/IFAS Extension from workshops, demonstrations, and presentations; word of mouth of referrals from others; websites; search engines; e-mail; and newsletters. The employees believed that word of mouth or referrals from others, websites and e-mail were the most important for communicating UF/IFAS Extensions' programs to the public. Employees also believed that "education," "providing solutions," "training," and "assistance" were the most effective words for describing their work to the public. The employees had a generally neutral to somewhat positive view of the effectiveness and consistency of UF/IFAS Extension's external communications, which they believed was important. In open-ended responses, consistent messaging and branding were the most common responses for improving communications with the public, following by increasing Internet and social media presence.

UF/IFAS Extension and its personnel may be able to leverage an opportunity to reach wider audiences by utilizing social media. Extension personnel did not believe Extension used social media as a major source of information for the public, yet social media are extremely pervasive and could offer the ability to reach groups who are unable to access UF/IFAS Extension otherwise.

## Overall Perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension

The employees perceived UF/IFAS Extension as good, ethical, important, beneficial, useful, reliable, believable, unbiased, valuable and positive. Their perceptions were highest for UF/IFAS Extension being important and valuable. Employees believed their perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension were higher than they believed the public's perceptions were, though they still thought the public's perceptions were generally positive. The employees believed that the public's perceptions were highest for UF/IFAS Extension being ethical and helpful. While not low on the scale as a whole, employees rated accessibility the lowest among the listed attributes. Employees also thought the county leaders' perceptions were generally favorable, but not as favorable as the employees' own views. Employees believed the county leaders' perceptions were highest for UF/IFAS Extension being ethical and believable. State-level faculty indicated noticeably lower ratings of UF/IFAS Extension than the other groups.

## Perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension Functions

While all UF/IFAS Extension functions were considered important, employees believed researched-based information and helping to problem solve were most important, while staff management and leadership were least important. The employees perceived that the public places the most importance on Extension's expertise and providing training for clientele.

Based on the evaluations of the personnel, the core functions of UF/IFAS Extension that appear to be currently represented are expertise, solving problems, providing training, providing research-based information, and providing technical assistance. State faculty did not believe the education functions of Extension were as important as county faculty believed them to be.

## Perceived Importance of Audiences

Clientele and funders' opinions were considered by the employees to be the most important to UF/IFAS Extension, while special interest groups and businesses opinions were considered the least important.

## Mission Statement

The employees liked the mission statement, thought it was an accurate reflection of UF/IFAS Extension, and helped differentiate UF/IFAS Extension from other organizations. Employees held neutral opinions and also believed the public held neutral opinions about the importance of differentiating between Extension county offices.

## UF/IFAS Extension Communication Materials

Good design, constant color scheme/appearance, and constant use of the organizational name were important attributes of communication materials perceived by the UF/IFAS Extension employees. The employees also felt strongly about UF/IFAS Extension having problems connecting with the public. Employees only slightly agreed they have good knowledge of communication resources available to them as well as understanding of the UF/IFAS branding policies. They also indicated they most commonly get support to create communication materials from themselves or from UF/IFAS Communication Services, and get very little support from county government personnel.

## Faculty vs. Non-faculty

Overall faculty and non-faculty had the same perceptions on most topics. Non-faculty employees received more information about UF/IFAS Extension from supervisors than faculty employees did. Non-faculty also perceived workshops, demonstrations, and presentations as being the main source of information for the public. While workshops, demonstrations, and presentations were the information source the largest portion of faculty believed the public received information from about UF/IFAS Extension, it was about half as many responses, percentagewise. A large majority of

faculty said they received support for creating communication materials from themselves, while non-faculty said they received most of their support from UF/IFAS Extension personnel.

### County Faculty vs. State Faculty

A common theme was state faculty having lower perceptions than county faculty of UF/IFAS Extension and its functions. While the evaluations were not low in absolute terms, state faculty responses were lower when compared to the other groups in the study. There appears to be some disconnect between state faculty and UF/IFAS Extension compared to the other employee groups.

