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**TO CROSS THE RUBICON? :
THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE RURAL
DEVELOPMENT DILEMMA¹**

By Louis E. Swanson and Shripad D. Deo²

For too many decades, assisting the economic and social development of rural America has been a virtually neglected congressional mandate for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Land Grant Universities (LGUs). In recent years, the USDA has increased its attention to non-farm rural development programs (Rural Policy Research Institute, 1997a). The same cannot be said of most Colleges of Agriculture (CAs). Is the inattention of CAs to rural development a maligned neglect simply rooted in historic allegiance to production agriculture? Or is there more at work? While a great deal of criticism has been leveled at production agriculture's animosity toward competing agendas for CAs' resources--food safety, stewardship of the environment, and rural community enhancement--such historic biases alone do not explain neglect (cf. Browne & Swanson, 1995; Swanson, 1989). And, more important, such a simplistic interpretation does not provide bases for identifying the institutional and cultural dilemmas confronting CA administrators in enhancing their rural development capacity. An alternative interpretation of their neglect might provide constructive avenues for rural development interests to assist CA administrators to incorporate rural development programs into the mainstream of their institutional missions and resources.

Criticism of CAs has become a cottage industry among their commentators. Like most public institutions, CAs and their larger LGU campuses confront serious legitimacy issues. Most of these center on their long-term relationship with large-scale farms and agribusinesses in the

¹ The authors would like to thank David Freshwater and Richard Maurer for their insights and comments. We would also like to thank the three reviewers for their valuable assistance. However, the reader should not hold them responsible for comments made herein.

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context of a declining family farm population. Rural development may offer a new clientele that could undergird their public legitimacy. We propose to identify possible pathways for not only CAs but also other colleges within LGUs to develop non-farm rural development missions. Our proposal rests on developing local and state-based constituencies that provide a political base in state and local governments. The federal government will become a less effective means for facilitating rural development. We also propose that an enhanced rural development agenda can address both fiscal and legitimacy concerns of the CAs. We first review cultural, political, and institutional fiscal conditions that set the stage for the depreciation of rural development. Then we suggest an array of opportunities to overcome these barriers.

BARRIERS CONFRONTING RURAL DEVELOPMENT AS A MISSION AREA

Unquestionably, public institutions born in the political economies of the 19th and early 20th centuries and buffeted by the rapid qualitative social changes of the middle and late 20th century are widely seen as in need of substantive reform. The agrarian institutions of the USDA and the LGUs represent historic innovations in the relationship of both federal and state governments to the social and economic conditions of rural America (Hamilton, 1994). The LGUs were the first public institutions of higher education specifically dedicated to the well-being of the “industrial classes.” Their development has been a testament to the importance of their contributions to the creation of wealth and the social capital of their communities and the larger society. The USDA represented the first significant federal agency designed to facilitate the creation of wealth in agriculture. In the 1930s, the USDA became the first great modern federal bureaucracy. By the end of that decade the USDA was the largest federal agency. Its political legitimacy rested on the sharing of administrative authority with local stakeholder boards. This unique private sector-government relationship has been termed the “associative state” (Hamilton, 1994).

These agrarian institutions represent archetypal examples of successful institution building in response to serious social and economic problems. As the economic and social structures associated with natural resource production and with rural communities changed, earlier institutional innovations became the bulwark of entrenched political elites

and consequently less relevant to changing local and national conditions (Browne, 1994; Strange, 1988). The extent of current institutional crises confronting both the USDA and the LGUs has warranted extensive and often heated internal debate (National Research Council, 1996). A particular focus of this debate is captured in the conclusion of the National Research Council report *Colleges of Agriculture and the Land Grant Universities* that the research priorities of Agricultural Experiment Stations (ESs) are not responsive to the outreach priorities of the Cooperative Extension Services (CESs). However, even this report has little to say about the importance of economic and social issues confronting rural people, even though these issues represent the new core of CES priorities. Table 1 provides proposed priorities for the LGUs (the National Agricultural Research and Extension Users Advisory Board is no longer in existence.) Please note the complete lack of non-farm development concerns.

