Orienting the UF/IFAS Extension Volunteer Teacher to the Institutions They Represent

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Orientation

It is important that everyone understand that the utilization of the Extension Volunteer Teachers is a benefit that is shared among many facets of the community and the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension Program. These various benefits should be discussed with the Extension Volunteer Teacher as well as the UF/IFAS Extension staff members. A positive attitude toward volunteers is an essential part of any successful program that utilizes their services.

Once a person has been accepted for a position as an Extension Volunteer Teacher, an orientation should be provided. While the contents of an orientation will vary from county to county, all orientations should include an explanation of what is expected in terms of time, performance, schedules, relationships, and results.

Benefits to the Volunteer, to the Community, and to the UF/IFAS Extension County Service

A good beginning for an orientation is to emphasize to the volunteer the benefits that he/she should expect from their participation, the benefits to the community at large, and to the UF/IFAS Extension county service.
The volunteers benefit when they share their time and talents to teach others. According to the *Implications of Volunteerism for Extension* study (Steele and Henderson 1985), volunteers gain

- information usable in other situations;
- increased skill in working with people;
- satisfaction from helping;
- better understanding of their community;
- shared interests;
- opportunity to develop talents; and
- new friendships.

The UF/IFAS Extension program benefits from involvement of volunteer teachers because the resources of the UF/IFAS Extension county faculty are multiplied through the work of volunteers.

Communities also benefit when volunteers are involved in UF/IFAS Extension programs. The community members reached by the volunteer gain

- information;
- new ideas and help with problems;
- greater confidence in themselves; and
- friendship and support.

The communities gain

- more leaders;
- greater cohesion; and
- greater community interest.

Following the explanation of benefits, there are some general elements that should be covered in an orientation:

1. A job description for the volunteer teacher (although described during the recruitment phase, the actual job description should be covered again and a written copy given to the volunteer and included in the file)
2. An explanation of the institutions that the volunteer represents through his/her teaching
3. Policies and procedures that relate to the work of the volunteer teacher
4. The general code of ethics or conduct that the volunteer teacher is expected to follow when dealing with clientele working with other staff members and volunteers
5. The organizational rules for safety, dress code, attendance and punctuality, health, etc.
6. Expense reimbursements, if applicable
7. Requirements for reporting and record keeping

A checklist is given in Box 1 and includes the general information that should be provided to the Extension Volunteer Teacher. This checklist is a guide and can be altered to fit specific requirements in a county. The checklist should be shared with the volunteer teacher, and it should be dated and put in the personnel file to show that the orientation was provided.

**The Institutions the UF/IFAS Extension Volunteer Teacher Represents**

It is mandatory that each Extension Volunteer Teacher understand that they are an important link in the education chain between the local community and University of Florida. This includes the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), UF/IFAS Extension, and the UF/IFAS Extension county service. A basic knowledge of each of these institutions and their interrelations is an important part of the orientation of the volunteer teacher. The sections can be duplicated and given to the volunteer teacher. It is not necessary to cover every aspect of each institutional linkage.

**The University of Florida**

*Institutional Purpose*

The University of Florida is a public, land-grant, sea-grant, and space-grant research university, one of the most comprehensive in the United States, encompassing virtually all academic and professional disciplines. It is the largest and one of the oldest of Florida’s 11 universities and is a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU). Its faculty and staff are dedicated to the common pursuit of the university’s threefold mission: teaching, research, and service.

Teaching—undergraduate and graduate through the doctorate—is the fundamental purpose of the university. Research and scholarship are integral to the education
process and to expanding humankind’s understanding of
the natural world, the mind and the senses. Service is the
university’s obligation to share the benefits of its knowledge
for the public good.

Mission

The University of Florida faculty renews its commitment to
serve the citizens of Florida and educate students so they
are prepared to make significant contributions within an
increasingly global community. In affirming the university’s
academic mission, we honor the human component of our
mission: our students, faculty, staff, and administrators; and
recognize the importance of these human resources to the
university’s success. Towards this affirmation, the University
of Florida faculty specifically encourages a campus-wide
culture of caring.

It is the mission of the University of Florida to offer broad-
based, exclusive public education, leading-edge research,
and service to the citizens of Florida, the nation and the
world. The fusion of these three endeavors stimulates a
remarkable intellectual vitality and generates a synthesis
that promises to be the university’s greatest strength.

