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Urban Extension in the Decade Ahead

Collaboration, Competition, or Contraction

Since the passage of the Morrill Act in 1862 and related legislation in the years following, agricultural universities have benefited greatly from the funding from federal, state, and local initiatives for research and from extending that research to the person who could benefit the most from it, the farmer. Today, with the urbanization of America, much can be learned from the land-grant university model with its extension agents and applied to the urban university and to the person it can benefit most, the city-dweller. This article examines what has been learned about urban extension, how it can be improved, and what its relationship is and may be with the existing cooperative extension agencies.

The Return of the Urban Crisis

In April 1991's issue of *Governing* magazine, Jonathan Walters reports in his article "Cities on Their Own" that "the phrase 'urban crisis' has returned to the American vocabulary." It has been a quarter-century since the riots in Watts and Hough and similar events elsewhere riveted national attention on the plight of our major urban centers. The initial federal response was a series of major policy and program initiatives. In spite of these, the problems of our cities seem as intractable today as they were in the mid-1960s. But today's urban leaders have recognized that they cannot depend on a Washington-generated, comprehensive urban policy. They are, as Walters states, working in an environment of "greater self-reliance that is not so much a tactic as an acceptance of reality." This environment presents a unique opportunity for those in higher education committed to urban extension.

Although the urbanization of our nation began early on, there have been few historic linkages of higher education to the city. Most institutions of higher learning founded in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were purposely located in pastoral settings, as far as possible from the perceived negative influences of city life. Early partnerships between these institutions and their communities were developed within this rural environment. By

the 1960s, a new group of institutions of higher education emerged with a special mission to serve the urban communities of which they were a part. As these urban universities began to consider the development of partnerships with their communities, some looked to the earlier, rural efforts as a model.

The cooperative extension programs of the nation's land-grant universities were established by the Smith-Lever Act in the early part of the twentieth century to link the academic and research strengths of the land-grant universities to the American public. Their extension programs originally focused on agricultural and rural development issues but, as our nation has become more urbanized, many cooperative extension programs have responded to calls for increased relevance to modern urban issues, recognizing the need to build an urban constituency to retain funding in the face of federal, state, and local budget constraints. Today the direct service providers, often known as "extension agents," serve both rural and urban areas.

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A commitment to a strong disciplinary and research base is the heart of the success of the Cooperative Extension Service. However, in many states the research that historically has supported the extension efforts focuses on agricultural issues and is done primarily through the colleges of agriculture. Access to and coordination with other departments or universities conducting research on urban issues are limited.

To continue to fuel the urban initiatives of the extension programs will require access to a strong research base on critical urban issues. Linking up with the urban public research universities is one way to strengthen these programs. Several states have developed programs that more closely coordinate urban research programs with the urban extension function. This article will examine these models and begin to lay out a strategy for more closely coordinating extension programs with the programs of urban public universities in a way that enables both to fulfill their missions of linking the research and teaching strengths of the university to the public.

In this presentation, *urban extension* is defined as the application of the reservoir of skills, talents, and knowledge of universities and community colleges to addressing our nation's urban problems. Urban extension involves systematic and sustained efforts by institutions of higher education through carefully designed strategies in teaching, research, and technical assistance that focus on such urban issues as economic development, community infrastructure and service, social policy, public health, housing, education, planning, and the development of skilled human resources.

In 1959 the Ford Foundation began funding urban extension programs at a number of state universities with grants totaling approximately $4.5 million. These academic centers were encouraged to emulate the experience of nineteenth-century agricultural extension agents by putting research to practical use to eliminate urban problems. The experiments had mixed

results. Those that were well funded, had capable leadership, and were located in stable cities of moderate size seemed to work well and had impact; in other cases, the experiments had scarcely any effect.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, additional Ford grants were made to a new generation of university urban specialists. Funds were focused on two areas: the need for more and better research on cities and encouraging university faculty and students to serve in urban government.

A ten-city network of *urban observatories* was begun in June 1968 with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding. Six months later, the U.S. Office of Education became a joint sponsor through Title I of the Higher Education Act of 1965. The program had three goals: to make university resources available to local governments for aid in solving urban problems, to provide a coordinated program of urban research that could be applied to problems common to a number of areas, and to further university capabilities to relate research and training to urban concerns.

Although all observatories yielded some useful results, when HUD ended its support in 1974 only two of the ten cities were willing to provide sufficient funding to keep the observatories operating.