Another important institutional concern for CAs is the transformation of LGUs in response to the decline of agriculture as the primary employment base for their rural constituencies and the rise of urban and, more importantly, suburban constituencies. The internal hegemony of CAs has declined with the transformation of rural America. This is not to say their influence has been eclipsed. Unfortunately for rural constituencies, the ascending colleges within LGUs have shown little to no interest in rural America (or to urban concerns). This is particularly the case for Colleges of Arts and Sciences that now form the core curriculum base for LGUs. Therefore, the institutional crises confronting CAs are also latent issues for the larger LGU institutional community.

Development institutions, such as the USDA and LGUs, are social and political responses to cultural imperatives (Eitzen, 1996). These institutions tend to be conservative (Eitzen, 1996). That is, they are slow to change institutional cultures and structures that once served them well. They are even more loathe to abandon powerful interests among their constituencies. Altering institutional missions and redirecting resources requires a great deal of pressure from within and without. Such internal institutional stability well serves a society experiencing little change. But such social stasis is not a defining characteristic of 20th century America. New cultural imperatives require new institutional solutions. No one should be surprised by the deep resistance of LGUs to change their institutional cultures and structures to meet new challenges. Nor should anyone be surprised that an inability to change can lead to fundamental

Table 1. Planning or advisory body priorities for food and agricultural system research and education, 1994.

Joint Council on Food and Agricultural Sciences	National Agricultural Research and Extension Users Advisory Board	Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy
Achieve economically viable production systems compatible with environmental and social concerns	Profitability and competitiveness: e.g., develop profitable production systems that reduce agriculture's contribution to water quality problems	Environment and natural resources
Provide a safe, affordable, reliable, and nutritious food supply	Consumer and post-production issues: e.g., determine the role of diet in obesity, eating disorders and chronic disease.	Nutrition, food, safety, and health
Educate agricultural scientists and professionals to meet future challenges	Sustainable agriculture	Processes and products: e.g, new and improved nonfood products
Improve global competitiveness of U.S. food, agricultural, and forest products	Economic development: e.g., encourage development of opportunities for niche-market farmers engaged in activities such as organic and alternative production enterprises	Economic and social issues
Empower individuals, families, and communities to improve their quality of life		Animal systems
		Plant systems

challenges to LGUs' societal legitimacy. But, then, if one doesn't know where to go, it makes sense to stay where one is. Change for change's sake is just as likely to meet with failure.

The pressures for substantial institutional change are impressive. These pressures come from 1) the transformation of rural economic bases from extractive enterprises to manufacturing and service employment (Browne et al., 1992); 2) the emergence of a dual farm structure in which a small proportion of very large farms produce most of the wealth on farms (Browne et al., 1992; Office of Technology Assessment, 1986); 3) the fiscal crisis of the federal government (the national debt) that has contributed to cuts in non-entitlement federal programs (Rural Policy Research Institute, 1997a); 4) increased public priorities for food safety, food quality, and environmental stewardship (Browne, 1994); 5) the rise of public will to downsize government bureaucracies while improving their efficiencies and accountability (for example, the Government Performance and Review Act) (Rural Policy Research Institute, 1997a); and 6) evidence that the quality of life in rural America is similar to conditions in central cities (Castle, 1995). Among these, rural development interests are particularly concerned with the relatively low quality of life and the virtual absence of institutional support for improving it. But such interests would also point out that solutions to these problems primarily reside at the local level with institutional and modest financial support from the states and federal government (Browne & Swanson, 1995).

These and other fundamental social and economic pressures are challenging CAs' traditional and almost total emphasis on the interests of production agriculture. CAs are moving toward enhancing both food safety and environmental stewardship as primary mission areas. The USDA has already done so (Browne, 1994; Policy Research Institute, 1997a). However, there is little evidence of enhanced CA interest in rural development.

A Universal Low Status of Rural Development?

Rural development is a low priority for LGUs in general and for CAs in particular. The National Research Council (1996) report gives little attention to rural issues. Yet there are ample examples of improving visibility and importance of rural development at the national level. The USDA has made significant efforts to increase the resources allocated to rural development (Rural Policy Research Institute, 1997a). The virtually

overhauled Rural Development division at the USDA (USDA/RD) has more fiscal and professional resources available for rural development than at any other time in its history. Moreover, two new programs in the 1996 Farm Bill provide indications of improved stature among members of Congress--an institution with a historic disinterest in non-farm rural issues (Browne, 1994). These are the Rural Community Advancement Program (RCAP), which gives greater authority to state and local governments in the administration of USDA/RD programs, and the Fund for Rural America. The latter program represents the first transfer of Commodity Credit Corporation (farm commodity programs) funds for non-farm programs. But the more significant evidence of improving stature may occur outside of the USDA. This said, congressional interest in rural development may be more due to current opportunities than long-term interest. Like the environmental provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill, when environmentalists thought they had altered congressional behavior only to find that they had been simply incorporated, so too rural development may never have a home among the agricultural committees. Perhaps it is time for rural development advocates to look elsewhere.³

