

FROM THE DESK OF: CRAIG WEIDEMANN, VICE PRESIDENT FOR OUTREACH

Change is inevitable—except from a vending machine.

Robert C. Gallagher

Imagine a massive metal flywheel mounted on an axleⁱ surrounded by Outreach members. Step by step, action by action, and decision by decision we turned the flywheel and its weight began to work for us. To sustain the momentum, we need to incorporate two fundamental elements for success—to simultaneously preserve the core of Outreach and stimulate progress.

If the flywheel is our work, then the axle is the core of Outreach. While the flywheel turns, the axle remains still. It represents what we value, build upon, and preserve. It's our mission, values, and purpose.ⁱⁱ It is also the reason why we work; protecting it is vital as we search for new handholds.



Like yin and yang, we cannot achieve balance by merely preserving our core. While the flywheel spins, things outside the core, such as operating practices, tactics, processes, structures, and strategies, will constantly change; we will always be in pursuit of a ledge to grip. While also unnerving, flailing around for a perch will challenge us to new heights and horizons that may otherwise have been overlooked.

A competitive organization understands that change is good and that the process is essential for growth. Over the next several months Outreach will grip its values tight in one hand while exploring new ridges with the other.

Three senior leaders will be retiring from Penn State within the next few months. The first is Jack Gido, director of Penn State's Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD). He will be followed by Michelle Rodgers, Cooperative Extension regional director for the Capital Region, who will retire from Penn State in May and pursue an opportunity at Michigan State. Gary Miller, associate vice president for Outreach and executive director, Continuing & Distance Education will also retire. Regrettably, there will be one additional change in leadership. Dave Rynd, Cooperative Extension regional director for the Northwest Region, passed away unexpectedly in January.

Great organizations understand change is good and the process is essential.

As evidenced by the legacies they will leave behind, these leaders are passionate about their work and the work of their teams. Thanks to them, Penn State's ability to respond to the needs of Pennsylvania and the world has made the University a national model for higher education outreach and Extension programs.

Retiring in June, Gary Miller was instrumental in the planning and launch of the World Campus. President Spanier highlighted Gary's significant contributions with these comments: "Gary has had a distinguished career of leadership and accomplishment. . . His path-breaking work in online learning . . . has set a standard for academe. Gary is a national hero in fostering innovations that will forever change the field of education."

Retiring at the end of March, Jack Gido helped establish the OEWD and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), expand PennTAP and its services, develop Penn State's partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor, advance Penn State's visibility as a principle leader in economic and workforce development, and connect resources in support of the nation's first statewide summit on higher education's role in economic development.



Michelle Rodgers will also retire from Penn State at the end of May. An outstanding leader, Michelle started in Cooperative Extension as an Educator and then moved to Assistant Regional Director. As a Regional Director, member of the Capital Region team, and Extension Leadership Team, Michelle has led several Outreach and University initiatives. She is considered to be an outstanding and highly regarded leader.

Dave Rynd, Northwest Regional Extension director, proudly served Penn State for 35 years. He began working for Cooperative Extension in 1971 as an agricultural assistant and 4-H agent in Lawrence County. Prior to becoming the Northwest Regional Director, he served as the Northwest Regional Agriculture program leader. Dave's leadership helped develop and strengthen 4-H youth and extension programs in the northwest region and beyond.

The vacancies left by these leaders provide us with the opportunity to reexamine our organizational structure and determine how talent can be developed from within Outreach. To encourage succession planning and engage up and coming leaders, leadership committees will be formed and modifications will be made to the Executive Team and its practices (more to follow).

**Cooperative Extension
has over 42,000
volunteers.**

As with every position in Outreach, the search committees for these vacancies are challenged with finding the right people to bring onboard. The first two leaders to be identified are Wayne Smutz, executive director for Continuing and Professional Education and Bill Kleiner, formerly the Adams County Extension director.

Wayne Smutz, executive director for Continuing and Professional Education, will succeed Gary Miller upon his retirement on June 30. Wayne brings over 26 years of experience in continuing education with Penn State. He has provided leadership for several continuing education units, and made strategic contributions to multiple Outreach efforts including: continuing professional education, market research, marketing, the Penn Stater Conference Center, the World Campus, and program development.

In January 2007, Bill Kleiner was appointed the director of Penn State Cooperative Extension's Southeast Region. Described as a motivator and a coach, Bill is an expert in horticulture and agriculture, and is experienced in conducting Extension education programs across multiple counties. Bill's leadership and skills will prove invaluable to serving southeast Pennsylvania.

I believe Wayne and Bill will push our work to become more efficient and innovative as we continue to holdfast to the heart of Outreach while seeking new horizons. Please join me in wishing Gary, Jack, and Michelle all the best in their retirement, and in welcoming Wayne and Bill to their new roles in the Outreach family.

Craig

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ⁱ Visual representation of The Flywheel, Jim Collins, [Good to Great](#)

ⁱⁱ Visit my website at www.outreach.psu.edu/weidemann/ and click on 'Strategic Plan'

