

OSU Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative

Rural communities in Oregon and elsewhere face an extraordinarily complex set of challenges. As Oregon's Land Grant University, Oregon State University has a distinguished history of research on and service to the state's rural people and places. Given its strong faculty presence in rural Oregon, OSU is uniquely positioned to help rural communities understand and respond to these challenges. By investing in the Sustainable Rural Communities (SRC) Initiative, OSU would advance the Oregon State University's *Strategic Plan for the 21st Century* by creating a unique national center of excellence at OSU with a coordinated research, teaching and outreach program focused on rural community sustainability.

A number of Land Grant Universities have strength in academic programs, research and/or Extension outreach related to rural community issues. The three that have the strongest programs focused on rural communities are Cornell, Pennsylvania State and Wisconsin. All have significant rural coursework in agricultural economics and rural sociology; and all have some activity in research and Extension related to rural communities. In addition, both Cornell and Pennsylvania State have a center or institute for community development and masters degree programs in community/economic/rural development. None of these universities, however, bring faculty from the disciplines of anthropology, forestry, ethnic studies, political science, and geography into their programs. Most importantly, none have an integrated program focusing the research, teaching and Extension efforts from many disciplines on rural community sustainability in a coordinated way. While these other universities house their rural programs in the Colleges of Agriculture, we propose a collaboration across a broad range of disciplines from five colleges: Science, Liberal Arts, Forestry, Health and Human Sciences and Agricultural Sciences.

All of the strongest rural community studies programs in the nation are east of the Mississippi River. The issues they focus on certainly have some relevance to communities and public policy in the West, but none of the programs have expertise to deal with community issues related to extensive federal ownership of land, irrigated agriculture in semi-arid environments, Native American tribal communities, or sparsely populated and depopulating agricultural counties. Our proposal would create the most broadly multi-disciplinary center for coordinated research, teaching and outreach on rural community sustainability in the United States and the only one west of the Mississippi addressing the unique issues of Western rural communities.

The *overall goal* of the Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative is to *improve environmental, economic, social and cultural well-being in Oregon's rural communities* by establishing the premier program for rural community sustainability in the Land Grant University system. This Initiative would achieve this goal by pursuing four objectives:

- ***Generate new knowledge*** through multi-disciplinary research and policy analysis about the challenges facing rural communities and potential pathways to sustainability.
- ***Prepare a new generation*** of citizens, professionals and scholars to take on the kinds of complex situations that emerge as rural communities seek economic and social viability.
- ***Expand citizen and policymaker understanding*** about the contributions of and constraints faced by rural communities and the impacts of federal and state policy on rural sustainability.
- ***Engage rural communities*** in learning collaboratively about their strengths and opportunities and empower them to develop strategies to support long-term sustainability.

I. Executive Committee and Core Faculty

Name/Rank/Unit	FTE	Responsibility
Executive Committee		
John Bliss Professor, Forest Resources Starker Chair in Private/Family Forestry		Liaison with College of Forestry
Sally Bowman Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Sciences; Interim Extension Program Leader, Family and Community Development	0.05	Liaison with Extension Service
Kate MacTavish Assistant Professor, Human Development and Family Sciences	0.3	Liaison with College of Health and Human Sciences , multi-disciplinary rural research
Roger Nielsen Professor and Chair, Geosciences	0.1	Liaison with College of Science
Kurt Peters Associate Professor, Ethnic Studies Director, Native American Collaborative Institute		Partnerships with Tribal communities , Ethnic Studies course
Brent Steel Professor, Political Science Director, Master of Public Policy Program	0.2	Liaison with College of Liberal Arts and local government
Bruce Weber Initiative Coordinator Professor, Agricultural and Resource Economics Director, Rural Studies Program	0.5	Overall coordination, Liaison with College of Agricultural Sciences, state government and other external partners, multi-disciplinary rural research
Other Core Faculty		
Joan Gross Professor, Anthropology	0.1	Community Partnerships
Nancy Rosenberger Professor, Anthropology	0.1	PhD in Applied Anthropology
John Tanaka Associate Professor, Agricultural and Resource Economics, at Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center		Liaison with Eastern Oregon Community Partnerships
Rebecca Warner Professor and Chair, Sociology	0.1	Rural Policy Concentration, MPP

This Initiative's implementation plan is to build on the structure of the pilot OSU Rural Studies Program, which has a Director and internal Advisory Committee. An Executive Committee (identified above) will direct the Initiative, and an External Advisory Committee will guide and support its long-term sustainability.

II. Project Description: The Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative

The Need

The people, places and natural resources of rural America play a vital role in the nation's economy and culture. Yet rural communities are facing gut-wrenching economic and cultural adjustments. Rural communities are concerned with the loss of their futures, in the form of living wage jobs and educational opportunities for, and flight of, their young people (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2001; Pew Partnership, 2000). Rural Oregonians share these concerns: they are significantly more likely than urban Oregonians to list the economy, lack of jobs/unemployment, education, and health care as the most important issues facing the country (Steel, 2004).

In Oregon, government leaders have established a new Office of Rural Policy, whose mission is to address these challenges. In creating the new Office of Rural Policy, Governor Kulongoski outlined the context in which rural communities are attempting to achieve economic and social vitality.

