

## *Extension's Future*

**The real strength of Extension is the  
well founded, factual research available to be extended**

**C. A. VINES, LOWELL H. WATTS,  
and  
W. ROBERT PARKS**

*A Seminar on Agricultural Administration in the Land-Grant College System was aimed toward developing an effective response by colleges of agriculture to changes in our social and economic development.<sup>1</sup> One paper and two summaries dealt, at least in part, specifically with the Cooperative Extension Service. In the interest of sharing some of the current discussions regarding Extension's role and its future, excerpts from these papers are presented here under three major headings: (1) broadening challenges, (2) alternative courses, and (3) self-analysis. All material included under each of the three major headings is digested from one of these sources and is specifically identified by footnote.—The editors.*

### **BROADENING CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY WATTS<sup>2</sup>**

THERE IS strong recognition of the widening role of the Land-Grant University. Extension is moving more rapidly than it may have been credited to meet broadened challenges. We are now dis-

<sup>1</sup>This National Seminar, held at Fort Collins, Colorado, June 16-19, 1963, was co-sponsored by Colorado State University and the Center for Agricultural and Economic Development. A full report of the seminar is available from the Center for Agricultural and Economic Development, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

<sup>2</sup>Excerpts from a talk, "The Extension Service—An Interpretative Analysis of Seminar Discussions Concerning the Role of Cooperative Extension in the Land-Grant System," by Lowell H. Watts at the Seminar on Agricultural Administration in the Land-Grant System, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, June 19, 1963.

---

C. A. VINES is Director, Agricultural Extension Service, University of Arkansas, Little Rock, Arkansas; LOWELL H. WATTS is Director of Agricultural Programs and Director of Extension, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado; and W. ROBERT PARKS is Vice President for Academic Affairs, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

cussing horizons far beyond the "Scope Report"—itself only a few years old. Significant innovations have and are continuing to take place. Today Extension is functioning effectively in many urban and suburban areas, particularly in 4-H Club work, home economics, and horticulture. In several institutions there are programs in operation which provide interplay, communication, and support between Cooperative Extension and colleges other than agriculture.

There is a willingness on the part of Extension administrators to review and change programs to meet new challenges. Cooperative Extension is organized to provide institutional access at the local level and to provide feed-back from local areas into the university proper. Cooperative Extension has the experience in informal education which is needed for future programs of continuing informal adult education. But, to effectively broaden its base, Extension must have an adequate and broadened research base. Even more important, the role, the responsibilities, and the goals of the Extension Service must be determined in each Land-Grant institution and, once determined, must be supported at the highest levels of university administration.

It is significant that a real broadening of the Extension function will, of necessity, carry organizational implications throughout the entire university; a basic principle is involved. If we are agreed that the extension function is a primary characteristic of the Land-Grant system, and that it can assist the parent university to meet its future responsibilities, then Extension must be structured in such a way that it has access to research and is involved in the academic programs of the university.

This, first of all, carries with it a requirement that Extension and the colleges of agriculture be willing to build new relationships on university-wide patterns. It means that Extension directors may need to relinquish some degree of autonomy by assuring that subject-matter specialists, whether in the college of agriculture or not, be responsible to their appropriate department head for technical subject matter. It may mean that the dean of agriculture will find Extension specialists who function outside the jurisdictional bounds of the college of agriculture. It can mean that all colleges of the university will have a responsibility to work with Cooperative Extension and accept a share of responsibility for program efforts appropriate to the particular college.

It means that both deans and presidents must face squarely, in whatever manner is appropriate to each particular institution, the matter of administrative organization. If Extension is truly expected to operate throughout the full fabric of the university, it

must have access to the broad sweep of disciplines and activities that will be required to support it. But it must have more than access. It is not enough for Extension to pledge its interest and its willingness, nor for presidents to outline their desire for acceptance of this mandate. Extension must be held accountable. But in order to be accountable, it must also have its proper measure of authority.

Concern has been expressed that formalizing Extension relationships in colleges or departments throughout the university might destroy present effective relationships in the fundamental area of agricultural programming. It would seem that extending such relationships into non-agricultural departments should not only aid Extension but might develop more adequate awareness of, and responsibility for, both research and Extension in non-agricultural areas.

Cooperative Extension of the future may be a part of a college of agriculture, it may be part of a university-wide extension function, or it may even embrace international as well as national responsibilities. One thing seems obvious: If the Land-Grant system fails to develop extension functions to its fullest capabilities, it will fail to maintain its unique place in education.

