

RURAL

COMMUNITY VITALITY

In a Global Economy



A CONFERENCE REPORT ON THE VITALITY OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

State and Local Policy Program

Freeman Center for International Economic Policy

Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs



Hubert H. Humphrey
Institute of Public Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



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The Conference on Rural Community Vitality in a Global Economy was held at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis on September 13 and 14, 2002. The conference was sponsored by the Humphrey Institute's Freeman Center for International Economic Policy and State and Local Policy Program. For more information on the conference, visit www.ruralvitality.org.

The **Freeman Center for International Economic Policy** identifies the major challenges of an increasingly interdependent global economy, mobilizes resources to analyze the nature of those challenges, and crafts effective public responses. Regents Professor and Orville and Jane Freeman Chair in International Trade and Economic Policy G. Edward Schuh directs the center, which currently is focused on Minnesota's growing exposure to the global economy, monetary issues and the international competitiveness of U.S. agriculture, the economic integration of the western hemisphere, economic reform in China, and other issues. (612) 626-0564

Directed by Lee Munnich, the **State and Local Policy Program** works as a highly visible regional policy resource by engaging individuals and institutions from government, business, academia, labor, and nonprofits to devise improved public policy, particularly in the Upper Midwest. The program provides a forum for discussion of issues and for developing new information and ideas on policy issues. (612) 625-8575

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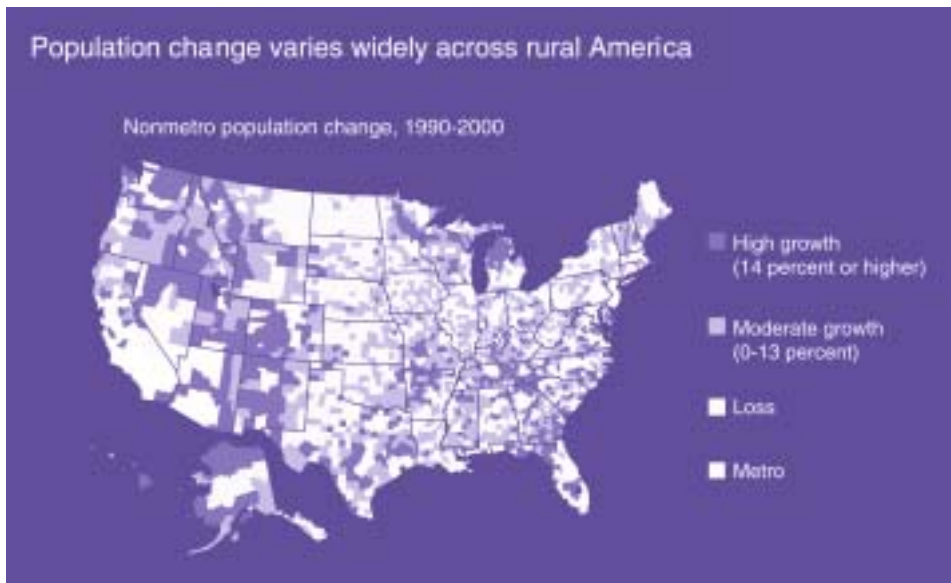
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The Rural United States

A rural town may be small, it may be isolated, and it may have little or no political clout. But together, rural communities are a far greater part of American life than meets the eye, and they face not only individual economic problems, but collective ones as well.

Rural America confronts serious economic challenges and shoulders a disproportionate share of poverty in this country. At a time when the global economy has actively extended into rural areas, young workers are leaving for urban centers and the federal government is shifting policy to state and local levels without sending the accompanying money to carry out the extra responsibilities.



Courtesy of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Undersecretary Rodney Brown, rural America comprises 80% of the land in the United States and is home to 56 million people. Rural citizens do worse than urban residents in terms of median income, per capita income, and earnings per hour. As examples, almost seven million rural inhabitants lived in poverty in each of the last two years; almost one in five rural children

under 17 is poor; and 364 rural counties have had poverty rates at 20% or higher consistently over the last 50 years, especially in the South. And even in good economic times, poverty and unemployment are higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

Policymakers, lawmakers, educators, researchers, academics, and others met at the Conference on Rural Community Vitality in a Global Economy to talk about how to revive rural economics. The conference was held at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis September 13 and 14, 2002.

They told of how the globalization of the economy has had a specific — and often negative — impact on the country's small towns and villages. But they also emphasized that rural communities must seize the opportunities of the world economy, not just become passive victims of it. Conference speakers presented research on everything from the “devolution” of federal authority and the development of rural economic “clusters” to the infusion of immigrant populations into rural areas, all of which could produce substantial economic benefits to smaller towns if they would recognize the trends as advantageous and build on them.

Perspectives on the Rural Economy: The Pressures and Opportunities of the Changing World Economy

As a starting point, the rural economic development strategists who gathered for the conference acknowledged the burden of the global economy on rural communities, but noted those same communities can use the global shift to their favor.



Joseph Cortright

Lee Munnich, senior fellow and director for the Humphrey Institute's State and Local Policy Program, said that rural economies confront a "double-edged sword," because, while they have access to global markets, they also are exposed to global competition.

Economist Joseph Cortright of Impresa, Inc., a Portland-based consulting firm, said that rural communities have lost a historic advantage to the world economy. Where once they provided industry with proximity to metro areas with relatively lower production costs, they're now expendable in favor of cheaper production elsewhere in the world. "Now, when work can be moved from U.S. metro areas, it often can as readily go overseas as to a U.S. rural area. Rural areas are no longer the low-cost alternative. Now the Third World is the low-cost alternative," Cortright said. He also noted that companies are increasingly producing goods close to their markets, rather than close to the raw materials that are concentrated in rural areas.

Cortright believes everyone should be concerned about "the blur of regional differences and the loss of distinctive characteristics among rural communities," resulting from the onslaught of large retail and food chains, which is "erasing the diversity of rural America."



Cornelia Flora

Sharon Sayles Belton, a former mayor of Minneapolis who currently is a senior fellow at the Humphrey Institute, encouraged participants to think about the link between urban and rural America. "We need more access to capital in rural America," she said. "It's always been a dream that rural and urban legislators would get together and talk about a vision for our communities."

Cornelia Flora, professor of agriculture at the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development at Iowa State University, said that globalization has produced a policy shift from the national to the state and local level, which has led to more responsibility for rural areas. However, she pointed out that the money necessary to provide more government services at the local level does not accompany the increased responsibility imposed by the federal government. She asked, "If you don't have the ability to raise revenue (by taxing), what do you do with the responsibility (handed down by the federal government) that you have?"

Regents Professor G. Edward Schuh said that there is a "loss of sovereignty" at the national level as some part of economic policymaking and implementation shifts up to the international level. But he emphasized that another part of governance shifts down to the level of state and local government and offers local governments the opportunity to have a greater role as they take on more decision-making authority.

