FINAL REPORT

2013 MINI CONNECTING IN NORTH CAROLINA (CINC)
FACULTY/STAFF DEVELOPMENT TOUR

TOUR PURPOSE

This twelfth modified development tour was successfully implemented May 16, 2013, with 21 participants (Appendix A-2013 Tour Participants and Staff). This one-day trek was designed to expose selected faculty and staff to a specific county of North Carolina - its people, its geography, its culture, its economy - allowing them to witness the tangible contributions made by NC State University as part of our land grant mission. The tour was an opportunity to increase an awareness of the diversity at NC State as well as to gain a greater appreciation for the rural character that produces our students and employs our graduates.

The 2013 tour included participants from the College of Agricultural & Life Sciences, College of Design, College of Engineering, College of Natural Resources, and eleven key campus units. As a result of this experience, faculty and staff commitment to and support of the institution’s mission and goals were strengthened. They forged friendships with University colleagues outside their own disciplines which should stimulate joint research and extension initiatives leading to enhanced economic development. Furthermore, site hosts gained a better insight into the University and its community engagement focus by meeting the faculty face-to-face.

Mini CINC, sponsored by the Provost and Vice Provost for Outreach and Engagement, was organized and managed by the McKimmon Center for Extension and Continuing Education (MCE&CE) in cooperation with a Planning Committee consisting of college representatives and previous tour participants (Appendix B-Planning Committee). Prior to boarding the bus, the participants were given a detailed resource notebook which contained information relevant to Harnett County and the sites comprising the one-day itinerary. The group of twenty-one left the campus and “hit-the-road” on May 16th for a bus tour that gave them a first-hand opportunity to get to know more about Harnett County, its native sons and daughters; to witness the economic development role of our University, and to better understand the impact of NC State University on the quality of life and livelihood of its citizens.

SITES VISITED

Site visitations or presentations at six locations highlighted the 140 mile journey through 1 county (Appendix D-Tour Itinerary). Diversity in size, scope and type of operation from traditional to higher tech was an important factor in site selection, with a conscious effort to represent as many of the ten academic disciplines and the state’s major economic “engines” among those chosen. A prime emphasis in 2013 was to expose our participants to the real work world, average wage earners, family owned businesses, a military supported business and a business incubator. As typical, the Mini CINC tour included stops that have a relationship with NC State University in terms of personnel, college-level support, collaborative research projects, and/or joint extension initiatives.

Visitations:

- Harnett County Cooperative Extension Office
- First Choice Community Health Center
- Little River Trails Aquaculture
General Observations:
Much positive feedback was received from the participants relative to the value of the time spent at the sites as well as engaging with the Provost. The extended time at the various sites positively impacted the quality of the overall visitations and discussions. Appropriate time allocation in the future tours must remain a priority in order for the tour participants to have an opportunity to address issues beyond the time utilized by the respective hosts and representatives of NC State University field faculty. It is important that an overview of the production flow from raw materials to finished products be provided at those locations where the group will be divided into smaller units for guide-led walking tours.

Budget and Administration
The direct cost for Mini CINC planning and implementation was $2,301.21 (Appendix E-Income and Expense Report). In addition, approximately 95 hours are required to effectively plan and implement all phases of the tour, involving one MCE&CE EPA professional staff and one SPA program assistant.

State appropriated funds in the amount of $1,635.09 were provided by the Provost’s Office. The Vice Provost of Continuing Education supported the meal and participant materials cost this year in the amount of $666.12.

Publicity
Promotional efforts for the 2013 tour included an early January contact with the respective college’s Planning Committee members requesting pertinent itinerary information. The purpose was to define the reciprocal relationships between each site and NC State University and to highlight the value-added benefit of NC State to the site and/or the local area. A press release was submitted to the Bulletin and a targeted email was sent to all new faculty. Designated university leaders were invited to attend.

Tour Evaluation
The 2013 Mini CINC tour can be labeled a success since all seven questions in the overall tour evaluation range from 4.5 to 4.8 scale of 1-5 with 5 being “excellent”. The “overall value of the tour” criterion was also 4.6. (Appendix G1-Overall Evaluation and G2-Representative Travelers Comments)

Individual tour sites were evaluated by the participants with ranges from 4.4 at the Harnett County Cooperative Extension office; 4.0 at First Choice Community Health Center; 5 at Little River Trails Aquaculture; 4.4 at Saab-Barracuda-LLC; 4 at Triangle South Enterprise Center; and 3.9 at the FLS-Dunn Solar Farm. The numerical values were reinforced by voluntary participant comments received on the evaluation forms or in subsequent thank-you notes and emails (Appendix G3-Daily Site Evaluations). As shared in previous years, one general conclusion to be drawn from the participant ratings is that the stronger the relationship a given site has with NC State, the more meaningful is the overall visitation/interaction.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE MINI-CINC TOURS

1. Mini CINC should continue to be implemented Wednesday or Thursday following Spring Commencement as an annual one-day regional tour.

2. Eligibility for participation should remain consistent with respect to no more than seven years of employment at NC State, with special considerations granted to faculty and non-teaching EPA staff assigned broader roles and/or responsibilities regardless of their time on campus.

3. Each college should be represented along with various key divisions and related campus units. The Faculty Chair-Elect (Faculty Secretary on alternate years) and the incoming Chair of the Staff Senate should participate on a routine basis.

4. The daily agenda should not exceed more than three or four site visits.

5. The inclusion of visitations and/or presentations that reflect the various academic disciplines should remain a primary goal in developing the one-day itinerary.

6. Interaction with average citizens, exposure to larger cities and their key enterprises, grass-roots contact in rural communities, and visitation to a military base or information provided about the impact of the military to N.C., add meaning to each tour. Arrange, if feasible.

7. Arrange the schedule in order to not have back-to-back manufacturing/processing plant visits, if possible given the actual daily tour route. Acronyms and technical jargon should be minimized in the discussions to improve overall effectiveness.

8. The introductory presentations at each site should be no longer than necessary to allow more “active” time for the tour and interaction with both management and workers, if feasible. Participants should be encouraged to review upcoming site information contained in the notebook while en route to potentially reduce the need for an extensive overview upon arrival. During the dialogue with site hosts, the value of an NC State education relative to current employees and future hires should be addressed.