

The Role of U.S. Universities in Influencing Foreign Aid
by Margaret Fahs

Historical Background

U.S. universities have had a long involvement in U.S. foreign assistance efforts. While individuals and institutions have participated in many early educational exchanges and other efforts abroad, the most significant coordinated efforts began in response to President Harry S. Truman's Point Four, in his 1949 inaugural address.

Truman called upon the U.S. to "embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas."

A review of the university response, and the development of the activities of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges in coordinating the activities of these particular universities in international issues has recently been documented by James W. Cowan and Paul R. Shaffer in an article International Affairs and The National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges: A Historical Perspective, AIEA Quarterly, Fall 1987

This historical background is relevant to the current discussion in that it reveals the growth and changing structure which universities have developed to work on the federal scene in establishing the federal role in their international activities. Their response to U.S. foreign policy initiatives, such as Point Four, and the unique federal/state/local relationships of public institutions have played an important role in developing universities as a resource for U.S. technical assistance programs.

The response given by the Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (now NASULGC), in fact, came within 10 days of the President's speech. It noted that "one of the greatest contributions America can make to the improvement of living standards, elimination of hunger, and fostering of peace in certain parts of the world is by encouraging education in food production, food handling, food utilization, and better homemaking and family life among rural and urban people. ...The troubled areas of the world are primarily agricultural, and their political problems derive primarily from their need to develop a higher standard of living—more and better food, and better clothing and housing for their people.

Perhaps also significant is that both the call for assistance and the response offered a clear vision of what could be done, and the unique resources U.S. universities could contribute in education, science and technology, food production and in the technology of improved industrial production. The universities noted that they offered: experience, the unique land-grant system with its federal/state/local relationships, proven concepts and ideas on how to promote economic well-being, and institutional commitment.

We must wonder today if that was the last time that there was a clear consensus of what a foreign assistance program should be.

Universities and individuals alike are active public policy spokesmen in all arenas. But as in all interest areas, because of the complexity of issues, voices, and demand on time, Congress and agencies prefer to deal in a more organized way with a constituency group. The National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) has taken the lead among other education associations in this field, because of its early efforts, and because of the special interest of the agricultural colleges in international development. However, it continues to work closely with other higher education associations, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in particular, and with the Consortium for International Cooperation in Higher Education, a group of five major higher education associates in Washington.

In looking at the public policy arena, this university system, with the land-grant system at its core, also offered a unique constituency group for support of international development and the experience of its long-term linkages with other education institutions throughout the world. These public service institutions were a natural ally as the U.S. was seeking to find its role in international leadership.

Land-grant institutions seeking to influence foreign assistance programs, took as a natural role model for discussing policy and concepts, their unique historical relationship with USDA, where they had developed a structure of partnership and continuing dialogue with that agency on policy, program and budget. Such a relationship with AID was elusive, but continues as a goal of the university community.

While a number of joint federal/university committee structures preceded, an outgrowth of this concern was the development of the Title XII "Freedom From Hunger" amendment, passed Congress in 1975, to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Title XII established the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD), a seven person advisory board to the administration of USAID, to "help AID mobilize and utilize the faculty and institutional resources of eligible universities," and to participate with the AID

Administrator in the planning, development, implementation and monitoring of development activities and to make recommendations for the Administrator's consideration.

BIFAD has had an active history in working with the agency on policy and planning, and continues to make recommendations to the Administrator on budget. Perhaps one of its more effective tools has been the establishment of a budget panel, which reviews AID programs throughout the budget process from budget submissions from host countries through Congressional presentations. Such accurate data and analysis had not been available to the university community before, and has proven invaluable to university representatives in understanding and acting on the budget process. Numerous policy issues have also been addressed by BIFAD, and through its Joint Committee on Agricultural Research and Development (JCARD) and have improved relationships through this agency/university partnership.