Other federal agencies have begun to register a concern for rural issues that complicate their program delivery. At the Department of Health and Human Services, a Secretary-level task force on rural issues has been created. This effort is focused on urban-based biases in their existing programs that have made efficient and effective program delivery problematic. Perhaps the most far-reaching changes in the fortunes of rural health care are those associated with congressional efforts to reallocate existing distribution formulas for Medicare and Medicaid among urban, suburban, and rural areas. This reformulation is in response to convincing evidence of considerable inequities in recent formulas for a rural clientele (Rural Policy Research Institute, 1997b).

Despite increased national and federal interest in rural development, interest at the state and local level is very uneven. It will be at the state and local level where the fortunes for rural development between CAs and LGUs will rest. Rural communities vary greatly among themselves in their characteristics and in the array of potential opportunities for development. This diversity of experiences requires

³ The authors thank David Freshwater for his more pessimistic assessment, which they find hard to deny.

public policies that are flexible in design and in the provision of institutional support. There are few, if any, “one size fits all” programs for rural development. Therefore, the active participation and leadership of local stakeholders are required. However, the capacity for many rural people and communities to act without non-local support is limited. Unlike larger towns and cities, rural communities usually do not have the economic or tax base to fund the necessary institutional support. Moreover, there is considerable variation in the capacity and will of rural communities to act on their own behalf. Consequently, there are important roles for development institutions such as LGUs and their CAs to support and perform. All of this suggests a need for and a potential clientele for rural development. Given both need and opportunity, why have CAs and LGUs not enhanced their rural development efforts?

Barriers to Colleges of Agriculture Enhancement of Their Rural Development Missions

There are at least four substantial barriers to the emergence of rural development as a significant mission for CAs and LGUs. These are 1) the absence of powerful political clientele, 2) tight CA budgets, 3) few CA administrators who believe that rural development deserves a greater share of their scarce resources, and 4) a perceived absence by CA administrators of a scientific foundation for developing effective and efficient intervention strategies (including limited integration of rural development among their research, teaching, and extension activities). These barriers underscore a general lack of consensus on what to do. Establishing such a consensus is a necessary step toward developing an active constituency. For rural development to become a central mission area among CAs, internal proponents and external stakeholders must address each of the barriers.

1) Absence of a Strong Constituency. An *active* constituency is a requirement for rural development to become a mission area. There is a potentially powerful political clientele, but its fractured character often means it exerts a minimal influence on CA decision making. These disarticulated clienteles include rural community and civic leaders, private foundations, community-based organizations, subregional development organizations, and state development agencies. Their disarticulation is a critical weakness. In rural areas there are few local organizations that can make even modest claims to the support of a broad spectrum of community

members. Yet rural development generally works best when there is a broad consensus.

This absence of effective links between CAs and rural development constituencies often follows program-specific paths. Whereas rural development encompasses a broad constellation of issues such as health care, social welfare, telecommunications, education institutions (particularly higher education), private business, and the like, each often has its own set of agendas and organizational initiatives. They are not connected with one another. Such disarticulation may not only contribute to missed opportunities for cooperation, but may also foster dysfunctional competition. Moreover, these groups do not see the USDA, congressional agricultural committees, and LGUs as important to their interests.

There also is a public policy clientele, including the U.S. Congress and federal agencies. The USDA has four agencies that have direct interests in rural development (USDA/RD, USDA/Natural Resources, USDA/Research, Education, and Economics, and USDA/Forest Service). Regional development agencies such as the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the Delta Commission have historical commitments to rural development and possess some of the most powerful political constituencies in Congress. Cabinet-level agencies such as the Department of Transportation, the Department of Energy, Housing and Human Services, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development have programs in rural areas. Even the Veterans Administration spends more funds in rural areas than does USDA/RD. In addition to government agencies there are policy interest groups with rural development programs. Among these are the National Association of Counties, the National Rural Electric Cooperatives Association, the National Association of Towns and Townships, and the National Association of Development Organizations. Each of these has strong local and state affiliates that could support LGU rural development initiatives.