Rural Oregon communities are in need: unemployment in those communities is often many points higher than the state average; Rural Oregon communities have significant threshold issues to overcome to compete with urban communities for economic and community development resources; the lack of an industrial base makes funding for education, health care, economic development and other social services more difficult to attain; and finally, Rural Oregon communities often lack administrative mechanisms and infrastructure to share information and to collectively construct solutions to its problems. (Executive Order 04-04 establishing the new Office of Rural Policy, April 21, 2004)

Rural communities face at least four sets of challenges that threaten their economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being:

- 1) ***Economic development and natural resource management.*** Environmental regulations, technological change, urbanization and globalization have dramatically changed the opportunities for rural businesses, creating new opportunities for some and new barriers for others. With these changes, rural Oregon has become progressively lost ground economically relative to urban Oregon over the past 20 years. Rural Oregon's unemployment rate runs about 25% higher than urban Oregon's, and its poverty rate is 18% higher. In addition, the earnings gap between rural Oregon and the rest of the country has grown over the past three decades: between 1969 and 2001, real average earnings per job in rural Oregon declined both absolutely and relative to the national average. Real average earnings per job in rural Oregon are now down to only 2/3 of the national average.
- 2) ***Individual and family well-being.*** Individual economic distress caused by unemployment and underemployment is greatly magnified through the family. In a major study focusing on Iowa families, sociologists found economic decline during the 1980's farm crisis had a "significant and lasting impact on their emotional well-being and interpersonal relationships." Income and job loss was associated with increased problems in marriage and greater adjustment problems among adolescent children (Conger and Elder, Jr., 1994). A loss of a sense of purpose, and of a productive future in their community has generated an exodus of the young, often leaving elders stranded with no family and few social services (Population Reference Bureau, 2004).

- 3) ***Cultural identity and change.*** Many Americans imagine rural communities as culturally homogenous and unchanging. However, with recent patterns of migration and immigration, rural cultural landscapes are changing faster than their urban counterparts. First, many rural populations are aging with out-migration of youth and/or in-migration of retirees. Second, there is increasing cultural diversity in rural communities with growing numbers of international migrants. In the 1990s, the Hispanic population of Oregon grew over 70% as the number of people who left Mexican villages to work on US farms increased by over 50 percent. Lest we forget, Oregon was multicultural long before the first Europeans appeared here. Rural Oregon still harbors spiritual centers for many indigenous groups such as Paiutes, Warm Springs, Klamaths, Umatillas and the many peoples affiliated with the Coquille, Coos, Grande Ronde and Siletz communities. Increasing cultural diversity has necessitated a reweaving of the social fabric of rural communities. We know that a strong cultural identity positively influences self-esteem, which is essential for the education of youth and the maintenance of healthy populations.

- 4) ***Local governance and local/state/national policy.*** Small rural governments are much more likely to need training and expertise in all aspects of public management (i.e., grant writing, budgeting, accounting, information management, internet applications, strategic planning, and program evaluation), criminal justice (i.e., youth counseling and juvenile justice issues), health care management and policy (i.e., rural and family health care issues), family support services (i.e., crisis intervention and team building), and natural resource management (i.e., conflict resolution and natural resource economics) (McVeety, Steel, and Sahr, WSU Vancouver Program in Public Affairs, 1997). Rural governments also face political and policy challenges posed by federal and state government devolution of responsibility without adequate funding by federal and state management of some natural resources and by the imbalance of political power. Growth of urban and suburban population centers, and the migration of retirees and others seeking recreational amenities lead to urban areas exerting ever more influence over life in contingent rural areas including higher housing costs, demands for services and the loss of farm lands.

Summary

Rural communities face unique challenges in their ability to address the forces that are transforming rural places in ways that threaten community viability and well-being. Yet little is known about what works and what doesn't in improving the economic and social conditions in rural places, about how community actions or outside policy makers can strengthen the economic and social fabric in rural communities. We do know that the rural communities themselves must work as full partners to develop strategies for overcoming the disadvantages that come with lack of scale and geographic isolation.

The OSU Response: A Sustainable Rural Communities (SRC) Initiative

We are proposing a statewide multi-disciplinary program that would focus, redirect and leverage the resources of five colleges and the Extension Service toward developing a new and unique multi-disciplinary model of University engagement with rural communities. This model would involve partners from other universities, governments, and the nonprofit sector in creating new educational opportunities, applied and fundamental research, and outreach that addressed

the needs of rural communities. The model involves innovations in the organizational structure involving five colleges and the three functions of the Land Grant University, and it contains innovative teaching methods and novel place-based university/community partnerships for collaborative learning.

An important Initiative mechanism for stimulating new ideas and leveraging resources to develop this model is the **SRC Innovative Project Fund**. This fund will support multi-disciplinary research, teaching and outreach projects that have potential both for long term measurable outcomes that improve rural community sustainability and for becoming self-supporting. Proposals for funding will be evaluated by the SRC Executive Committee. Examples of activities that could be supported by this fund include place-based community partnerships, student internships, and graduate research assistantships or seed money for development of multi-disciplinary research proposals.

While this is a new program, it will build upon the initial investment OSU has made to the pilot multi-disciplinary Rural Studies Program. We plan to aggressively pursue external funding to make the program economically sustainable in the long run. In moving toward the overall goal of improving the environmental, economic, social and cultural well-being of rural communities, the SRC Initiative will support activities directed at four objectives:

Objective 1: Generate new knowledge through multi-disciplinary research and policy analysis about the challenges facing rural communities and potential pathways to sustainability.