The university maintains its dedication to excellent teaching
and researching by creating a strong and flexible founda-
tion for higher education in the 21st century. While the
faculty remains committed to key aspects of the university’s
original mission, changing times will require that we
continually expand and evaluate our academic aspiration.
We do this in order to assure that quality education at the
University of Florida remains the highest goal and most
valued contribution to society.

The University of Florida belongs to a tradition of great
universities. The faculty and staff of the university are dedi-
cated to the common pursuit of its mission of education,
research, and service. Together with our undergraduate and
graduate students we participate in an educational process
that links the history of Western Europe with the traditions
and cultures of all societies, that explores the physical and
biological universes, and that nurtures generations of young
people from diverse backgrounds to address the needs of
our societies. The university welcomes the full exploration
of our intellectual boundaries and supports our faculty and
students in the creation of new knowledge and the pursuit
of new ideas.

Teaching is a fundamental purpose of this university at
both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Research and
scholarship are integral to the education process and to
the expansion of our understanding of the natural world,
the intellect and the senses. Service reflects the university’s
obligation to share the benefits of its research and knowl-
edge for the public good.

These three interlocking elements span all of the university’s
academic disciplines and represent the university’s commit-
ment to lead and serve the State of Florida, the nation, and
the world by pursuing and disseminating new knowledge
while building upon the experiences of the past. The
University of Florida aspires to advance the state, nation,
and the international community by strengthening the
human condition and improving the quality of life.

Commitment to Diversity

The University of Florida is committed to creating a
community that reflects the rich racial, cultural, and
ethnic diversity of the state and nation. No challenge that
exists in higher education has greater importance than
the challenge of enrolling students and hiring faculty and
staff who are members of diverse racial, cultural, or ethnic
minority groups. This pluralism enriches the university
community, offers opportunity for robust academic dia-
logue, and contributes to better teaching and research. The
university and its components benefit from the richness of a
multicultural student body, faculty, and staff that can learn
from one another. Such diversity will empower and inspire
respect and understanding among us. The university does
not tolerate the actions of anyone who violates the rights of
another.

The university will strive to embody, through policy and
practice, a diverse community. Our collective efforts will
lead to a university that is truly diverse and reflects the state
and nation.

History

The University of Florida traces its beginnings to 1853
when the state-funded East Florida Seminary acquired the
private Kingsbury Academy in Ocala. After the Civil War,
the seminary was moved to Gainesville. It was consolidated
with the state’s land-grant Florida Agricultural College,
then in Lake City, to become the University of Florida in
1906. Until 1947, UF enrolled men only and was one of
only three state universities. The others were Florida State
College for Women (now FSU) and Florida A&M. In 1947,
the student body numbered 8,177 men and 601 women.

UF, the sixth largest university in the nation, celebrated its
sesquicentennial anniversary (150th) in 2003.
Government of the University

A 13-member Board of Trustees governs the University of Florida. Six of the trustees are appointed by the governor, and five are appointed by the 17-member Florida Board of Governors, which governs the state university system as a whole. The university's student body president and faculty senate chair also serve on the Board of Trustees as ex officio members. Trustees are appointed for staggered five-year terms.

The University of Florida Board of Trustees is a public body corporate with all the powers and duties set forth by law and by the Board of Governors. The University of Florida president serves as the executive officer and corporate secretary of the Board of Trustees and is responsible to the board for all operations of the university. University affairs are administered by the president through the university administration, with the advice and assistance of the Faculty Senate, various committees appointed by the president, and other groups or individuals as requested by the president.

Students

University of Florida students, numbering more than about 50,000 in fall 2014, come from more than 100 countries, all 50 states, and each of the 67 counties in Florida. The ratio of men to women is about 45/55. Sixty-seven percent of UF students are undergraduates, 25 percent are graduate students, and eight percent (3,411) are in the professional programs of dentistry, law, medicine, pharmacy, and veterinary medicine.

Approximately 4,000 African-American students, more than 6,000 Hispanic students and almost 4,000 Asian-American students attend UF. More than 96 percent of entering freshmen rank above the national mean of scores on standard entrance exams taken by college-bound students. UF consistently ranks among the top five public universities in the nation in the number of enrolled National Merit Scholars, Achievement Scholars, International Baccalaureate graduates, and Advanced Placement score recipients.

