

## LOOKING DOWN THE ROAD AHEAD: THE VIEW FROM A CORNER OFFICE

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After succumbing to James Flower's flowery blandishments to visit with you this morning, I found myself in a quandary as to what you and I could, or should, think about together. I didn't know what to talk about as I considered all the different facets of our profession and where it, and we, are, or are not, headed. Besides that, as you know, a professor doesn't know anything. He just professes. Then, one day, Glen Shinn and I ate lunch in one of the finest emporiums of culinary cuisine in our fair city of College Station, a greasy spoon called Fatburger. He doesn't know it, but that is where the idea for this talk was born, and recorded on a 3"x5" card.

I reread the specific topics, bolstered by research and scholarly writings, that previous mystery speakers have presented as their distinguished lectures, e.g., Milo Peterson's issues and reactions (1968), Dave McClay's concerns and comforts (1970), Lowery Davis's unpardonable sin (1971), Orville Thompson's possible dream (1972), Joe Bail's renewal and rebirth (1973), Bob Warmbrod's liberalization of vocational education (1974), Ron Brown's capitalizing on our strengths (1991), L.H. Newcomb's transforming university programs of agricultural education (1992), Glen Shinn's topographical survey of our professional society (1993), and many others.

Then, looking out the office window one day, with the wind blowing, I started thinking about the different winds of change that are swirling around institutions of higher education today, yours and mine, and programs of agricultural education in those institutions, and I was reminded again of Orville Thompson's conclusion 28 years ago that "Education in agriculture has no alternative but to change and change and change, (that) technological development is irreversible, (and that) we need to quit concentrating on the rear view mirror for direction...." (Thompson, 1972, p. 7). The question that arises then, is, are we changing in ways that truly make a difference, or as

Glen Shinn said seven years ago, using a surveyor's term, do we have to take a few more foresights before we can move our frame of reference? (Shinn, 1993). And are there foresights that we need to examine more critically than others?

This talk is not about transforming university programs of agricultural education (Newcomb, 1992). L.H. Newcomb did that beautifully in his distinguished lecture to this Association in 1992. I recommend that we all read his remarks again, for they are just as relevant today.

This talk is not about some of the activities, projects, or discussions taking place about programs of agricultural education today. It is not about Roscoe Vaughn's "Creating the Preferred Future for Agricultural Education." It is not about the "National Strategic Plan and Action Agenda for Agricultural Education." Nor is it about "Reinventing Agricultural Education for the Year 2020" project. It is not about the "National Standards Project for Agricultural Teacher Education Program Improvement." (Talk about stacking nouns as adjectives!) Nor is it about such topics as "The Move to Agriscience and its Impact on Teacher Education in Agriculture" as reported in the Fall 2000 issue of the *Journal of Agricultural Education*. Nor is it about strategies for solving the emerging problem of providing remediation and certification for non traditional, non certified teachers being hired to teach agriculture in school systems. Nor is it about the perceptions of some that our Association has moved from one end of a continuum with no research to the other end of the continuum of being about nothing but research, thus the excuse given by some agricultural educators as to why they are not with us today. All of these topics are appropriate, timely, necessary, represent our concerns, our thinking, and they even are critical to our serving students at whatever level and in whatever circumstances they may be found, if our

profession is to be proactive, effective, and respected.

This talk will not result in a cornerstone in a foundation on which our profession and Association can build and must stand. Incidentally, what is a cornerstone? Often, in older buildings, a cornerstone has an inscription on it that states: “Leveled by (and the name of the builder or surveyor)” to indicate that it is level and square with the world for the superstructure to follow. Nor is it a keystone designed to keep the arch of the different entities that make up our profession from collapsing. Nor is this talk a capstone, the pinnacle that stands above, protects, sheds water, and to which everybody’s attention is constantly drawn. But hopefully, what I say can be one of the blocks in the wall that we must examine as we consider the directions that we take in our profession. This talk is about foresights. It is about looking down the road ahead. It is about people, about you and me, and about the bureaucratic entities in which we all work, namely, departments of agricultural education, regardless of what they are called in our various institutions, and it is about those whom we serve, our students, and about whom they serve, in turn.