The SRC Initiative facilitates multi-disciplinary research by focusing and recognizing research on various cultural, economic and environmental aspects of rural life. It will also create a forum in which scholars can discuss their work with a multi-disciplinary group of interested colleagues. With this mix of scholars comes a mix of methodologies, ranging across the humanities and social and applied sciences. Our faculty works with such diverse approaches as elicited narratives, ethnographic interviews, remote sensing, GIS, statistical modeling, survey questionnaires, and participant observation. Focusing this diverse set of skills, together with the perspective of community partners, provides a powerful mechanism for addressing specific rural issues. The SRC Initiative would stimulate and support multi-disciplinary research projects focused on issues critical to economic and social well-being of rural people (such as employment, health care access and costs, land use, education, food insecurity, poverty, and migration). It would accomplish this in four ways:

1a.) SRC Graduate Research Fellowships will be offered to support research on rural community issues in different disciplines. Two of the fellowships each year will be used to support students in the emerging graduate programs in the College of Liberal Arts (the multi-disciplinary MPP and the PhD in Applied Anthropology). Five graduate research fellowships will be offered the first year. The other three assistantships during year 1 will be awarded to students in the other graduate programs affiliated with the Initiative. The SRC Executive Committee will evaluate the proposals for SRC graduate research fellowships.

1b.) The SRC Innovative Grant Fund will consider proposals for **seed funding for writing proposals for new multi-disciplinary research projects** on rural community issues that are important to Oregon. Priority would be given to those proposals that identify a strategy for significant future funding and that involve cross college collaboration.

1c.) Synergies and cross-fertilization of the multiple research projects will be supported by **regularly scheduled SRC research seminars** at which faculty and graduate fellows present preliminary results of their research. SRC fellows and their advisors are expected to participate in these seminars. These will be coordinated with the Social Science Research Roundtable, currently offered through the Department of Sociology.

1d.) The SRC Initiative will bring to OSU the best national rural community scholarship in an **annual SRC Research Symposium**. This event will bring a nationally prominent rural community scholar to OSU for a major address, and schedule sessions at which SRC faculty and students and affiliates at other universities present their research, and provide a forum for education and input from rural community leaders.

Objective 2: Prepare a new generation of citizens, professionals and scholars to take on the kinds of complex situations that emerge as rural communities seek economic and social viability.

The SRC Initiative will enrich the educational programs at Oregon State University in six ways:

2a.) New Rural Policy concentration in Masters of Public Policy. Beginning in Fall Quarter of 2003, OSU began offering the *Master of Public Policy* (MPP) to graduate students interested in applied public policy, environmental policy, and international policy. The MPP is an interdisciplinary degree offered by the Departments of Agricultural and Resource Economics, Economics, Political Science and Sociology. The MPP degree provides graduate education that prepares students for careers in the public, non-profit, and international sectors and offers training for “in-service” students (already employed) desiring professional growth and advancement. As part of this Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative, we plan on developing and offering a Rural Policy concentration for rural professionals and students wanting a career in rural development and policy. This would be one of the first programs of this nature to offer such a concentration in the United States, and we suspect it will attract many new students from across the country planning for careers in rural policy. We also hope to attract rural professionals wanting to receive new training and exposure to new and innovative rural development approaches. There is an internship required for all MPP students, and we would expect students pursuing this concentration to fulfill their internship requirement by participating, for example, in one of the three place-based research sites or with a rural NGO or government agency. We anticipate the new concentration to pull from the courses listed below, as well as any new courses developed as part of this program:

AREC 554-Rural Development Economics and Policy

ANTH 581-Natural Resource and Community Values; **ANTH 582**-World Food & Culture Implications of Intl Ag Dev; **ANTH 584**-Wealth and Poverty

GEO 520-Geography of Resource Use; **GEO 523**-Land Use; **GEO 552**-Principles and Practices of Rural and Resource Planning

HDFS 547-Families and Poverty

SNR 511- Sustainable Natural Resource Development; **SNR 520**- Socially Sustainable Natural Resources; **SNR 521**- Economics of Sustainable Natural Resource Management; **SNR 522**- Basic Beliefs and Ethics in Natural Resources

SOC 575-Rural-Urban Sociology; **SOC 581**-Society and Natural Resources; **SOC 585**-Consensus and Natural Resources; **SOC 560**-Comparative Societies; **SOC 566**-International Development-Gender Issues

2b.) A Rural Focus in the PhD in Applied Anthropology. In the Fall of 2005 the first students will be admitted to the Ph.D. program in Applied Anthropology, the only one of

its kind in the Northwest. There are three options in the new Ph.D.: Local Values, Indigenous Knowledge, and Environment; Ethnicity, Culture, and Health; and Business, Organization, and Work. The anthropology department will reserve some of their graduate admission slots for students who are prepared to focus their program on one of the four sets of challenges for rural communities outlined in the problem statement of this Initiative.

2c.) A New Rural Community Studies Specialty Option in the Natural Resources Degree. The Natural Resources program is an interdisciplinary degree offered jointly by the Colleges of Agricultural Sciences, Forestry, Liberal Arts, and Science. The degree emphasizes a broad-based approach to the study of natural resources, providing students the opportunity to combine areas of particular interest and focus on topics not otherwise offered at the undergraduate level. Under the proposed Rural Communities Initiative, students in the Natural Resources Program will be able to choose a Specialty Option in Rural Community Studies. This will consist of at least 50 credits of relevant courses from throughout the University, including new courses offered as a result of this Initiative.

2d.) New Sustainable Rural Communities Certificates. The Sustainable Rural Communities Certificate will prepare students for leadership in, or professional work in, rural communities by giving them an exposure to rural economic and social issues and policy options. We envision three options for certificates (The first two would be offered both on-campus and through Ecampus.):

- 1.) A **Graduate Certificate** will be developed for students pursuing a graduate degree to prepare them with the skills and competencies they need to understand economic, cultural and social dynamics in rural places. Such students would be well prepared to either work in rural places and/or analyze the impacts of public policies on rural communities. The courses listed above for the MPP, along with new courses developed through this Initiative, will be considered for inclusion in the 18-credit graduate certificate program
- 2.) An **Undergraduate Certificate** requiring a minimum of 27 credits would be developed after evaluation of the experience with the graduate certificate. It would draw primarily from the 400-level versions of the courses listed above for the Graduate Certificate.
- 3.) A **Professional Graduate Certificate** can be earned in three ways: through distance education, through a mixed on-campus/internship experience, and through an intensive Summer Institute like the interdisciplinary 18-credit Graduate Certificate Program in Sustainable Natural Resources (SNR). The potential for (and the most appropriate model for) a Professional Graduate Certificate will be evaluated during year 3, based in part on experience with the SNR Summer Institute professional certificate program, which will be offered for the first time in Summer 2005.

