DISCUSSION: TEACHING, RESEARCH, AND EXTENSION PROGRAMS AT PREDOMINANTLY BLACK LAND-GRANT INSTITUTIONS

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Williamson and Williams are to be complimented for their willingness to address this broad and complex subject. The historical and philosophical perspective presented by Williamson provides the framework for focusing on the major issues confronting the Land-Grant System as suggested by Williams in reference to programs at predominantly black land-grant institutions. There is, I believe, general agreement within the Land-Grant System that the focus of the System's teaching, research, and extension programs should continue to be determined by the needs and problems of agriculture, rural people, and society with the intent of improving the total quality of life. The character and growth of these programs in general, however, has been and will continue to be affected by the following two trends:

1. Enrollment in traditional agricultural fields has been declining in recent years as the attractiveness of agricultural careers in the minds of the nation's youth has diminished. While efforts have been and are being made to reverse this enrollment trend, it is not reasonable to expect large enrollment increases in the near term. Therefore, growth in land-grant programs cannot be expected to occur on the basis of increasing enrollment, particularly in the traditional areas, and

2. The funding of teaching, research, and extension programs within the Land-Grant System has become increasingly dependent on state government, with the percent of funds originating from federal sources declining. It can be expected that this trend will continue, placing the Land-Grant System in further competition with other demands for limited state funds. Given the anti-tax attitude that is in evidence across the country, the competition for state funds can be expected to intensify. Consequently, justification for programs and the elimination of program duplication across institutions will continue to be demanded.

Given these general trends affecting the growth and direction of programs in land-grant institutions, let us turn our attention to the papers presented by Williamson and Williams concerning the role and focus of predominately black land-grant institutions.

I question the general implication by Dr. Williams that the Land-Grant System should assume elements of an advocacy role. The System's strength has been related to a great extent to its ability to maintain an objective posture with respect to its teaching, research, and extension programs. Assumption of an advocacy role could very quickly erode the strength that objectivity has brought to the System. The System's role, as described by Dr. Williamson and referred to by Dr. Williams—the objective development of research information and dissemination of that information through its teaching and extension programs—should be continued. The objective posture and problem solving nature of the System's programs will ensure its long-run viability.

In his presentation, Dr. Williams identified several issues that influence the effectiveness of the Land-Grant System and its viability in rural areas. Many of his points were made using the environment faced by the small...
family farm and the consequences of a non-
viable small family farm sector in rural areas
as a focus. A general thesis was that the Land-
Grant System has failed to effectively address
the problems of the small farm sector and,
in fact, had to some extent been a constraint
to the sector's economic viability. Conse-
sequently, he concludes that the System must
effectively address the concerns of this sector
if it is to remain a viable entity in the future.

In general, these specific issues can be
categorized as both economic and social in
origin. Each issue could form the basis for
considerable discussion. However, whether
we agree or disagree with the issues identi-
ified, I think each of us would agree with Dr.
Williams' premise that the Land-Grant System
cannot justify its existence solely on the basis
of past accomplishments. Predominately black
land-grant institutions, as well as all other
land-grant institutions must be concerned
with the relevance of their programs relative
to clientele and societal needs. Institutional
success is going to depend upon effective
program development coupled with the non-
duplication of effort in an environment of
fiscal restraint. I would like to confine the
remainder of my comments to the issues iden-
tified relative to the small farm programs at
the predominately black land-grant institu-
tions.

Many of these issues are closely related to
several raised during the recent structure of
agriculture debate (Day, Paarlberg). Of par-
ticular relevance is the issue of the neutrality
of teaching, research, and extension pro-
grams relative to cultural, social, size, and
other user group characteristics. Evidence
presented during the structure debate served
to further stimulate the argument that the
assumption of neutrality may not apply to all
aspects of Land-Grant System programs. This
argument has particular significance for the
research and extension programs that have
evolved at the 1890 Institutions and Tuske-
gee Institute. In general, these programs have
been described as small farm oriented. How-
ever, as the literature suggests, it is inappro-
priate to characterize these programs as simply
small farm research and extension programs.
More appropriately, these programs were de-
digned to address problems faced by and that
affect the small farmer and rural areas. As
such, these programs have addressed pro-
duction, economic, social, and cultural prob-
lems.

Definitional questions aside, evidence in-
dicates that the "small farm will continue
to be a useful option for families who find
such units the best way to use their re-
sources" (Tweeten). These units are highly
heterogeneous with respect to characteristics
such as size, capital, off-farm employment,
level of management skills, and producer
objectives (Carlin and Crecink, Emerson,
Humphries, Madden and Tishheim, Thomp-
son). Such evidence and diversity support
Williams' contention that the small farm and
rural area interface offers many teaching, re-
search, and extension opportunities for land-
grant institutions having expertise applicable
to these areas.

One of the issues in the small farm rural
area interface not addressed by Williams, but
inferred by Williamson, deals with the effort
to base any expansion or program reorien-
tation on what might be called a doctrine of
"non-duplication". Non-neutrality of certain
aspects of land-grant programs with respect
to size, social, cultural, and other character-
istics provides a basis for program delinea-
tion. However, duplication must be avoided
in those aspects of programs in which results
are neutral. Such an approach requires that
in the research and extension areas, for ex-
ample, an awareness of research activities at
other institutions exists and that those find-
ings applicable to a given problem be adopted
and used by extension personnel. The non-
duplication of programs coupled with the
traditional problem solving philosophy of the
Land-Grant System; i.e., focusing programs
on issues determined important by society,
will ensure continued and future funding. In
his 1979 paper, West quoted Wienberg: "In
a democracy the direction of scientific re-
search must in some degree respond to the
will of the people. The scientists, who, after
all, spend public money, cannot fairly ob-
ject to the public setting the 'ends' of sci-
entific research". Obviously, this statement
could easily be expanded to include teaching
and extension programs.

REFERENCES


