

## Alliance for Strength

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*Cooperative Extension and the community colleges should join forces in solving community problems. "Each may be able to do something on its own, but neither has the staff, technology, nor educational programs to help communities with all their needs," the authors say. There are several benefits in cooperating. Extension could update its image, and community colleges could become involved in "education for action" programs. And, the alliance between the two institutions could strengthen public support for community educational programs.*

Cooperative Extension and the community colleges should be the leaders in showing how educational institutions can join in solving community problems. Both are locally financed and ideally equipped to work together on local concerns.

Cooperative Extension, the older of the two, was established more than 50 years ago to apply scientific knowledge to the problems of rural people.

More recently, community colleges were launched to meet a need for increasing higher educational opportunities for young people.

Both are committed to community service.

Community colleges might seriously think about tapping Cooperative Extension's expertise in informal adult education. Conversely, Extension should get to know the

people and resources of community colleges. Then, both can realize their common objective—community service.

Harlacher defines community service:

Those less formal educational activities—workshops, seminars, conferences—are now commonly called "community services," a term which has come to be defined as educational, cultural and recreational services above and beyond regularly scheduled day and evening classes.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the examples and issues discussed in this article are taken from New York State. We concentrated on one state system because of the diversity of philosophies and practices surrounding Extension and publicly supported community colleges throughout the United States.

## Historical Perspective

The community college movement in New York began in 1950 when the first colleges opened their doors in Middletown and Jamestown. Today, 36 publicly supported 2-year colleges, within the State University of New York (SUNY), are spread throughout the state, each having a cogent mandate for community service.<sup>2</sup> Because of this high priority, these units served 25,385 part-time students in the fiscal year 1968 through noncredit courses, workshops, and seminars.<sup>3</sup>

Cooperative Extension, on the other hand, has been active in New York since 1914 as part of the state Land-Grant Colleges at Cornell University.<sup>4</sup> At that time, Smith-Lever funds were appropriated to all Land-Grant Institutions to encourage more effective dissemination of knowledge about agriculture and home economics. Now, about 420 professional field staff members operate in 56 counties and New York City.<sup>5</sup> Over 200 faculty members with Extension responsibilities are on the Cornell University campus. Although Cooperative Extension has mainly served rural people, population shifts, social awareness, and increased public sophistication are redirecting its programs to meet the needs of urban and rural people.

### The Thesis— Complementary Assets

The strengths of community colleges are credit courses for full-

and part-time students. Festine, in his 1967 study, concludes that 2-year units of SUNY are moderately successful in offering short-term courses and seminars in the area of cultural enrichment.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, their programs rarely touch the areas of public affairs and community development. He questions the administration and faculty's responsibility to exert leadership in community service; he questions their willingness to allocate time and money for this nebulous activity. You might deduce with Festine that the only realistic solution to the problem is a separate administration and faculty totally devoted to community service. This unique arrangement exists in New York City and a few other metropolitan areas where powerful segments of the community have strongly influenced the community colleges' trustees and administration. However, most community colleges haven't forcefully moved into a broad program of community service.

Without a planned approach that promotes joint enterprise, the autonomous units of SUNY, including Cooperative Extension and the community colleges, will probably act independently in a fragmented approach to community service. A long-range plan, established by the State Board of Regents, could provide the guidelines for the coordinated efforts of all educational institutions to meet local needs. This argument is supported by the "Nelson Report."<sup>7</sup> It says duplication of program offerings isn't a

serious problem now. However, in the future, formal cooperative arrangements, not only between the schools and community colleges but among other agencies as well, will be essential to a fully effective program of continuing education. In lieu of a master plan, community colleges and Extension should *now*

develop effective working relationships and coordinate their efforts.

### Assets and Liabilities

To support the argument that the two institutions are complementary, the obvious assets and liabilities of each organization are shown below.