2e.) New courses. Implementation of these new concentrations and certificates will require development of some new courses. We foresee the development of new and innovative interdisciplinary courses coming out of the research collaborations supported by the Initiative that can be utilized by all of our new rural studies and policy education initiatives, as well as other OSU graduate programs. We already have some experience developing and offering such courses. For example, four different departments offered

“Endangered Species, Irrigated Agriculture, and Rural Communities: The Klamath Basin” in 2003 (see: www.oregonstate.edu/dept/pol_sci/fac/steel/cl/ps507/).

At least four new **undergraduate and graduate courses focused on rural issues** are being planned for 2005-2006: (1) Natural Resources, Public Policy and Rural Communities, (2) Rural Poverty and (3) Rural Studies capstone course. All will be team taught by SRC faculty and cross-listed in the participating departments. In addition, SRC faculty are planning to work with University of Oregon faculty to offer a joint **multi-disciplinary course** on rural communities.

SRC will provide support for a unique multi-disciplinary **cross-cultural “action learning” field course** focusing on the Native American experience in Oregon, and will develop a strategy for external support to sustain the course in the long-term. During the first five years, the Initiative will provide support for the “learning through listening” course pioneered in Ethnic Studies and Sociology during Spring Break. Students will participate in an interdisciplinary field study of cross-cultural issues faced by Native Americans and Hispanics in rural areas.

<http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/soc204/plazad/native/index.htm>

2f.) Student internships. Those students in the certificate and MPP programs will be offered opportunities to participate in the student internships in rural communities in Western states. This option is being developed in collaboration with the University of Oregon and the Western Rural Development Center at Utah State University.

Objective 3: Expand citizen and policymaker understanding about the contributions of and constraints faced by rural communities and the impacts of federal and state policy of rural sustainability.

The SRC Initiative will expand the outreach offerings of OSU in two ways:

3a.) Short-term multi-disciplinary outreach projects in particular communities.

Changing economic and social trends, such as population shifts in age, race, and gender; educational attainment; living arrangements; poverty; and housing costs have direct implications for health care, transportation, social services, and business services and products in communities. Many rural communities have sought assistance from OSU faculty for their community development efforts, but our capacity has been inadequate to meet this need. Community leaders seek research-based information about their local social and economic conditions, the context within which they must make decisions, and effective strategies for achieving various community development objectives. With the expanded Extension specialist capacity under this Initiative, OSU will be able to provide more assistance to local communities. Extension specialist faculty will have the capacity to produce comprehensive rural community profiles in collaboration with local OSU Extension faculty and community leaders. These profiles will provide essential information on local economic, demographic and land-use conditions and trends and on community economic, social and policy strategies.

3b.) Noncredit statewide educational programs. Through nontechnical publications and informal educational programs, we will make research-based information about rural conditions, trends, opportunities and challenges accessible to all Oregonians, in both rural and urban areas. This effort will work through the extensive network of off-campus OSU faculty and with government, university and nonprofit partners.

Objective 4: Engage rural communities in learning collaboratively about their strengths and opportunities and empower them to develop strategies to support long-term sustainability.

4a.) Place-based research/teaching/outreach community partnerships: a model of university/community interaction. Under this Initiative, we will work to develop and implement an innovative model of interaction between the University and rural communities that seek to improve the quality of life in the partnering community. We will seek long-term multi-disciplinary collaborations in a small number of “Partnership Communities” that want intensive interaction with OSU on-campus and field faculty. In order for a partnership to bear fruit, OSU faculty and community members must find a community issue that all want to understand and resolve, and all must want to bring the expertise that each has to the learning process and to receive what the other offers. The model involves reciprocity between the University and community and is based on collaborations in which faculty members, students and community members will work together to set and achieve goals and hold each other accountable for commitments.

SRC faculty members have a strong track record of working with local citizens and leaders toward effecting positive social change. Four such examples are (with contacts in parentheses): the new Wallowa Resources/OSU Field Studies program in Enterprise seeking to create an economically viable community in a natural-resource-dependent region (John Bliss, Forest Resources); an OSU/ Benton County Food Security Task Force effort to assist the community of Alsea in developing strategies for local food security while enhancing local agriculture and providing emergency food (Nancy Rosenberger and Joan Gross, Anthropology); a project to revitalize languages in Warm Springs (Joan Gross, Anthropology); and a NIH-NICHHD sponsored program in Sweet Home to build stronger pathways to successful child and youth development (Kate McTavish, Human Development and Family Sciences).

Using knowledge and experience generated by these and other projects, the SRC Initiative will create three new university-community partnerships in the next five years. These projects will be partially funded through the Innovative Grant Fund and Graduate Research Fellowships. Once each term the three working groups of faculty, students and community members will come together to discuss their progress. It is expected that each working group will deliver reports on their work in the communities, on campus, in Salem and at national and international academic conferences and that a report from each group will be published as a Rural Studies Program working paper each year. In each of the selected communities, local OSU Extension faculty can provide key local knowledge and access in partner communities and local working space and meeting facilities for partnership events.

In moving toward the four objectives, the SRC Initiative will develop international projects and new collaborations with the University of Oregon.

