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Foreword

Patrick Proden

Oregon State University, Outreach and Engagement, Patrick.Proden@oregonstate.edu

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Foreword

A few years ago, a small group of spirited professionals with passion for urban communities came together from across the Cooperative Extension System. Focused on one collective purpose—raising the priority of urban engagement—we mobilized systems-level support through the *National Framework for Urban Extension*. This framework provides a sustainable and integrated approach to Extension’s role in urban communities. I like to think of this as giving each of us sanction at the local, regional, and national levels to engage in a transformative change process leading to a creative modern movement where momentum met common ground and lifelong friendships were formed.

As urban professionals, we felt excitement and a sense of urgency to drive a process that would elevate the importance of urban Extension. To start, we gathered insights into what makes Extension unique within the interdependent urban–rural continuum. This allowed us to break free from our own academic disciplines, from the shackles of habit, custom, and the mundane to explore new ways to learn, discover, and engage as we bring urban knowledge together. Our gatherings were akin to a modern times rendition of Teddy Roosevelt’s “rousing of the people on the land” for the purpose of establishing an effective and compelling community spirit with the urban populations we serve, in the systems in which we work, and in the advancement of the next generation of Extension colleagues who undoubtedly will help shape and redefine urban community priorities.

This special issue of the *Journal of Human Sciences and Extension* focuses on urban Extension, offering a comprehensive series of articles from experts who have synthesized our changing urban landscape of opportunity. Our hope is that these articles will position, guide, and inform program, policy, and system decisions by honoring the past and driving us energetically towards the future vitality of Extension as we serve the changing demographics of our country.

As Chair of the National Urban Extension Leaders, I invite you to take this journey with urban educators, colleagues, and friends from across the nation who are committed to engaging in conversations and advancing the collective future and impact of urban Extension.

Patrick Proden
Oregon State University, Outreach and Engagement
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The National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL) advocates and advances the strategic importance and long term value of urban extension by being relevant locally, responsive statewide, and recognized nationally. NUEL’s Steering Committee consists of 17 people with a balanced representation from the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy’s (ECOP) five regions, one representative from ECOP, and one representative from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). For more information, see <http://www.nuelaction.org>