

October 7, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

This week our CES colleagues are holding their [Annual Arizona Cooperative Extension Conference](#). Of course, it is virtual, and I wish we could be together in person. I miss catching up with everyone outside of their counties and being together in one room. I have attended some of the presentations and, as usual, they have been exemplary.

I always appreciate the conference keynote speakers, and the perspective they bring relative to the mission of Cooperative Extension. This year's Keynote Speaker was true to form: Calline K. Sanchez, Vice President, IBM Worldwide Systems Lab Services, Arizona & New Mexico State Leader, Tucson Site Leader, gave an insightful presentation that was very "4<sup>th</sup> IR" and super insightful for the CES. I commend the event's organizers for inviting Calline!

The fact that this conference is happening at all, let alone is as high-quality as ever, is remarkable but *not at all surprising to me*, and I want to tell you why.

Just like everyone else, our CES colleagues have had an exceptionally trying summer managing all of the additional competing demands on top of work and the stresses and anxieties of our global pandemic. Now fall is proving even more so. This is because Arizona CES has a physical presence in all 15 counties and, via Tribal Extension, on the San Carlos Apache Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, and Colorado Indian Tribes lands.

Our CES employees not only serve, but also live 24/7/365, the realities of being integral and visible members of their communities. These realities have put our CES employees directly in the path of some extremely contentious issues, where community expectations and UA policies have conflicted. CES personnel face high expectations even when "not on the job" because they have always delivered; this year they have not only done that as best as anyone could have, but they have also literally provided lifelines to their county friends and neighbors.

For many Arizonans, the CES *is* the University of Arizona. Only 552 CES employees, with a total base budget of ~\$16M, deliver all of one of UA's three federally mandated Land Grant University missions. Our CES employees create hundreds of jobs annually and return 4 to 1 on

the state dollars invested. Our CES team is as critical an economic engine in Arizona communities, and in many cases much more so, than UA's main campus is for Tucson Metropolitan area's economy. Of even more value are their health and educational outcomes.

And speaking of outcomes: CES faculty measure each other for promotion and continuing status (equal to tenure) not only on output measures (such as publications, grant dollars and conference talk invitations), but *outcomes for their stakeholders*. One half of what CES faculty must demonstrate for promotion and continuing status is that they have had a genuine measurable quantifiable impact for their stakeholders.

I am blessed to be able to spend time with our CES colleagues statewide in their "natural environment". Now that I am "COVID-safe", I am eager to get back out to visit them and am trying to reschedule my life to do so. When I can, I know that I will witness *opportunity recognized in adversity and innovation implemented*. It's not surprising then, that during this once-in-a-lifetime-adversity, our CES colleagues have been even more innovative than usual.

The CES have even implemented, independent of the rest of the UA and done it with no additional resources, a county by county re-entry model. Developed by CES director, Jeff Silvertooth, this has informed our UA main campus professionals.

Adversity always also has silver linings. One from this pandemic is that, because of its far-reaching statewide impact and county by county re-entry model, Arizona Cooperative Extension's profile has never been higher.

Congratulations to my CES colleagues. You are heroes in your communities, and you are heroes to me. I look forward to seeing you in person in your counties again as soon as possible.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial letter 'S'.