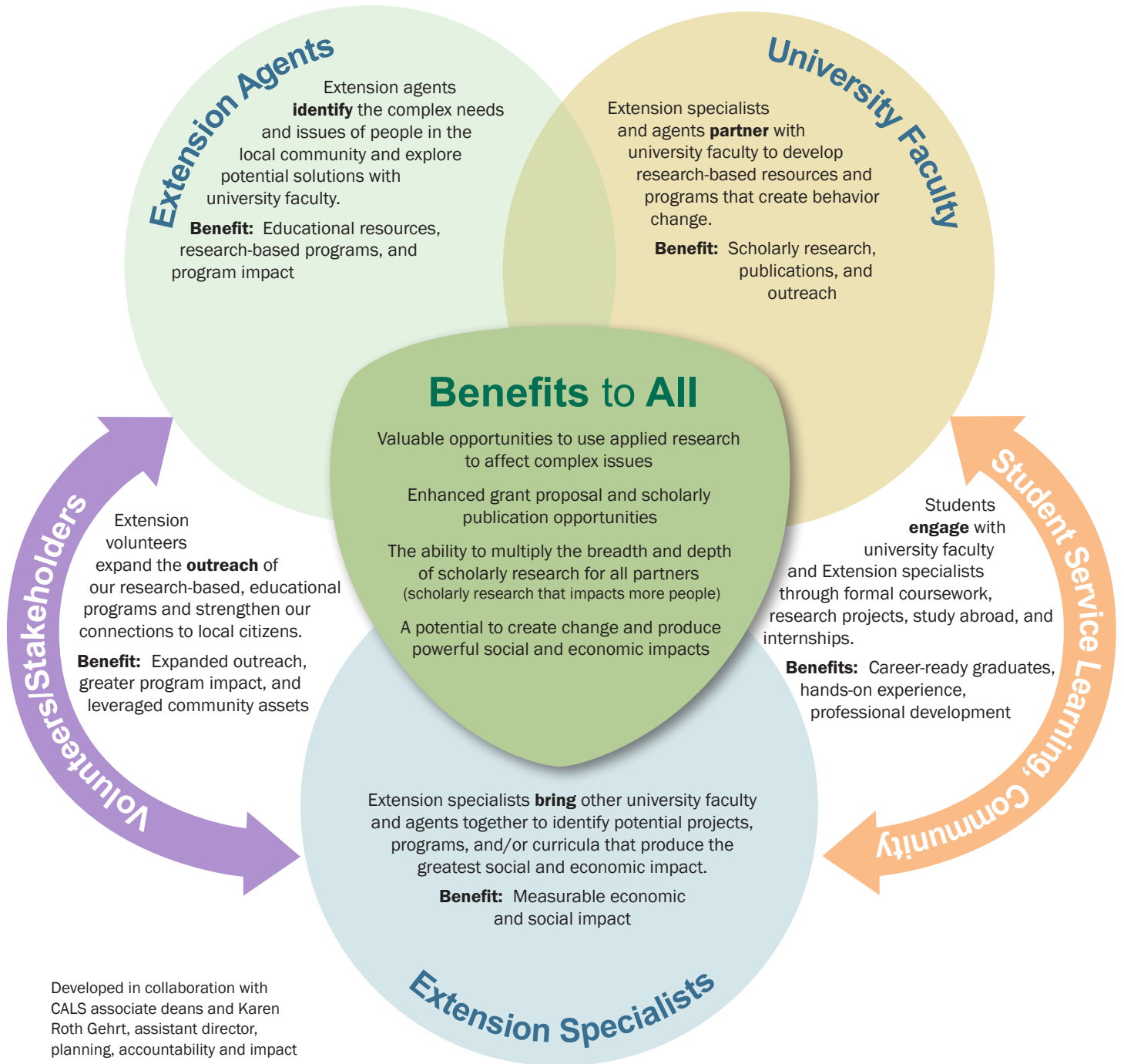


# Common Ground: Why Should University Faculty Partner with Virginia Cooperative Extension?



Nothing is more impactful than university faculty using the tripartite mission of discovery, learning, and outreach to impact people and their communities. University and Extension faculty, volunteers, associations, and students have wonderful opportunities to partner through applied research projects and educational programs that foster positive changes in the lives of Virginians. Let's work together for the benefit of everyone!

