

# The Role of Agricultural Colleges in an Urbanized Society

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The headlines read, "Graduates into Job Drought." The article began, "A graduate of Kansas State University with a doctoral degree in plant pathology works at a Manhattan, Kansas, service station. A classmate with a degree in nuclear engineering is a machine operator for a railroad."

The above appeared in the *Kansas City Times* in May. Because the *Times* is so widely read in our area, the article caused considerable concern on our campus. A careful survey of the faculty and students by our Central Placement Office revealed that the job placement picture has changed in the last year or two, but that all, or nearly all, Ag graduates have found jobs in the areas of their training or closely related fields. (The above plant pathologist is a Filipino, whose mastery of the English language still is progressing. He could have work in his field in his native country but he insists on staying in the U.S.A.)

I relate the above to point out a rather new problem. Other new problems are facing us. The biggest, no doubt, is seriously limited budgets and increasing numbers of students to be served (Applications for admission to KSU are running 20 to 30% above a year ago). Additionally the public continues to turn to the educational institutions to help solve its problems. Are we doing all we can to control air and water pollution, to insure an adequate supply of high quality food for our nation and others, and to prepare people for making wise use of leisure time?

Our society has many problems which can more properly be solved by other educational units and agencies. The answers to many of our problems are related to knowledge and intellectual discovery. Our efforts in the institutions of higher education in agriculture have to be related to the problems of society if we are to expect society to support our institutions.

Production agriculture in this country has been tremendously successful. Much of this success is due to the educational institutions. Agricultural leaders in earlier days selected wisely the part education in agriculture was to play in the society of that time. Can we be equally successful in identifying and solving present and future problems that properly fall within our range of responsibilities?

Though the panel's topic states . . . "agricultural colleges", I want to include, at least in part, all agricultural education beyond secondary schools. However, to keep the subject somewhat confined, I will review some of the major purposes of colleges or universities, realizing that many students who begin their higher education at a junior or community college or a vocational-technical school find themselves later finishing a degree.

As a part of our universities and colleges, agricultural colleges have their proper place in assisting as great conservators and transmitters of the elements that make up our culture and civilization. But to believe that is the total role of our colleges would be a major error. The boundaries of knowledge are being pushed *back through research*, thus adding to the quantity of knowledge possessed by our generation. Our colleges are recognized as key institutions related to our national welfare.

Our colleges provide direct information to the public to increase its knowledge and to answer its questions. So we find that the role of these colleges includes: (1) instruction; (2) research; (3) storage of knowledge; and (4) immediate educational service to the public, plus (5) an international responsibility.

Our society is becoming more complex, more demanding, and more sophisticated, but our central purpose is teaching and learning.

It has been said that society supports institutions that serve its needs. Actions of the recent state legislative sessions in Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and many other states, makes us wonder if we are failing to serve society's needs, or if the statement is no

longer true.

For years, the national goal on education in the United States has been the basic idea that every child has a right to as much education as he has the ability to receive. The recent tendency has been: (1) to broaden and improve the quality and quantity of buildings and teachers; (2) to concentrate resources on neglected areas (realizing that the first step to improving economic conditions is to improve educational conditions); (3) to expand total college facilities; (4) to consider education as a life-long process; and (5) to otherwise strengthen our community and state educational systems.

Shall we turn to history and our past successes for guidance to our present and anticipated needs. Unfortunately, we cannot find all the guidelines we need in the past. What will be the future our young people will face in the next twenty years? An article in the "U.S. News & World Report" stated that:

(1) three out of four of the young people will be in urban areas; (2) the center of the city will be the focus of life; (3) average incomes will be \$10,500 annually; (4) economics will switch from production to services; (5) services will need training; and, (6) the destinies of young people will be with the large corporations or government.

It has been predicted that we shall have four to six times as many people in colleges in the year 2,000 as now. Already growth in adult classes in many areas has been tremendous.

Those of us in the business of improving individuals realize that, to be improved, an individual must (1) learn to do better what he is now doing, or (2) move to another vocation or occupation in which he has greater opportunity for service and value to society.

Economists are increasingly recognizing that one of our greatest resources is human capital. We and society have the financial resources and educational tools to develop human resources.

Recently one of our faculty members said, "We don't need to put efforts in to publicizing the great work we do. All we need is to do our job well and the information and reputation will get around."

I will agree we need to do a good job, but I also am convinced that we need to inform significant people. Our public relations in agriculture has been very weak and could accomplish so much if we were to use it properly.

Has our role been what it should be, and can we rely on our role to remain the same in the future? In my opinion, we need a coordinated plan that would involve: (1) determining direction and clarity of purpose (O. W. Holmes stated: "It is not so important where we stand, but in what direction are we headed."); (2) the thinking and efforts of many persons; and, (3) being in tune with the needs of society and our students.

Our plan should be capable of being accomplished. Then it needs to be subject to appraisal and assessment. Such appraisal and assessment would help us change our role if the part we play needs changing, and I think it does. Though goals and efforts must be coordinated, because of the variation in our institutions, our geographic locations, and the differences in the communities we serve, each institution must have the freedom to be somewhat unique.

At Kansas State University we have attempted to "keep up" as I am sure each of your institutions has. In the last 10 years we have surveyed our graduates four times. Some who were out of school 3 to 5 years - some 10 years. We constantly request and get feed-back from employers and recruiters. We have the "picture" from current students through course and instructor evaluation rating sheets.