The historical constituency for CAs has been production agriculture interest groups. During the eight decades of the 20th century these groups have generally represented a wide range of farmer interests. While these interests have been as fractured as those of rural development, they have been unified as a "Farm Bloc" since the New Deal (Browne, 1994). One might think that rural development would be a "backyard issue" for farm-based interests, but with the transformation of American

agriculture, the influence of small- and medium-sized farm operators has given way to that of transnational agribusinesses and very large farm operations. For the approximately 80 percent of agribusiness jobs located in metropolitan counties, rural development is not a backyard concern. Rural development is more likely to represent a potential threat to production agriculture interests in current CA programs. However, the emergence of rural economic and social issues among CESs signals potential changes in attitudes toward rural development.

Rural America does not lack influential stakeholders at the local, state, and federal level. Rather, unlike the Farm Bloc of production agriculture, rural America lacks a unified rural development constituency. Deans of Agriculture need a reliable constituency to support any reallocation of scarce resources away from programs directly benefiting production agriculture, which is supported by powerful national political interest groups. Rural America has a clear disadvantage. Given current budget difficulties, Deans of Agriculture are not likely to cross the politically dangerous Rubicon necessary to initiate rural development programs unless there is a stable constituency to offer a hand on the other side.

2) Tight College of Agriculture Budgets. The fiscal crises of the federal government coupled with a public will to downsize government programs have negatively affected CA budgets (National Research Council, 1996). Generally, CA budgets have either remained stable in current dollars or lost ground. At the federal level this fiscal crisis has triggered a substantial decline in federal farm expenditures and the simultaneous downsizing and reorganization of USDA (Rural Policy Research Institute, 1997a). Assuming those national political pressures to balance the federal budget continue, there is little reason to believe that this portion of CA budgets will increase in current dollars, while there is a likelihood of further erosion.

The federal portion of CA budgets are declining relative to state contributions. Among most LGUs, state contributions to CA budgets are considerably more than federal revenues. This suggests that the development of rural constituencies should be more focused on state legislatures. Unfortunately, states with weak rural development interests will be states where CAs and LGUs may have little future in pursuing new rural development initiatives. The devolution of federal authority to states coupled with the greater ability of state governments to address their local circumstances make the cultivation of a state constituency a more direct

means for helping Deans of CAs to enhance their commitment to rural issues.

Unless there are compelling reasons (such as the emergence of a strong demand for rural development programs), most CA administrators are unlikely to divert money from existing programs with a clientele to rural development. Therefore, rural development must make a strong case for new funding for Colleges of Agriculture or for a diversion of existing funds from other CA programs. Such cases should be focused on state and local conditions and not on some generalized national crisis.

3. A Lack of Confidence by College of Agriculture Administrators in Rural Development. Few Colleges of Agriculture administrators believe rural development deserves a greater share of scarce resources. This is a serious barrier. Again, an intuitive argument can be made that rural development should be an obvious mission area. There are at least two hurdles. First, rural development is perceived as a cyclical policy phenomenon. Second, CA administrators primarily are recruited from the ranks of agricultural scientists with little or no understanding of rural issues beyond agriculture. Given these conceptual differences, it is little wonder that CA administrators view rural development as a bundle of collective goals that cannot be firmly attached to particular reliable interest groups. Worse still are the absence of universal measures of accountability. How should rural development issues be measured? How can the effectiveness of programs be evaluated?

CA administrators also have good reason to doubt the political staying power of rural development (Browne & Swanson, 1995; Rural Policy Research Institute, 1995). Congressional interests in rural non-farm issues ebb and flow with the political currents of social programs. The 1972 Rural Development Act (Title V) greatly enhanced the legislative authority for Congress to appropriate funds for rural development, but since the early 1980s it has proven to be ineffective legislation (Browne & Swanson, 1995). What then makes this new round of interest different? As will be discussed below, the transformation of federal agencies to transfer federal authority and limited funds to state and local government has fundamentally changed the policy environment. Rural policy will be driven more by state and local issues and not by federal priorities.