However, Schuh believes that this policy shift “is not being taken into account in development policy.” He said policymakers need to strengthen the capacity of local communities to deliver on this decision-making opportunity by investing in training and education and in technology that currently does not reach governance units in rural communities.

Charles Fluharty, director of the Rural Policy Research Institute in Columbia, Missouri, believes that devolution can help rural communities despite the skepticism he’s heard from colleagues. He said, “we talk a lot about democracy but we have a subtle concern about whether it can happen at the local level.” He’s “much more hopeful” about governments’ ability to address problems than

“Getting Unstuck: Rural Policy that Might Work”

KEYNOTE SPEAKER DAVID FRESHWATER LOOKS TO FREE UP RURAL POLICY

Rural policy advocates have failed to recognize the common interests and concerns that stitch small cities and the countryside together, according to University of Kentucky agricultural economics professor and head of the university’s Rural Studies Program David Freshwater. Delivering the keynote address at the Humphrey Institute’s Rural Vitality in a Global Economy conference, Freshwater encouraged attendees to recognize this blind spot and reconsider where rural policy is applied.

“What we have to do is change the way we conceptualize the issue so that it is about all the people who live outside large cities,” Freshwater said. “Until we find a way to fuse rural interests with small city interests, we won’t get very far.”

Looking beyond the nation’s 100 largest cities to the 20,000-some remaining incorporated places, Freshwater described strong, symbiotic rural-urban ties that have remained little understood and rarely emphasized, whether they are economic, societal, or governmental. Consider how small cities, towns, and villages act as markets for nearby farms. Freshwater pointed out how this market role means that economic conditions in small cities and the nearby countryside strongly affect one another.

“Cities are where the bulk of activity takes place in rural America but they are assumed to be largely irrelevant to rural policy,” he said.

Freshwater described his own assumptions when he started working last year with the Kentucky League of Cities while on leave from the university. Except for Louisville and Lexington, Kentucky’s cities are less than 50,000 in size. He said he still “naively” assumed that urban policy applied to these smaller cities. But he found instead a policy void, with no one addressing development in small cities.



David Freshwater

The problem with this conceptualization is that neither small cities nor rural areas currently see their common interests, Freshwater said. Officials in smaller cities don’t see the relevance of rural development. And to make the issue more complex, he said that local governments who represent small cities and nearby countryside — city and county officials — often have a “visceral dislike” for one another.

Yet city government ambivalence or animosity has to be overcome because the current focus on county government has proven inadequate. Freshwater has seen the benefits of city-county partnerships. He said they have existed in every community he’s seen in Kentucky and Manitoba where rural development efforts have succeeded.

State governments hamper local government cooperation by keeping local governments weak and in competition with one another, Freshwater said. But rural development proponents have not focused on state governments, paying close attention to the federal government instead. Freshwater listed land use, education, transportation, most resource use, and local government as rural development issues that remain state rather than federal responsibilities. Hope for significant federal funds for rural development also have failed to bear fruit.

“Continuing to wait for the federal government to take on a role it hasn’t and shows no inclination to take on causes problems,” he said. “It allows local government and local groups to avoid responsibility because it isn’t their bailiwick.”

Freshwater concluded that rural policy advocates have a role in helping local institutions adapt. “Collectively, cities and counties can do a lot more together,” he said.



Lou Swanson

his peers. “I’m very hopeful about the leadership of state and local government,” he said.

Lou Swanson, professor and chair of the Department of Sociology at Colorado State University, offered a positive spin on devolution: it’s the decentralization of program authority to provide greater partnerships with state and local governments. Seen negatively, however, he described it as a “decade-long process of the federal government shedding fiscal and political liabilities.” He also noted that state governments are “very uneven” in developing partnerships with local governments and that “not all rural places have the same capacity to deal with these unfunded mandates.”

David Freshwater, a professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Kentucky who conducts research on rural economic development, said it’s difficult to talk about devolution’s impact on rural America since devolution is a federal–state dynamic. “Rural communities don’t have a leg to stand on when they’re just acting under the umbrella of the states,” he said.

Rural America is Not Alone

Craig Mathisen of the Department of Primary Industries for Queensland, Australia, has worked in rural economic development for 15 years. His list of major concerns for rural Australia today applies to the rural United States as well:

- Lack of certainty about farming incomes due to commodity price squeezes, deregulation of agricultural industries due to globalization, and increasing environmental regulations imposed on agriculture;
- Lack of public and private investment in rural areas;
- Lack of appropriate infrastructure, especially telecommunications;
- Loss of jobs and people to urban areas;
- Loss of political influence in decision making;
- Corporate farming that has a negative impact on rural communities;
- Urban values that are being imposed on rural communities; and
- The reflection that agriculture is seen as an “old,” sunset industry.

Mathisen noted that his government has used the work of the Humphrey Institute’s State and Local Policy Program to develop economic strategies for rural Southeast Queensland, one of the poorest regions of Australia, highlighting the fact that international resources can be used for local rural development.

A Sign of Economic Hope: Clusters

Lee Munnich has studied what appears to be an evolving economic phenomenon in several areas of rural Minnesota called “rural knowledge clusters.” They are comprised of innovative, interrelated groups of firms, outside of metro areas.

The research has revealed several rural areas in which interrelated firms apparently are clustering:

- Mankato: wireless and radio frequency technology companies
- Alexandria: automation/motion control technology firms
- Winona: advanced composite materials companies
- Northwest Minnesota: recreational transportation equipment firms
- Southwest Minnesota: precision agricultural equipment firms

In each of these regions, the companies together employ such large percentages of the local population that the employment density is hundreds, and, in some cases thousands, of times more concentrated than for the United States overall.

In Alexandria, he said, “You go into that area and you can *feel* the cluster” of the automation and motion control technology industry. Eight related companies employ more than 1,500 people in a nine-county area, and in one of the subset industries — packaging machinery — the employment density in the region in 2000 was 446% more concentrated than the United States overall.

Several regional institutions influence the cluster by providing education, networking, and support, including Alexandria Technical College, the Minnesota Manufacturing Automation Coalition, and the Tri-State Manufacturers’ Association. Munnich documented parallel trends in the other communities, as well.

Stuart Rosenfeld, president of Regional Technology Strategies, Inc. in Carrboro, North Carolina, said that local “intermediaries” are key for the success of clusters — banks, extension services, professional associations, and community colleges. He also cited “non-local intermediaries,” such as distant suppliers and customers, virtual networks, and national associations, but said that “in most rural areas, companies don’t have the time” to take advantage of non-local sources.



