



*The Forum is a place for Journal readers to express their feelings on any topic they think is important to Extension. We ask that it be no more than two double-spaced pages. Send to: Jerry Parsons, editor, 310 Poe Hall, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, 27607.*

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*The Golden Age of Academia . . . the 50s and 60s . . .* grew in light of the demand for higher education, created by post-war affluence and the baby boom. Many established universities doubled and tripled in enrollment, former teacher's colleges and county normal institutions became full-fledged universities, and the number of academic institutions—both public and private—grew rapidly. But, times have changed. The gilt has worn thin . . . and the golden age seems to have passed. The public's response to the "zero population" movement; the end of the draft; the end of U. S. involvement in Vietnam; the rise of vocational-technical schools; the development of high paying jobs for skilled, noncollege workers; disruptions on campus; and taxpayers' revolts have all contributed to the tarnishing of the golden era. Academia now finds itself overbuilt, overstaffed, and lacking enough students to sustain growth. Lower admission standards, more aggressive recruitment tactics, and faculty layoffs are indications that hard times are here.

Under such conditions, educators are beginning to look for new clientele groups. During recent years, a new vocabulary has invaded the halls of academia . . . the vocabulary of Extension. Terms like "change agent," "adult learners," "programming," "community development," and "outreach" are being heard in academic planning sessions. Faculty members who once perceived education as an on-campus phenomenon are, in small numbers, moving off-campus. Researchers, once dedicated exclusively to basic research and theory, are now applying their skills to the problems of society.

In an effort to meet the educational needs of the people, more universities are offering vocationally oriented, two-year degree programs. Undergraduate and graduate degrees are being awarded on a part-time, night basis. It's now possible to obtain

*advanced degrees off-campus.' Business schools—such as the Graduate School of Business, University of Wisconsin-Madison—now offer outreach programs of managerial assistance for small businessmen. In brief, it appears that academia is beginning to extend the “Wisconsin Idea” that “. . . the boundaries of the state are the boundaries of the university.”*

Considerable doubt exists that the “Wisconsin Idea” can be effectively implemented by academia in the near future, however. Perhaps there's no greater inhibitor of academia's ability to reach out than the unwilling attitude of the individual faculty member. Here are several facets of this attitude.

1. Campus faculty frequently hold Extension faculty (and especially county agents) in low regard and fail to work with them.
2. Many professors hold a patronizing attitude toward their students, viewing themselves as imparters of knowledge and students as the unquestioning receptacle of that knowledge.
3. Teaching (education) is frequently defined within the cubic mentality of the campus classroom and confined to the lecture method with an occasional foray into discussions, case studies, and, perhaps, a field trip.
4. College professors are usually a sedentary lot who abhor travel and detest evening or Saturday classes. The campus is an intellectual community where one can survive and progress without coming to grips with the reality of one's area of expertise. To leave this is, to many, utterly unthinkable.
5. To be academic is to be profound and theoretical. Respectability lies in doing basic research and developing theory. Applications of that research and theory is of lesser value and sometimes fit only for the underlings of Extension.

These negative attitudes aren't held by all faculty. However, they do exist to varying degrees in a depressing number of campus faculty.

Due to the historical structure of higher education, many campus faculty aren't oriented toward the nontrained in Extension or adult education. The principle of participation has yet to invade the classroom. Consequently, campus faculty frequently fail to involve the adult learner in planning or to legitimize their progress within the community or clientele group. Their efforts are often wasted and, in some cases, result in disheartening personal experiences. One such experience is sometimes sufficient to send the hapless professor back to the ivory tower with his tale of woe.

Unskilled in Extension education, the academic professor frequently fails to communicate with his clientele, the community power structure, or the county agent, thereby reducing his effectiveness and blocking his efforts.

Many professors would engage in off-campus activities if they could be held in the summer. Unfortunately, the schedules of campus teaching and off-campus teaching rarely coincide. Conversely, communities are generally unaware of the professor's pressures and time limitations.

Faculty frequently fail to understand the nature of Extension education. Administrators, too, sometimes fail to extend themselves beyond campus boundaries to support out-reach activities.

Closely related to the administration problem is the lack of an adequate reward system to encourage faculty. This problem is especially severe in subject-matter areas where applied research, off-campus teaching, and public service are held in low esteem.

Without strong administrative support and financial rewards, the young professor wishing to gain recognition in his academic field, frequently can't obtain it "off-campus."

Internal shifting compounds the many problems already faced by the university. Some areas (education) are shrinking, while others (business and engineering) are expanding. This turmoil means a certain amount of paranoia and change of any type is viewed with trepidation and suspicion.

Precisely when faculty should be pulling together and moving into new areas, they're holding back.

These are some of the problems in the path of Extension and academic cooperation. Until they're resolved, little progress is likely to occur. When faculty begin to recognize that Extension can help create new opportunities and rewarding challenges in higher education . . . when communication between professor, Extension change agent, and the clientele improves . . . when university administrations emphatically support off-campus activities, then academia can really reach out. The golden age of higher education won't have just passed, it will have just arrived.