A potentially more intractable barrier is the low priority and visibility of rural development among CA administrators. Busch and Lacy (1988) find that most CA scientists are trained and recruited from other CAs. This provides an opportunity for a relatively unified CA culture

nationally. While such cultural reinforcement may have a significant impact on a lack of methodological and theoretical diversity among the agricultural science disciplines, the importance for non-agriculture economic and social issues cannot be understated. Other than personal commitments to rural America, such as having been raised on a farm or in a rural community, these scientists do not receive training that would inform them of the importance of rural development for the future legitimacy of CAs. But the CA scientists should not be blamed. Non-CA biological scientists also receive little in the way of a liberal arts training. This general inability to conceive of social and economic issues in their totality is consistent with the reductionist and often positivist methodological training of biological and physical scientists.

CA scientists may believe that economic social issues are important only if they directly facilitate the implementation of agricultural programs--the people problems of adoption and diffusion of agricultural technologies (rural sociology's traditional role). Possibly more important, these scientists have no experiential basis for gauging the potential importance of rural development as a legitimate mission arena in their colleges. This may be changing as CES priorities continue to focus on social and economic issues. Rural development stakeholders should not base their hopes of enhancing rural development within CAs on raising the consciousness of CA scientists about the importance of their concerns, though it can be a method of doing so.

Simply announcing the importance of rural development and making claims for a *potential clientele* will not cause Deans of Agriculture to embrace rural development. Nor should this strategy work. Deans of Agriculture are unlikely to become risk takers without justification. Again, they need reliable clienteles on the other side of this mission Rubicon to help them to the other side.

4. A Distrust of Social Science as Real Science. Biological and physical scientists have a fundamental distrust of the validity of most social sciences. The social sciences are thought to be the "soft" sciences, lacking the requisite allegiance to the positivist rigors of the scientific method (cf. Keat & Urry, 1992). From the positivist perspectives of agricultural scientists, such a distrust of social science is reasonable, especially for social science research on rural economic and social development. Their reductionist reasoning processes are not amenable to the analyses of rural social change. No doubt they concede that the social sciences are important, but from their epistemological perspectives there is little reason

for them to believe that good social science research will ultimately lead to good rural development in the same way they believe that good basic genetic research will lead to financial benefits for their production agriculture clientele.

This mistrust represents a fundamental issue of what constitutes valid knowledge and how such knowledge can be made to have “useful” outcomes. By the standards of positivist agriculture research, rural social research on rural development is elementary at best and mysticism at worst. Why should scarce resources be devoted to research and extension enterprises that cannot be applied to the problems of rural America? If rural development cannot directly make claims to scientific validity, then overcoming the constituency barriers may not be enough to establish rural development as a substantive CA mission area. While this is a *perceived dilemma*, perceptions can become real in their consequences when administrators act on them.

Why Should Colleges of Agriculture Administrators Be Interested in Rural Development?

Given these formidable concerns, why should CA administrators be interested in rural development? The simple answer is that rural communities need and will eventually demand their services and in return will provide a viable program constituency. Taking on a new constituency is sensible if traditional constituencies are less able to deliver needed public legitimacy. The unity of the old Farm Bloc and the ability of production agriculture to capture broad public legitimacy based on public support of family farming is ebbing (Swanson & Coughenour, 1995). A critical problem confronting CAs is their dependency on federal funds. As Congress has sought to trim non-entitlement budgets, expenditures on production agriculture research has faced tough scrutiny. Seeking out reliable new constituencies has become more prevalent. CA administrators have begun to accept environmental and food safety missions as partial replacements for the erosion of production agriculture’s public influence. Rural development has the potential of providing an even more reliable constellation of clients. Demand for development assistance comes from 1) the new world of devolving federal programs and 2) the old world of economic development. There are few public and even fewer private institutions that can deliver on rural development as well as the LGUs and their CAs.

1. A new world of public policy. The 1990s have witnessed qualitative changes in public perceptions of the federal government. After more than a half century of enhancing the authority of the federal government the tide has shifted toward greater fiscal responsibility and a downsizing of federal bureaucracy. This process is popularly referred to as the *devolution of the federal authority*. In fact, it is not a devolving process. Federal agencies are not devolving to former selves. Rather, they are being reorganized around new missions and political clienteles. Federal institutions shaped by political economy conditions of the first part of the 20th century are being forced to find new organizational cultures and structures that more effectively address the late-20th-century socio-cultural imperatives.