Assets	Liabilities
<p><i>Cooperative Extension</i> Full-time commitment to helping people solve their problems through informal education.</p> <p>Experience in "education for action" developed and overseen by local lay leaders. Established audiences with youth, low-income people, farmers and their families, homemakers, community leaders.</p> <p>Functional knowledge base (Land-Grant University) that has capacity for applied research aimed at solving people's problems.</p> <p>Community service activities financed from tax-supported budgets.</p>	<p><i>Community Colleges</i> Organizational rewards and sanctions that don't encourage administrators and faculty to become involved in community service.</p> <p>Limited experience in "education for action." Subject-matter orientation versus audience and problem specialization.</p> <p>Philosophic leaning for excellence in teaching credit courses with little emphasis on research on solving people's problems.</p> <p>Community service activities funded primarily on a self-supporting basis.</p>
<p><i>Community Colleges</i> Community leaders and citizenry with high expectations for the college to be flexible and responsive to their educational concerns.</p> <p>Broad bases of political support that could lead to generous local, state, and federal funding for community service projects.</p> <p>Competent staff, comprehensive program, modern learning facilities, and commitment to adult education and community service.</p>	<p><i>Cooperative Extension</i> Encumbered by traditional programs and audiences.</p> <p>Decreasing political support where attached to rural interests only.</p> <p>Perceived generally as public servants of farmers and rural people rather than adult educators.</p>

### Justifying Coordination

Local educational institutions are being asked to help solve the crucial problems of population growth, urban blight and decay, poverty, racial prejudice, and environmental pollution. Community colleges have already been called on for educational leadership in many of these problems.

Extension has built a base of experience in helping with these types of problems. Many of these efforts have been in cooperation with other educational institutions and action agencies like town planning boards and state offices for planning coordination. Extension can draw on the knowledge and experience of instructors and researchers at the Land-Grant University. It has a history of experience in rural development, aiding rural communities and farm groups to organize to meet common economic and social problems. For example, with the impetus of recent Congressional action, economic and nutritional problems of low-income families have become a major target of Extension.

In looking to the 1980s, Medsker suggests that community colleges will become community education centers, providing formal education for young and old. This prophecy is well in focus now.<sup>8</sup> We believe that community colleges can also provide the needed leadership for dealing with problems of the community. But, it's doubtful that they *alone* can be effective in aiding urban communities of lower socio-

economic levels. Now they have neither the knowledge resource base nor the experience with action-centered, educational programs.

A professional partnership of efforts between the two institutions is the real challenge. Each may be able to do something on its own, but neither has the staff, technology, nor educational programs to help communities with all their needs. The record of community coordination among educational institutions isn't good; but W. Keith Kennedy, vice provost of Cornell University, says:

Lack of funds, and more important, the lack of trained manpower will require that we develop a system of continuing education which will maximize the use of all available resources and techniques. The organizations which see this need clearly and work for the improvement of the total system will increase their competitive advantage. The institutions which attempt to build their own baliwicks and operate independent programs will not survive.<sup>9</sup>

An alliance of the two institutions, effected by joint planning and discussion, can strengthen public support for educational programs needed by the community. By sharing staff, facilities, and knowledge resources, economies can be introduced which can be very attractive to local legislators. Today's legislator is more enlightened about cost-benefit analyses, systems approaches to problem solving, and professional educators' salaries. "He who pays

the fiddler calls the tune" is appropriate because of the demands on the local, rather than state or federal, government to solve community problems. Thus, community colleges and Cooperative Extension must become sensitive to legislative leaders who will determine their destiny. Critics and supporters should find this team approach appealing.

### Examples of Cooperation

How has cooperation between community colleges and Extension been effected in New York State? Here are some examples.

First, lay leaders, teachers, and administrators of each organization are participating on each other's board of directors and program advisory committees. These decision makers then become more aware of the purposes, activities, and capabilities of the other organization.

Second, community colleges and Cooperative Extension embarked on several successful, single-purpose activities:

*Local Government Seminar:* A seminar series that was designed to update community leaders on the resources and processes of local government. The history, current programs, and future role of local government were examined in the context of intergovernmental relations, societal changes, and political trends.

*Home Grounds and Gardens Program:* A six-session program that was taught by agricultural agents representing three different

counties in northern New York. Publicity and facilities were provided by the community college, enabling Extension to reach a broad spectrum of people.

*Preadolescent Workshop Series:* A workshop series that was taught by an Extension home economist and clinical psychologist. Typical headings were: no longer the forgotten years; each will react differently; he wasn't born yesterday; striving for independence; the importance of peers; what has been said . . . what does it mean to us?

*Conference on Potential of Women:* A one-day conference that considered the obstacles and opportunities facing women wishing to return to work or school. A psychiatrist spoke on attitudes and expectations of women at this point in life. Other topics were: child care, employment opportunities for financial reward or volunteer service, and available training.

