Fresh Ideas for Rural Development
Background

The Southern Rural Development Center is one of four regional centers coordinating rural development research and Extension education programs cooperatively with land-grant institutions regionally and nationally. The Centers are supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the Center and its authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Mission

The Southern Rural Development Center seeks to strengthen the capacity of the region’s 29 land-grant institutions to address critical contemporary rural development issues impacting the well-being of people and communities in the rural South.

Goals

• Stimulate the formation of multi-state research teams
• Coordinate the development and revision of educational materials and maintain a centralized repository of educational resources
• Organize and deliver high priority rural development research and educational workshops/conferences
• Provide leadership for the preparation of science-based rural development policy reports
• Build partnerships that link the South’s land-grant university system with other key entities committed to rural development activities in the region

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Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is composed of four Extension representatives appointed by the 1862 and 1890 Extension leadership, as well as four Research representatives selected by the 1862 and 1890 Research Directors/Administrators. Three non-land-grant affiliated individuals serve on the SRDC Board as well; the Farm Foundation permanently fills one of these spots. Each member serves a four-year term. The current composition of the Board is as follows:

**Extension:**
- Lawrence Carter 2002-2006
  Florida A&M University
- Ariel Ramirez 2004-2008
  University of Puerto Rico–Mayaguez
- Ken Roberts, Chair-Elect 2002-2006
  Louisiana State University
- Vance Watson Permanent
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**Non Land-Grant:**
- Walter Armbruster Permanent
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- Susan Jenkins 2003-2007
  Cherokee Preservation Foundation
- Vacant
  Non Land-Grant Representative

**Ex-Officio Members:**
- Robert Gibbs Permanent
  USDA-ERS
- Sally Ward Maggard Permanent
  USDA-CSREES
Technical and Operational Advisory Committee

The Technical and Operational Advisory Committee of the Board of Directors advises the SRDC staff in the development of priority goals and strategies for the Center. The committee seeks suggestions and support from the directors and administrators of the various state Extension and research units in the region, from land-grant faculty, and from rural development stakeholders. The committee meets annually to review the proposed direction and activities of the Center and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors. Current members are:

1862 Extension:
- Hank Cothran 2002-2005
  University of Florida
- Deborah Tootle 2004-2007
  Louisiana State University
- Sam Fowler 2003-2006
  Auburn University

1890 Extension:
- Claudette Smith 2004-2007
  North Carolina A&T State University
- Charles Shephard, Chair 2003-2006
  Alcorn State University
- Cassandra Steele 2004-2005
  Prairie View A&M University

1862 Research:
- Mark Henry 2003-2006
  Clemson University
- David Barkley 2004-2007
  Clemson University
- Lori Garkovich 2002-2005
  University of Kentucky

1890 Research:
- Fisseha Tegegne 2004-2006
  Tennessee State University
- Vernon Jones 2004-2005
  Langston University
- Dreamal Worthen 2004-2007
  Florida A&M University

Non Land-Grant:
- William Buster 2003-2006
  Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation

Advisor:
- Ken Roberts
  Louisiana State University
We are pleased to share with you the latest report of activities undertaken by the Southern Rural Development Center over the course of the 2005 fiscal year. While continuity, consistency and quality are attributes that we strive for at the Center, we constantly seek to delve into new efforts that we believe are needed in order to respond to the emerging opportunities that exist in the Southern region. This is especially the case for those rural development issues that our region’s land-grant university research and Extension communities are well positioned to address.

As such, our 2005 report is designed to offer more in-depth attention to five key areas that the SRDC has given special attention to in recent years – topical areas that we believe are “fresh ideas for rural development.” In particular, we give special focus to:

- Rural Entrepreneurship as a Viable Economic Development Strategy for Rural Communities of the South
- E-Commerce “Know How” as a Valuable Tool for Small Rural Businesses
- The Rural Community College Initiative: An Important Conduit for Building and Sustaining Land-Grant University Partnerships with Rural Community Colleges
- The Hurricane Impacted Areas of the South: Responding in a Time of Disaster
- New Publication Activities: Developing Better Products, Better Communication Delivery Systems

Certainly, the SRDC’s work over the past year has not been limited to these five major areas, but in the interest of space, we share only snippets of the additional activities that the Center has pursued over that time period. As we continue to tackle the important rural development work in the region, our Center remains ever thankful for the talented land-grant university faculty, staff and administrators who continue to give of their time and talents to our region. We genuinely appreciate, as well, the investments by several agencies and organizations in the Center’s research and Extension/outreach efforts.