5.) New international experiences and exchanges. It is critical to understand that what we learn about rural sustainability is not restricted to the Oregon or American contexts but extends beyond our borders. To this end, the SRC Initiative will support the development of funded projects such as the International Research Experience for Undergraduates (INTREU) sited in Bulgaria (Brent Steel, Political Science). The new INTREU project, funded through the National

Academy of Sciences, examines human dimensions of natural resource management and policy by engaging undergraduate students from OSU and the University of Oregon in a comparative research project. A significant component of this project is the recruitment of women and people of color to engage in collaborative research that is beneficial to rural communities and to encourage these students to pursue graduate degrees in disciplines in which they are currently underrepresented. At the completion of this one-year project (ending summer 2005), we are expected to propose a long-term INTREU sit in Bulgaria (a 5-year, \$500,000 proposal) which would foster continuing research on sustainable development.

6.) New collaborations with University of Oregon. Oregon State University has a long history of collaboration with University of Oregon, including joint research/outreach projects with faculty in the Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management, and the former Bureau of Governmental Research and Service. As a part of the SRC Initiative, several potential collaborations in teaching, research and outreach are being explored with the University of Oregon's Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management:

6a.) OSU and UO are planning a joint course offering for 2005-06: "Rural Communities in Transition: Economic, Social and Governance Challenges and Policy Responses." OSU would take the lead in providing the course content on rural economies, social structure, demographics and culture; UO and OSU would share the responsibilities on rural governance issues; and UO would take the lead in providing content on planning and policy issues.

6b.) We are planning a meeting in 2005 between UO faculty and OSU faculty to share research agendas and explore potential interests in joint proposals for multi-disciplinary research projects.

6c.) We are exploring collaboration in two established UO PPPM programs involving students in outreach into rural Oregon Communities.

7.) SRC Faculty: the foundation of the Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative

Underlying the success of this Initiative is the energy and competence of OSU faculty. Building OSU capacity for sustainable, coordinated, and integrated teaching, research and outreach in and with rural Oregon communities requires a stable **multi-disciplinary SRC faculty** with competencies in four core issue areas of concern to rural communities and rural people. OSU is fortunate to have a strong cadre of faculty with rural-oriented teaching, research and extension programs focused on the four challenges facing rural communities: *Community economic viability/natural resource management* (John Bliss, Bruce Sorte, John Tanaka); *Individual and family well-being* (Kate MacTavish, Leslie Richards, Rebecca Warner, Anisa Zvonkovic); *Cultural identity and change* (Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, Joan Gross, Kurt Peters, Nancy Rosenberger); and *Governance and policy* (Brent Steel, William Jaeger, Bruce Weber). These faculty will form the core foundation needed to develop courses, academic programs, and research projects on rural community issues and to participate in rural-community-focused outreach.

Current faculty, however, do not have some of the skills, competencies or experience needed to implement the planned Initiative. Nor do they have the capacity to teach the needed courses. Thus implementation of the Initiative requires **coordinated hiring of five new faculty members** with appointments in the Colleges of Liberal Arts, Agriculture, Science, Health and Human Sciences and Forestry. Three teaching/research faculty will be hired: a **rural economist** in Agricultural and Resource Economics; a **resource geographer** in Geosciences and a **rural**

sociologist in Sociology/ Forest Resources. In addition, two Extension faculty would be hired to support the outreach activities in rural communities: an **Extension community economist** in Agricultural and Resource Economics and an **Extension community/applied demographer** in Human Development and Family Sciences.

Two of the teaching/research faculty (the rural economist and rural sociologist) would be supported by the SRC Initiative for years 2-5. The College of Agricultural Sciences is committed to supporting the rural economist after year 5 and the Colleges of Liberal Arts and Forestry have indicated support for the Initiative and interest in supporting the positions after year 5. The resource geographer and the two Extension positions are being supported by the Colleges of Science, Agricultural Sciences and Health and Human Sciences starting in year 1.

We envision two faculty development activities that will build the OSU community of rural scholars and educators and undergird the sustainability of the Initiative. The first is an **annual SRC faculty retreat** at an off-campus rural location to develop and revise the SRC strategic plan. The second is an **annual “rural immersion experience”** offered as an option for faculty members/graduate research fellows who have had limited experience in rural areas. In alternate years, the immersion experience would be in a community with rural minorities.

8.) Planning for the long term future of the OSU Sustainable Rural Communities effort.

The long-term future of the SRC Initiative depends on the development of a strategic plan.

Development of a strategic plan will begin in Year 2 and will build on three building blocks:

8a) The first is the **annual evaluation** of the Initiative progress in meeting the measurable outcomes identified in Table 1. This will provide direction for where short term investments need to be made to keep the Initiative on track for achieving its goals. The evaluation will be presented to **8b)** an **External Advisory Council** of rural leaders and community and university partners. This council, which will include a representative of the Office of Rural Policy, can provide guidance to the SRC Initiative about ways to increase the effectiveness of outreach, about the relevance of research and the demand for rural expertise, and about potential funding for Initiative efforts. The annual evaluation and the External Advisory Council will provide input for **8c)** the **annual faculty strategic planning retreat**.

Strong external partners will be essential for both access to community partners and financial support for projects. The most important external partners will be state and local governments, nonprofits working in rural community development, federal granting agencies that fund rural research and foundations that support projects in rural communities. Initial contacts have been made with the new **Office of Rural Policy**. As soon as the new director is selected, SRC faculty will explore ways in which Oregon State University research and outreach can align with the priorities being established by the Office. Discussions have also been initiated with the nonprofit **Rural Development Initiatives, Inc.**, which has a strong history of capacity building in rural Oregon communities. SRC faculty have been successful in securing grants from federal, state and local governments and from foundations.