A department, or more accurately, the people who make up a department, has to have both a vision and a mission to accomplish that vision. The result is an integration of purpose. What should this vision be? Hopefully, very few can argue with the following, a statement of vision of one department of agricultural education in this country:

“Together, we aspire to add scholarship to the discipline, synergy among the faculty, meaning for learners, and value to the publics we serve. We aspire to build upon a strong and balanced academic curriculum that links science, technology, leadership, education, and human resource systems. We aspire to emerge as one of the premier agricultural education programs in the world and to forge interdependent relationships with other world-

class programs that share complementary missions.” (*Creating a Strategic Framework for the Department of Agricultural Education*, Texas A&M University, June 16, 2000, p. 4.)

What then should be the mission that can accomplish such a vision? Let us consider this:

“The mission of the Department is to improve the quality of life and the economic well-being of individuals and communities in (your state), the Nation, and selected areas of the world through high quality teaching, leadership, research, extension, and outreach programs.

Our mission is to educate and prepare undergraduate and graduate students for world-class educational leadership in the broad fields of food systems, human resources, and natural resource systems throughout the world. The Department joins the (insert your College of Agriculture and/or your College of Education) in their mission to advance science and technology in ways to serve best the needs of the people and our world.

We will achieve our mission by working together as a team and leading by example to: 1) serve our students and stakeholders, 2) improve continuously our professional competence, 3) empower each faculty and professional staff member by creating an environment that is safe, that recognizes and rewards achievements, and encourages excellence, and 4) maintain the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct.” (*Creating a Strategic Framework for the Department of Agricultural Education*, Texas A&M University, June 16, 2000, p. 5.)

Please note that this mission statement does not restrict a department to serving just one state. However, we don't have time this morning to examine all facets of such a vision and mission statement. But we do have time to examine several factors that relate to the first two elements of a mission as stated, namely, 1) serving our students and stakeholders, and that includes preparing their outlook for their particular world of work, and 2) improving our professional competence, and that includes the knowledge bases and contextual applications of those knowledge bases with which we work.

*Serving Our Students and Stakeholders*

When serving and preparing our students and stakeholders, we have to keep three major factors in mind with respect to their outlook on the world: 1) they need to understand, accept, and live with increasing globalization, 2) they need to know how to function in the culture in which they find themselves, and 3) they need to break the shackles of provincialism that many, through no fault of their own, bring to the

university and unfortunately, possibly may take into the work place. Maybe, we, too, need to learn some things as well as we serve and prepare students.

*1. Globalization*

Let's take a quick look at the first factor, globalization, especially since Spaceship Earth welcomed its 6 billionth passenger on October 12, 1999. Globalization, according to French (2000), is a broad process of societal transformation that encompasses jobs, incomes, the food that people eat, the air they breathe, the social and cultural milieu in which they live, broader cultural and social integration, trade, investments, travel, the growth of global corporations that transcend national borders and allegiances, the increasing permeability of international borders to ideas, pollution, microbes, refugees, computer networking, and rapid communication. "Globalization has become a contentious process" (French, 2000, p. 4). Some snapshot views of globalization (adapted from French, 2000, pp. 6-7) include:

Travel	1950	69,000 people crossed an international border every day
	1998	2,000,000 people crossed an international border every day
Transnational Corporations	1970	7,000
	1998	53,600,449,000 foreign subsidiaries. Sales of goods and services by foreign subsidiaries (\$9.7 trillion) surpassed total world exports by almost 50%.
NGOs	1956	985 (operating in at least three countries)
	1998	23,000 (operating in at least three countries; had 5.7% of the national economy and 5% of total workforce)
Refugees	1961	1,400,000 receiving U.N. assistance
	1998	22,400,000 receiving U.N. assistance
	1998	56,000,000+ total worldwide
Export Trade	1950	\$311 billion
	1998	\$5.4 trillion
Export Services	1980	\$467 billion
	1997	\$1.3 trillion, 1/5 <sup>th</sup> of total world trade
Religion	1998	More mosques built in the United States than churches

