Title: Recruiting the next generation of extension professionals.

Rationale: Vice President Humiston has conveyed a commitment to hiring Cooperative Extension advisors and specialists to address critical California issues. We propose a pilot program where our local extension office and community college will work together to promote graduate education, and more specifically, extension work as a viable career path to junior college agricultural students.

California needs extension professionals that are well versed in research and extension methods, as well as practical farm knowledge. Junior college ag departments are a potential resource for such professionals in California, with students engaging in hands-on learning activities on school farms, as well as students with farming backgrounds looking to earn degrees and work outside of the family farm.

Modesto Junior College (MJC) has a robust ag department, with 1,266 enrolled students in 2016. The college offers several degree and certificate programs in agriculture. Though many internship opportunities are available to students, there isn’t a current pathway to encourage graduate education and extension careers.

Goal: To raise awareness of UC ANR research and extension programs, while promoting extension careers to agricultural students poised to enter the job force in the next 5-7 years.

Specific objectives:
1. Educate Modesto Junior College (MJC) students on research and extension work conducted by local farm advisors;
2. Convey graduate education and extension career options to MJC agricultural students;
3. Provide mentoring to a subset of MJC agricultural students to further demonstrate the importance of extension work and opportunities for a rewarding career with extension.

Outreach approach: As a point of first contact, farm advisors will participate in the agricultural department’s “guidance classes” at Modesto Junior College (MJC) to familiarize students with UC ANR and the extension mission. To contact the maximum number of students, six lunchtime seminars will be conducted on the MJC Campus. Instructional staff at MJC will advertise the seminars on campus and secure campus meeting locations. UC ANR will provide lunch to students attending the educational seminars conducted by farm advisors. The objective of these seminars will be to showcase current UC ANR research and extension methods, tying results to the agricultural communities in which these students live and work. A second objective will be to provide information and mentorship to those students interested in a career with extension.

Three students will be selected to “job shadow” farm advisors in Stanislaus County. Students will work alongside advisors in all aspects of the farm advisors’ work, including: attending and assisting with outreach meetings, assisting in field research, attending farm calls, etc.
Potential impact and expected outcomes:

1. Increased number of students applying for extension positions (student intern, SRA, etc.) at the local level.
2. Increased student interest in graduate education, research, and farm advisor career positions.
3. Increased visibility of UC ANR research and extension programs to the next generation of farmers.