



COMMITMENT TO CIVIL RIGHTS AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The Cooperative Extension System of the U.S. Department of Agriculture was founded on the principle of helping people help themselves. Although it was originally established to help people living in rural areas who lacked access to research-based knowledge, Extension evolved to address a variety of issues important to all individuals. Washington State University Extension is committed to the realization of the spirit and letter of federal and state civil rights law and regulations. Civil rights are the freedoms and rights that a person may have as a member of the community, state, or nation. Civil rights include freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion; the right to receive fair and equal treatment from government, another person, and private groups. The United States Constitution, state constitutions and many laws protect the civil rights of individuals and groups.

The strongest law enacted to protect civil rights of individuals and groups is the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This law bans discrimination because of a person's color, race, national origin, religion, or sex. The Civil Rights Act also forbids discrimination by any program that received money from the federal government. The kinds of discrimination prohibited by WSU policy are those which occur on the basis of race, sex, religion, age, color, creed, national or ethnic origin; physical, mental or sensory disability; marital status, sexual orientation, and status as a Vietnam-era or disabled veteran. While legislation in the State of Washington bans preference for women and minorities, it does not promote discrimination, nor mandate against actively involving everyone in programs and employment.

Civil rights regulations generally set forth specific procedures for assuring equal opportunity. To protect the rights of groups that suffered discrimination in the past, the federal government enacted laws designed to assure inclusion for these groups. Federal contractors, for example, are required by regulations to develop affirmative action and employment plans that identify steps to prevent future discrimination and correct past and current inequities. Regulations also generally call for identification of and access to evidence documenting that required steps were completed.

An affirmative action plan is a document delineating the steps that will be taken to correct deficiencies in delivering programs to disadvantaged audiences. We maintain a process to update each county affirmative action plan and the state plan. In this process it is necessary that we recognize our deficiencies and weaknesses, make realistic plans to correct them, and carry out the plans.

WSU Extension personnel have a reputation for being capable, innovative, and committed to the people we serve. Significant progress has been made in reaching targeted audiences with our programs. Attention must also be given to recruiting and retaining paid and volunteer employees representative of all the people in Washington. Everyone in the organization can be involved in identifying and actively recruiting people from underrepresented groups for positions in WSU Extension, service on advisory committees, or other roles which are essential for leading and guiding the organization.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel J. Bernardo".

Daniel J. Bernardo, Dean and Director,
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linda Kirk Fox".

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