Table Continues

Telephones	1960	89,000,000 non-cellular telephones
	1998	838,000,000 non-cellular telephones
	1975	1 telephone per 100 people in developing countries
	1999	6 telephones per 100 people in developing countries
	1930	\$244.65 = 3 minute telephone call, NY-London
	1998	\$3.32 = 3 minute telephone call, NY-London
Computers	1998	147 million people have Internet access
	1998	43 million computers
	2002	490 million will have Internet access

Others in agricultural education are concerned about globalization as well. Bill Camp, president of American Vocational Education Research Association and a member of this Association, has stated that "I believe that the organization should expand its vision to become an international organization," (Camp, 2000) and is asking that Association to think about an international future for itself during its meetings this week here in San Diego.

Other people in agriculture are concerned about globalization. For example, the International Programs Office of USDA/CSREES will look at how best to encourage and support efforts in global education over the next few months. Maybe, some of you already have been interviewed by people from that office about what you are doing and what you believe you should be done.

Are we communicating international perspectives, global perspectives, to our students who become teachers, extension agents, and other types of change agents and development workers? Are we preparing them in turn to communicate such perspectives to their clientele, whether their own students, people in the community, or people in organizations?

In the "Perspectives" section of the October 2000 issue of "Making a Difference," the FFA advisors' newsletter, Christian Mackinnon, an agriculture teacher at the STAR Academy in Indianapolis, describes how he was motivated to include an emphasis on developing a global vision in his agricultural science curriculum. He realizes the importance of doing so. Can we inspire our other pre-service and in-service teachers to do the same? We should, for it is critical. Unfortunately, if a study of 1,515

teachers of agricultural science in Texas conducted by Dr. Larry Bell in 1998 is any indication, we are failing miserably in implementing international perspectives, much less improving those perspectives among those teachers. However, even if we do succeed in getting teachers to incorporate a global emphasis in their curriculum, are we preparing them to act effectively in global settings, to act effectively in cross cultural settings, to help their students to act effectively in those settings?

## 2. Culture

Anthropologists shadowing a dozen families in Silicon Valley the past two years in what will be a seven-year NSF-financed study have found that at its most fundamental level, the technology revolution is altering people's sense of time, collapsing boundaries between work and home, collapsing geographical boundaries, and not providing people with firm moral guideposts (Van Slambrouck, 2000). We cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are (Max DePree). Our culture is changing.

When we look at our own field, we see that the evidence to be sought for standards for preparing teachers in agricultural education as outlined in the "National Standards for Agricultural Teacher Education Program Improvement" does specify general education that includes the arts, communications, history, literature, mathematics, philosophy, sciences, and the social sciences. Also, 13 categories of coursework and/or experiences related to pedagogical and professional instruction in agricultural education have been identified. But not one of those 13 categories pertains to understanding and learning how to cope

with people in diverse cultures. And over and over again, at least in my state (hopefully, you are doing a better job in your states), we see our former students learning the hard way by trial and error, or else never learning, because they are oblivious to what it takes to work successfully in cross cultural settings.

Oh, yes, those 13 examples of evidence include such things as the impact of technological and societal changes on schools, but they don't look for evidence of how to handle those changes. To use an analogy, which also is a crude example of the difference between general and vocational education, we sometimes fall into the trap of teaching how corn grows (general education), but don't teach how to grow corn (vocational education). We teach how technology affects our clientele, but we don't teach, at least not very effectively, how to manage that technology so that it causes the fewest unanticipated and undesirable social consequences. The results are seen in the lives of those families in Silicon Valley referred to earlier.