Lee Munnich



G. Edward Schuh

Rosenfeld cited several examples of clusters in areas outside this country, such as Ireland and New Zealand, which boast such cluster skill centers as tool making, knitwear, plastics, and fisheries.

Craig Mathisen distinguished a “cluster” from a “clump.” He described a clump as a group of firms that exist near each other but don’t work together. A cluster, on the other hand, uses what he called “soft infrastructure” to work together.

Despite this enthusiasm, there is not universal agreement that clusters will bring new economic life to rural areas, or even that clusters are as common as some believed.

David McGranahan, an economist with the USDA Economic Research Service, said that research on industrial clusters shows that research-based industries, like medical instruments,

are the most clustered and that for the most part, rural manufacturing is not research-based. However, he said that “process innovation” — adopting new ways of making things — is relevant in rural areas.

McGranahan noted that clustering by sector is declining over time and that there’s more clustering by function than by industry. For example, managers increasingly are clustered in urban areas, he said. He also said “rural communities generally are not positioned to be part of these knowledge creation clusters, although there may, of course, be local spillovers.”

Phil Psilos of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices presented an even more skeptical view of clusters. He said that not every industry concentration is a cluster and that whether or not a cluster is an actual phenomenon. “We need to broaden the discussion of what makes a dynamic rural economy,” he said.

Globalization and the Rural Economy

The need for rural communities to re-imagine how they plan for their future in an increasingly global economy was a frequent theme during the conversation about globalization. Creating industrial parks and offering businesses relocation incentives are some of the traditional development tactics that the panelists criticized as shortsighted. Instead, they encourage communities to differentiate themselves from others, to globalize their strategies, and to overhaul education.

On the education front, Minnesota’s students are not being prepared for a knowledge-based economy, said Robbin Johnson, senior vice president at Cargill Inc. College admissions directors estimate that only 10% of incoming college students are fully prepared. Nearly half of all new jobs will require at least a bachelor’s degree, something that less than a quarter of Minnesotans entering the workforce possess. And some of the brightest students leave the state for higher education and potentially for life. All this at a time when technology makes the competition for knowledge and service jobs international in scope.

“Locally, communities must equip themselves with the resources and strategies needed to compete successfully in the face of national and global developments they cannot control,” Robbin Johnson said. “Increasingly, those resources must be knowledge-based, and Minnesota must move to reform its education system to compete within this new economy.”

Another response to the global economy is to consider how communities differentiate themselves, said Stan Johnson, vice provost for the extension program at Iowa State University. The idea is for a community to think of itself as a product and consider how to present itself in a way that will make it a desirable choice. He encouraged communities to look for what makes them distinct historically or culturally — not just in economic terms. Johnson pointed out that in Iowa the towns that are flourishing are the ones that are different from the others.

Communities also need to consider how they globalize their visions and the strategies they want to use to pursue those visions, according to Sandy Renner, president of Global Resource Associates. Local employers, trade groups, schools, and other institutions have important roles to play when it comes to developing these visions and making them a local reality.

Traditionally, trade in farm products has been the strongest local connection to the global economy for many rural areas, said Robbin Johnson, whose employer operates in 60 countries. But the volume of international trade in agricultural markets remains low, accounting for less than 10% of global food consumption. He said that agricultural trade barriers are to blame. As an example, he pointed out that wealthy nations collectively spend roughly \$1 billion a day on subsidies for farmers, seven times more than what they spend on aiding development in poorer nations.

With these barriers to international trade in farm products likely to fall slowly, rural communities should look for global economic opportunities in other areas, including manufacturing and service businesses, Robbin Johnson suggested.

Here in the United States, the federal government has renewed its commitment to commodity supports. But Robbin Johnson said he sees opportunities ahead to move federal resources into rural diversification and development instead. “We can no longer — if we ever could — prime the pump of the rural economy with farm policies and commodity subsidies,” he said. Even though the federal government has pumped more than a half-trillion dollars into farm programs over the last 70 years, he said incomes in farming states have continued to fall when compared to more urban states.

Increasing global demand for differentiated agricultural products — driven by consumers — could help the rural economy: “I think there will be more interest in new and younger farmers in moving away from the commodity approach,” Renner said.

The Importance of Innovation to the Rural Economy

Mathisen called entrepreneurship “a basic element of every economic strategy.” Economic development involves “slow, painstaking community development, with an eye on the innovators” he said.

But Mathisen emphasized that innovators don’t have to be high-tech: “You can just follow market trends,” not only technological trends. For instance, he highlighted the phenomenon of “serial entrepreneurship” in which one person opens one type of retail shop then re-opens a downtown theatre, then a new restaurant. “You actually can grow your economy without growing your population.”

During an exchange about technology, an audience member from the University of Alberta in Edmonton asked about the implications of broadband technology on rural areas. The National Governors Association’s Psilos responded that broadband could increase technological capacity, but is not an economic “driver.” “It’s not a leading-edge solution to a community without a vision,” he said. Mathisen added that rural areas in Australia lobbied to get broadband technology but, once they got it, they didn’t know what to do with it.

Responding to panelists’ comments about entrepreneurship, Jane Leonard, acting executive director of Minnesota Rural Partners, noted, “We don’t have an entrepreneurial culture in many places in rural Minnesota.” She said that in certain places, there’s a feeling that someone else will provide a job, like mining companies, and there isn’t a sense that someone can start their own business.

Emphasizing the need for risk taking, Joseph Cortright called innovation an act of “deviant behavior,” and encouraged “willingness as a society to tolerate people who are going to try things differently.”

Rural Institutions and the Promotion of Innovation and Knowledge Creation

Cortright noted that, while rural areas comprise almost 20% of the population, they have only about 12% of all adults with a four-year college degree. He also observed that “smart, young workers” are being drawn to metro areas and that the growing high-technology and biotechnology industries are concentrated in urban, not rural, areas.

Kevin Kopischke, president of Alexandria Technical College, challenged colleges to participate directly in the business interests of their regions, asking: “Can you do what you want to do to

respond to what industry expects of you?” Some teachers tell him: “I’m here to teach, not to be in the marketplace,” to which Kopischke responds, “we’re turning the corner” toward a different market-based philosophy of higher education.

Responding to the theme of rural young people leaving for urban centers to either seek or apply their education there, one audience member said it was “not as important to keep our own kids [as it is to] have the best educational facilities so kids can go wherever they want.”

Looking at employment opportunities for young people and others in rural areas, Gary Green, professor and chair of the Department of Rural Sociology at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, researched the job training — or lack thereof — offered by 1,600 non-metro employers, specifically collaborative job training. He said that the employers he studied desire an educated and trained workforce but are “unable or unwilling to make the investment as a single employer.” He said that employers who conduct cooperative training with other companies are “most likely to develop training programs with other firms in their industry and least likely to cooperate with firms in their supply chain.”