In a similar fashion, university representatives work closely with USDA under a letter of agreement between NASULGC, AASCU, and USDA on the International Science and Education Council (ISEC). The objectives of ISEC are, among others,

"to help solve worldwide development problems concerning the productive and efficient use of food and agriculture resources through cooperative programs.

"to assist U.S. colleges and universities to strengthen their research, education and extension capabilities relevant to food and agriculture activities in developing and transitional countries.

"to encourage the participation of agribusiness and trade associations along with USDA and universities in international food and agriculture and development programs."

A number of joint agency/university ISEC committees work closely on problems relating to international agriculture activities and training, primarily focused on AID "graduate" countries. These offer some opportunities for universities to address concerns about the increasingly important area of relationships to middle income countries.

The associations also work through committees, and under NASULGC through an International Division established in 1987, to monitor policy and budgets of all federal agencies which support international activities on university campuses. International agriculture programs are the focus of the newly established International Committee on Organization and Policy (ICOP) of NASULGC's Division of Agriculture.

An early concept of U.S. assistance to developing countries was clearly defined in terms of science and technology, academic technical assistance, institution building and institution-to-institution relationships.

While the university community may still see these programs in these terms, the division and descriptions are less clear and considerably more related to political terms in Washington. Congress sees foreign aid in sometimes rapidly changing political hues, partisan positions, failing or shifting political support, and declining expectations of success.

There is no clear single goal: feeding the hungry, increasing economic growth, keeping friends, paying for bases, building markets, dumping agricultural surpluses, keeping the Middle East peace. There are different constituents for all. A key Senator charges that following foreign aid legislation for development assistance is like riding the waves with the latest fad in development.

The Commission on Security and Economic Assistance (commonly known as the Carlucci Commission) appointed in 1983 by President Reagan, was the last attempt at building a constituency for foreign assistance, and was one of three commissions looking at U.S. foreign assistance policy at the time. The other two were the Kissinger Commission, which focused on Central America, and the Private Sector Commission, headed by Dwayne Andraeas, which tried to tackle the threat of and bolster mixed credit for U.S. agricultural commodities.

The Carlucci Commission, although bipartisan in design, failed to overcome the polarization of its members and offered recommendations for reorganization, called for renewed support for security programs, reaffirmed institution building and science and technology programs, and recommended a new citizens network to generate political support for these programs. While increased foreign aid levels were supported in 1984 and 1985, budget problems, fractious constituency support and divisive political views of Central America have cancelled any gain in bipartisan approach.

So how do universities attempt to influence the process? In looking at the natural role model of USDA and land-grant universities, we must recognize the differences. The goals of the agencies are different. USDA has a clear domestic function, with a clear domestic constituency. USAID has no domestic function and little domestic visibility (in fact, decentralization has increasingly placed its staff overseas). Budgeting processes begin in-country for USAID projects, but are also subject to State Department objectives. It is a much more difficult creature to handle.

How can universities best participate in a process to influence foreign assistance?

Universities can assist in bringing to the public a better understanding of what foreign assistance is and why it is important to our national interest. The man on the street is an instant expert in two areas: religion and politics — foreign aid is a curious blend of both, yet probably the least understood area of U.S. foreign policy.

A major problem is evaluating foreign aid — because the political situation can change so rapidly, such as in Panama or the Philippines, or because starving children keep repeating the cycle, as in Africa — we seem to have no success stories anywhere in the world.

The concept of long range development is quite hard to sell politically. We should recognize that political time set is two years in the life of Congress, while Congressman must run for reelection continually. And in the current budget context, they must balance domestic priorities against broad, and less defined, international priorities. The man on the street is faced with the problem of "street people" as well as starving children in Africa.

This is an new political era where "self interest" and budget priorities have taken on new meaning ; where the winnowing of defining what is the federal role and responsibility, and what are the most effective means of delivering those programs have become determining factors for funding. National security interests, the economy and international competitiveness, concern with global markets, and peace and stability are all clearly within the national interest and will have budget priority. How clearly foreign assistance programs fall within these goals will aid in gaining a broader support for funding. Humanitarian goals will continue to hold its major constituency.