The devolution of the federal government has begun to transfer considerable flexibility in program design and responsibility to the states--which in turn are likely to transfer flexibility and responsibility to rural communities (Rural Policy Research Institute, 1996, 1997a). This transfer of authority is simultaneously (and sometime contradictorily) seen as an opportunity to make federal public policy more locally relevant and as a liability for resource-poor communities. As a rule, funding and technical assistance provided by the federal government for its own programs to state and local programs is not being passed along at levels that will sustain these earlier levels of federal support per client. Four programs merit particular concern: 1) welfare reform, 2) health care reforms (especially for Medicare and Medicaid), 3) telecommunications, and 4) various economic and community block grants. Historically, farm policy has been characterized by an associative state structure and culture. The 1996 Farm Bill provides legislation that will eventually terminate existing commodity programs. Therefore, farm policy may actually be "devolving" toward the minimal market intervention by the federal government that existed prior to the New Deal. It is likely that farm policy will continue to change as the realities of farm risk require new forms of federal government assistance (Swanson & Skees, 1991).

Current institutional change among federal agencies will continue for the foreseeable future. While the movement toward the devolution of federal authority reflects internal contradictions associated with the federal fiscal crisis and the perceived ineffectiveness of federal agencies to adequately address public problems, so too are there internal contradictions that will trigger further institutional experimentation. For rural communities, the increased flexibility of federal programs in addressing

local circumstances on balance is perceived as a positive event. However, rural communities usually do not have the necessary tax base or social capital to assess their problems, identify opportunities, and follow through with effective programs and evaluate outcomes. For the devolution to work, rural communities require both extensive technical assistance and modest access to funding or credit. Presently, neither condition for success is in place. LGUs and their CAs have not only a congressional mandate to provide technical assistance. They have the program delivery vehicles to do so, especially the CES. However, most LGUs do not have enough rural development professionals for the burgeoning demand.

In an effort to maximize the efficacy of federal funds under conditions of organizational downsizing and resource depletion, federal agencies are moving toward competitive block grant programs. Examples of existing rural competitive grant programs are RCAP and the Enterprise Communities/Empowerment Zone initiatives within the USDA. While there may be very attractive features to this policy shift, rural communities must have the capacity to 1) understand where the opportunities exist (to know which agencies have competitive grant program and to understand the application procedures), 2) effectively develop a broad-based strategic plan from which programs will emerge, 3) identify priorities and develop a competitive proposal, and 4) effectively administer and evaluate their programs.

LGUs offer a great deal of expertise useful to rural communities. Indeed, there are few other organizations that can match their potential (for example, the Kellogg Foundation), but CAs are unprepared to capitalize on this opportunity to renew its importance with an old clientele. The competitive advantages for LGUs are their CESs, which have an office in most counties. County agents can facilitate the identification of necessary information, provide assistance in strategic planning and program development, and assist in writing a competitive grant. County agents also have access to expertise of the Land Grant University (all colleges and programs) and often are given *entre* to other institutions of higher learning (community colleges, and public and private colleges and universities).

LGUs should not expect CAs to become the only provider of rural development expertise. The entire LGU campus should be involved, with expertise funneled through the CES. Developing this capacity will require professional development programs and new protocols within both the CESs and the LGUs. The changing configuration of federal policy engendered by the devolution of federal authority represents an opportunity

for LGUs to cultivate a potentially powerful but broad-based rural constituency and to reinvent their mission goals.

2. An old world of economic development. Historically, rural development has been narrowly defined by administrators and policy makers primarily in terms of economic development (Beaulieu & Mulkey, 1995; Rowling et al., 1996). The rapid and far-reaching implications of a global restructuring make continuous efforts at economic and social development necessary. This requires broadening the arenas for development to include more than the creation of jobs. Three key local dimensions for development are a community's physical, economic, and social infrastructures. Among these three, LGUs are most able to provide technical assistance that enhances a rural community's economic and social infrastructure. While the importance of assisting economic development is self-evident, the greatest contributions may be made by enhancing the capacity of a community's social infrastructure.