Preliminary Accomplishments

Oregon State University faculty involved in the SRC Initiative have considerable experience in multi-disciplinary cross-college collaboration on rural community issues. Important accomplishments that point to a high level of commitment to such activity include:

- ***The Rural Studies Program*** which has stimulated multi-disciplinary, cross-college collaborations in teaching, research and outreach during the past three years. Accomplishments have included:
 - Rural Studies ***multi-disciplinary courses***: “Endangered Species, Irrigated Agriculture and Rural Communities: The Klamath Basin Case” (2002); a Rural Studies Capstone course.
 - Rural Studies outreach: ***economic studies*** of rural communities, forums, publications.
 - Rural Studies ***multi-disciplinary/multi-college research*** on food insecurity (AREc/SOC funded by Economic Research Service), rural labor markets (EC/AREc with Oregon Employment Department), rural poverty (SOC/AREc), rural community linkages (AREc with EC at Iowa State funded by the USDA National Research Initiative).
- ***Sustainable Forestry Partnership*** which has almost a decade of experience in cross-campus collaboration in teaching, research and outreach in three OSU colleges and with Pennsylvania State University and Auburn University.
- ***Native American Collaborative Institute*** which facilitates collaborations between tribal programs and OSU on research, education and outreach that affects the quality of life of tribal peoples.
- Previous ***multi-disciplinary course collaborations by SRC faculty***: Poverty in Oregon, a course cross listed in 6 departments involving 8 faculty members from 3 colleges that was offered on campus and as distance course for many years
- Prior Research/outreach ***collaborations with other universities***: OSU/University of Oregon/Portland State University collaboration on the *Oregon Fiscal Choices* project funded by Northwest Area Foundation, and the Hunger Forum co-sponsored in 2004 with Willamette University.
- Prior Research/outreach ***collaborations with state and local governmental partners***: OSU SRC faculty have collaborated with the Oregon Progress Board, individual county governments, the Association of Oregon Counties, and the Oregon League of Cities, and one SRC faculty member serves on the Oregon League of Cities Advisory Board.
- ***International experience*** in teaching and research on natural resources and community issues: National Academy of Sciences planning grant in Bulgaria.

Goals and Expected Time-phased Measurable Outcomes

The ***overall goal*** of the Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative is to ***improve environmental, economic, social and cultural well-being in Oregon’s rural communities*** by establishing the premier program for rural community sustainability in the Land Grant University system. The enhanced capacity of OSU enabled by this Initiative would lead to improved measurable outcomes related to each of the four objectives, as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative
Activities, Measurable Outcomes, Timeline**

Activity by Objective	Outcomes and Outcome Measures	Timeline: Years
SRC Initiative Infrastructure		
Activity: Recruit faculty, administrative assistant	Outcome: Recruited and hired three research teaching faculty, two Extension faculty and administrative assistant (Measures: Faculty and staff members hired)	Y1
Activity: Innovative Project Fund	Outcome: Increased teaching, research, outreach in rural communities (Measures: Number of new classes and students, number of grants written, number of community partnerships created, number of interns placed)	Develop Y1, Implement Y1-Y5
Activity: Development of external stakeholder relationships	Outcome: Increased the type and number of services available to rural communities through strong partnerships developed with the Governor's Office and nonprofits. (Measures: Number of communities served, increases in services associated with partnerships, increased satisfaction/knowledge of community partners in survey-based evaluations)	Develop Y1, Implement Y2-Y5
Activity: Appoint External Advisory Committee	Outcome: Established External Advisory Committee, held initial meeting (Measures: Advisory Committee meeting agenda and notes)	Y1
Activity: Evaluation of Initiative	Outcome: Increased understanding of impacts of initiative by SRC core and stakeholders, redirection of resources to more effective uses (Measures: Number of times evaluation used in decision making or public discussion, number of outcome measures that improved as a result of reallocation)	Y1-Y5
Activity: Faculty Strategic Planning Retreat	Outcome: Increased program effectiveness as a result of strategic decisions made at retreat (Measures: Numbers of outcome measures that improved over previous year)	Develop Y1, Implement Y1-Y5
OBJECTIVE #1: Conduct research and policy analysis to generate new knowledge about both the challenges facing rural communities and potential pathways to sustainability.		
Activity 1.1: Graduate Research Fellowships	Outcome: Increased research on rural community issues (Measures: Number of students funded, number of papers submitted and published, number of degrees/theses completed)	Develop Y1, Implement Y1-Y5
Activity 1.2: Research Projects	Outcome: Increased funded research on rural communities, increased peer-validated knowledge about rural community sustainability (Measures: Number of grants written, number of successful grant applications, amount of new funding for research on rural community issues)	Develop Y1, Implement Y1-Y5
Activity 1.3: Research Seminars	Outcome: Increased scholarly discussion of rural community issues (Measures: Number of seminars, number of attendees)	Develop Y1, Implement Y1-Y5
Activity 1.4: Research Symposium	Outcome: Increased participation of faculty, students, policymakers, and citizens in symposium (Measures: Numbers of faculty, students, policymakers, and citizens participating in symposium)	Develop Y1, Implement Y2-Y5
Activity 1.5: Joint research and outreach with UO Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management	Outcome: Increased research and outreach jointly with UO (Measures: Number of faculty research collaborations with UO faculty, number of OSU faculty involved, number of OSU faculty and students involved in joint UO/OSU outreach collaborations)	Develop Y1, Implement Y1-Y5
Activity 1.6: Comparative research on rural natural resource dependent communities in Bulgaria	Outcome: Increased student and faculty participation in international efforts (Measures: Number of students and faculty, especially ethnic and racial minorities and women, engaged in international research related to sustainable rural development in Bulgaria.)	Develop Y1, Implement Y1-Y5
OBJECTIVE #2: Prepare a new generation of stake-holders including community members, scholars, and professionals with the capacity to address the complex and often messy situations that emerge in rural places as they seek economic and social viability.		
Activity 2.1: Rural Policy track in Masters of Public Policy	Outcome: Improved academic profiles of MPP applicants, increased participation in MPP Rural Policy track, and greater success in placement of graduates (Measures: Undergrad GPA and GRA scores of applicants; number of Rural Policy track students; number of Rural Policy track graduates; number of students and graduates from underrepresented demographic groups; number of placements of graduates in professional positions)	Develop Y1, Implement Y2-Y5
Activity 2.2: Applied Anthropology program with a rural focus	Outcome: Improved academic profiles of PhD applicants, increased participation in rural research, and greater success in placement of graduates (Measures: Undergrad GPA and GRA scores of applicants; number of "rural emphasis" students; number of "rural emphasis" graduates; number of students and graduates from underrepresented demographic groups; number of placements of graduates in professional positions)	Develop Y1, Implement Y2-Y5