Universities should focus on at least three areas, to improve their effectiveness:

- . develop spokesmen
- . develop message
- . develop alliances with other clientele groups

NEED TO DEVELOP SPOKESMEN

There is a need to develop better spokesmen for foreign aid, in the university community, in Congress, in the media, and through citizen groups.

A survey of "What Americans Think: Views on Development and U.S.-Third World Relations," has given us a better picture of what the general public thinks about foreign assistance. The report says:

"Americans in general consider international development issues and U.S. relations with Third World countries to be less important than—or even to conflict with—domestic problems and other U.S. foreign policy objectives. Many Americans remain uninformed about development efforts and U.S.—Third World relations. A major factor influencing American opinion on U.S. trade, debt, and aid policies toward developing countries is concern that U.S. policies to promote Third World development imply economic losses for Americans. Support for U.S. policies to alleviate poverty and stimulate growth in developing countries is further limited by the American public's negative perceptions of Third World governments, as well as by widespread skepticism about the effectiveness of aid and aid agencies."

In general, we can be assured that the views of the American public are mirrored in Congressional views and action.

Academics tend to resist the role of lobbyists; however, if we take the most common and important functions of a lobbyist—to educate on issues, provide reliable information and data, provide a delivery system for the rationale and support of these positions—universities are well suited to serve this function.

The credibility of a university community also opens up a forum for debate of issues, offers research and data, offers experience of long-term linkages and relationships with institutions in other countries that are important contributions to the debate.

Much has been written on the need for institutional commitment by universities as the key to effective participation in technical assistance programs. This commitment is also required to develop institution spokesmen, from university presidents on down, who are willing to schedule time and opportunity to explain why international programs are important to your institution, to the economy of your state, and to quality education on your campus.

Universities need to play a stronger role in developing spokesmen in natural constituency groups. In some areas, other constituencies may be in a better position to speak to specific issues than the university community, however, the data, rationale and teaching materials may still need to be developed through university channels.

Universities also need to assist in developing political leaders in the foreign aid arena. Most universities shy away from this aspect. But some have exceedingly good relationships with their Senators or Congressmen from their districts and with their politically active alumni. The list of issues on which elected officials must respond is long and complex. Most Congressional

offices are eager for feed-back from knowledgeable people from their state in a regular and diverse way. A number of international program administrators have a good working relationship with Congressional staff, reporting on how their programs are working, how the AID missions are operating, and on in-country conditions after overseas trips. Similar linkages between Congressional offices and foreign language and area studies centers have also been beneficial. Those Congressional offices which seek such ties are able to offer more informed leadership to the political process.

The need to develop political leadership for the university role in development is crucial and better linkages to Congressional members must be developed.

We need to develop better ties with the media and understand more fully its use. There are some natural vehicles to do this on your campuses—certainly agricultural colleges have developed strong ties with the agricultural press in their state on domestic issues. A recent AUSUDIAP and Agricultural Communicators in Education conference in Rhode Island in June, 1987 was a step to build the international dimension into this process and improve these ties.

Presidents' offices and institutional representatives have developed effective public relations offices on most campuses, but better ties with international programs should be developed.

The recent spree of critical reports on the quality of education have centered on the need for international education to improve U.S. competitiveness. They offer enormous opportunities for media stories and universities should see some relevant ties to current international development programs.

Some universities are doing exceedingly well at these programs, and perhaps some sharing at this point could be helpful to others. An inventory of faculty and administrators with international experience and expertise is a starting point. Michigan State University is now developing short directories of such expertise to be available for the media on specific current international issues. Television networks and talk shows are constantly looking for resource persons—especially those which can explain the difficult in short, lucid time periods. Editorial pages seek more interpretation and analysis of the news in the international arena. We need to explore ways to develop better access to the experts on our campuses.