William Pendleton of the Ford Foundation concluded that a weakness of these attempts at urban extension was the lack of hard funding, calling the Ford-supported urban centers no more than "another paper organization." What he and Peter Szanton, who headed the New York City Project of the Rand Corporation, determined from these experiments in urban extension was that certain conditions were necessary for establishing productive relationships between universities and state/local government officials including:

- a need to overcome mutual distrust that often exists between university people and government officials;
- a need to connect the right academic people with the right government people;
- rewards for the academics who contribute to solutions of city government problems;
- a committed client—a local agency responsible for the subject being investigated;
- a specified problem or issue, or a number of them;
- a university advisor with genuine and relevant expertise;
- good communication between the university advisor and city client, i.e., the advisor must be able to convey his results in terms the client can understand.

Looking to the Future: Contraction—Competition—Collaboration

Urban and cooperative extension programs face new challenges in the 1990s as federal, state, and local governments all attempt to balance budgets and reduce or eliminate costly programs. And as pointed out by Larry D. Terry in his paper "A Crisis of Legitimacy," extension programs

of all kinds are coming under increasing pressure to prove their value to their constituencies.

The Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture submitted a FY 1992 budget proposal that calls for a 3 percent increase over FY 1991. Total funds requested for FY 1992 are $410 million. Under the Smith-Lever Formula, each $3 of federal-appropriated funds leverages $7 in state and other public- and private-sector funds, giving the extension service over $1.3 billion in funding. Additional analysis of funding trends indicated that the federal share of total dollars for cooperative extension decreased nationally, while the state share increased.

Anecdotal information from Massachusetts and other states, as well as recent developments in Georgia where a 23 percent cut in state extension spending was approved (August 1991), indicates that funding for cooperative extension in urban states may be in a contraction mode. To test this, state-by-state funding for cooperative extension service programs for 1980 and 1990 was analyzed and compared to the percentage of the population of those states residing in urban areas in 1988 (the most recent year for which information was available) to determine if there was any correlation between urban states and the change in funding from 1980 to 1990. This preliminary analysis seems to confirm that on a per capita basis, states with a higher percentage of population residing in urban areas received less of an increase in funds over the period from 1980 to1990 than did the more rural states. This relationship was statistically significant for the change in federal, state, and total funds. As extension programs begin to focus more on urban areas, these statistical and anecdotal trends provide further support for a separate source of funding for urban extension and urban research, as proposed in Title XI of the Higher Education Act.