Green believes that the firms that could benefit most from cooperative training arrangements — such as small businesses with a large percentage of unskilled workers — are the least likely to work together to provide training.

“Education and training are key factors in rural development,” he noted, but he also said that providing education and training are challenges in rural America because there are fewer people to educate and many rural areas are not served by community colleges. There’s a perception among employers that they won’t recoup what they’ve invested, partly because of a high turnover rate among employees, he said.

Devolution, Local Capacity, and Rural Development

Increasing local decision making has clear benefits, but during a panel discussion on devolution, many who work in the field expressed concerns about how this idea is being put into practice.

Consider how Boone County, Missouri, has been charged with managing water quality through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the state Department of Natural Resources. Boone County Commissioner Karen Miller, president-elect of the National Association of Counties, described how this responsibility has come without the ability to create a funding mechanism to pay for compliance or adequate authority to address the issue.

“Devolution is a word that can be synonymous with ‘unfunded mandate,’” Miller said. When local governments are given responsibilities without resources they are hard-pressed to make cuts elsewhere. “What are we supposed to do, cut public health? Reduce planning? We don’t have a lot of fluff,” Miller said.

Some policymakers are encouraging devolution because of their desire to reduce state taxes, using it as a “stalking horse” for their real aims, said Tom Stinson, Minnesota State Economist and associate professor of applied economics at the University of Minnesota.

Federal and state policymakers can do more to encourage collaboration on a local level, Miller said. While Boone County’s EPA regulations have triggered the county to work with its largest city on the problem, there are more constructive ways to spur on that kind of shared effort than by imposing unfunded mandates. For example, Miller mentioned the idea of legislation including provisions that lower the local match for grant applications made jointly by local governments.

A lack of city–county cooperation was the biggest issue Bert May faced when Mount Sterling, Kentucky, lost 650 jobs. The mayor of the city of 5,800, May was pressed by the community’s economic challenges to find ways to cross the city–county divide. One step was for the city to contract with the county for fire services. Another change was to coordinate the collection of an employment tax that some employers were avoiding paying by playing the two jurisdictions against one another. He said the city and county also collaborated on opening an economic development office and buying land for an industrial park.



May and Miller both highlighted local examples of building partnerships outside of government as well, with everyone from university extension agents to schools to the local chamber of commerce becoming involved in community problem solving.

A big challenge for local government partnerships is overcoming questions of control because elected officials are reluctant to give up “a lick of authority,” Miller said. But the benefits are clear from the residents’ point of view. “Every political subdivision has an imaginary line; it may be called the city limits or the county line,” she said. “When dealing with real issues, the problems do not stop at that line — such as the flow of storm water runoff. Our citizens really do not care what government entity is responsible for their problem. They just want it fixed.”

Local governments should not look to state coffers to provide resources for such fixes, cautioned Minnesota State Economist Stinson. He said that the easier cuts have been made in the state’s budget and that local governments would likely feel the impact of additional cuts. Minnesotans worried about the state’s finances could feel glad at least that the state’s budgeting process hasn’t broken down. May discussed how the Kentucky legislature failed to pass a budget, leaving the governor to operate the state by executive order.

Latinos Changing Rural America

According to Rodney Brown of the USDA, “Hispanic people are settling in rural America faster than any other racial or ethnic group.” In rural Minnesota, the influx of Latino immigrants has fueled the growth of many communities, including Owatonna, Albert Lea, Wilmar, Worthington, St. James, and Long Prairie.

Claudia Fuentes, executive director of Hispanic Advocacy for Community Empowerment through Research (HACER), said, “In some rural Minnesota communities, Latinos account for about one-fourth of all residents.” In one rural Minnesota kindergarten, Latinos comprise 44% of the kindergarten class. She said that the Latinos who are coming to Minnesota “are in their prime child-bearing years,” and that this infusion of Latino children has helped rural schools avoid closure or consolidation due to shrinking enrollment. These new students have brought more state school aid to local districts, since the aid is based on a per-pupil formula. Fuentes noted, “Latinos will become the new majority statewide and nationally. Our state will have to rely on students of color for its social and workforce needs.”

HACER research shows that immigrants have a very hard time finding housing. Landlords often refuse to rent to them, and, in one community, new immigrants must cook their meals in parks because the hotels where they're forced to live have no kitchens.

“There’s a real issue for gaining support for temporary housing,” Fuentes said. “There are federal monies available for migrant housing, but it’s a drop in the bucket compared to the need.”

Researcher and Humphrey Institute professor Katherine Fennelly said that food-processing companies are driving the growth of the Latino population in rural Minnesota — IBP, Swift, Hormel, Farmland Foods, Jennie-O, ConAgra, and Tyson all attract large numbers of Latino workers.

Fennelly listed the “links of incorporation,” which make for a fuller, more meaningful life for new residents: secure employment, establishment of credit and legal status, and freedom from discrimination. She also listed workers’ rights, including a living wage, reasonable benefits, and safe working conditions, as key issues to be addressed by rural communities and the companies that locate there.

Fennelly challenged rural community leaders: “What kind of questions are you asking *before* these businesses come in?” For example, what commitment will the company make to respond to local needs? She noted that while some middle managers are interested in the community, without the involvement of upper management or town leaders, “we won’t get to where we want to go.”

Joe Nathan, a senior fellow at the Humphrey Institute who directs the Center for School Change, made the case for broad community collaboration between newer and more established residents. He told a story of how separate community groups in Northfield, Minnesota, approached a wealthy individual, each wanting money for their own new building. The donor turned them down as individuals, but said he would donate \$1 million if they collaborated on a building, so they did. Now the community boasts a new 50,000-square-foot building that houses several programs, including Head Start, a high school, counseling services, and a senior citizen center, with plenty of “cross fertilization” across the various groups.

Former Minneapolis mayor and current Humphrey Institute senior fellow Sharon Sayles Belton summed up the conversation this way: “Quality of life and culture — what do they mean in terms of new populations? We have to find a way to be energized by this conversation.”

Themes in Successful Rural Development

Craig Mathisen believes in adaptability, not conformity: “How do you best implement someone else’s success story? Adapt, not adopt. Every model is a context in a particular point in time.” He suggested that rural areas “find out the principles (of success) and adapt them to your community.”

Jane Leonard of Minnesota Rural Partners said, “Successful rural communities are in the eye of the beholder. What is a success for one community could be a disaster for another.” She said that successful rural economies emphasize education, an entrepreneurial attitude, a strong sense of ownership and belonging to a human community, and making use of the tools and resources of their age.

Mathisen said successful rural development requires what he called “interdisciplinary thinking,” combining economics, sociology, demography, geography, political science, and more. He warned against the temptation to act fast without defined plans and quoted one researcher who said “If you aren’t prepared to sustain the effort for at least five years, then don’t start.”



