

A Collaborative Research and Extension Outreach Model: the Grape Community of Practice

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Abstract

In 2009, the grape community of practice (GCoP) was formed within the eXtension system. eXtension is an internet-based collaborative environment where Land-grant university content providers exchange objective, research-based knowledge to solve real challenges in real time. The GCoP leadership team consisted of members of the Extension and Outreach Education Committee of the National Grape and Wine Initiative (NGWI). This committee addressed an overall priority of NGWI to enhance outreach education for grape producers by targeting development of a GCoP for the eXtension system. The GCoP launched www.eXtension.org/grapes in 2010 and a companion site in 2011 called eViticulture.org. To date, the GCoP has 88 members from cooperative extension, research, and industry in 31 states and Canada, who interact through a variety of online and face-to-face methods to collaboratively create and review content. All content is reviewed by experts within our community of practice. More than 100 articles have been translated into Spanish as well to reach a broader audience. Data collected from Google Analytics show that content from the eXtension grape site was viewed more than 135,000 times during 2011. After successful establishment of the GCoP, NGWI strongly encouraged other proposals to link to the GCoP for part of their outreach component. Through this process, two funded projects in 2011 included the GCoP as part of their outreach component: **“Accelerating grape cultivar improvement via phenotyping centers and next generation markers”** (Reisch) and **“Northern grapes: Integrating viticulture, winemaking, and marketing of new cold-hardy cultivars supporting new and growing rural wineries”** (Martinson). Expected outcomes for these projects and the GCoP are to create comprehensive online resources for research-based information by providing viticulturists access to content addressing all aspects of grape production, linking to all state-based sites, integrating projects to increase networking and collaboration, and reducing information redundancy across the country.

How does a project collaborate with the GCoP?

•Send an email to the GCoP Project Leader, Eric Stafne (estafne@ext.msstate.edu), stating the general objectives of the proposed project and the role requested of GCoP in the project, including budget. All correspondence will be kept confidential until the grant has been funded. This must be done as far in advance of the due date as possible.

What does the GCoP provide to collaborators?

- A national and international web presence for information that is delivered by experts in viticulture and associated disciplines
- A collaborative work environment
- Social media promotion of projects and events
- A format to create learning opportunities that are science-based and peer-reviewed in an accessible, internet-based 24/7 format
- Ability to deliver and house webinars on cutting-edge technology and management techniques

Who can join the GCoP?

•Any professional in the area of grape production – viticulture, enology, plant pathology, entomology, economics, etc.

How does one join the GCoP?

•One can join the GCoP by obtaining an eXtension ID and expressing an interest in joining the GCoP. Go to people.extension.org to get started.