Title XI —The Urban Grant University Program

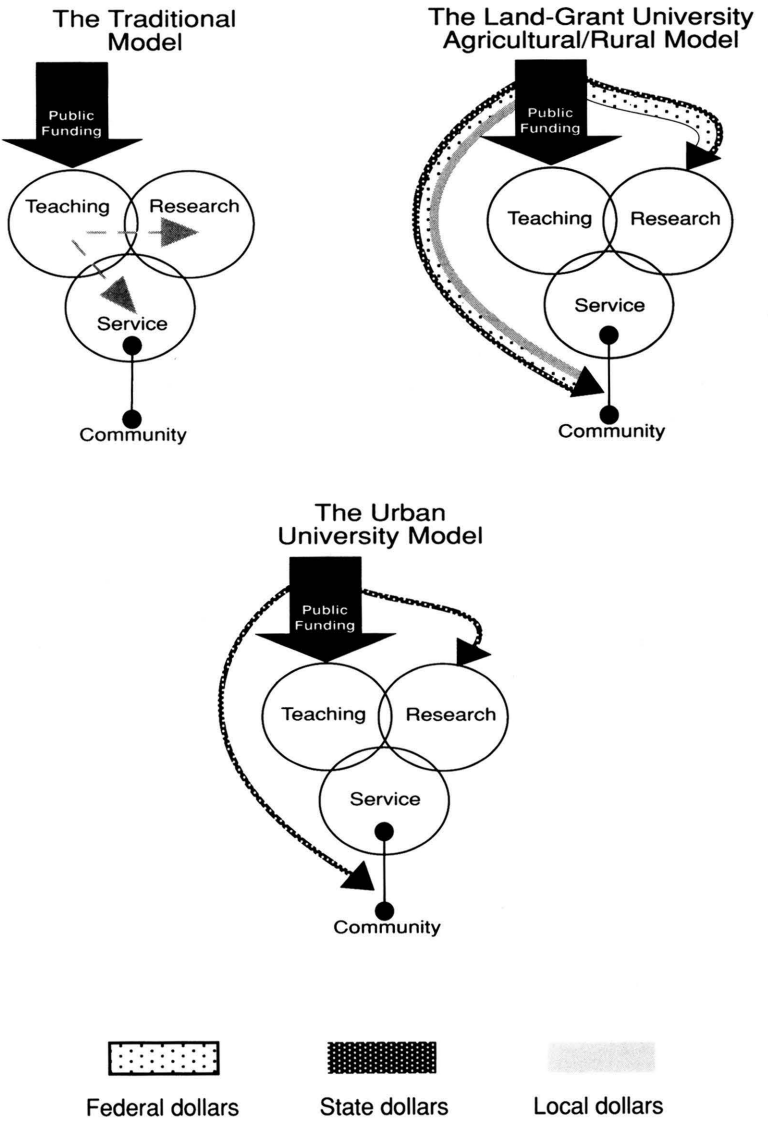
Spurred by a group of urban universities across the country, federal-level attempts to build on the Morrill Act reforms to provide a federal purpose and funding for urban universities and urban extension efforts were initiated in Congress in the late 1970s. These efforts resulted in Title XI, the Urban Grant University Program, established as part of the 1980 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965. The new program was created to draw upon the "underutilized reservoir of skills, talents, and knowledge" of the nation's urban universities and to apply these "in a systematic and sustained manner to make a significant contribution" toward the solution of urban problems. Title XI language acknowledged that these goals were "hindered by the limited funds available to sustain their commitment" and authorized $15 million for fiscal year 1981, increasing to $55 million for fiscal year 1985. However, these funds were never appropriated.

In 1991, Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon and Representative Tom Sawyer of Ohio introduced legislation in Congress to fund and reauthorize Title XI, reopening the discussion of the need for, and value of, urban universities and the need for federal funding of urban center programs. As Title XI comes up for reauthorization, the Ohio Urban University

Program, described below and in more detail in the subsequent article, intends to draw on its decade of success and to argue that the time is right for national policy to follow state policy as it did with the cooperative extension program and to provide ongoing financial support for urban university centers.

In seeking to strengthen urban extension initiatives, it is essential to appreciate the differences in the sources and methods of funding for extension in the land-grant model and the urban university model in contrast with the traditional model for funding universities. These

Figure 1: Method for Funding Extension Programs



differences have a significant impact on the type of outreach or extension programs that can be offered by universities.

With the land-grant model, state, federal, and county funds are provided specifically for the purpose of providing extension services. On the other hand, with the traditional model, funds must be diverted from the university's teaching budget to provide similar research and outreach services. Ohio's urban university model provides line item state support to eight urban public universities for research and outreach. Title XI will provide federal funds for this purpose. These funding differences are illustrated in the preceding diagram.

Alternative Approaches to Urban Extension

Three alternatives emerge from the funding analysis and from additional research on how the states organize and fund research, extension, and technical assistance programs in urban areas. The alternative approaches show varying degrees of collaboration between the extension programs and the urban universities in terms of both programs and funding. A fourth alternative of contraction is also discussed.

Alternative 1: The Traditional Approach

Illinois offers a good example of the traditional funding approach. The Cooperative Extension Service is administered through the University of Illinois College of Agriculture in Urbana-Champaign. It has a regional office and several area offices in the Chicago area. Programs offered by the Cooperative Extension Service include environmental quality, health and safety, youth development, and community development. Although the University of Illinois has a major campus in Chicago, there is little coordination between the cooperative extension and the urban research efforts at that campus. The extension function is essentially separate from the urban resources, both academic and research, at the Chicago campus, and the urban programs at that campus receive no funding from the cooperative extension. This creates an atmosphere of competition between the Cooperative Extension Program and the urban campus.

Michigan's Cooperative Extension, another example of a traditional funding approach, is undergoing a transformation in the way in which it serves urban counties. In an effort to make its programs more relevant to the needs of the urban population, Michigan State University applied for and received funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to augment their traditional cooperative extension programs and to create a new university/community partnership in urban areas. This will be done through the creation of an "urban technology transfer system to improve the quality of life in urban communities..." and will utilize the "field agent concept to assist the university in focusing on the current needs of local communities and facilitate the transfer of knowledge and technical assistance."