### Recommendations

- UF/IFAS Extension needs to enhance efforts to increase public understanding of the organization and what the organization can provide for the public. The success of this type of effort will ultimately stem from Extension personnel. As such, Extension personnel need to be on board with the UF/IFAS Extension brand. Another aspect of enhancing public understanding is ensuring the link between Extension and UF is well understood in all interactions with the public. UF/IFAS Extension should pursue efforts to increase support and access to branding resources that focus on ease of use for Extension personnel.
- UF/IFAS Extension should increase its communication with the public. Employees believed that the public largely lacked awareness of UF/IFAS Extension and what functions and benefits Extension provides for the public. Increasing presence in the media and developing a key message/theme that relates to its target audiences will help reach the general public more efficiently. This message should be used consistently, on all communications, along with a logo.
- UF/IFAS Extension could benefit from clarifying who their target audiences are and what messages are most likely to resonate with each. Respondents in this survey believed that word of mouth or referrals from others, websites and e-mail were the most important for communicating UF/IFAS Extensions' programs to the public, yet these channels are most effective when targeting specific audiences interested in seeking out information from an organization they already know, and are less likely to be effective in raising overall awareness by the public as to what Extension does.
- Along these same lines, employees also believed that "education," "providing solutions," "training," and "assistance" were the most effective words for describing their work to the public, yet they also felt their mission statement does not differentiate Extension from other organizations. This could indicate brand confusion with the many other organizations that provide the same services.
- Expertise was considered the most important Extension function by all groups, while accessibility was the lowest ranked Extension attribute. This might suggest that UF/IFAS Extension has both a narrower, segmented audience that is looking for specific expertise and a broader, more generalized audience that does not know how to access its services, both areas of opportunity for developing key messages to these different segments.
- The use of UF/IFAS Extension's social media should continue to increase, while also continuing the use of face-to-face and non-Internet communication channels for those members of the public who do not use the Internet. Social media offers the opportunity to reach a wider audience, including those who have been missed by traditional Extension efforts. In particular, social media can allow for an easier introduction for those who do not have the time or inclination to engage in Extension programming but still would like the information available from Extension personnel. Based on what the core functions of Extension appear to be, social media messages should focus on sharing the latest research-based information, with practical recommendations for problems the public may encounter.

- UF/IFAS Extension, including all of its personnel, needs to be consistent in representing its identity. Employees indicated in their responses that they did not believe Extension was particularly consistent in its communications. Every member of an organization is a brand manager, because they affect brand perceptions through interactions with the public. Consistent representation increases the likelihood the brand and its attributes will be remembered by members of the public. Employees need to understand branding policies, as well as why the branding policies exist. Employees' consistent use of branding materials will buoy the brand, while inconsistent use of branding materials will dilute the brand.
- UF/IFAS Extension employees need to utilize and be aware of the communication and branding resources they have available to them. UF/IFAS Extension as an organization needs to ensure there is an open dialogue with Extension personnel to help ensure this awareness exists. This dialogue needs to be two-way so that 1) employees are aware of the resources available to them, as well as the importance of employees' roles in branding UF/IFAS Extension, and 2) Extension can understand what employees believe is working and what is not working.
- Employee perception's of UF/IFAS Extension functions are important and are conveyed to the public when they interact with employees. When interacting with members of the public, personnel are likely to talk about the functions of Extension they believe are the most important. The results of this study indicated employees believed the core functions are providing research-based information, helping solve problems, providing training, and expertise. If these are not the core functions UF/IFAS Extension wants to represent, UF/IFAS Extension needs to work with Extension personnel to represent the most important functions in communications with external audiences.
- Focus needs to be put on core functions in broader communications, such as brand materials and messages going out to large groups. The other functions are still important and need to be represented once external audiences begin searching for more in-depth information, but the core functions increase the simplicity of messages and make it easier for the messages to be remembered.
- Because Extension serves as a source of scientific information for the public, it is important for everyone in the organization to make sure they are using understandable language when communicating with the public. It is important to focus on practical benefits Extension can provide the public through its programming and information sources.
- The keywords reported by Extension personnel as most effective were education, training, and providing solutions. "Extension" as a term was not highly evaluated. While the name of the organization is unlikely to change, the key words could be useful when explaining what Extension is to new audiences.
- To avoid confusion, every UF/IFAS Extension county's website should be consistent, simple, accessible and updated frequently, so the public can easily utilize it as a valuable tool. A lack of consistency between county sites could cause problems for external audiences who are unfamiliar with variability between counties.
- UF/IFAS Extension should continue using e-mail to relay information to employees because most employees prefer e-mail communication. UF/IFAS Extension supervisors should also relay important information face-to-face in addition to e-mail.
- A consistent finding was that state faculty with Extension appointments had consistently lower views than the county-level staff and faculty. This disconnect needs to be addressed, because these state-level faculty are representatives of UF/IFAS Extension. Efforts should be made to increase the connection state-level faculty have with UF/IFAS Extension, including its functions.
- The brief branding guide available on IFAS Communication's website is a good start to remedying problems of access to branding resources. It is brief enough to be understandable and offers more in-depth information, depending on the needs of the user.

- For those who are interested in pursuing more in-depth information, a course is available through [eXtension.org](https://www.eXtension.org) (Becoming a brand ambassador). This will allow those interested in understanding branding further depth of information.