

ADMINISTRATOR'S MEMORANDUM TO CSREES EMPLOYEES

CIVIL RIGHTS POLICY STATEMENT

I fully support the position of the Secretary of Agriculture that equal opportunity and civil rights are of great importance and must clearly exist in the Cooperative State research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES). It is of utmost importance that we renew and strengthen our efforts to ensure equal access and opportunity in all aspects of our programs and employment practices without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, or sexual orientation to the full extent of nondiscrimination laws.

As employees of this Agency, we are charged by law and regulation to conduct our business in such a manner that CSREES does not directly or by implication condone the practice of discrimination. We have an obligation to correct any program or management practice that is not achieving the objectives of inclusion and anti-discrimination. We are expected to play a very important role in maintaining a positive equal opportunity environment, that ensures discrimination and harassment do not exist in our education and research programs, employment activities, or our work environment.

We must be committed to an emphasis on diversity in our programs. I believe that learning to address the many dimensions of diversity surpasses ethnicity, gender, and culture, but also embraces a diversity of norms, values, and standards by which people act. Therefore, we must strive to maintain an environment that allows us to have differences of opinions in a climate of openness, mutual respect, and trust.

I am directing all managers and employees to explore ways to collaborate with our State partners and other recipient organizations to: underscore and reinforce current laws and regulations regarding nondiscrimination; promote best practices in providing equal access and opportunities in programs and employment practices; provide greater equity in the distribution of recognition.

Each of you must assume personal responsibility in making every effort to ensure that our commitment to equitable treatment is thoroughly understood, aggressively followed and recognized as an integral part of every educational program we deliver, every research project we undertake, and in every opportunity for employment.

Colien Hefferan

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HARASSMENT POLICY STATEMENT

Harassment of employees occurring in the workplace or in other settings connected with work activities will not be tolerated in this Agency. Harassment consists of unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based upon a person's protected status, such as sex, color, race, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, or other protected group status. CSREES will not tolerate harassing conduct that affects tangible job benefits, that interferes unreasonably with an individual's work performance, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Sexual harassment is a concern that deserves special mention. Federal guidelines define sexual harassment as including "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature" not only when the conduct is made as a condition of employment ("quid pro quo" harassment), but when the conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

If you experience or witness any conduct that you feel may be unlawful harassment, I encourage and expect you to notify immediately your supervisor, and/or this office, or our Civil Rights Director, or the Agency human resources representative, or an EEO counselor. As in the words of the Secretary: "We must comply with every aspect of our Nations civil rights laws. We cannot deliver programs and services without being sensitive to the human issues that are so much part of our work." CSREES managers and supervisors will be held responsible for ensuring that the workplace is free from harassment, and that appropriate action is taken when allegations or evidence of harassment, sexual or otherwise, is brought to their attention. Any CSREES employee found to have engaged in harassment in violation of civil rights laws and regulations may be subject to disciplinary action.

I am committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of unlawful discrimination or prohibited personnel practices.

As an Agency, we must treat people as our most important asset. We must work together to develop a common set of workforce mores based on mutual professional respect, and observe the highest standards of conduct. It is our affirmative duty to maintain a workplace free of harassment, coercion, intimidation, or exploitation.

Colien Hefferan

MEMORANDUM FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

TO: *CSREES Employees*

SUBJECT: *Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement*

Promoting the full employment and participation of a more diverse workforce in the Agency has long been a moral imperative, but today, it is also an economic and social necessity for the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES). If the Agency is to maintain its competitive edge in our rapidly changing Nation, it will need to engage affirmatively in creative strategies to harness the talent and energy of both diverse and traditional audiences of an ever expanding diverse workforce population. Population trends are already increasing the demand for culturally relevant educational programs. Hence, now and increasingly in the future, CSREES will need new ideas and solutions, and the way to accomplish that is by welcoming new perspectives and methods brought by a diverse workforce. Achieving and maintaining this goal will require diligence, innovation, and a willingness to better use traditional practices while developing innovative programs to address our changing needs.

It is most important that we strengthen our efforts to ensure equal opportunity in all aspects of our employment decisions. As the job market becomes more diverse, so does the challenge of ensuring quality in employment opportunity for all individuals regardless of their color, race, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, or sexual orientation. CSREES will continue to meet this challenge, enforcing the laws that guarantee individuals the right to compete and succeed in our workplace. I support the Secretary's goal that the Department of Agriculture's workforce reflect the diversity of the population of the Nation.

Equal employment opportunity must become and remain an integral part of every aspect of our personnel practice in the employment, advancement, development, and treatment of employees in CSREES. Special care must be taken to assure that job opportunities in CSREES are made known to employees of all races, gender, religions, and ethnic backgrounds.

CSREES must remain above reproach in its treatment of employees and applicants for employment. When complaints are filed against the Agency, I expect prompt, fair, and impartial consideration in reaching an early solution. We must not condone harassment, reprisal, or violations of the intent and/or spirit of equal opportunity laws and employment regulations. I expect all CSREES supervisors and employees to assume personal responsibility for ensuring that all individuals in the Agency as well as stakeholders, State partners, and customers are treated fairly and equitably and with dignity and respect.

Let us clearly demonstrate a commitment to productive and effective implementation of equal opportunity for all individuals.

Colien Hefferan