Alternative 2: The Parallel Approach

Ohio offers a good example of a parallel model of funding urban extension. For the support of agricultural research and development and cooperative extension, the state General Assembly provides two separate line-item budgets for research and service—for decades the only major research and service initiatives supported by separate line-item appropriations in Ohio's biennial budget. These funds go directly to The Ohio State University College of Agriculture. As in other states, they are supplemented with federal and county funds and used to fund extension programs in Ohio's eighty-eight counties. The research and extension agenda has five initiatives: (1) agricultural competitiveness, (2) food quality and safety, (3) environmental quality, (4) community development and economic revitalization (for rural areas), and (5) youth and families at risk.

Although many extension programs are being modified to meet the needs of urban counties more effectively, on the whole cooperative extension lacks the research base (and the federal mandate) to develop programs that are uniquely urban. On the other hand, the urban university model, as exemplified by Ohio's Urban University Program, has the research expertise in urban issues but does not share the system of extension agents, or multilevel public funding. Ohio is the only state in the nation that provides a line-item appropriation for a statewide Title XI-type Urban University Program (UUP). In 1979 the Ohio Board of Regents and the Ohio General Assembly approved a proposal from Cleveland State University to establish a program that, building on the land-grant model, provided separate funding for urban-focused research and outreach activities at the state's universities located in major urban centers. The legislature approved $1 million for the 1980–81 biennium to create the Ohio UUP. This, together with significant levels of grant funding, enables substantial activity in these program areas: housing and neighborhood development, public management, public works management, economic development, and the Northern Ohio Data and Information Service (NODIS).

In contrast to the agricultural model, which is focused at one university, the UUP, while centered at Cleveland State University, draws on all eight urban-based, state-supported institutions in Ohio to provide research and outreach services.

These two programs, agricultural research and development and cooperative extension, and the Urban University Program, run separately. As in many other states, cooperative extension does not utilize the resources of the urban universities, and the urban universities rarely utilize the extension program. The issue is not one of competition between the urban universities and agricultural research and extension programs for funding and constituency. Rather, the relevant problem for the 1990s is identifying those areas where the two programs can pool resources, capitalize on one another's expertise, and cooperate programmatically and financially to ensure that the total public university system can continue to bring the "fruits of the universities' research" to the people—in this case, to the millions of people who live in metropolitan areas.

Alternative 3: The Cutting-Edge Approach

Wisconsin and Missouri have long been innovative with their cooperative extension programs. Missouri has integrated its extension more closely with the research base at all the universities in the state, not with just the College of Agriculture, to develop programs that are responsive to the needs of urban areas. Missouri's extension work flows from four campuses: two urban (St. Louis and Kansas City) and two rural (Columbia and Rolla). Columbia is the oldest member and has the largest allocation. Each university also has access to the field network of county extension offices.

The challenge faced by Missouri is to maintain the model. Other states have tried and failed. Its success in Missouri can be attributed to its good design and extremely strong support of the administrators and governing board in the early years, although it does not have a centralized administration with responsibility for coordinating programs among the four universities and the county offices.

In Wisconsin, it was President Charles Van Hise of the University of Wisconsin in the early 1900s who put forth the "Wisconsin Idea" that "the boundaries of the campus are the boundaries of the state." Since then, the University of Wisconsin has adapted its programming and administrative structures many times to respond to changing needs. As Patrick Boyle, chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Extension and director of Cooperative Extension, said in a recent article, "In Wisconsin, form follows function. If we don't periodically adjust the extension mission, program, and structure to meet the dramatic changes affecting society, then we nurture fertile ground for seeds of destruction to grow."

The Wisconsin approach has two significant components that put it at the cutting edge:

1. The University of Wisconsin-Extension is a separate institution within the UW system. It has three divisions—Extension, General Extension, and Telecommunications—each uniting related disciplines and functions that have common sources and intent of funding, delivery methods, and clientele. It was created when the system underwent a major change in 1965, uniting cooperative extension programs that were formerly based in the UW-Madison College of Agriculture (as are most such programs) with the Continuing Education Division and a number of other extension functions of various schools and colleges in several of the UW universities.
2. Extension agents in Wisconsin hold joint appointments with one of the thirteen four-year universities or thirteen two-year centers of the University of Wisconsin system. In the 1980s, efforts were made to integrate extension faculty with their resident teaching and research colleagues in the resident campus departments.