Faculty

The university has more than 4,000 distinguished faculty members with outstanding reputations for teaching, research, and service. UF’s research and development expenditures totaled $740 million in 2011.

UF currently has 34 Eminent Scholar chairs and 42 faculty elections to the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, the Institute of Medicine, or the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. A variety of other endowed professorships help attract prominent faculty. More than two dozen faculty are members of the National Academies of Science and/or Engineering, the Institute of Medicine or a counterpart in another nation. Also, in a national ranking of total Fulbright Awards, UF ranks 15th among AAU public universities, with six visiting scholars and three American scholars.

A very small sampling of honored faculty includes: a Fields Medal, two Pulitzer Prizes, NASA’s top award for research, and Smithsonian Institution’s conservation award, inventors of Gatorade and Bioglass (a man-made material that bonds with human tissue), one of the four charter members of the Solar Hall of Fame, and an art faculty with 80 percent of its members in Who’s Who in American Art.

Programs

The University of Florida is among the nation’s 96 leading research universities as categorized by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. UF is one of 63 members of the Association of American Universities, the nation’s most prestigious higher education organization. The university is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award the degrees of bachelor, master’s, specialist, and engineer, as well as doctoral and professional degrees. It has 16 colleges and schools and more than 181 interdisciplinary research and education centers, bureaus, and institutes. Almost 100 undergraduate degree programs are offered. The Graduate School coordinates about 250 graduate programs throughout the university’s colleges and schools. Professional postbaccalaureate degrees are offered in dentistry, law, medicine, pharmacy, and veterinary medicine.

Last year, more than 32,000 people took advantage of the many university-sponsored opportunities made available through the Division of Continuing Education. More than 25,000 people participated in non-credit conferences, workshops, institutes, and seminars. More than 7,500 students are enrolled in Independent Study by Correspondence courses, both credit and non-credit.

Facilities

On 2,000 acres, most of it within the limits of a 120,000-population urban area, the university operates out of close to 1,000 buildings, almost 200 of them equipped
with classrooms and laboratories. Facilities are valued at more than $1.6 billion. Notable among these are the Brain Institute, the physics building, the University Art Gallery, a microkelvin laboratory capable of producing some of the coldest temperatures in the universe, a 100-kilowatt training and research nuclear reactor, the second largest academic computing center in the South, and a self-contained intensive-care hyperbaric chamber for treating near-drowning victims.

The Florida Museum of Natural History is the largest natural history/anthropology museum in the Southeast, and one of the top 10 in the nation. Its research collections contain nearly 6.5 million specimens.

The Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, with 18,000 square feet of exhibit space, is one of the largest museums in the Southeast. The Curtis M. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts attracts world-class symphony orchestras, Broadway plays, operas, and large-scale ballet productions to Gainesville.

The Stephen C. O'Connell Center and the J. Wayne Reitz Union provide space for a myriad of student and faculty activities. One thousand persons can participate simultaneously in eight different recreational activities in the O'Connell Center, which is home to the Gator basketball, volleyball, swimming and gymnastics teams. More than 20,000 use the student union daily for dining, meeting, bowling, pool and other games, arts and crafts, music listening, and TV viewing.

**Standard of Ethical Conduct**

Honesty, integrity, and caring are essential qualities of an educational institution, and the concern for values and ethics is important to the whole educational experience. Individual students, faculty, and staff members, as well as the university's formal organizations, must assume responsibility for these qualities. The concern for values and ethics should be expressed in classes, seminars, laboratories and, in fact, in all aspects of university life. By definition, the university community includes members of the faculty, staff and administration as well as students.

Education at the University of Florida is not an ethically neutral experience. The university stands for, and seeks to inculcate, high standards. Moreover, the concern for values goes well beyond the observance of rules.

A university is a place where self-expression, voicing disagreement, and challenging outmoded customs and beliefs are prized and honored. However, all such expressions need to be civil, manifesting respect for others.

As a major sector in the community, students are expected to follow the university's rules and regulations that, by design, promote an atmosphere of learning. Faculty, staff, and administration are expected to provide encouragement, leadership, and example.