I, myself, am still in a quandary in understanding our own culture. For example, I have always been told that you should start a talk with a large group with a short story or joke to get the audience's attention, give them a chance to settle down, establish rapport, etc. In line with that advice, I thought that I was in good shape when I accepted Jim Flower's invitation and told him that I would talk about us, and lead off with a good old-fashioned Aggie joke. But, Jim Flowers emphasized that this is a solemn, serious, intellectually stimulating occasion and warned me not say or do anything that would put AAAE in an unfavorable light on the front page of the San Diego paper tomorrow morning, especially considering all the different kinds of diversity found in the state of California. The wrong kind of joke might reflect adversely on the universities, the faculties, the students, and others represented here today, especially if it should relate to some cultural factors to be discussed.

I can understand that. After all, our business is people, and people want to be treated with respect. I may be slow, but I am not dumb. I got the message – no Ohio

Buckeye jokes, no Red Raider jokes, no Arkansas Razorback jokes, no Florida Gator jokes, no Aggie jokes, no tall people jokes, no short people jokes, no thin people jokes, no fat people jokes, no Jewish jokes, no Presbyterian jokes, no Polish jokes, no Vietnamese fisherman jokes, no Indian jokes, no Czech jokes; in other words, no jokes of this world. So, there was this Martian....He went home and reverse culture shock got him. Is it possible that we do not understand what we do in our own culture? Do we understand why we do what we do? Let's look at just two examples.

I need a couple of volunteers. (Demonstrate):

1. Personal space: "Could you please come up here on the stage with me? I want to talk to you about something." When that person comes up and stands by me, show how my extended arm with my fist closed touches the end of his or her nose, an American cultural pattern. Point out how the person stands angling away from the person with whom he or she is talking so as not to be confrontational, another American cultural pattern.
2. Show of hands: Ask, "Who was reared in a small town or grew up living in the country East of the Mississippi River?" "Who was reared in a small town or grew up living in the country West of the Mississippi?" Have one of each group come to front of room, face away from each other, and ask them to squat. They will squat differently. Comment: "Would you hire this guy (born east of the Mississippi) to squat on the ditch bank under a cottonwood tree in West Texas and expect him to sell a lot of fertilizer to a West Texas cotton farmer?" Do our students understand these differences?

When we were standing next to each other and when we were squatting, we were communicating in a silent language, in a non-verbal way. Our students need to know such things. But in addition, we need to

teach our students to know the context of a communication in different cultures in order to understand it, because that is where much of the information is hidden (Copeland & Griggs, 1985). On a continuum of high context to low context, we can generalize as follows: High Context = Japanese > Chinese > Iranian > Arab > Indian > Greek > Spanish > Italian > English > French > American > Scandinavian > German > German-Swiss = Low Context (Adapted from Copeland & Griggs, 1985, p. 107).

Why is this important? Because of these differences in context, we need to teach our students that their personal style of expression may communicate things that they do not mean to say when working with people in a cross cultural setting. For example, American children are often told: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Think about how blunt we often are when we speak to each other, even how much more blunt people in the Upper Midwest and the Northeast tend to be than people reared in the South. On the other hand, Arab children are often told that "A sharp tongue cuts deeper than the sword," and Americans often are driven to distraction because it seems to take forever for our Arab colleagues to get to the point.

We could spend several hours on cultural topics, such as these, that face our students and us. However, let's move on to a third related area in which we could serve our students and stakeholders better. This is what I call overcoming provincialism and handling diversity.

### *3. Overcoming Provincialism and Handling Diversity*

We do try to educate our students not to be provincial in outlook. We have courses on diversity education, courses on multiculturalism, offer internships, practicums, etc. in many of our universities in the United States. Provincialism is a concern in other countries as well. The curricula of universities in other countries are beginning to include courses on gender and youth issues in agriculture, population, food security, critical thinking, effects of agricultural production on the environment, leadership, and cross cultural management rather than concentrating solely on

production practices and technical subject matter in agriculture. One example is the University of Cape Coast in Ghana.

