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The Land Grant Vision of Extension's Future: Maximum Leverage in a Time of Scarce Resources and Public Value to Clientele and Society.

Contemporary LGU's in Disruptive Times

Mission

- As public LGU's, our basic mission is well defined, never more relevant, and fundamentally unchanged since the Morrill Act was passed in 1862 during Lincoln's presidency.
- Our basic mission is in essence "to stay close to the people" and to help society meet its 3 Great and Enduring Challenges
 - Providing sufficient food, fiber, fuel and shelter for a growing population
 - Overcoming resource limits and protecting/conserving/maintaining the integrity of the planet's (Spaceship Earth's) resources
 - Creating a just society
- These enduring challenges have perhaps never been greater than they will be as 6+ billion (heading to 9 billion) people take on the contemporary challenges of combating climate change and transitioning to a post-fossil fuel future.

Disruptive Times: the Context for our Consideration of the Future

SR Financial Disruption

- Certainly the most serious financial crisis of most of our lifetimes.

LR Economic Disruption

- But perhaps even more importantly, I believe we may be experiencing the beginning of a major LR (decades long) disruption in our global economic system triggered by the financial crisis, but ultimately fueled/driven by climate change and the impending energy sector transformation.

- Society doesn't yet understand the disruptive aspects of sustainability. [Dilbert: "If you want to save the planet, you have to be prepared to make other people sacrifice."]
- New paradigm – essential to transform the economy to one based on renewable energy.
- Solar based, sustainable economy of the future will be different in four significant ways: 1) efficiency vs. speed; 2) cooperation vs. competition; 3) diversity/niches vs. homogeneity; and 4) focus on maintenance vs. growth. [May have implications for LGU's.]
- Premium on information and information innovation (great embodied energy in information). (*Odum*) [Key role for LGU's]

Disruption Observations

- Disruptions naturally occur in all complex systems and are the first stage of transformation: personal, organizations (*Axtel*), agricultural/forest, unmanaged ecosystems (*Hollings*) and economic systems (*Schumpeter*).
- Disruptions in human systems open up ways to see things differently; 2) the key is to see disruption as an opening for development vs. the beginning of an upset; 3) disruption causes confusion, pain, provokes, and forces us to figure out new ways of doing things; 4) benefitting from disruption requires relationship. Look for opportunities for engagement and maintaining community – students, staff, faculty, and citizens.

Implication of SR Financial Disruption for a LGU

- Acute short run fiscal challenges; followed by a new lower level of trend public funding.
- Important financial considerations: 1) option values are important (buy time/flexibility); 2) premium on diversity of revenues (state, tuition, federal, grants, industry, private gifts, foundations, tuition/fees for service); 3) more opportunities for transformative changes at higher organizational levels; 4) double digit budget cuts require: compensating increases in substitute revenues or reductions in payroll (compensation per employee and/or number of employees); and 5) given the greater potential for transformation it is important that we be guided by a clear, long term vision during the transition.

Implications of Long Run Economic Disruption for Agricultural and Natural Resource Systems

- Plants/agriculture will play an increasingly critical role in relation to food, fiber and energy in a solar based economy. Plants are the most efficient mechanisms for capturing and transforming solar energy (having evolved over eons). Animals (livestock, marine, fisheries) represent efficient mechanisms for collecting and concentrating plant energy.
- The role, importance, and relative efficiency of services provided by the ecosystem will become increasingly evident (embodied energy cost of manmade substitutes become prohibitive).
- LGU's expertise will be more important and more relevant to society than at any time in our ~150 year history.

So what does this mean for Extension/Engagement – the very heart of “staying close to the people”; being in relationship/helping identify and solve society's problems.

1) Impacts Driven Bottom Line:

- Good dynamic programmers; reverse logic models.
- Our impacts will arise from our relevance; timeliness/accessibility; and credibility/science based/lack of advocacy.
- Our relevance will stem from addressing issues of import to citizens/tax payers.
- Unique value (e.g. deep expertise, unbiased, science based).

2) Alternative Funding Sources

- Need to facilitate innovative models of simultaneous for credit and Extension classes; simultaneous on-campus and distance education.
- Need to facilitate intentional/integrated engagement of Extension faculty in the new “integrated” competitive research programs.

3) Networking/partnerships

- New partnerships with government, community colleges, NGO's, as well as industry groups will be valuable ways to bring in or develop new audiences and additional revenue sources either directly from these or new sources developed in partnership with these types of groups.
- In this day and age, citizens have much greater access to information. To have impact our information has to be easily accessible (e.g. web/social media, etc.)
- Interconnectedness, interdependence

4) Audience: [Why do you rob banks? "That's where the money is." Jesse James?]

- Especially in urban areas Extension and the University as a whole needs to have greater saturation of the audience by three ways: a) increases of traditional programs like Master Gardeners which have a high touch component (lots of face time); b) more delivery on a "wholesale" basis. Education of the providers to the urban audiences like landscaper community; c) greatly increased electronic delivery.
- With increasingly urban populations, this will require making the case for urbanites stake in rural economic development and ecosystem protection in rural areas as well as dealing with urban concerns e.g. food systems and security, urban environments/quality of life, sustainability.