**Table 1: Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative
Activities, Measurable Outcomes, Timeline**

Activity 2.3: Rural Community Specialized Option in Natural Resources degree	Outcome: Improved academic profiles of applicants, and greater success in placement of graduates (Measures: Undergrad GPA and GRA scores of applicants; number of students; number of graduates; number of students and graduates from underrepresented demographic groups; number of placements of graduates in professional positions)	Develop Y1, Implement Y2-Y5
Activity 2.4: Sustainable Rural Communities Certificate (Graduate and Undergraduate)	Outcome: Improved academic profiles of applicants and greater success in placement of graduates (Measures: Undergrad GPA and GRA scores of applicants; number of students; number of graduates; number of students and graduates from underrepresented demographic groups; number of placements of graduates in professional positions)	Develop Y1-2, Implement Y3-Y5
Activity 2.4.1: Professional Graduate Certificate	Outcomes: Improved academic profiles of applicants and greater success in advancement of graduates (Measures: Undergrad GPA and GRA scores of applicants; number of professional "in service" students; number of graduates; number of students and graduates from underrepresented demographic groups; number of advancements of graduates in professional positions within 5 years of completion)	Develop Y3, Implement Y4-Y5
Activity 2.5: New Interdisciplinary Courses (Example: Cross-cultural "action learning" field course)	Outcome: Increased number of interdisciplinary and disciplinary courses with rural community focus, increased student participation in rural community courses (Measures: Number of interdisciplinary and disciplinary courses with rural community focus, number of students in rural community courses)	Develop All Y1 ES course: Implement Y1-Y5; Other Courses Implement Y2-Y5
Activity 2.6: Student Internships	Outcome: Increased number of internships in rural communities and organizations focused on rural community issues (Measures: Number of internships)	Develop Y1, Implement Y2-Y5
Activity 2.7: Joint course offering - "Rural Communities in Transition"	Outcome: Increased participation in new joint course at both Universities (Measures: Number of OSU faculty and students involved in joint UO/OSU outreach collaborations)	Develop Y1, Implement Y2-Y5
OBJECTIVE #3: Help urban leaders, rural leaders, and policy makers understand the contributions of and constraints faced by rural communities and the impacts of federal and state policies on rural sustainability.		
Activity 3.1: Short-term outreach projects to create comprehensive rural community profiles	Outcome: Increased involvement of communities in learning about economic and demographic context, increased media exposure. (Measures: Number of community profiles produced, number of presentations in communities using profile information, number of media uses of information)	Develop Y1, Implement Y2-Y5
Activity 3.2: Informal noncredit statewide educational programs	Outcome: Increased requests for information about rural Oregon from citizens and policymakers, and increased use of OSU publications, websites and expertise in state and rural community decision making about economic and social issues (Measures: Number of public presentations, public testimony, consultations for citizens and policymakers, number of publications produced and distributed, number of website hits)	Develop Y1, Implement Y2-Y5
Activity 3.3: Joint outreach with both Universities using UO's Community Planning Workshop and RARE program	Outcome: Increased research and outreach jointly with UO (Measures: Number of faculty research collaborations with UO faculty, number of OSU faculty involved, number of OSU faculty and students involved in joint UO/OSU outreach collaborations)	Develop Y1, Implement Y2-Y5
OBJECTIVE #4: Engage rural communities in developing place-specific strategies to support long-term sustainability.		
Activity 4.1: Community Partnerships: Long-term collaborations in a small number of communalities	Outcome: Established long-term collaborations with a small number of Oregon communities leading to effective and innovative solutions to complex rural issues (Measures: Number of communities served, number of community members involved, increases in jobs or income associated with community partnerships, increased satisfaction/knowledge of community partners in survey-based evaluations)	Develop Y1, Implement Y2-Y5

Summary: How Initiative Activities and Outcomes relate to Criteria

The Rural Communities Initiative focuses and redirects OSU's resources toward improving the well-being of the people who live in rural places. As Oregon's land-grant university, OSU has a distinguished history of research on and service to, and a strong faculty presence in, the state's rural places. This makes OSU particularly well-suited to address the problems and issues facing Oregon's rural communities.

