

Inside Outreach

The Promise of Outreach

August 1, 2003

Colleagues,

We are fortunate to have modern technologies that enable us to communicate instantaneously with people around the world. With our diverse units and geographically dispersed faculty and staff, a monthly e-mail conversation will help me stay connected and provide updates to all of you--a new twist on an old tradition, like Roosevelt's "fireside chats." True communication, of course, is two way and I encourage you to send your comments, responses, and questions about "Inside Outreach" directly to me.

This first edition of "Inside Outreach" focuses on my early observations as vice president and my thoughts about how we might build upon the **Promise of Outreach**.

Throughout my career, I have admired the collective, outstanding work of you, the Penn State Outreach team. Since coming to Penn State, my perceptions have been even further validated. I see outreach as an important element of the land-grant mission. It fulfills the University's promise to share faculty scholarship with constituencies across the Commonwealth and beyond.

Today, our organization is the largest unified outreach organization in American higher education, with a rich history dating back to 1877 and a long tradition of success.

Over the years, Penn State Outreach units have made a lasting impact on the Commonwealth and its people. Yet, we are not "mired" by this tradition, rather we continue to build on this tradition and break new ground every day.

I am eager to work with you to build upon this significant record of achievement and to take Penn State Outreach to the next level of national prominence. The Penn State model of outreach is being emulated across the country by many prestigious institutions. Our challenge now is to advance Penn State Outreach to realize the full promise articulated in 1996 by President Graham Spanier and Vice

President Jim Ryan, building upon the foundation built by you and Dr. Ryan.

From my perspective, for us to truly realize the **promise of outreach**, we must focus on maximizing the opportunities resulting from our unique partnership of Cooperative Extension, Continuing Education, Distance Education, and Public Broadcasting to better serve our various constituencies throughout the Commonwealth, the country, and the world.

The key to our success is clearly the passion and commitment each of us brings to our work and respective fields. Our own inspiration is driven by our desire to help others and truly play a role in transforming lives.

Theodore Roosevelt said, "Far and away the greatest opportunity in life is to work hard at work worth doing." Each of us, regardless of our position, benefits from the incredible richness of doing worthwhile work. We are in the important business of transforming lives. Embedded in any success we achieve as an organization are the individual contributions of each member. At the same time, all of us want to know that our work contributes to a greater good and moves us closer to achieving **the full promise of outreach**.

Therefore, I would like to share what I believe are the guiding principles for our organization to achieve the **full promise of outreach: Leadership, Excellent Service, Entrepreneurism, and Community and Learning**.

My thoughts are tempered by my favorite management books: "Built to Last" and "Good to Great," written by Jim Collins, former Stanford business professor, who looked at the elements of organizations that were successful for the long term. The promise of outreach is timeless and we have the responsibility to see that it endures for Penn State and for those our University serves.

1. We will be an organization that nurtures and rewards Leadership.

This means:

-Nationally--to maintain our national leadership role, we must break new ground for university outreach through greater collaboration

across units, colleges, campuses, and counties to better serve clients, customers, viewers, and listeners.

-Statewide-we must provide the leadership required to ensure that our University responds to the economic, social, educational, and cultural issues facing individuals, communities, and organizations throughout the Commonwealth and beyond.

-Institutionally-we have a leadership role to play in advancing the integration of teaching, research, and service. Drawing upon faculty expertise, we can be catalysts for integration across disciplines and between the University and the field. We are uniquely positioned to respond to societal needs with state-of-the-art knowledge generated by our faculty. We not only reach out with Penn State's many academic resources, we also reach in to the University on behalf of diverse external constituents to engage faculty in transforming lives. Working with our academic partners, we must continue to advance this outreach scholarship to ensure that it remains a relevant core mission within the institution.

-Individually-we have a responsibility to create an environment that enables each of us, regardless of our position in Outreach, to assume leadership in advancing the outreach vision. I hope all of you will be vigilant in your work to maintain our high standards and to push our organization to the next level of excellence.

2. We will be an organization that provides and rewards Excellent Service.

This means:

-Serving both internal and external customers--striving for excellence in customer service when working with our academic partners and our clients, customers, viewers, and listeners.

-Providing value--added service that inspires our various clients to choose to work with us (one of the core ideologies of American Express is "heroic customer service").

-Constantly developing new processes and products to better serve our various customers.

3. We will be an organization that nurtures and rewards Entrepreneurship.

This means:

- Taking charge of change--always being cognizant of external forces and being proactive in addressing them.
- Encouraging all staff to look for new opportunities, new programs and new audiences, new streams of revenue, and new ways to do business.
- Creating an environment that is supportive of innovation, emerging technology, creativity, and risk-taking.
- Assessing both the impact and the return on investment of everything we do.
- Challenging everything we do and being brutally honest with ourselves about opportunities for improvement.
- Having FUN.

4. We will be an organization that values Learning and Community.

This means:

- Creating an environment that understands and advances the power of learning in transforming lives.
- Fostering an environment that enhances the work and learning environment for individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- Caring about each other and taking care of ourselves. Creating a work environment that fosters trust and respect and recognizes the total person and the many roles we all have outside of work.
- Recognizing that no matter how much we achieve--there is still much that can be accomplished and striving for unequivocal excellence in addressing organizational priorities.
- Building an organization that can be sustained-today, tomorrow, and in the future.

I have already had the pleasure of meeting many of you during my first weeks at Penn State. However, over the next several months, I will have the opportunity to meet with you in your units, regions, departments, and counties. We can use that time to foster dialogue and identify issues and opportunities that will help to shape our collective agenda for building a sustainable organization. In addition to spending time with you, I will be meeting with deans, vice presidents, and faculty. I plan to travel into the regions to visit with our county extension staff, campus staff, external constituents, community leaders, and local officials. I also plan to communicate with students, clients, and donors. These important conversations will help us to shape the outreach agenda for the future and the Penn State **promise of outreach**.

Thanks for your leadership. I am looking forward to hearing from you. Feel free to e-mail me or stop by my office to chat.

I am deeply honored to be part of the Penn State family!

Craig