Mathisen then enumerated some of the lessons he's learned over the past 15 years, including:

1. Projects that are cash poor need to be people rich.
2. Work with what you've got.
3. There are benefits to cooperation and partnerships.
4. People love bricks and mortar projects and hate strategies and studies.
5. Those who don't believe it can happen should quietly get out of the way of those trying to make it happen.

"Rural development is a journey, not a destination," Mathisen concluded.

Where do we go from Here?

The USDA's Rodney Brown said there is no federal policy specifically tailored to rural America, a rather surprising fact given the expanse and challenges of rural communities. However, Brown said the fact that more people are talking about such a policy "might be a good start."

Dr. Vernon Ruttan, Regents Professor Emeritus in the Department of Applied Economics at the University of Minnesota, noted the impact that the shifting national economic structure has on rural areas.

"Between 2010 and 2020, the goods-producing part of the U.S. economy will account for no more than ten percent of employment. That's why we didn't hear a lot (at the conference) about chasing factories." But while he pointed out that most economic growth will come from the service sector, growth in that sector is low. "What this says to me is that if rural economies are going to grow, the service sector is going to have to play a much larger role, and we haven't really talked very much about the growth of the service sector."

Ruttan also said the shifting economy will require a change in the way we finance rural economic development, because tax receipts based on goods are declining, therefore, taxes on services will have to expand to compensate for the lost revenue.

"If we continue to restrict our tax revenue to things like land, and sales taxes to a sub-sector of the goods-producing sector and don't find a way to tax the service sector, the state will continue to be in the kind of a crisis that it has been in the last couple of years."

John Adams, professor of public affairs and chair of the Department of Geography at the University of Minnesota, synthesized what he viewed as some of the key themes in rural economic development.

"What's happening in the non-metropolitan Midwest is part of what's happening worldwide. This globalization process has many facets, as does the way that organizations of all kinds are responding to these changes. So the big trends are one thing but the ways they play out on the ground where people live and the responses that they trigger are quite another matter. We see a continuing need for public goods, public services of all kinds, but, at the same time, there's continuing hostility, at least since the 1980s, toward government programs and paying taxes to support them."

Adams noted that many look toward nonprofits to step in to make up for lost services but that “at the same time, we’re confronted with increasing individualistic values and behaviors that often work against cooperation. And finally, many people feel that what’s familiar is necessary. So communities dwell on what has been, rather than on what will be and what we’re becoming. That kind of thinking doesn’t get you very far. There’s a need to focus on opportunities and hope.”

Cornelia Flora said rural America must adjust to what she called the three major economic “revolutions” in genomics, digital technology, and lifestyle, but noted, “Not all rural communities are comfortable with innovation.”

Mary Rothchild, project manager for strategic partnerships at the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, asserted that policy decisions that affect rural economies come from every level of government. “Where does policy take place? I guess I would argue that it’s state, local, regional, national, and international.” She also spoke of the resilience inherent in the people who live in rural areas and conveyed her point by reading the opening paragraph of Willa Cather’s *O Pioneers!*

“One January day, 30 years ago, the little town of Hanover, anchored on a windy, Nebraska table land, was trying not to be blown away. A fine mist of snowflakes was curling and eddying about the cluster of low, drab buildings, huddled on the gray prairie under a gray sky. The dwelling houses were set about haphazard on the tough prairie side. Some of them looked as if they had been moved in overnight, and others as if they were straying off by themselves headed straight for the open plain. None of them had any appearance of permanence, and the howling wind blew under them as well as over them.”

Rothchild noted that the book’s central character, Alexandra, perseveres and becomes a very successful woman on the plains. “It’s just a nice reflection, in my view, about the perseverance of people who live in rural areas, and I think that has a lot to tell us about these communities.”

“When you have multidimensional aspects of a problem, I think you need to find (the) common good, and I hope it’s in preserving the pioneering spirit of our rural communities,” Rothchild said.

Craig Mathisen noted an underlying psychological challenge faced by many rural areas. He said, “For many rural communities, change is choosing them” as they see their industries deregulated, commodity supports disappearing, and new immigrants moving in. He said, in the face of changes that communities cannot erase or minimize, they must come to grips with their sense of loss before they are ready or willing to listen to economic development experts about how to move ahead.

Charles Fluharty, the director of the Rural Policy Research Institute in Columbia, Missouri, said he’s “much more hopeful” about governments’ ability to address problems than his peers. “We talk a lot about democracy but we have a subtle concern with whether it can occur non-locally,” he said. “I’m very hopeful about the leadership of state and local governments.”

Patricia Hipple of the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, spoke pointedly about the impact of multinational corporations on rural America. “Their behavior makes a difference in the lives of people in rural communities. We see them as ours, but they don’t recognize themselves as having a country. We call them multinationals, but who do they report back to? Who holds them accountable? We have abdicated our role in that because they seem so far away from us.”

Jack Gellar, president of the Center for Rural Policy and Development in Mankato, Minnesota, expressed satisfaction that the conference did not focus on how to recruit businesses into rural areas, how to develop tax incentives for them, and how to get broadband technology in areas that don’t have it.

He said he was glad to hear conference participants talk of building human capital and inclusive communities, and the importance of collaboration. He said, “You can’t change your topography, you can’t change your geography. But you can change the culture, you can bolster the leadership, you can change the community dynamics.”

One theme was clear throughout the conference: successful rural economies are intentional, not accidental. They require sustained, committed work by people who have purpose and passion. Those involved in rural economic development must actively decide how to steer the fate of their communities or they run the risk of being drawn into a global economy that simply exploits them for their human and natural resources, as well as facing the continuing trends of losing their younger, better-educated workers to the urban center.

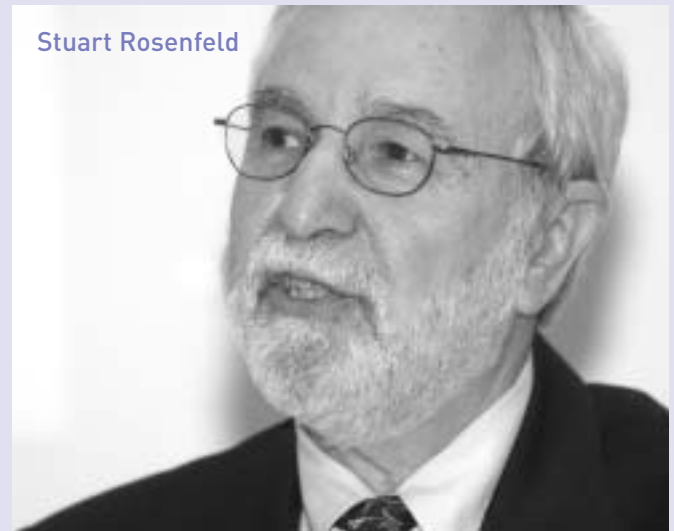
Conference speakers and audience members made clear that the task of reviving rural economies is large and complex, but not impossible. Every available resource and innovation must be considered. Individual entrepreneurship must be nourished, the support of institutions enlisted. The driving question for economic development specialists is not “Can rural development be done?” but “How can it be done?” There seemed a consensus that for the struggling rural economy, this question will best be answered by invoking two vital principles: energetic optimism and sobering realism.