LGUs should not be expected to create jobs directly. However, they can facilitate the development of an economic infrastructure by nurturing entrepreneurship, providing technical assistance for the management of firms, and providing both information on and analysis of market conditions and opportunities. Efforts that promote the expansion and retention of existing industries and programs that expand the effectiveness of industrial extension provide assistance that would not otherwise be available to local businesses.

Social infrastructure refers to the capacity and will of rural communities to promote self-development. It includes not only the human capital base of a community but also its social capital base (Flora & Flora, 1991). Rural communities can act on their own behalf. Just as individuals have individual capacities to create wealth and sustain social systems, so, too, do communities have similar capacities to tap their human and natural resources to accomplish community development tasks (Luloff & Swanson, 1995). LGUs can provide considerable technical assistance to rural communities for the development of their social infrastructure--assistance that likely would not otherwise be available.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO INCORPORATE RURAL DEVELOPMENT INTO COLLEGES OF AGRICULTURE?

Each of the barriers discussed above needs to be addressed. If our assumption that a disarticulated constituency exists is correct, then

nurturing an articulated constituency is an effective means for overcoming an important barrier. This will not be easy. The most direct strategy is to begin development of a mission within CAs in ways that provide immediate access to and support of external rural development constituencies. Furthermore, given the diversity of rural community needs and circumstances, there are no easy organizational templates. But there are three associated principles that can guide the incorporation of rural development missions with CAs. Rural development missions should 1) systematically link research, extension, and instruction in a broad sense, 2) be driven and shaped by demand of new broad-based constituencies, and 3) directly engage rural communities and their stakeholders.

Stakeholders within LGUs can work with current CA administrators in identifying the merits of rural development in the context of current program goals. While exogenous stakeholders ultimately will determine the fate of rural development within CAs, there are immediate opportunities to establish rural development missions that address the gaps between ES research and CES outreach program priorities. CESs are only one of many groups that should be articulated. LGU rural development programs should be as responsive to a broad range of stakeholder interests as their resources can reasonably permit. However, first priority should be given to the needs of CES for at least two reasons. First, rural development as a mission area will gain a great deal of internal legitimacy when CES administrators champion this mission in terms of their program goals. Given their program priorities, there is good reason to believe they will be receptive to an integrated rural development mission. Second, CESs' clienteles continue to have deep roots within the production agriculture community. By addressing CESs' mission concerns, rural development has an opportunity to build a base among CAs' traditional production agriculture clientele. Rural development programs that do not go beyond CESs' constituencies run the risk of missed opportunities and myopic public agendas.

Any effort to incorporate rural development into CAs as a mission area must systematically link research, outreach, and instruction. Moreover, the challenge is to link CA resources with those of the larger campus. The program challenge will be to *functionally integrate* these core mission efforts. The National Research Council's (1996) emphasis on the necessity to link research, outreach, and instruction must be taken as the guiding principle in initiating any rural development program. This report highlights the expanding gulf between the research priorities of ES

scientists and those of CES professionals. The clear opportunity for CAs is the role rural development research and instruction activities can play in addressing the high social priorities of CES (again, see Table 1). This also provides CAs the opportunity to play a leadership role in redefining LGU missions for the next decade.

ES research priorities often follow academic disciplinary agendas. While such research is expected to demonstrate a potential for an applied outcome, researchers have a great deal of autonomy. Unlike ES research priorities, extension priorities are primarily set by county extension councils. Rural development research should give a high priority to expanding the knowledge base necessary to assist county extension agents in meeting their constituencies' social and economic priorities. There are no other research institutions that can or wish to provide the necessary research effort.

An ancillary principle is that rural development missions should be *driven primarily by demand from rural development stakeholders rather than professional social science agendas*. This includes not only responsiveness to rural stakeholder concerns, but also to providing career paths for LGU faculties that address local and state research and extension needs. This principle underscores a final principle. *Rural development missions should directly engage rural community leaders*. CAs created their current basis of legitimacy by directly engaging farmers. So, too, should emerging rural development programs directly incorporate rural communities into their research, instruction, and outreach efforts. The best means for creating a sustainable constituency is to empower them.

Opportunities for Innovation

The creation of LGU rural development missions offers opportunities for organizational innovation and experimentation. Among the three mission areas of outreach, research, and instruction, multiple opportunities exist. For example, outreach programs should capitalize on the technical advances in telecommunications to maximize outreach and instruction. Social science research has an opportunity to address issues associated with the validity of their research through innovative research that utilizes both quantitative and qualitative research designs. LGU campus-wide curricula could include undergraduate and graduate multidisciplinary instruction in rural development, including the creation of professional undergraduate and graduate degrees.