However, just because we have such courses, and people take those courses, does not mean that we are teaching the right things. Why? There is more to diversity than "politically correct" ethnic/gender/sexual/religious diversity. For example, there are reasons, rightly or wrongly, why "red necks" view the world differently than do non "red necks," why older people who survived the Depression and World War II may be more conservative, cautious, and frugal in outlook than post World War II people, why rural people may view society, security, satisfaction, "saving," "making do," caution and risk, work, and leisure differently than do urban people, etc. Are we making our students aware of these differing viewpoints? I hope so.

To complicate matters further, there are 13 major cultural biases, and many minor ones, that people hold in any culture. They pertain to differences in the way people view time, save face, view those in authority, handle sex roles in the family, treat privacy, handle personal vs. group actions, are or are not willing to become involved in other people's affairs, view change, view tradition, consider money and wealth, consider the future, compare the "old" and the "new," and place value on economic gain. These also are differences about which students should be aware and for which people in the field later, inevitably, thank us if we had worked with them on these topics.

### **Improving Our Professional Competence**

Now let's turn our attention to the second component of the departmental mission statement mentioned earlier, namely, to "improve continuously our professional competence."

First, in some cases, it seems that we, as university faculty, concerned about teaching, have to redefine some aspects of teaching, at least whom we teach and how we do it. Why? Let us look at the situation that exists today.

The United States Department of Education reports that the percent of each high school graduating class going on to

some form of higher education in the past 25 years has increased systematically from 25% to 60%. USDE also reports that the number of traditional 18-24-year old students enrolled in institutions of higher education is projected to increase to 16.1 million between now and 2008, an 18% increase over 1996. In 2008, 6,227,000 people 35 years and over are expected to enroll in institutions of higher education. Full-time-equivalent enrollment is expected to be 11.9 million in 2008 with 9.0 million of that in public institutions and 2.9 in private institutions. The emerging population of older adults, the "nontraditional" students over 35 (50 million in 1995) consists in large part of people who believe that "lifelong learning" is a necessity if they are to keep up with rapid changes in the job market. Both groups, traditional and non-traditional, are made up of "...technologically sophisticated consumers who expect services that are as user-friendly, accessible, and convenient as automatic teller machines." (A Rationale for Change: Approaching Graduate Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 2000).

The nontraditional students are the major audience for graduate programs delivered through new technologies. This does not take into account enrollment in business and industry-sponsored "in-house" educational programs. Jimmy Cheek, in his address on "Agricultural Education Reconsidered: Priorities for the Profession," given at the annual Southern Agricultural Education Conference held in Little Rock, Arkansas in February 1998 stated that "If we don't take care of the customers, somebody else will." Businesses have been developing their own training systems, e.g., GM University, because they perceive that higher education has failed to provide the on-time, specialized, relevant education that their employees need. Private businesses and industries now invest \$5 billion in educational training programs; they will spend \$3 trillion in the next few years.

Adult and part-time students now make up 43% of post secondary education enrollments nationwide. Growth in the demand for continuing and distance education will continue. Who is going to take care of this demand in agricultural

education? Fortunately, I believe that we do see an emerging commitment to outreach, to teaching at a distance. I also believe that in doing so we see greater emphasis being placed on using asynchronous, at-a-distance educational methods. However, there are some problems that we need to address as we move to, what are for some of us, different delivery systems.

For example, how appropriate is our education for the students who come our way? Are we creating obstacles for ourselves in that we tend to emphasize teaching at the expense of learning? When the educational experiences that we develop with students meet the needs of those students, then the education is appropriate and the students, the clientele served by those students upon graduation, those of us doing the teaching, and the society at large are all winners. To do this, we must ensure that our teaching and learning is in context. Contextual teaching and learning is "teaching that enables learning where pupils employ their academic understandings and abilities in a variety of out-of-school contexts to solve complex, real world problems, either alone or in various paired and group structures" (Invitation Packet to Attend Conference on Contextualized Teaching and Learning, 1998, p. 1.)