Successful Rural Economies: What can be Learned? A Success Story from Ireland

To underscore the point that rural economies across national boundaries have a lot in common, Stuart Rosenfeld of Regional Technology Strategies, Inc., told the story of the Furniture College of Letterfrack, Ireland.

In 1988, an abandoned boys’ reformatory in Letterfrack came back to life to educate young people in furniture design. The Galway–Mayo Institute of Technology and Connemara West Centre, a rural community development organization in Letterfrack, joined forces. They created the college to train young people in the design and manufacture of furniture, promoting an indigenous approach to furniture making, with an eye on reviving the local sagging economy overall. The college has lived up to its promise. It has become the basis of an economic rebirth in this once-struggling village.

The school has an enrollment of 200 students, with more demand for admission than it can accommodate. The college has brought more young people to the area. The average age of the community has dropped from 57 to 27, with new sports events, music, and recreational activities, so there’s more incentive for young people to stay in the community. Before the college opened, Letterfrack had been losing 70% of its young people every year to other areas. Now there are new restaurants in town, and the school has created 15 new businesses in the last ten years, generating goods and services that cater to the student body. Housing has been improved to accommodate the students, and the area is more appealing to tourists. In addition to creating jobs in various new small businesses, the college itself provides full- and part-time employment to teachers and administrators. Most of the



Stuart Rosenfeld

students who graduate from the college leave Letterfrack, but stay in Ireland.

What makes this local success story all the more remarkable is that the Irish buy less furniture per capita than any other European country, and furniture making is concentrated in three counties, employing just 5,000 people nationwide.

The Furniture College initiative has borne many fruits over the past 14 years and is an example of hopeful, realistic economic revival in a once-struggling small rural village. This revival relied on collaboration, use of local assets, and innovation — major themes throughout the conference — and is an example of a model of economic revival that might be adapted for other rural communities.



John Adams



Rodney Brown



Joseph Cortright



Katherine Fennelly



Cornelia Flora



Charles Fluharty

John S. Adams is a professor of geography, planning, and public affairs and chair of the Department of Geography at the University of Minnesota. He received a B.A. in economics and mathematics from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul in 1960 and a Ph.D. in economic geography from the University of Minnesota in 1966. Adams's research focuses on the American city, regional economic development, interurban migration, housing markets, urban transportation, and urban development in the United States and the former Soviet Union. His courses and seminars feature methods for analyzing population, housing, land use and transportation, and the metropolitan economy.

Rodney J. Brown was raised on a dairy farm in Coalville, Utah. After receiving degrees from Brigham Young University, Utah State University, and North Carolina State University, Brown spent two years as a research scientist at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel. Since then, he has been a faculty member, department head, dean, and interim vice president for research at Utah State University. For the past year, Brown has served as senior program liaison between the Earth Science Enterprise of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Joseph Cortright is vice president of Impresa, Inc., a Portland-based consulting firm that provides economic analysis, policy development, communication, capacity building, and evaluation services. Recognized as one of Oregon's leading economic analysts, he directs Impresa's activities, advising business and government clients on the challenges of economic and technological change. Prior to joining Impresa, Cortright served as the chief economic development staff person for the Oregon Legislature. During his 12-year tenure, Oregon produced a number of nationally recognized innovations in development policy, including the Oregon Benchmarks, sector strategies, workforce policies, and entrepreneurial development.

Cortright has a bachelor's degree in economics from Lewis and Clark College and a master's degree in public policy from the University of California-Berkeley.

Katherine Fennelly is a professor at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute. Her research and outreach interests include leadership in the public sector, the human rights of immigrants and refugees in the United States, and the preparedness of communities and public institutions to adapt to demographic changes. She has been dean of the University of Minnesota Extension Service, a faculty member and department head at the Pennsylvania State University, and a faculty member at the Columbia University School of Public Health. At Penn State, she was a senior faculty associate in the Population Research Institute and associate editor of *Demography*.

Cornelia Flora is a professor of sociology and director of the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development at Iowa State University. She holds a B.A. from the University of California-Berkeley and an M.S. and Ph.D. from Cornell University.

Flora's scholarly interests include international and domestic development, community, and the sociology of science and technology, particularly as it relates to agriculture and participatory change. Her current research includes work on the generation of social capital in community development, sustainable agriculture, and natural resource management, with particular attention to how class, gender, and ethnicity influence and are influenced by technology and policy.

Charles W. (Chuck) Fluharty is director of the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI), the only national policy institute solely dedicated to assessing the rural impacts of public policies. He was born and raised on a fifth-generation family farm in the Appalachian foothills of eastern Ohio and is a graduate of Yale Divinity School. He is now a research professor and associate director for rural policy programs in the Harry S. Truman School of Public Affairs at the University of Missouri-Columbia, where he also holds an adjunct faculty appointment in the Department of Rural Sociology. He is the 2002 recipient of the Distinguished Service to Rural Life Award from the Rural Sociological Society, the 2002 USDA Secretary's Honor Award for Superior Service (jointly to RUPRI), and the 2001 Friend of Rural Counties Award from the National Association of Counties.

David Freshwater is a professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Kentucky where he conducts research in the area of rural economic development with an emphasis on rural finance and rural labor markets. He also is program manager for TVA Rural Studies, a research center that is jointly supported by the Tennessee Valley Authority and the University of Kentucky.

Previously, Freshwater was a senior economist for the Joint Economic Committee of Congress and a member of the professional staff of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. He also has been a visiting scholar at the USDA, a member of the faculty of the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Manitoba, and a consultant on rural finance and rural policy for various domestic and international government agencies. He holds a B.A. in economics from Brock University, an M.A. in economics from McMaster University, and a Ph.D. in agricultural economics from Michigan State University.

Claudia Fuentes is the executive director of HACER, the Hispanic Advocacy for Community Empowerment through Research organization. In her position, Fuentes identifies research needs and delivers quality research products to enrich and strengthen the assets of Latino communities in Minnesota.



David Freshwater



Gary Paul Green



Robbin Johnson



Jane Leonard



Craig Mathisen



Bert May

Fuentes has several years of professional experience in academia, public health, and public policy. In addition to her extensive experience working with Latino communities, her accomplishments include producing bilingual health promotion videos and developing interactive presentations on urban education strategies for K-12 teachers. She holds a master's degree in international and intercultural management from the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont, and an individualized bachelor's degree in intercultural communications from the University of Minnesota.

