Look Beyond the Big Land-Grant Institutions

A career choice many agriculture Ph.D.'s do not seriously consider is to work outside the land-grant system. Having been a student and faculty member for 13 years at three U.S. land-grant institutions and a professor for four years at a small, public, regional university, I have found that both large and small schools offer challenging careers. Yet, they are different, especially in terms of professional stature, salary, intellectual orientation, and collegial involvement.

One's salary and professional status will likely suffer at small, public schools. Reduced travel funds hurt professional visibility and less-than-12-month employment hurts annual income. Conversely, summer release time can contribute significantly to one's intellectual and cultural development. Small schools do offer an individual greater opportunity to influence the institution's mission and reputation.

Major Differences

The biggest difference between small and large schools is that smaller schools hire primarily for breadth of teaching expertise versus depth of research capabilities. Though small schools also want active publishers and large schools also want effective teachers, the primary duties are fundamentally different.

Large research-oriented universities in the U.S. were patterned after the mechanistic and reductionist model of science developed in the 17th and 18th centuries; they generally continue to build their faculties along the same paradigm today.

Many of the current general education movement has emanated from small-school scholars and is slowly being adopted, or at least addressed, in varying degrees at larger schools. A good land-grant example is the Humanities and Agriculture Program at the University of Florida. Why has the general education movement basically evolved from small to large schools? Because many smaller schools were not organized nor operated along strictly reductionist lines and rejected the assumption that we can produce a whole person merely by educating the individual parts. Today, many liberal scholars are decrying large schools for using people (faculty and graduate students) to build knowledge, rather than vice versa.

In Defense of Smallness

The general education debate and its corollaries do not dictate where agriculture teachers/scholars should work, but these persons should heighten their sensitivity to the atmosphere in which they work and their awareness of different philosophies of education. If and when all faculty members at all institutions become involved in the debate, the large/small school delineation may dissipate, though not completely. Both sides have some provincial biases.

I have taught 11 different courses in four years here, ten of which I had never taught before. The teaching "load" (note the pejorative term) at small schools is demanding, but the job fosters breadth and promotes faculty/student interaction. It is nice to interact with students without my guardian angel (devil?) whispering, "Publish or perish!"

Our best students match those at large schools, but our worst students are weaker in aptitude and secondary preparation. These inadequacies can be frustrating for professors. However, it is gratifying to help such students develop a permanent commitment to higher education for themselves and their children.

Small schools offer considerably more opportunities for a faculty member to be involved in varied aspects of the institution. I have served here on 11 different university-wide committees and twice been elected an officer in our Faculty Senate. Though a heavy service involvement has its obvious drawbacks, each of these activities taught me something new about the overall functioning of a university.

This service involvement exposed me to a range of intellectual thought as well. Consequently, my four best friends here at East Texas State University are a music composer, astronomical physicist, oriental historian, and theater scene designer. I doubt that I would ever have been elected or appointed to such committees at my prior institutions—large land-grant universities—nor would have had an opportunity for a half-time administrative position.

The diverse collegiality at small schools can even assist one's research creativity. Though small schools offer limited exposure to one's disciplinary peers, the close interaction with people in other fields enhances certain types of scholarly pursuits. Large schools often defend their emphasis on disciplinary research by saying that full professors earn the oppor-

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tunity to broaden into multidisciplinary work. This argument ignores an important effect: the damage done to undergraduates by younger specialists who are striving to become full professors, after which they will be allowed the privileges of working holistically and participating in faculty governance.

Four Other Differences
I have experienced four other general distinctions.

- Ph. D.'s majoring in humanities have limited career mobility. Consequently, small schools find it easier to attract and retain some who publish a lot and therefore could prosper on large campuses.
- Most small schools face uncertain enrollment. This worry can be particularly disconcerting to untenured professors, but it forces most professors to realize that the institution's future indeed depends on them—the faculty.
- At older, smaller, heavily tenured schools, ambitious faculty members will encounter resistance and resentment from some faculty members. Many of these schools are undergoing difficult transitions to more progressive academic climates.
- It is harder to move from a small to large institution than vice versa, especially if one has a limited publication record. Thus, it is imperative to consider all possible ramifications before making such a choice.

The Decision
Did I make the "right" choice, for me? Though I have learned a lot and feel needed here at East Texas State University, a conclusive answer eludes me. However, my wrestling with the question is probably more important than answering it.

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The Market

Philip L. Martin on Immigration Reform
It Leaves The Door Open To Agriculture

The United States is a nation of immigrants; yet efforts to change immigration policy are among the nation's most contentious public policy debates. Congressional debate often persists for years before a consensus reform is forged, so that major changes in immigration laws occur only once each generation. The most recent major immigration reforms were in 1952, 1965, and 1986.

Three Likely Effects
The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 (PL 99-603) is complex legislation that will eventually affect all U.S. employers and employees. It is hard to predict its effects, but three patterns are likely: (1) sanctions will probably work unevenly; (2) fewer illegal aliens will receive amnesty than expected; and (3) labor costs in agriculture will increase. IRCA is also acknowledged that farm and nonfarm labor markets cannot be integrated in the sense that "Americans" are expected to fill farmworker jobs as they do construction jobs.

Sanctions on employers were included in the IRCA as a tacit admission that illegal entry across U.S. borders could not be stopped. If most illegal aliens enter the United States to work, then "closing the labor market door" with sanctions is expected to deter them. However, the history of sanctions indicates that sanctions work best where they are needed least: major employers who inadvertently hired an illegal alien worker are now likely to screen out such workers, but employees who depend on an illegal alien work force are not likely to be deterred.

For example, since the mid-1960s, farm labor contractors (FLCs) have been subject to Federal employer sanctions for knowingly hiring illegal alien workers. Instead of fewer FLCs as expected, there are now more FLCs (in the mid-1980s) apparently hiring more illegal alien workers than ever before. Most observers believe that the majority of FLCs have work forces that are at least 50 percent illegal. Stricter enforcement is possible, but it has not been applied to FLCs.

Low Amnesty Yield
It is hard to predict the number of persons who will receive amnesty because reliable data on the population of illegal aliens is nonexistent. Amnesties in other nations, however, consistently

On The Way to Immigration Reform
1971-73—The House of Representatives approves legislation to impose sanctions or fines on employers who knowingly hire illegal alien workers. Senate does not act.
1979-81—Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy (SCIRP) concludes that the "back door" of illegal immigration must be closed in order to keep open the "front door" of legal immigration.
1982—Senator Alan Simpson (R-WY) and Representative Romano Mazzoli (D-KY) introduce immigration reform proposals based on the SCIRP report vis-a-vis employer sanctions and amnesty for some of the illegal aliens in the United States.
1983—Agriculture begins to take an interest in immigration reform; Western growers form the Farm Labor Alliance (FLA) and lobby for a guestworker program.
1984—FLA gets a guestworker program included in the House of Representatives immigration reform bill. However, the guestworker program is dropped in the House-Senate Conference Committee in favor of changes in the H-2 temporary worker program. Immigration reform dies for other reasons.
1986—Schumer compromise substitutes a Special Agricultural Worker amnesty for guestworkers. IRCA enacted November 1986.

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