**Table 2: Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative
Relating Activities and Outcomes to Criteria**

Criteria	Major Activities	Outcomes
Advance the Strategic Plan by "advancing the arts and sciences as the foundation for scientific discovery, social and cultural enhancement, and progress in the applied professions."	Build new graduate professional program concentrations (2A, 2B, 2E), stimulate multidisciplinary research (1A, 1C, 1D) and develop new models of university/community interaction (4A).	There is new knowledge about how local action and state/federal policy can strengthen the social and economic fabric of rural communities; OSU-trained professionals have the knowledge and competency to effectively address rural problems and exploit rural opportunities; OSU and rural communities have more effective mutually beneficial interactions about community sustainability issues.
Address the three land grant mission areas.	Create a core SRC faculty with teaching, research and extension responsibilities (5A, 5B) and develop new models (4A) for integrating the three functions to the benefit of rural communities.	Communities are able to interact with OSU faculty in new ways that integrate teaching, research and outreach, and have access to OSU faculty and resources appropriate to their needs.
Enhance and promote diversity.	Create a core SRC faculty with teaching, research and extension responsibilities (5A, 5B) and develop new models (4A) for integrating the three functions to the benefit of rural communities.	Faculty and students have increased cultural competence and increased understanding of cultural perspectives and values of Hispanic and Native American people.
Include an international dimension.	Introduce international perspective and experience into research and teaching program (6A).	Oregon citizens, students and researchers have been exposed to creative new thinking about rural community issues and to cross-national rural community sustainability issues.
Be collaborative, integrative, and multidisciplinary.	Create an organizational structure and funding mechanism (1B) that encourages collaboration across disciplines and functions; create classes (2E), research projects (1B), exchanges (1A, 1C, 1D), a "partnership" model of research, teaching and outreach (4A), and new projects with U of O (7A,B,C) that are collaborative, integrative and multidisciplinary .	OSU has a core faculty that collaborates on multidisciplinary research projects and has developed new multidisciplinary classes (on-campus and Ecampus) and outreach efforts focused on rural communities; that is engaged in a collegial way with others in the SRC core and U of O; and that has established integrated partnerships with selected Oregon rural communities addressing their sustainability issues.
Contribute to Oregon's environmental, economic, social, and cultural well-being.	All of the activities in this initiative are directed to improving Oregon's environmental, economic, social, and cultural well-being. The two outreach activities (3A, 3B) and the community partnerships (4A) are specifically directed to Oregon's rural communities.	Rural community leaders in Oregon have a better understanding of their local economic and social contexts and of what strategies for economic and social sustainability have the best chance of succeeding in the long run. State and federal policymakers have new knowledge about how economic and social policy affect rural communities. Long-term collaborations have been established with a small number of rural Oregon communities that have generated effective and innovative solutions to complex issues in those communities. Students have had hands-on, meaningful learning experiences in place-based research and outreach.
Leverage existing resources and generate new resources.	The formation of a core SRC faculty (5A) and coordinated hiring of new faculty (5B) and graduate student research (2B), collaborations with University of Oregon (7A, B, C) and in international projects (6). New multi-disciplinary research (1B), new graduate concentrations (2A), new certificates (2D), new courses (2E), new short term outreach projects (3A) and noncredit classes (3B).	OSU has redirected and leveraged university and outside funds to focus research, teaching and outreach on rural community sustainability issues and have redirected the resources of collaborators in government, other universities and nonprofits to address the needs of rural communities. Core SRC faculty have secured new funding for rural community related research and outreach projects. New students attracted by the new graduate and certificate programs have generated new student revenues to OSU.

The expected outcomes of the activities of the Initiative are an extraordinary fit with the criteria established for evaluating these OSU Initiatives. This SRC Initiative:

- Advances the Oregon State University *Strategic Plan for the 21st Century* by *advancing the arts and sciences as the foundation for scientific discovery, social and cultural enhancement, and progress in the applied professions*. Given the important impacts of rural community decisions on natural resource management, this Initiative also contributes to excellence in managing *natural resources that contribute to Oregon's quality of life*. It moves OSU toward becoming a national leader in rural policy studies and applied rural social science.
- Builds capacity in teaching, research and outreach, and engages the University more deeply in seeking solutions to the problems facing rural communities through creation of a collaborative, multi-disciplinary Sustainable Rural Communities faculty. This engagement enriches student learning, research methods and ultimately the well-being of Oregon's rural and urban populations.
- Enhances cultural diversity and cultural competence of students and faculty by highlighting the contributions of, and challenges facing, ethnic minorities in rural Oregon, including Hispanics and Native Americans.
- Introduces an international perspective of rural contexts and issues thus contributing to creative new thinking in Oregon's rural communities. Students from Oregon, other regions of the US, and international sites will take advantage of the learning, research, and community partnerships available in the Rural Studies Program.
- Stimulates integrative, long-term, multi-college, multi-disciplinary collaborations in teaching, research and outreach
- Contributes to Oregon's environmental, economic, social and cultural well-being in three primary ways: educating graduates who would understand and are able to stimulate economic and social health in rural areas; continuing and long-term service to rural communities through engagement with rural leadership; and developing a knowledge base on what policies work best in rural places that would support long-term development in rural areas.
- Leverages existing resources of the five Colleges by redirecting current faculty, reprioritizing new positions, redirecting graduate student research, and leveraging outside funds and resources of collaborators in communities, governments, and universities toward rural community problems.
- Positions OSU for increased access to grant funding for rural research projects by supporting and facilitating faculty grant seeking. Increased student enrollment will generate new funds for the University.

We will know that this program has had a lasting impact on OSU and the citizens of this state *when* students and professionals from Oregon and around the world select OSU as the preferred university for graduate and undergraduate education in rural studies and rural policy; *when* our students take positions of leadership in government and business and use their knowledge to advance the sustainability of rural areas; *when* faculty make important advances in our understanding of the opportunities and barriers in rural places and in the impacts of public policies on sustainability of rural communities; and *most importantly when people living in rural communities have new opportunities growing out of OSU involvement*.