Jack M. Geller, Ph.D., has been president of the Center for Rural Policy and Development, a Mankato, Minnesota-based rural policy research center, since 1998. Prior to his appointment at the center, he was the director of health services research at the Marshfield Medical Research Foundation and a professor and director of the Center for Rural Health at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine.

Gary Paul Green is a professor and chair of the Department of Rural Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Green received a Ph.D. from the University of Missouri-Columbia and taught at the University of Georgia for eight years. Over the past nine years his applied research has concentrated on employer responses to the labor shortage, employer demand for welfare recipients, and strategies for addressing turnover problems. He currently is studying the role of community-based organizations, employers, and community colleges in providing training in rural America. Green also has been involved in community, economic, and workforce development issues in international settings, such as Ukraine, New Zealand, and South Korea. Beginning in 2003, he will become the editor of *Rural Sociology*.

Patricia (Pat) C. Hipple is national program leader for the social sciences assigned to the Competitive Programs Unit of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service of the USDA. Her primary responsibilities include program direction for the markets and trade program and the rural development program of the National Research Initiative.

A rural sociologist trained at Iowa State University, Hipple joined the staff of the USDA in February 2002. Her prior research agenda included strengthening beginning farmers' programs, ethics in agricultural cooperatives, rural electric cooperatives and energy conservation, telecommunications in rural America, alternative farming options for Iowa commodity producers, and the biomass potential of switchgrass for electric generation, erosion control, and carbon sequestration.

Robbin Johnson was elected senior vice president of corporate affairs at Cargill in June 2000. In this role, he works with Cargill's senior leadership team on public policy and communications strategies. Johnson chairs the Cargill Citizenship Committee and serves on the Cargill Foundation. Johnson joined Cargill in 1971. He was named an assistant vice president in 1976, promoted to vice president of the administrative division in 1982, and was elected corporate vice president of public affairs in 1993.

Johnson graduated from Yale University in 1968 with a bachelor's degree, did graduate study as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University in England from 1968 to 1970, and attended Yale Law School from 1970 to 1971.

Stanley R. Johnson is vice provost for extension and Charles F. Curtiss Distinguished Professor in the Department of Economics at Iowa State University (ISU). Before his appointment as vice provost, Johnson was the director of the Center for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) at ISU. Prior to joining ISU in 1985, Johnson held faculty positions in economics and agricultural economics at the University of Missouri-Columbia, the University of California-Berkeley, Purdue University, the University of Georgia, the University of California-Davis, and the University of Connecticut. Johnson is a fellow of the American Agricultural Economics Association.

Kevin Kopischke is vice president and chief of staff at Alexandria Technical College. His work experience includes 10 years as a faculty member in the marketing division of Alexandria Technical College, five years as vice president of Brainerd Technical College, and 12 years as vice president of Alexandria Technical College. Kopischke is board chair of the Alexandria Area Economic Development Commission and past chair of the West Central Initiative.

Jane Leonard is the acting executive director of Minnesota Rural Partners, the state's rural development council, and currently is managing the creation of the statewide Virtual Entrepreneurial Network. Leonard also is co-owner and president of Community Technology Advisors Corp. (CTAC), which helps communities to increase their access to and use of advanced technology for economic development. From 1996 to 1998, she helped develop the Minnesota Office of Technology, the state's first attempt to organize resources for community and economic strengthening around the emerging telecommunications and information technology revolution. She holds an M.A. in communications from the University of Minnesota and a B.S. in journalism and agriculture from the University of Maryland.

Craig Mathisen is assistant director of regional services for the Department of Primary Industries in Queensland, Australia. He has more than 15 years of experience as a rural economic development practitioner, including 10 years as the manager of a economic development organization in a rural community, foundation manager of the Centre for Australian Regional and Enterprise Development (CARED), project manager of the preparation of the Economic Development Strategy for South East Queensland, and leader of the Queensland Government's Department of Primary Industries' Rural Development Network in South East Queensland.

Bert May is legislative liaison for the Kentucky League of Cities. He served for six years as a city council member in his hometown of Mount Sterling, Kentucky, before returning to private business but was persuaded three years later to run for mayor, a position he held from January 1986 through December 1998.



David McGranahan



Karen Miller



Lee Munnich



Charles Muscopolat



Joe Nathan

During his tenure, May served as president of the Kentucky League of Cities.

May was a leader in economic development and downtown revitalization. His community of 5,800 people landed 24 new industries and created 3,300 new jobs during his term in office.

David A. McGranahan is a senior economist at the Economic Research Service (ERS), a branch of the USDA. A major focus of his recent research has been the implications of globalization and technological change for rural manufacturing. This work has drawn on the 1996 ERS Rural Manufacturing Survey, which examined advanced technology use, worker training, program use, and financial issues in 3,900 manufacturing plants. A second recent research interest is the role of natural amenities in rural development. He has a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where his thesis examined community economic development in northwestern Wisconsin.

Karen Miller was born and raised on a farm in rural Indiana and moved to northeast Missouri in 1969. Upon relocating to the Columbia area, she owned and operated her own restaurant for 11 years. She served on the Missouri Restaurant Association’s state board of directors for eight years and the association’s executive board for three years. In 1992 she ran on the Democratic ballot for Boone County District I Commissioner. She began serving her term of office on January 1, 1993, and is now in her ninth year.

Lee Munnich is a senior fellow at the Humphrey Institute and director of the State and Local Policy Program. He focuses on transportation policy, regional economic development, quality strategies for government, and state and local fiscal policy. Munnich has more than 23 years of experience with state and local governments. He was a deputy commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development, research director for the Minnesota Business Partnership, economic consultant for the Minnesota House of Representatives, manager of the Midwest Research Institute’s Center of Economic Studies, and executive director of the Minnesota Tax Study Commission. He was elected to the Minneapolis City Council in 1973 and 1975. Munnich received a bachelor’s degree in economics from Georgetown University in 1967 and has done postgraduate work in economics and computer science at the University of Minnesota.

Charles C. Muscopolat, Ph.D., is vice president for agricultural policy; dean of the College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences; and director of the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station. Muscopolat also holds positions as professor of medicine and microbiology in the Medical School and professor of animal science in the College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences. From 1981 to 1999 Muscopolat was vice president for medical affairs for MGI PHARMA, Inc.

Muscopolat received a bachelor’s degree in chemistry in 1970 with a minor in mathematics and a Ph.D. in veterinary microbiology from the University of Minnesota in 1975. He was

a post-doctoral fellow at the Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research in New York City from 1975 to 1976.