As the SRDC staff ponders its future efforts, our enthusiasm remains high given the careful study the Center is undertaking in 2006 – a study that will unveil the priority areas that the Center will concentrate on over the course of the next 3-5 years. As these priorities emerge, the Center will work hand in hand with the region’s land-grant university leadership in detailing the best ways to pursue these priorities. It is our hope that this valuable partnership, coupled with the working ties we have with several key rural development partners outside the land-grant system, will keep the Center on the cutting edge as it seeks to introduce and support “fresh ideas for rural development” in the Southern region.

Bo Beaulieu
Director
Our latest ideas are providing a fresh approach to advancing the South’s rural communities.
Entrepreneurship: Exploring New Ways to Expand the Economies of the Rural South

The subject of entrepreneurship has been around for some time, but its importance to the economic health of rural areas has been elevated in light of the major economic shifts that have occurred in the South over the past several years. Many rural communities in the region, once dotted with large manufacturing firms, are now challenged to find new, innovative ways to replace jobs lost as a result of the closure of key textile, apparel and footwear industries. In still other places, the productivity enhancing technologies that have been introduced in the agricultural sector have further eroded the need for workers. The end result is that an increasing number of workers in the rural South are commuting long distances from their place of residence in order to have access to decent paying jobs. This trend has long-term negative consequences for the vitality of rural communities and families.

But recent reports offer compelling evidence that interest in entrepreneurial activities in rural America is stronger today than ever. Unfortunately, as the accompanying chart notes, the ability of these individuals to capture enough income to sustain their entrepreneurial activity remains problematic. Moreover, recent studies published by the Center for the Study of Rural America, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City offer clear evidence that rural areas of the South are lagging behind the rest of the country in terms of launching entrepreneurial enterprises. If entrepreneurship is to be a viable part of the economic development portfolio of rural communities in the South, a stronger support system must be in place to help make entrepreneurship a reality. The SRDC – in partnership with its sister Regional Centers and other key organizations – is taking important steps that will build the capacity of our land-grant schools to serve as valuable resources in support of rural entrepreneurial initiatives. The following highlight the exciting work being spearheaded or supported by the SRDC in the South.

Establishing the National Coalition for Rural Entrepreneurship

The call by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation for innovative proposals designed to build high quality, comprehensive entrepreneurship development systems in rural America provided much evidence of the unmet need existing for these programs. The accompanying chart indicates that the South led the way in terms of applicants for the Kellogg entrepreneurship initiative. Given that the Foundation was only able to invest in six of the 182 proposals submitted, the four Regional Rural
Development Center directors, in concert with James Zuiches of Washington State University and Sally Maggard of CSREES/USDA, opted to work in partnership to help keep the energy and enthusiasm created as a result of the Kellogg effort alive. They did so by creating the National Coalition for Rural Entrepreneurship.

What is the coalition all about? Its principal intent is to build the capacity of the land-grant university system, in partnership with other relevant partners, to be a vital conduit in spurring entrepreneurship in rural America. It seeks to do so by developing high quality outreach education and training programs, conducting applied research, providing timely technical assistance, and investing in innovative demonstration projects.

The philanthropic community is providing valuable support to this important initiative. Already, well-recognized and respected foundations are providing seed funding to the National Coalition as a way of jump-starting its key activities. These philanthropic organizations include the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Farm Foundation, and the Northwest Area Foundation.