While the university seeks to educate and encourage, it also must restrict behavior that adversely affects others. The Standard of Ethical Conduct summarizes what is expected of the members of the university community.

**The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences**

The University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) is a federal, state, and local government partnership dedicated to develop knowledge in agriculture, human and natural resources, and the life sciences and to make that knowledge accessible to sustain and enhance the quality of human life. While extending into every community of the state, UF/IFAS has developed an international reputation for its accomplishments in teaching, research, and extension. From developing orange juice concentrate to educating tomorrow's leaders, from helping establish agricultural universities in Africa to helping local citizens buy their first home, UF/IFAS is making a difference.

While the University traces its roots to 1853 and the establishment of the state-funded East Florida Seminary, UF/IFAS traces its roots to the Morrill Act of 1862, which established the Land Grant university system. On July 2, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed into law what is generally referred to as the Land Grant Act. The new piece of legislation introduced by U.S. Representative Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont granted to each state 30,000 acres of public land for each Senator and Representative under apportionment based on the 1860 census. Proceeds from the sale of these lands were to be invested in a perpetual endowment fund that would provide support for colleges of agriculture and mechanical arts in each of the states. The establishment of Florida Agricultural College at Lake City in 1884 under the Morrill Act marked the beginning of what became the College of Agriculture of the University of Florida in 1906.
A history of federal legislation relating to land grant institutions may be found at http://ifas.ufl.edu/land_grant_history/index.html. Today UF/IFAS includes Extension programs in each of the state's 67 counties, research and education centers in 22 locations throughout Florida, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences with 17 academic departments and IFAS International Programs.

**UF/IFAS Extension**

UF/IFAS Extension is a partnership of local county government, the state land-grant university that is the University of Florida, and the US Department of Agriculture, authorized by the Smith Lever Act. Each shares in planning and financing Extension programs.

The mission of UF/IFAS Extension is to help people identify and solve their own problems. This mission is carried out through the work of nine regional UF/IFAS Research and Education Centers and the University of Florida in working with UF/IFAS Extension county services to bring educational programs and research information to local citizens. UF/IFAS Extension county faculty work with community organizations, volunteer teachers, and individuals to deliver educational programs to local clientele. The volunteer teacher is a vital part of this unique delivery system of science-based educational programs and research information to local citizens.

The primary purpose of UF/IFAS Extension is to disseminate and encourage the application of research-generated knowledge and leadership skills to individuals, families, and communities. The UF/IFAS Extension program

1. is an integrated partnership with federal/state/county levels of government, research, and the private sector.

2. is educational in program content and methodology, not regulatory or financial. Thus, Cooperative Extension is administratively attached directly to the 1962 and 1890 land-grant university system and is a major part of it, rather than being attached directly to state government.

3. provides informal, noncredit education conducted primarily beyond the formal classroom for all ages.

4. is practical, problem-centered, and situation-based. UF/IFAS Extension education begins with helping people to identify and understand their needs and problems and to use new technology or information in solving them.

5. features the objective presentation and analysis of factual information for decision-making by the people themselves. UF/IFAS Extension is typically research-based with a free flow of communication among research, UF/IFAS Extension and resident-teaching functions of the state university system, and also with the resources of the United States Department of Agriculture and other departments or agencies, public and private.

6. functions as a nationwide educational network and resource through local offices that are semi-autonomous units accessible to and subject to influence by local citizens.

7. involves cooperative but not necessarily equal sharing of financial support among federal, state, and county or local levels.

8. requires cooperative but not necessarily equal sharing of program development among federal, state, and county or local levels.

9. involves funding and administrative relationships that permit educational programs directed at broad national purposes, yet serving specific local needs with priorities determined locally.

10. is a professional function staffed by college-trained personnel specifically qualified for their positions.

**The Department of Family, Youth, and Community Sciences**

The mission of the Department of Family, Youth, and Community Sciences (formerly Home Economics Department) is to enhance lifelong learning and the personal, social, economic, and environmental well-being of diverse individuals, families, and communities through state-of-the-art UF/IFAS Extension, research, and teaching programs. Included in this mission are the following key elements:

- To apply research-based information through innovative outreach programs.
- To extend the frontiers of knowledge through research and other scholarly endeavors.
- To build student competencies for successful careers in human and community development.
- To enhance the professional development of individuals through continuing professional education.
UF/IFAS Extension County Service
The UF/IFAS Extension county service is another link in the chain that brings education to local citizens. It is the local UF/IFAS Extension service that brings the research and education of the UF/IFAS Department of Family, Youth, and Community Sciences (or other) programs to each county in Florida.