Do we emphasize contextual applications too much, and do not emphasize enough the bases of knowledge in which we work? To illustrate, when somebody asks you what do you do to earn your pay check, do you say, "I'm a teacher educator," or "I'm a distance educator," or "I'm an extension educator," all examples of the context or setting in which we work. Or do you say, "I work with learner-centered instructional design," or "I teach delivery strategies," or "I work in planning and needs assessment," or "I teach research, measurement, and analysis," or "I deal with evaluation and accountability." The latter are all examples of knowledge bases, professional in character, that are undergirded by theory, research, and a set of professional values and ethics expressed in articulated understandings, skills, and judgments. If I were to bet, I would bet that you and I both tend to say that we are teacher educators, extension educators, etc.

Doing so implies that we are generalists, competent in many things. But, we can no longer be generalists. We have to be specialists grounded in a knowledge base, but not narrowly defined specialists working in isolation. Instead, while specializing, we need to work more collaboratively, both within and across institutional and disciplinary boundaries.

Second, in establishing criteria for selecting students to teach, are we guilty of using some faulty criteria, e.g., the larger the number of prospective students rejected, therefore, the better our programs and our institutions are? To some, that seems to be the case when we look at comparisons made sometimes between elite, top tier institutions and the “wantabes.” We should remember what John Knox, the Scottish Protestant reformation theologian, said: “When we once set ourselves to resist the truth, we can always find excellent reasons for objecting to all possible representations of it or arguments for it.”

Third, as we examine our professional competence, do we attempt to improve our “engaged instruction?” Why? Engaged instruction focuses on quality of education; engagement is a two-way street. An engaged faculty responds to the needs of today’s and tomorrow’s students, not yesterday’s students. The faculty in an engaged university will deal with problems that communities and the real world face. As a result, our instruction becomes more meaningful, credible, valuable, and sought after.

Fourth, are we paying attention to the role and effectiveness of communication in what our students do? As we meet here today, the FAO Communication for Development Group is hosting an e-mail discussion on “The appropriation of traditional and new media for development: Whose reality counts?” The discussion will focus on the relationship between communication and development, the role of communication in development, and exploring and questioning our positions and actions as professionals in this field. Other people are concerned about communicating effectively, are we concerned likewise for our students?

### Summary

In summary, what do I hope that you take away with you today? What are the Burma Shave road signs that we need to read as we look out the windshield and travel down the road ahead?

1. I hope that Sign 1 exhorts us to examine the central implications of globalization for us and for our students as we deal increasingly with people different in culture, values, experiences, and outlooks from ourselves. Incidentally, in dealing with them, we may find that our worst enemies are the other American university faculty and students who have gone before us. Why? We have to live down or live up to the things that they have said or done, or not done.
2. Because of globalization, I hope to pass Sign 2 that says that we need collaborative working partnerships among our respective institutions and between agricultural education institutions and the private sector. We need a world campus instead of a Texas, Ohio, NY (you fill in the blank) campus.
3. But, why do we resist doing these things? For one thing, as Dr. Shinn said in the Fatburger that day, reaching in to others in our field is comfortable, we know everybody. So Sign 3 should say that reaching out is uncomfortable. We are afraid to interact with people we don’t know. We don’t know other cultures. We don’t have a world view. But, we need those interactions. We need to risk. But we must remember that we live with and carry around our own cultural baggage, our own cultural biases.
4. Don’t our students also need to develop a world view? So Sign 4 says to teach our students a world view.
5. Don’t they need to participate in cultures with which they are unfamiliar, need to reach out, need to interact with people they don’t know, and need to understand their own

cultural baggage? And, don't we need to prepare them to do these things? That takes care of Sign 5.

6. Don't we also owe it to our students and to their clientele to ensure that our teaching and their learning is in context? And in doing so, can't we focus to a greater extent on the bases of knowledge around which we build our individual and collective strengths? That is what Sign 6 should be about.
7. And then we have Sign 7. Can't we do these things together?

Shall we do something about these issues, these problems? I believe that we can and that we must. Why? The unique thing about the problems of our profession that we face in our time is that they are ours alone. Thank you.

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