#### ALTERNATIVE COURSES IDENTIFIED BY VINES<sup>3</sup>

No organization or group within the Land-Grant College system has subjected itself to more self-appraisal, introspection, and self-analysis than has the Cooperative Extension Service. This organization has been notably active in considering its changing role. The "Scope Report,"<sup>4</sup> state conferences, and study groups within the states have indicated recognition of the problems. The missing element seems to lie in converting from awareness to action. This self-analysis has brought to our attention the need for redirection in organization and program. Extension can make many of these changes, but others need higher administrative consideration and approval since they could have implications for the total university.

#### *Three Alternatives*

Basically, Extension is concerned with using its local resources in helping people in the decision-making process. It is apparent

<sup>3</sup>Excerpts from a talk, "The Extension Service in a Dynamic Society," by C. A. Vines at the Seminar on Agricultural Administration in the Land-Grant System, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, June 18, 1963.

<sup>4</sup>*The Cooperative Extension Service Today: A Statement of Scope and Responsibility* (Washington: Federal Extension Service, April, 1958).

that problems are becoming more complex as changes take place in the economic and social structures of the nation. Many problems facing farm people are outside agriculture. We must involve competencies that go beyond those in the college of agriculture because of the interrelationships in present day society.

What is to be the role of Cooperative Extension? Three alternatives are suggested and will be discussed:

1. Provide informal educational leadership in agriculture, home economics, forestry, and related subjects on a broad base in both rural and urban areas without responsibility for community or total resource development.
2. Provide informal educational leadership in agriculture, home economics, forestry, and subjects related on a broad base in both rural and urban areas and provide educational leadership for community and resource development in rural areas.
3. Broaden Extension's educational leadership to include *all informal* educational programs in both rural and urban areas and extend educational programs from all colleges of the university.

If any of these courses are followed, changes and adjustments will need to be faced by Extension and the Land-Grant University.

#### *First Alternative*

If Extension stays and works within the framework of the first alternative (providing informal educational leadership in agriculture, home economics, forestry, and related subjects *without responsibility for community or total resource development*), it will be easier to get intra-institutional understanding of Cooperative Extension's role and method of providing informal education than if the role is broadened. It is likely that opportunities to develop staff competencies in specialized fields would be greater than with a broadened program. It could mean a greater degree of staff specialization and probably involvement in more applied research.

But in view of increased urbanization and present attention to legislative reapportionment, Land-Grant Universities may be faced with lessening interest on the part of the decision-making forces. To stay strictly in agriculture, the Extension program would be more and more determined by individual states with a reduction of participation in national program. Some believe this alternative would result in a decline in the number and status of schools or colleges of agriculture. They cite decreasing opportunities for entering farming (resulting from decreasing numbers of farms) and the decreasing number of agriculture students. If there is a decline

will it be because of the need for the resources and leadership of other disciplines of the university in community and resource development?

### *Second Alternative*

The second alternative (providing leadership in agriculture, home economics, forestry, and related subjects to rural and urban areas *plus leadership for community and resource development for rural areas*) would mean that additional staff resources from disciplines in addition to agriculture would be included in the program. Departments or colleges, as they become involved, would need to accept responsibility for education or service to all citizens of the state. Such involvement would require other units of the university to understand Cooperative Extension's role in and method of informal teaching. They would need to agree to accept some responsibility for program execution in their particular areas of work. In like manner, it would become necessary that Extension develop a deeper understanding of formal classroom teaching and the limitations to involving formal educational personnel in informal teaching.

Should Extension follow alternative two, university administration would need to support the idea of *one informal* extension service for rural areas. The present Extension staff would need to accept this broadened concept of the institution's role. Extension administrators would need to provide in-service training to assist the staff in improving their knowledge and competency—especially in the area of program leadership. The needs of the local people would continue to be the basis of program emphasis, with each discipline performing its most competent part. This alternative would require approval and understanding of existing support-groups, and new support-publics would need to be developed.

### *Third Alternative*

The greatest departure from our traditional role is the third alternative. It would involve the application of all implications listed in the second alternative to all informal off-campus educational programs for both rural and urban people. This alternative would pose the most difficult challenge to administration and add new dimensions to the program development process. Theoretically, if concepts embodied in the second are sound, the third alternative is even more logical since it uses the same organizational structure

and also faces squarely the logic of program ties to geographically identifiable areas. But this concept may meet serious resistance in many universities, as well as draw fire from agriculture's commodity-oriented special interest groups.

If such a plan were to be followed, some conflict with general extension services could be anticipated in areas involving informal, non-agricultural, forestry, or home economics education—particularly in urban areas. Under such a plan it would be necessary that formal and informal be carefully defined and that specific working relations with general extension be developed. Strong direction would be required from the top administrative office of the institution. In addition, different competencies and specializations could be required of both Cooperative and general extension from what is now maintained by either.

In all except the largest counties, the program scope would be so broad in relation to the present staff that personnel would become organizers and stimulators for action and could not be expected to be leaders in all subject-matter areas. Area programming would be given greatly increased impetus and multi-county, specialized staffs would be necessary.