A third example of cooperation centers around the concept of sharing resources: instructors and audiences; research, technology, and teaching materials; buildings, class and conference rooms; equipment; office, research, and demonstration facilities; direct mail lists and publications; and finances. A multiplying effect takes place when organizations engaged in community service education share resources.

Another joint activity provides experiences for improving the teaching competence of each other's staff. Community colleges might offer specialized training for techni-

cians, para-professionals, and volunteers serving the Cooperative Extension programs. Through its affiliation with the Land-Grant University, Extension, which has access to faculty, research, and educational programs, might help the community college faculties become updated in fields related to community problems. Furthermore, Extension's community-centered programs are a way for faculty members and interested students to help people not otherwise attracted to the college programs.

Finally, contracting for services between the various units of SUNY gained popularity. In some places, the best way to conduct applied research and obtain specialized teachers is by contractual agreement. The State Experiment Station at Cornell University does applied research in distant parts of the state. It tries to relate to community problems of interest to Extension agents as well as other educators in these areas.

Although research isn't stressed in community colleges, it's an important activity many students and teachers are interested in. Therefore, research could give greater relevancy to the college's community service efforts. You might imagine a situation where the community college and Cooperative Extension would jointly contract for a sociologist to teach at the college and conduct action programs in community service with Extension. The sociologist could consult with faculty members and tap the knowledge resources

at Cornell University. Moreover, he would have access to Cooperative Extension audiences and lay leaders and still be free to teach more theoretical credit courses in his field. In addition, his experience with Extension activities would enhance his classroom teaching, adding interest for students and faculty. Think of the impact this person could have on a community!

### Summary

Cooperative Extension and the community college should lead the way for educational institutions by joining forces for the good of the community. The location and commitment of the community college, with the knowledge base and the application-oriented field staff of Cooperative Extension make them an ideal team to tackle major problems. Both could benefit from working together and jointly planning community service programs.

Through joint efforts, Cooperative Extension could update its image as it shifts to serve all people—urban and rural. Likewise, the community college could learn from Extension's experience in helping individuals, families, and communities through "education for action" based on research efforts. Each could multiply its efforts through the support and use of the other's staff, facilities, knowledge resources, and source of financial support. Legislators and the public favor coordinated efforts for more efficient and less duplication.

Today's communities need research and action programs geared to help them. Neither organization alone has the resources to significantly improve most community situations. Joint planning, joint staffing, cooperative staff training arrangements, and cosponsored, research-educational efforts will strengthen the community service efforts of both institutions. Sharing community leaders on executive boards and committees, and getting local understanding and financial support for needed programs will also help this goal.

Cooperative efforts have already started in several communities, typified by interlocking board and committee membership, single-purpose activities (workshops, seminars, and conferences), sharing of resources, and contractual agreements. The door is opened for the Extension agent and the college director responsible for community service to get to know the purposes, programs, and staff of the other . . . and to start working together.

#### Footnotes

1. Ervin L. Harlacher, *The Community Dimension of the Community College* (Bloomfield, Michigan: Oakland Community College, 1967), p. 11.
2. *State University of New York News* (Albany, New York), March 2, 1970, p. 1.
3. Arthur E. Durfee *et al.*, *Continuing Education, Cooperative Extension—In the Service of the People of New York* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1969), p. 27.
4. R. G. Smith, *The People's Colleges* (New York, New York: Cornell University Press, 1949), pp. 148-49.
5. Statement by Harvey Lincoln, Cooperative Extension personnel specialist, Ithaca, New York, April 27, 1970.
6. Armond J. Festine, "A Study of Community Services in the Community Colleges of State University of New York" (Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, New York, 1967).
7. *The Future of the Public Two-Year Colleges in New York State* (Albany, New York: New York State Education Department, Division of the Budget, 1969), pp. 92-98.
8. Leland L. Medsker, "Community Colleges and Other Education Programs Beyond the Twelfth Grade," in Edgar L. Morphet and Charles O. Ryan, eds., *Designing Education for the Future; No. 2: Implications for Education of Prospective Changes in Society* (New York, New York: Citation Press, 1967), pp. 115-28.
9. W. Keith Kennedy, "Cooperative Extension's Partnership with State University of New York (SUNY)" (paper presented at the annual Extension Conference, Ithaca, New York, February 1, 1969).