Joe Nathan is a senior fellow at the Humphrey Institute, where he directs the Center for School Change. The center seeks to help transform public education and to produce significant improvements in student achievement. Nathan has been a public school teacher and administrator and coordinated the National Governors Association education reform project, *Time for Results*. His most recent work involves strengthening rural communities to help increase student achievement and reduce violence. His specialty areas include parent and community involvement, school choice, charter schools, and youth community service. Nathan holds a doctorate in educational administration from the University of Minnesota.

Philip Psilos is director of economic and technology policy studies in the Center for Best Practices at the National Governors Association (NGA). He heads a division dedicated to providing research, analysis, and policy development consulting to the nation’s governors and their executive staff on economic development and business issues, technology, and strategies for electronic governance.

Prior to joining the NGA, Psilos served as vice president for economic development with Hillwood Strategic Services, the Perot group’s global real estate services company, where he led regional economic research and strategy development for global public-private partnerships. Previously, Psilos was a senior consultant with Deloitte & Touche Fantus Consulting in Washington, D.C., and worked on strategy efforts for the State of Michigan’s technology-industry development programs focused on the life sciences, software, and semiconductor sectors. He holds a B.A. from the Johns Hopkins University and an M.S. from the London School of Economics.

Sandra Renner is president of Global Resource Associates, Inc. Her areas of expertise include market research, international trade consulting, organizational training and development, and project management. Prior to joining Global Resource Associates, Renner served as director of export development and managing director of WorldMed and director of MinnExport for the State of Minnesota International Trade Office. She is the author of several books, including *Fast-Track Exporting: How Your Company Can Succeed in the Global Market* and *Fast-Track Exporting: A Guide for Export Promotion*. Renner holds a B.S. in business administration, with concentrations in marketing and international business, and a MBA from Mankato State University.

Stuart A. Rosenfeld is president of Regional Technology Strategies, Inc. located in Carrboro, North Carolina. He previously served as deputy director of the Southern Growth Policies Board and director of the Southern Technology Council. Rosenfeld also organized and manages the Trans-Atlantic Technology and Training Alliance, a consortium of U.S., European, and South African colleges undertaking cooperative innovation and learning activities. His areas of interest include collaborative and cluster-



Stuart Rosenfeld



Sharon Sayles Belton



G. Edward Schuh



Richard Senese



Louis Swanson

based economic development, workforce development, and technology diffusion. Prior to joining Southern Growth, he was a senior associate at the National Institute of Education, where he co-authored a national assessment of vocational education for the U.S. Congress.

Rosenfeld holds an Ed.D. in education planning, social policy, and administration from Harvard University and a B.S. *cum laude* in chemical engineering from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He currently is a senior policy fellow with the Southern Growth Policies Board and senior research associate with the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Mary Rothchild is project manager for strategic partnerships at the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system office. In addition to targeted industry partnerships, she is responsible for alliances with businesses, state agencies, and other workforce development efforts, including staffing one of the committees of the governor’s Workforce Development Council.

Vernon Ruttan, Ph.D., is Regents Professor Emeritus in the Department of Applied Economics at the University of Minnesota. His current research includes the economics of technical and institutional change and economic development and foreign assistance policy. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

Sharon Sayles Belton is a senior fellow at the Humphrey Institute, where she works with the Roy Wilkins Center for Human Relations and Social Justice on anti-racism initiatives and on improving information sharing between community organizations and research institutions, such as the Humphrey Institute. She is involved in developing an emerging leaders program for communities of color in the Twin Cities and its suburbs, as well as community leadership among new immigrants. She also lectures on her experiences as an elected official and policymaker.

Sayles Belton served as mayor of Minneapolis from 1994 to 2001. Prior to becoming mayor, she served on the Minneapolis City Council for 10 years and was council president for four of those years. As a community leader and activist, she led efforts to improve services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. In 1978, she co-founded the Harriet Tubman Shelter for Battered Women. She also was a co-founder of the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault. Sayles Belton attended Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota.

G. Edward Schuh is a Regents Professor at the University of Minnesota and directs the Freeman Center for International Economic Policy at the University’s Humphrey Institute. Appointed by the President of the United States, Schuh chairs the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development. He chairs the University of Minnesota Rural Development Council and is a member of the board of trustees of the International Food Policy Research Institute.

Schuh has held a variety of positions in university settings and with governmental organizations. Prior to assuming the

Freeman Chair in 1997, Schuh was dean of the Humphrey Institute for 10 years. Schuh has held faculty and administrative positions at Purdue University, as well as the University of Minnesota. He served as program advisor to the Ford Foundation in Brazil, as senior staff economist on President Ford’s Council of Economic Advisors, as deputy undersecretary for international affairs and commodity programs at the USDA, and as the World Bank’s director of agriculture and rural development.

Schuh holds a bachelor’s degree in agricultural education from Purdue University, an M.S. in agricultural economics from Michigan State University, and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in economics from the University of Chicago. He has received five professional awards from the American Agricultural Economics Association.

Richard (Dick) Senese grew up in Buhl, Minnesota, a town of about 1,000 people on Minnesota’s Iron Range. He attended Mesabi Community College in Virginia, Minnesota, and completed a bachelor’s degree in psychology and political science in 1985 at the University of Minnesota–Duluth. He holds a master’s degree in counseling from UMD and a Ph.D. in counseling psychology from the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities.

Before becoming associate dean of the University of Minnesota Extension Service, Senese served as the associate dean of the School of Psychology at Capella University, an accredited on-line university headquartered in Minneapolis. He was an assistant professor of psychology at St. Olaf College and has taught at Metropolitan State University, the College of St. Scholastica, and UMD. He served as chair of the Minnesota State DFL Party, and worked for Senator Paul Wellstone from 1990 to 1992 as a campaign manager and as a staff member in his Washington, D.C., and St. Paul offices.

Thomas Stinson is an associate professor of applied economics at the University of Minnesota. He also serves as the state economist for the State of Minnesota. Stinson’s areas of expertise include public finance and regional economic development. His current research focuses on evaluating alternative strategies for non-metropolitan development and estimating the impact of taxes on individual decisions. He holds a Ph. D. from the University of Minnesota.

Louis Swanson is a professor of sociology at Colorado State University. His areas of interest include the sociology of agriculture and rural development, agricultural environment and rural development policy, and research methodology. Before coming to Colorado State, Swanson served as a faculty member in the Department of Sociology at the University of Kentucky and a resident scholar with the National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy of Resources for the Future in Washington, D.C.

Swanson holds a B. A. from St. Andrews Presbyterian College, a master of technology in international development degree from North Carolina State University, and a Ph.D. in rural sociology from Pennsylvania State University. He was a Peace Corps volunteer in Tunisia from 1971 to 1974.



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