

# editor's page

## Extension Evaluation Specialists—Who's Training Them?

During the past several months, I've heard administrators, staff development members, and other Extension professionals talking about the need for Extension to put additional emphasis on program evaluation. The comments received on our recent program evaluation issue has again focused attention on the need for staff who have the competency to encourage, guide, and direct systematic program evaluation.

There's a trend developing across the nation to assign leadership for program evaluation to a specific staff member—most often someone in staff development and training. They have a variety of titles and a wide range of job descriptions, but their mission is clear . . . give leadership to the evaluation of Extension programs.

Who's training the people for these positions? Where would you get graduate-level training or an intensive, in-service, educational experience in program evaluation?

True, there are program evaluation courses taught as a part of a regular graduate curriculum or as a part of special educational programs. But a single course often taught in a short, concentrated period isn't enough to prepare a staff member for leadership in comprehensive program evaluation. It takes a full component of courses (research methodology, statistics, evaluation), as well as basic courses in adult education, to adequately train an Extension evaluation specialist. Furthermore, competency in evaluation needs more than a formal classroom experience. All training programs, degree oriented or in-service, should have a carefully supervised practicum.

Furthermore, it's important that the faculty members teaching these courses have a thorough understanding of the Extension Service. There's a difference in evaluating an out-of-school, continuing education program compared to a formal education program. Many instructors aren't experienced in evaluating Extension programs.

If the Extension Service is to meet the challenge of implementing comprehensive program evaluation, then one or more educational institutions must give leadership to the development of an intensive training program for Extension evaluation specialists. It wouldn't be wise to limit this effort to a traditional degree granting program. To meet this challenge, carefully developed, innovative, in-service training programs on a continuing basis are also needed. Who will provide this training?

\* \* \* \* \*

Dr. Marjory Mortvedt from Ohio State University has joined the *Journal* as the Book Review editor. Welcome aboard, Marjory.

JP