

THE VALUE OF AN EXTENSION SPECIALIST TO UCLA'S INSTITUTE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The mission of UCLA's Institute of the Environment (IOE) is to generate knowledge and provide solutions for regional and global environmental problems, and to educate the next generation of professional leadership committed to the health of our planet. The expertise of IOE members and constituents encompasses a broad array of academic disciplines that address critical environmental challenges - including those related to water quality, air pollution, biodiversity, and sustainability.

Addressing these challenges head-on is critical to enhancing UCLA's mission to serve the people of Los Angeles and the state of California. In order to best support this public service, it is critical that units such as IOE maintain an active science-policy program that reaches deep into the scientific expertise of UCLA researchers and the needs of local, state, and national decision-makers. Through a dedicated extension specialist, this bridge between IOE and the public can be built with strength and effectiveness.

An extension specialist acts as a knowledge broker. As a dedicated conduit between research and application, such an individual can maximize the effect of university-derived technologies and knowledge on the public good. Rather than relying on individual scientists to disseminate their expertise or relying on policy-makers to identify relevant cutting-edge research, an extension specialist creates valuable communications pathways that improve the efficiency and efficacy of this critical science-policy dialogue. Value is created by the familiarity and expertise of the extension specialist with both the science and the fields of application. Experts in communication in addition to policy practice and specific scientific fields, such extension specialists are of exceptional value in synergizing the work of university researchers with the public values they are entrusted to address.

An extension specialist at IOE will have four primary roles:

- To synthesize, evaluate, integrate, and apply research and expertise from IOE members and constituents as an integral component of educational activities and public outreach.
- To provide leadership for researchers in the development, implementation, and evaluation of public policy relevant to the specific subject matter area of expertise.
- To direct decision-makers to relevant cutting-edge research and world-class researchers as a means of efficiently delivering accurate scientific information in support of critical public policy concerns.
- To contribute substantially to environmental scholarship through synthesis of the scientific and policy-related concerns of critical local, state, national, and global environmental issues. An extension specialist generates new knowledge through studies, transmits new knowledge through educational and professional programs, and materially adds to our knowledge base through policy evaluation and publications.

The UC's Agriculture and Natural Resources Cooperative Extension Service (CES) maintains tremendous strengths in supporting California's agricultural commodities and resources. There remains, however, tremendous room for the CES to grow its utility in natural resource management. With its tremendous strengths in environmental policy and science, UCLA is an ideal campus to focus on environmental conservation and natural resource management public

engagement. The IOE can serve as the center of such public-university cooperation. Indeed, with years of experience and a dedicated staff that has extensive background in public-university partnerships and outreach, UCLA's IOE can fill an important void in the UC's CES efforts.

Public policy, the state of the natural environment, and the extent of our scientific knowledge all grow rapidly and often in disparate directions. Thus it is critical that CES and related efforts continue to evolve in response to these dynamics. New extension specialists with up-to-date expertise are critical to ensuring that this important public resource has the capacity to provide the people of California with timely access to relevant university expertise. UCLA has an excellent opportunity to reinvigorate this tremendous resource, thus demonstrating its clear commitment to the people of the state as a genuine partner in furthering the public's goals of sustainable environmental stewardship through cutting-edge science.