NEED TO DEVELOP MESSAGE

What is foreign assistance all about? And what can universities do about it? University representatives through BIFAD and association panels have provided some excellent documents and brochures on this question, but on the whole they are reports

slanted more to their peers than to the public. The ability to translate these terms to the public's demand for a short, simplistic description is much more difficult. The ability to translate programs, such as the complex role of agricultural development, into political terms has also proven difficult.

Duane Acker, at the request of the past USAID Administrator Peter McPherson, spent a number of weeks and held extensive sessions with outside groups, within the agency and on the Hill, exploring the most effective way to talk about agricultural assistance. It was an attempt to refocus the message in a simplified and more political appealing way.

In the end, the message was:

"The focus of the agricultural (ARDN) account is to increase the income of the poor majority and expand the availability and consumption of food while maintaining and enhancing the natural resource base."

In presenting this concept to audiences, Dr. Acker has expressed it much more graphically, "Poor people, or countries, don't buy much."

A number of other efforts, including this series of MSU seminars, are now underway to discuss development programs, which will assist greatly in "defining the message.": The final summary of the MSU May Conference, the papers coming out of the AUSUDIAP/ICOP International Agricultural Seminar on June 10, and a proposed NASULGC "white paper" expected in November should all be helpful to this end.

However, we need to be more geographically specific in delivering the message. How relevant is the term "Third World" in describing our foreign assistance programs? The world is growing smaller, and along with it our understanding of geography is dwindling, as a number of recent surveys on the knowledge of American students have indicated. Countries are different, their assistance needs are different, politics do play a major role. We need to explain this better. Foreign aid legislation moves through House and Senate authorization committees which first meet in subcommittees which focus on geographic regions. Development problems and development programs for Africa are different than for Asia, and we need to differentiate that in our testimony, matching diverse university resources with problems.

And finally, we need to put our message in terms of a declining budget reality. We need to answer budget questions in terms that place foreign aid programs crucial to U.S. national interests, relating the international economy to our own economic interests.

NEED TO DEVELOP ALLIANCES WITH OTHER CLIENTELE GROUPS

First, we must recognize that universities, along with the government, Peace Corps and others, have helped to create a development industry in the U.S. We have spawned a group of concerned professionals scattered through private voluntary organizations, religious organizations, government, Peace Corps, think tanks, the private sector and multilateral organizations. At any given time, many are uneasy and at odds with each other, frequently concerned with competition, often divisive on goals and political ends. Perhaps it is time that universities take the lead in easing these relationships and develop better mechanisms for cooperation.

A future role for the Association for U.S. Directors of University International Agricultural Programs (AUSUDIAP) will be to broaden its membership as a professional development association and will solicit better ties to PVCs and other development practitioners. The Association for Women in Development is also reaching out to academics and other professional practitioners in an organization for professional development. Other alliances with the private sector should be explored.

A. Agriculture and Business Community

A major critic of assistance to agriculture production in the Third World countries has been U.S. agriculture community groups and U.S. farmers who face low commodity prices and loss of markets. The university community has been effective in offering a forum for discussion of this problem, and in representing the research, and rationale in support of continued efforts for economic growth in what are potentially future market areas. Much more discussion will be required.

The lack of support for foreign assistance from the agriculture and agribusiness community has been one of the greatest "dampners" on the funding of the agriculture account in recent years, along with increased pressure of adding "special interest" earmarks to the budget pie. While these earmarks have not eaten into the agriculture account per se they have decreased the percentage of the total funding which has been going into agricultural development.

A series of amendments have been offered to prevent funding of agricultural production programs which assist in commodities in surplus on the market, both for bilateral and multilateral agencies. Congressional staff worked with the agencies and universities in rewriting language which would allow some room for interpretation.

