



The WELD Program

The History of the Western Extension Leadership Development Program

Cooperative Extension has a long history of being committed to leadership development for its employees. Some leadership opportunities, such as National Extension Leadership Development (NELD), have been offered for participants from all regions at the national level. However, many leadership development opportunities have focused on the regional level.

For many years, the University of Arizona offered a very popular Winter School, which attracted participants from many states to the warm Arizona winters for leadership development and renewal. After years of hosting Winter School, the University of Arizona decided it no longer had the staff resources and time to continue hosting Winter School, so Colorado State University rose to the occasion of providing leadership development training in the summer in beautiful Estes Park. This opportunity continued for a few years and then Colorado State University became home to the NELD Program, and it was decided the Western Region would have to collectively decide how to provide continuing leadership development opportunities for faculty and staff. To address the need for leadership development training in the Western Region, Extension Directors each nominated one person, often someone who had participated in NELD, to meet in Phoenix, Arizona, in January 2000, to propose a leadership development plan for the Western Region. Oregon Extension Director Lyla Houghlum met with a small group in Phoenix to begin discussions for the future. Included in the initial planning were: Deborah Young, Arizona; Judy Barth, Colorado; Arlinda Nauman, Idaho; Dave Sharpe, Montana; Jaime Castillo, New Mexico; Scott Reed and Tom Gallagher, Oregon; and Guy Denton, Utah. This group formed the core of the first Planning Committee for the Western Extension Leadership Development (WELD) Program, with Scott Reed from Oregon serving as Chair of the group. Additional members on the original planning committee included: Sheryl Stanek, Alaska; Linda Manton, California; Marlene Rebori, Nevada; Curt Moulton, Washington; and Carol Whitaker, American Samoa. This group laid the plans for a two-session Western Extension Leadership Development experience for “interns” from each state in the Western Region, and recruitment for WELD I occurred the fall of 2000.

WELD I and II

With Deborah Young from Arizona as Chair of the Planning Committee, the first WELD I class was held in San Diego, California, in March 2001. This class had 34 interns representing 11 western states. The Capstone Seminar for WELD I was held in Post Falls, Idaho in June 2002, with Judy Barth from Colorado providing leadership for the Planning Committee. Based on the successful completion of WELD I, positive evaluations from participants, and continuing support

from Western Region Extension Directors, recruitment for WELD II occurred in the Fall of 2002, with Arlinda Nauman from Idaho serving as Chair of the Planning Committee. Twenty-six interns from 11 states participated in WELD II. The first session for WELD II was held in Las Vegas, Nevada, in April 2003, and the Capstone Seminar for WELD II was held in Park City, Utah, in June 2004. New WELD Planning Committee members for WELD II included: Linda Tannehill, Alaska; JoAnne Skelly, Nevada; Steve Burr, Utah; Doug Stienbarger, Washington; and Steve Schafer, Wyoming. In June 2004, Western Region Extension Directors reviewed the WELD II evaluations and innovative projects and recommended the leadership development training program be continued, with interns for WELD III recruited in Fall 2004. Linda Manton from California was selected as Chair of the Planning Committee, and new Planning Committee Members included: Christopher Jones, Arizona; Wayne Nishijima, Hawaii; Dan Clark, Montana; and Reynaldo “Rey” Torres, New Mexico.

Submitted by Arlinda Nauman, Idaho
August 2004

WELD III

Twenty-eight interns from 11 western Extension States began their WELD III journey in April 2005, with Seminar 1 held in Phoenix, Arizona. This class of interns was diverse, in terms of disciplines, job titles, agents (county-based) and specialists (campus-based). The diversity of the class was important to its success. Unfortunately, by June 2006, when Seminar 2 was held in Portland, Oregon, WELD only graduated twenty-two interns. Six interns did not complete WELD III due to resignations from their Extension position, transfers to other units/states, and some for personal reasons. Based on the evaluations conducted at the Capstone Seminar in Portland, 100 percent of the interns felt that the WELD goals established at the beginning of the 2005 program were met, and several of the interns reported that they had become involved in new leadership roles. With approval and support from Western Extension Directors, WELD IV was launched. Steve Burr from Utah was appointed the new chairperson to lead WELD into Class IV. WELD Planning Committee members for 2006-2008 were: Milan Shipka, Alaska; Chris Jones, Arizona; Linda Manton, California; Judy Barth, Colorado; Lynn Nakamura-Tengan, Hawaii; Barry Bequette, Idaho; Dan Clark, Montana; Staci Emm, Nevada; Rey Torres, New Mexico; Russ Karow, Oregon; Steve Burr, Utah; Doug Stienbarger, Washington; and Paul Gutierrez, Western Extension Directors Liaison.

Submitted by Linda Manton, California
February 2008

WELD IV

Interns for the WELD IV program were recruited in the fall of 2006. For the first time, thirty-one interns from all 13 western states and American Samoa participated in the WELD IV Seminar 1, held in Las Cruces, New Mexico, in March 2007. The “capstone” WELD IV Seminar 2 is scheduled for June 16-20, 2008, to be held in Big Sky, Montana.

Submitted by Steve Burr, Utah
February 2008