The Extension Volunteer Teacher should be made to feel that he/she represents the department, programs, or units of University of Florida. At the end of the orientation session, have a signed copy of the letter in Box 2 to hand to the Extension Volunteer Teacher.

Notes
*Excerpted from The Undergraduate Catalog. The University Record 2009–2010.
†Excerpted from UF/IFAS Extension’s website.

References


### Orientation Checklist for the UF/IFAS Extension Volunteer Teacher

1. **Explain the work of Extension and of the particular program unit.**
   - a. Extension's organization and functions
   - b. Indicate volunteer's relationship within the particular program unit.
   - c. Explain relation of the volunteer's work to that of others.
   - d. Tell to whom volunteer reports, and who, if anyone, reports to the volunteer.
2. **Show volunteer physical layout and available facilities.**
   - a. Show volunteer own work area or teaching room, etc.
   - b. Show volunteer classrooms, elevators, rest rooms, water fountain, etc.
   - c. Discuss eating facilities, coffee machines, etc.
3. **Introduce volunteer to other staff.**
   - a. Indicate to each the new volunteer's position
   - b. Briefly mention duties of each person introduced
4. **Orient the volunteer to office management and operations.**
   - a. Explain office set-up, files, records, etc.
   - b. Show volunteer telephone and mail operations.
   - d. Discuss hours of work, punctuality, good attendance, etc.
   - e. Explain any unusual working conditions, hazards, etc.
   - f. Explain lunch and break periods.
   - g. Explain other practices and procedures (appropriate dress, smoking, identification cards, parking, etc.).
5. **Explain travel information to volunteer, if applicable.**
   - a. Discuss liability insurance coverage.
   - b. Valid driver’s license
   - c. Travel regulations, reimbursement procedures
6. **Explain necessity for the training programs.**
   - a. Explain training program for volunteers
   - b. Discuss records to be kept
   - c. Explain and discuss program goals with volunteer
7. **Inform volunteer on position responsibilities (some of these steps are covered as part of the training program—checklist provided to verify completion).**
   - a. Give volunteer current position description.
   - b. Discuss individual duties and responsibilities.
   - c. Explain quality and quantity requirements and establish goals and objectives.
   - d. Give step-by-step instruction in all aspects of the job.
   - e. Indicate availability of resources and other help when needed.
   - f. Provide learning aids and procedural manuals.
   - g. Explain procedures for obtaining and caring for Extension owned property.
   - h. Explain relationship to other agencies.
   - i. Stress security of confidential information and public trust.
8. **Discuss need for record keeping and how it is done (see Teaching and Evaluation).**
9. **Discuss volunteer recognition programs, if applicable (see Recognition).**
10. **Follow-up**
    - a. Check progress often during first few days or weeks.
    - b. Encourage questions and answer them fully.
    - c. Make corrections tactfully and give encouragement.

Name of Volunteer
Supervisor Signature
Date

Box 2. Sample welcome letter

Mrs. Jane Doe
123 Sunshine Lane
Sunshine, Florida 33333

Dear Mrs. Doe:

Welcome to the service of your community through the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension service. You have been selected to be a Volunteer Teacher for your UF/IFAS Extension county program. As a UF/IFAS Extension Volunteer Teacher you will represent the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and the UF/IFAS Extension service that operates in 67 counties in the state. Your work is important to each of these as well as to your community. You are an important link in the educational chain from the University of Florida to the citizens of your county.

We value your work and your time. We appreciate your commitment to the program in which you are teaching and the people you will be reaching. We want to work with you to make your teaching experience meaningful to you and to people you will reach. If you have questions about any of the institutions you will be representing or any aspect of your work, please get in touch with your UF/IFAS Extension county supervisor who works with the program in which you are teaching.

Thank you for being a UF/IFAS Extension Volunteer Teacher.

Very truly yours,

(Name), Dean
UF/IFAS Extension