Among continuing efforts to work with the agricultural community, ISEC will hold a special session on "Rationalizing Foreign Assistance with U.S. Agricultural Interests—A Policy Challenge for the 1990s" in Baton Rouge on April 5. Participating will be representatives from commodity groups, state legislatures, universities, USDA and AID.

A major effort to work with the agricultural community through the federal extension system is underway through the Consortium for International Higher Education (CICHE). The CICHE development education project, which is funded through Biden-Pell, has developed educational materials and visual aids, supports regional workshops which include discussions of markets and alternative crops, and funds a small competitive grant program to encourage state-by-state the preparation of educational materials for use with producers and commodity groups. A workshop of top officials in the federal extension service was recently held in Washington with presentations based on available research data and materials. Individual state video tapes and slide shows have also been developed. Other groups such as CARE have also developed notable materials for use with cooperatives and other farm groups throughout the country under Biden-Pell.

Equally important, Congressional staff members have been briefed on some of the same materials and can now respond more comfortably to complaining constituents.

The land-grant system has worked with the U.S. agribusiness industry in developing U.D. agricultural interests; we need to rethink and understand the private sector and its relationship to development, without connotations of Colonialism and in ways that are mutually beneficial to our own U.S. agricultural interests.

A concerted effort to enlist the support of the business community for foreign assistance funding is also crucial. They are natural allies of the university community and alliances for support of university domestic programs are well in place. Corporate leaders will be more responsive to enlightened self interest arguments than to selective political pleas. As universities continue to work in these business/higher education alliances, thoughts on bringing international concerns into the discussions are important.

A number of universities are now developing international business centers to assist small businesses in their states to find international markets. Many institutions are scheduling international trade conferences, bringing together government, academics and the private sector to discuss international issues. Information on developing countries need to be incorporated.

B. Environmental Groups

A major step in bringing the university community together with environmental groups was begun by the appointment of a Taskforce on Environmental Concerns by BIFAD late last year. The taskforce has now presented its report, which will be presented in a BIFAD Congressional Forum on the Hill on April 14. Preceding the Forum, university international agricultural administrators, through ICOP, will sponsor a Congressional breakfast for appropriate key Congressional members and staff. Efforts to work more closely with the environmental groups, which constitute an important grass roots community, should be explored.

C. Informed Citizens

And finally, universities must do what they do best—educate informed citizens. Numerous studies and strategies are underway addressing the need to educate Americans for an interdependent world. University groups are focussing on such areas as internationalizing the curriculum, linking professional schools to foreign language and area centers, improving foreign language instruction, and ways to feeding back international experiences into campus programs, to name of few.

Universities are offering a wide variety of outreach programs: summer seminars for high school teachers to buttress international education in the K through 12 arena, citizen education conferences with World Affairs Councils, and international trade seminars.

Other development education projects, funded under Biden-Pell, are slated more to the general public to develop informed voters. A new effort which focused primarily on Iowa and New Hampshire voters prior to the recent primary and caucus periods, was coordinated by the Roosevelt Center and assisted by CICHE. Its purpose was to better inform citizens about the basic elements of foreign aid through small group sessions and the use of guided discussions. These sessions were to encourage voters to ask candidates questions about foreign aid, and to help voters understand some of the budget trade-offs required to fund such programs. These materials continue to be available to other states as teaching aids.

The Citizens Network, which is an outgrowth of a recommendation of the Carlucci Commission, is also partially funded under Biden-Pell, as well as by the private sector, and works to bring together a broad coalition of constituent groups to support foreign assistance programs. It supports networking with agriculture, business, and humanitarian groups, and representatives from development banks, education and other exchange groups, and provided support for a major conference on the budget early in the FY 1987 process in Washington. Secretary of State Shultz, key Congressional

members and a number of organizational leaders, including Penn State President Bryce Jordan representing universities, were speakers at the event. The Citizens Network continues to work with specialized groups, including agriculture and the private sector, through a series of committees and workshops.