Three new, general type, beginning agricultural courses are being offered at KSU this fall. They are: "Natural Resources and Man", "Introductory Food Science and Technology", and

"Plants, Man, and Environment". Should action of this type be coordinated with other Ag colleges? With two-year colleges? With community colleges?

We are beginning a new curriculum this fall entitled: "Horticultural Therapy". It will involve seven semesters of course work in plants, soils, and other basic subjects related to horticulture and including psychology, sociology, and communications which are fundamental to the latter part of the training which will be taken the last semester at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka. This institution specializes in treating the mentally disturbed. Men and women trained in Horticultural Therapy will be assuming positions in state hospitals, homes for the aged, veterans' hospitals, correctional institutions, and day-care centers, all with increasing needs. During the last semester of the program, students will work under psychiatrists at the Menninger Foundation with patients with various needs.

The above curriculum is one example of the changing place of agriculture in today's society. Should we take a more active role in the esthetic areas, which might include hobby-type work such as small home gardens or flower production for therapeutic purposes? This could give physical exercise and mental relaxation to the many people in cities and suburbs and might be one of our most important areas of effort.

Considering the above challenges and opportunities, let us resolve that our instruction will continue to play a significant role in our modern and future societies.

Lessons must be taught effectively and efficiently. They must include not only facts, but concepts which really matter to today's youth. Content must be altered to keep pace with the changing needs of our urbanized society, both in the local community and in the national and world areas.

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## The Role of the Agricultural College in an Urbanized Society

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Theme: California Community and State Colleges  
Some Administrative Problems and Promises Encompassing Agricultural Education

First, I must give credit to deans of agriculture and heads of agriculture departments from fourteen community colleges and four state colleges for presenting their opinions relevant to my topic. These people have been most cooperative and generous with their time.

The California Community Colleges and California State Colleges appear to be making progress in spite of the growing urbanization of the state. Although large chunks of prime to submarginal agricultural real estate continues to fall under the developer's shovel, the rate of loss is decreasing. True, most of the great southern California citrus industry has fallen victim to burgeoning populations and adverse environmental conditions, such as smog. The fruitful Santa Clara Valley's prune orchards and vineyards have given way to what constitutes California's major population explosion of the '60's.

Nonetheless, California remains the number one agricultural state in the union from the standpoint of agricultural products with an agricultural income of over \$3½ billion per annum. The rate of population increase is slowing down, partly due to environmental pollution in Southern California's areas of greatest population increase and equally because of declining employment opportunities relative to the rest of the Country.

In light of these developments, some may think it surprising that, during this quarter of a century since the cessation of World War II hostilities, the number of California higher education institutions offering agriculture, as well as agricultural enrollment, has risen dramatically. Only Modesto, Chaffey, Fullerton, and perhaps another junior college or two offered production agriculture; and College of San Mateo and San Francisco Junior Colleges provided training in ornamental horticulture during the pre-war years. Now thirty-seven community colleges with an enrollment of 7,145 students and four state colleges with 4,039 students provide this training, according to NACTA's own survey.<sup>1</sup> Add to this the 3,166 students on three campuses of the University of California and one can see that with 14,350 students enrolled in agriculture, these programs are very much alive in California colleges and universities, located in the nation's most populous state.

At one time, on a state level, the junior and state colleges both answered to the California State Board of Education. This Board, burdened with the problems of a vast elementary and secondary educational system, had little time for the colleges. Many remember the 1950's, before the Trustees of the state colleges and chancellor's office assumed control in the 1960's, as the Golden years. Now, with the community colleges reporting to a like hierarchy, which began operation in 1967, some wonder if the consequent erosion of local control will stifle innovation

and the development of programs tailored to local needs. Only time will tell. In the meantime, money for colleges is very tight, with decreased support per student for the state colleges and with community college support failing to match inflationary pressures.

Agriculture has not been singled out for de-emphasis, although less than five percent of the population actually produces agricultural or horticultural products. The message is pretty well disseminated that over one-third of the state's population make a living in food processing, agriculture, business and industries related to or dependent upon agriculture.

However, a system called P.P.B.S. (Program Planning Budget Systems) is being thrust upon the community colleges of the state. The costs of agricultural and natural resources instruction will soon be precisely compared with that of every other type of curriculum. The financial requirements for agricultural instruction are relatively high. There was a fear expressed by most of the respondent community college teachers that such comparisons, coupled with declining state financial support, could jeopardize some agricultural and natural resources offerings or even programs. On a more optimistic note, some colleges felt that P.P.B.S. should point up the strength of their agricultural programs which are in competition with marginal ones in other occupational areas. A state college agriculture dean equated P.P.B.S. with "accountability and responsibility, which should be discharged through imaginative, relevant programs." He felt that P.P.B.S. information would win increased support for agriculture. Agricultural programs in the California state colleges will soon undergo an in-depth study by a dean of the School of Arts & Sciences of a land grant university. This survey may help some programs and jeopardize others. One question is, can or will a land grant liberal arts dean understand and appreciate California state college type agricultural programs?

Some community colleges conjectured that the new state administrative structure for the community colleges is tending to discourage close liaison between high schools and community college agriculture programs. Even if not well founded, it points up the necessity for community college and high school agricultural personnel to work closely with each other for the mutual welfare of both. The state colleges are in frequent communication with high school agricultural people and increasingly so with community college agricultural and natural resources people, as more and more entering state college students come from community colleges rather than directly from high school.

There is some concern that the Community College's Chancellor's Office is giving very little direction to community college agricultural programs. Others are relieved that regimenta-