University  
Faculty



Extension Agents  
and Specialists



A powerful  
potential to  
change the  
lives of people

through research, behavior  
change, and economic and  
social impact.

Here's an example of how research and Extension partnerships across land-grant universities benefit everyone involved...

For three years the Family Nutrition Program has offered a summer program for Virginia Tech students studying in nutrition related fields. These interns work during summer months in Summer Food Service Program sites sponsored by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) providing nutrition education to low-income youth throughout the state.

The students have the opportunity to take their classroom education and turn it into practical experience through the program. Students utilize the Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids and Teen Cuisine curricula and work through the local extension offices to coordinate classes with many local agencies that provided services to children during the summer. Utilizing the experiential learning model of 4-H they make the nutrition lessons "come to life" and help the youths apply the experience to their own life situation. Data evaluation of the students' learning shows a significant improvement in behavior change and attitudes toward healthy eating and being active.

The students also serve as auditors for the VDH Summer Food Service Program. They conduct site audits utilizing program evaluation skills they learned in their food service classes. Through this experience they learned first-hand about government funded feeding programs policies and procedures. Students gained confidence putting their knowledge into the workplace by carrying out audits in a supervisory role.

Beyond a summer job, students learn professional communication skills, collaboration, time management, and personal responsibility; skills that are hard to come by in a classroom.



## Fairfax Neighborhood and Community Services

"Working with the Extension team takes the guesswork out of nutrition education. As the coordinator of the USDA Summer Food Service Program in Fairfax County, I help ensure that every child has access to healthy meals—even when school is out of session. By connecting our meal sites with nutrition educators from Virginia Tech and Cooperative Extension, I can be sure that kids are getting credible information that will lead to healthier habits. And, healthier habits lead to healthier, happier lives for kids in Fairfax."

– Brent Quarles, Department of Neighborhood and Community Services, Fairfax County



Katie Strong

## Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent

"I'm excited to help connect kids and students at Virginia Tech through the "Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids" curriculum. Research from Virginia Tech shows that this curriculum helps kids make healthy choices, which strengthens families and communities in Fairfax County. By working together, we're reaching more youth, enriching Fairfax's Summer Food Service Program, and giving students invaluable "real world" experience. As an Extension agent, nothing makes me prouder than smart partnerships like this that leverage precious resources for maximum impact in my county."

– Katie Strong, family and consumer sciences agent, Fairfax County



Elaine Twigg

## Summer Intern

"As the Family Nutrition Program intern for Alexandria, I taught the Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids curriculum to approximately 400 children at 10 different recreation sites. The children really enjoyed the lessons and were always eager to tell me about what they had learned or remembered from the previous week's lesson. This summer internship was one of the most valuable experiences I have had thus far, as it was not only extremely rewarding, but also provided me with real-world experience in community nutrition. I know I will continue to carry this experience with me long after I have graduated."

– Elaine Twigg, undergraduate in the HNFE dietetic program



Susan M. Hutson

## Department Head

"I am awed by what the interns learned during the summer working with the Summer Food Service Program sites. All the students I met with said how much they enjoyed working with the children and once engaged how excited and eager to learn they were. Teaching lessons, no matter how well thought out, to a group of children and teenagers taught them how to improvise and change plans to keep the children engaged. They learned to handle the unexpected. Most of all, they learned the joy of connecting to the children and the challenges of taking what they learned in the classroom into the community. For some, it was a life changing experience. I am very grateful to the students, Extension agents, Virginia Department of Health and the Family Nutrition Program, and community sites that made this happen."

– Susan M. Hutson, professor and head of the Department of Human Nutrition and Foods and Exercise