### *Extension's Role*

The real strength of Cooperative Extension has been the well-founded, factual research available to be extended; it has been the type of information that people could use in solving problems. We should insure that basic principles developed by agricultural research and Extension be applied to all informal education by our institutions. Land-Grant Universities have demonstrated that the fundamental benefits of knowledge lie in its use—in its application—in the development of the individual to serve society and in the development of society itself. The entire institution can build on Extension's unique characteristic of involving and working with local people as the basis for a total continuing educational program.

In order for society to plan effectively and arrive at intelligent decisions, it is necessary to have some kind of a center of knowledge performing a role if desired goals are to be achieved—there seems to be no alternative. Land-Grant Universities are the logical institutions to provide these centers of knowledge and to develop a climate where maintaining the necessary competence over a period of time is possible. A university is the type of organization that can attract personnel with competencies needed in the discovery and dissemination of information so essential to the man-

formance of a knowledge center for a dynamic society. Land-Grant Universities can take leadership in this area but cannot meet such a challenge without a local field arm oriented to local conditions. If Land-Grant Universities fail to fulfill this mission, substitute institutions will likely be designed that may be more politically than educationally oriented.

#### SELF-ANALYSIS BY PARKS<sup>5</sup>

Extension workers have done more self-analysis and self-criticism than both resident teaching and research in agriculture put together. Perhaps one reason they have been so willing to undergo criticism and self-analysis is that they are team men; they were not raised on independence. By the nature of their work, they have to make adjustments often and have made many because of changes in national requirements, changes in the needs and desires of local clientele, and so on. With so many bosses to please, Extension workers have simply had to keep the program flexible.

Vines has laid out three clear alternatives for Extension. He has outlined the implications of choosing each of these three directions, saying essentially that university administration must say which one of these to take. Extension workers have come to this point many times before. But it appears that administrators higher up, dissatisfied as they sometimes are with Extension, are unwilling to say "take this alternative rather than the other ones." Extension is willing, it seems to me, to try to make adjustments in the face of more serious obstacles than those encountered by the other two wings of agriculture. I believe that the obstacles to adjustment are greater in Extension than they are in resident teaching and research, because the Extension program, by institutional arrangement and legal action, is built into the fabric of organized local government in a peculiar way.

One observation about Extension concerns field organization. The typical county Extension organization usually contains "a man," "a woman," and "a youth agent." The man is usually trained in general agriculture, the woman in home economics, and the youth agent generally in agriculture also. It is very possible that this type of county organization is becoming outmoded in many parts of the nation. Should we not give serious consideration to modifying this

<sup>5</sup>Excerpts from a talk, "New Dimensions: How Far From Reality—A Summary and Analysis," by W. Robert Parks at the Seminar on Agricultural Administration in the Land-Grant System, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, June 19, 1963.

organizational pattern—as some states are doing already—by going more toward an area basis of field administration with appropriate meaningful specializations? Remember that we have today essentially the same organizational arrangement in the counties that we had back in 1925. I am not sure that is the most useful one for the future—and I do appreciate the political hazards inherent in tampering with those county arrangements.

Another observation concerns the relationship of research to Extension. The system of conducting experiment station research on a long-term, project-by-project basis poses a serious handicap for Extension in its attempts to make the required, rapid adjustments in programs. Extension must depend upon the experiment station for the research work necessary for a dynamic Extension program. If the station cannot serve that need on a more flexible basis than it now does, I would be inclined to say that the only other alternative is to let Extension employ some research men of their own. This could lead to wasteful duplication.

A final general observation relates to the special obligation which a college of agriculture has to its state. The Land-Grant University in most of our states is the only institution which offers resident instruction, research, and Extension in agriculture. Although the work in agriculture may be spread among several institutions in a few states like California and Illinois, the Land-Grant institution occupies what in effect might be described as a "monopoly position" insofar as agriculture is concerned in most states. Because of the special obligations inherent in such a monopoly status, colleges of agriculture do, I believe, have a very broad range of responsibility for offering education at various levels in the several fields of agriculture. I don't think this means that we have to accept every would-be student of agriculture as a full-fledged bachelor's degree candidate. But it does mean that colleges of agriculture have a special responsibility to continue their short courses, their two-year programs, and all other worthwhile means for providing education to the limit of their resources in this "monopoly area." This includes Extension.

*It is hoped that this article will encourage discussion and extend interest in the problem of clarifying developmental needs and challenges of society whose welfare is both advanced and endangered by science and technology. Man-made institutions such as Land-Grant Colleges are dependent upon the wisdom and skills of their contemporary leaders in fashioning institutional structures that will keep services abreast of rapidly changing environments. Your appraisal of the ideas presented here will be welcomed.—The editors.*