The potential usefulness of emerging telecommunication technologies is often overstated. These technologies are seen as ends in themselves and not communication tools that require effective social organizations to unleash their potential. Nonetheless, the technical ability to overcome the crippling historic barriers of space and time for rural areas cannot be ignored. There is a great deal of demand for technical assistance in establishing telecommunication networks and in providing useful and timely information. LGUs can assist rural people's efforts to locate and analyze information that can be employed in improving their incomes and their communities. The provision and analysis of information are a historical mission of public institutions of higher learning. The trick will be to integrate the powers of telecommunications with rural development programs that meet the demands of rural people and their institutions.

Rural development research can be both relevant to rural stakeholders and theoretically and methodologically innovative. However, incentives for applied research are weak. The career reward systems for CA social science researchers tend to be closely aligned with their ability to address theoretical and topical issues central to their professional societies. Yet, research on rural development has not been visible in more highly regarded professional journals. Rural development's topical areas, theoretical applications, and research methodology have been both innovative and informative for larger social science audiences. Rural development researchers need to make more concerted efforts to publish in mainstream journals--because it is excellent research. This said, criteria for a research career in rural development need to give much greater emphasis to the needs of immediate stakeholders. Rural development offers unique opportunities for the integration of basic and applied research. It is our opinion that as rural development researchers explore their topical areas, their research designs will increasingly include both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Rural development requires both epistemological and theoretical innovation as macro issues are connected with the realities of local societies. For rural development researchers to dispel the distrust of positivist agricultural scientists, they must give greater care in establishing the validity of their efforts. The integration of quantitative and qualitative methodologies provides a path to addressing this long-standing barrier for rural development.

Perhaps the greatest opportunity for higher education institutional innovation is using rural development as a means for integrating the curricula of other LGU colleges. The Land Grant mission should cut

across all colleges. Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences form the core of modern institutions of higher education. CA natural resource and rural development curricula can provide pragmatic subjects for Liberal Arts and Sciences programs and certainly the reverse is equally possible. Rural development can provide an opportunity for LGUs to create an integrated campus-wide curricula, the benefits of which will accrue to all colleges involved. Moreover, actively working with other colleges provides new resources for CA missions that would otherwise not be affordable. The primary products of such integrated campus-wide curricula might be professional rural development degrees or certificate programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. For rural development stakeholders, the establishment of integrated degree programs addresses current resource scarcity issues by tapping the resources of other colleges and provides institutional anchors for a rural development mission area.

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

Rural development provides opportunities for both rural stakeholders and LGUs. As a mission area, rural development can provide one of several new or reformed mission areas that assure the survival of CAs well into the next century. However, such heady statements fly into the hard realities of administering CAs. The lack of an articulated constituency, tight CA budgets, the tendency of CA administrators to undervalue the benefits of rural development, and persistent questions of the validity of social science research are imposing barriers to the realization of pending opportunities. CA administrators will require rural stakeholders to demonstrate the worthiness of their demands for a wider mission area and a larger portion of dwindling resources.

For rural development to emerge as a primary mission area in CAs, its internal advocates must connect it to current CA goals. The greatest opportunity to do so may be in becoming much more relevant to CES priorities, thereby gaining the internal institutional support of CES administrators. However, a sustainable rural development mission must effectively integrate outreach, research and instruction while simultaneously nurturing a more unified constituency. This will be more easily accomplished only if rural development programs are highly sensitive to demand and directly engage rural communities.

Presently, the inherent benefits of rural development are apparent to its splintered stakeholders only. Simply wishing rural development to

become a viable mission area will not be enough for its realization. There is no evidence of a hidden hand that will force CAs to do the right thing. It is difficult to ignore a more pessimistic perspective that LGUs have little interest in the *land grant mission* despite their rhetoric. The National Research Council evidence is impressive. Pursuing such missions are politically difficult and presently academically unrewarding, and involve dealing with unreliable and often politically weak clientele. This perspective would find little chance of the cross-campus LGU push to help rural America. If so, there is all the more need to focus on CAs and state legislatures, for these are the only institutions that have given even scant attention to rural people.

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