However, the urban university (UW-Milwaukee) and the cooperative extension programs actually run parallel paths. The Urban Research Center at the University of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, focuses on research; the cooperative extension program offers some teaching assistance on urban problems. Partly due to location in separate divisions with largely

different charges, the parallelism is also partially caused by the limited availability of funding for cooperative ventures. The UW-Milwaukee Urban Research Center indicated that new initiatives are virtually impossible with a tight state budget, but that if federal funds were available, with stipulations on cooperation, relations between the two programs are good so that collaborative programs would be possible.

The Alternative of Contraction

While three alternatives have been discussed, in reality a fourth also exists. The effort in FY 1991 by Governor William Weld of Massachusetts to eliminate state funding for the cooperative extension program is an extreme example of the contraction approach. This most recent proposal follows successive cuts over the last several years and reflects a problem in Massachusetts, as in other states. The county government is weakening in political and economic strength and the partnership among the federal government, the state, and the counties is in serious question. In addition, there is a tendency among legislators to think that the cooperative extension is doing some things that are redundant.

The University of Massachusetts at Amherst, a land-grant university, waged a lobbying campaign led by Robert Helgeson, director of Cooperative Extension and the Agricultural Experiment Station and dean of Agriculture. Although the campaign succeeded in ensuring that cooperative extension is included in the governor's FY 1992 budget, the program is still slated for a substantial cut. Helgeson sees problems ahead for the Midwest and East Coast states as counties and states cut back on funding. Thus, he sees a real need to educate constituents about the relevance of the cooperative extension program and to eliminate repetitive programs in the urban and rural university programs. Legislators need to know how each line item accomplishes its distinct task.

Next Steps—Where Do We Go From Here?

The above approaches illustrate how various states have positioned their cooperative extension programs for the decade ahead, both programmatically and financially. New, collaborative efforts between extension programs and urban universities could make the extension programs more responsive to the needs of urban populations. Efforts must be made to avoid duplicating programs and research projects and to link constituencies and funding more closely.

The cooperative extension programs across the country offer a long and rich history of the effectiveness of the research-demonstration model. There is now a decade of experience with the Ohio Urban University Program that demonstrates the strength of its academic and research base and shows the substantial contributions universities can make in bringing about better understanding of the issues and improved analysis of the choices facing urban areas.

What is needed at the state and local levels are efforts to connect the successful case management model used by the cooperative extension

agents to the knowledge and research base of the urban universities. What is needed at the federal level is reauthorization and appropriation of funds for Title XI, making urban universities a cornerstone of efforts to address the newly returned urban crisis, as the land-grant colleges were in the national agrarian expansionist period of the 1800s. While cities may not receive the financial and policy help they need from the federal government, they are not truly "Cities on Their Own." They have a tremendous under-utilized resource—the public higher education institutions. The land-grant universities, urban universities, and community colleges are in a unique position to expand their role, assisting cities in confronting the current "crisis." Our challenge in higher education will be to identify ways universities and cities can seize the opportunity to form a partnership and, using the techniques of the Cooperative Extension System, implement a renewed urban extension program that addresses pressing urban needs. Three actions are proposed:

1. *Explore* the common interests between the research and outreach programs of the urban universities and those of the land-grant colleges.
2. *Identify* specific areas where we might seek to cooperate.
3. *Test* several cooperative efforts on specific urban issues to determine how a partnership can work and to begin to identify an administrative and funding structure that can support these efforts.

Then, we must communicate this new approach to urban extension to elected officials and legislative bodies at all levels, showing them how to mine the special capacities of the universities on their behalf. Urban universities and urban extension must work to increase the awareness of their research and accomplishments in outreach and to be in a position to influence federal and state policy.

To build a strong and supportive constituency, we must be accountable to the public. We must make our research relevant. We must continue to build partnerships with other universities and cities and to implement the solutions we have jointly designed.

The essential components established nearly a century ago in Wisconsin and echoed ten years ago by Szanton and Pendleton—good leadership, hard funding, a specific problem, relevant experience, a committed client, and effective communication—are still relevant ingredients for urban extension today. But over the last decade, our urban areas have changed and are faced with new problems. We must build on the lessons of the past as we focus our efforts on the present and the future.

Acknowledgment

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