Executive Director and Board Leadership Conference

In June, over 100 Executive Directors and Board leaders gathered at the Statler Hotel on the Cornell campus for a two day conference with Extension Administration. Participants reviewed the progress of the past year and Director Chris Watkins presented an overview of system topics including general University updates, new efforts through Engaged Cornell, and CCE funding updates. Kirsten Barclay from Center for Governmental Research presented her study of Shared Business Networks (SBNs) and led a discussion to gain input from EDs, board volunteers, and Extension Administration about the report (see below). Board members choose from 4 program-themed tours to see parts of Cornell that relate directly to CCE and wrapped up day one hearing a presentation by Anu Rangarajan on how Cornell’s Small Farms Program is reaching new veteran and diverse audiences. Discussions on day two centered on trends in CCE contracts and risk management, trends in CCE program efforts, and new communication efforts by Extension Administration to tell our collective story.

Many conversations and discussions took place during the conference which will help move our system forward. Director Watkins met with board members during an ‘open forum’ while executive directors engaged with Andy Turner, State 4-H Program Leader, on the topic of progress in 4-H. Board members discussed the need to continue improvements while supporting SBNs, needs for system-wide and local branding, sharing of best practices in program and structure, and appreciated the networking time as system leadership with campus-based staff. Early replies to the post conference evaluation indicate that the volunteers especially valued “Meeting people facing the same challenges we do in our Association, interacting with Administration, and contributing to the various dialogues on important issues.” We look forward to continuing these conversations through the work at the local, regional, statewide, and campus levels.
System Communications

Communication is always a challenge, even in this ‘connected’ age. To increase our capacity in this area CCE Administration recently welcomed R. J. Anderson as a staff writer. RJ joins Lisa Richards and the rest of the communications team in working to tell the CCE story far and wide. A number of stories have already appeared in the Cornell Chronicle as well as on the CCE website. Content is always welcome from associations! Contact R.J. at: RJ.anderson@cornell.edu and search the Cornell Chronicle for “RJ Anderson” to read some of his stories.

Analysis of Shared Business Networks

In response to a request from CCE Board Presidents a year ago, CCE Director Chris Watkins agreed to support an analysis of the Shared Business Networks, which in most cases are in their third year of operation. The analysis was conducted by the Center for Governmental Research, which is no stranger to CCE, having helped gather data that supported the original decision to form the Shared Business Networks. CGR’s analysis was both quantitative and qualitative, assembling new and updated data on SBN size, costs and services, as well drawing upon in-person and telephone interviews with CCE staff around the state and on-campus. A draft report was released just prior to the June Executive Leadership Conference, and was presented and discussed at that event. The report will help inform the Request for Proposals for the next round of SBN agreements.

New State Extension Specialist

Director Chris Watkins has announced the appointment of Renee Smith as State Extension Specialist, effective September 12, 2016, to fill the SES vacancy. Renee has spent much of her career in various executive capacities with the American Red Cross, and for the past three years has served as the Human Resources Lead for the Finger Lakes Shared Business Network. She will be working with associations in Western New York and on Long Island.

Constitution Revisions

As a reminder, CCE association boards should review their constitution every three years to determine whether changes or updates are needed. The recommended approach is to begin with the latest template on the web, which contains the most current language recommended by CCE Administration. Review and modify as necessary, and send to your State Extension Specialist who will facilitate review by CCE Administration. The updated document should then be voted on by
the association Board of Directors, receive pre-approval from the Director of Extension, and then be submitted to the enrolled members of the association for approval at the annual association meeting. Since the process takes time, it is best to get started early.

### Nominating Committees

Although many minds are on fairs, camps and other summer programs, this is also the time of year when association Nominating Committees should be busy identifying potential candidates for the annual association election. As a reminder, the Nominating Committee is a committee of the association, not the Board of Directors, and must have a majority of members who are not current board members. A good starting point for Nominating Committee work is to review county demographic data in an effort to help ensure that CCE board and Committees reflect the general population. The CCE Board Toolbox contains a wealth of information such as the fact sheet “What is a CCE Association?” to help introduce potential candidates to CCE.

The association constitution also provides for a second Nominating Committee composed of board members appointed by the President for the purpose of recommending a slate of officers for the new board once it convenes for its organizational meeting after the first of the year.