Listening to the People of the Rural South: The Entrepreneurship Roundtable Sessions
A series of stakeholder meetings are being conducted in the South, and the objective is to engage in positive and productive dialogue with a variety of organizations interested in rural entrepreneurship efforts in the region. These sessions involve Kellogg Foundation entrepreneurship grant applicants, local representatives of the National Association of Counties, members of the Association for Enterprise (which focuses on micro-enterprises), current/emerging entrepreneurs, Chambers of Commerce/business sector representatives, Small Business Development Centers, youth, community college representatives, local/state government representatives, county and state land-grant Extension educators, and others. All have one underlying connection – a dedication to strengthening entrepreneurship as an economic development strategy that builds on the assets, skills and resources that exist in rural communities already.

Two of the nine listening sessions were completed during this fiscal year, with the remaining sessions slated for the October to December 2005 period. All told, over 270 community-based individuals are expected to take part in the day-long discussions on entrepreneurship. The roundtable sites in the region are:

- San Marcos, TX
- Granbury, TX
- Clemson, SC
- Norman, OK
- Pine Bluff, AR
- Quincy, FL
- Pikeville, KY
- Meridian, MS
- Mayfield, KY

So why the roundtable sessions? In a nutshell, these important gatherings are intended to help the SRDC and its land-grant university partners realize the following four goals over the next several months:
• Develop an understanding and appreciation of the innovative entrepreneurship programs being undertaken by individuals, organizations and communities across the Southern region;

• Identify the strongest set of information and educational resources that are being used by individuals and organizations engaged in entrepreneurship education and technical assistance activities in the South;

• Assess the type of resources that are needed to further support an effective entrepreneurship development system for people, organizations and communities in the rural South; and,

• Identify specific steps for creating coalitions of individuals and organizations (at the local, state, regional or national levels) committed to working as a team in expanding entrepreneurship opportunities in rural areas.

A special report highlighting the outcomes of the 30-plus listening sessions across the United States will be prepared in the coming fiscal year in collaboration with the National Coalition for Rural Entrepreneurship.

SRDC/RRDCs Selected as an “eXtension Pioneer Community of Practice”

As rural communities and their residents search for ways to move beyond their traditional industrial recruitment models, they need information and guidance on the type of entrepreneurial development strategies that best align with the values, assets, needs, competitive advantages and possibilities of these localities. While relevant information does exist in various Extension programs across the country, it is largely disjointed and fails to fit into an integrated and seamless entrepreneurship development system that is sensitive to the needs of rural people and their communities.

With leadership provided by the SRDC, in partnership with the Regional Rural Development Centers and land-grant university faculty across the United States, a proposal was submitted to eXtension to establish an “Entrepreneurship Pioneer Community of Practice,” an effort that would tap the pool of talented Extension educators across the country with strong programs and investments in entrepreneurship-related activities. The SRDC/RRDC proposal was one of eight proposals (from a pool of 57 proposals) selected by a panel of Extension leaders in this highly competitive grants program.

Sample ELS Questions

1. What three wishes would you personally grant that would have a positive impact on entrepreneurship in your community, state or the Southern region?

2. Identify what it will take to make these wishes a reality in your community, state and/or the Southern region.

3. Think of a community that you would identify as “entrepreneur friendly.” What is this community doing specifically that makes it a great place for entrepreneurs?

4. Select four key activities a community should undertake if it wants to become recognized as an “entrepreneur friendly” locality.

5. What three to four activities can the people and organizations attending this roundtable session do to help communities become “entrepreneur friendly?”
So what lies ahead in terms of the work of this exciting “Entrepreneurship Pioneer Community of Practice?” Over the coming several months, the team of Extension educators will tackle the following exciting activities:

- **Create a Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) System on Entrepreneurship:** The FAQs will provide stakeholders with ready electronic responses to key questions commonly asked on entrepreneurship by Extension customers;

- **Produce Information Briefs:** A series of brief educational products (approximately one page in length) will be developed and made available to stakeholders for the purpose of offering more information to those utilizing the FAQ system who may be interested in accessing additional information on key questions. Where appropriate, video-streaming will be developed to accompany some of the briefs.

- **Develop “For Further Reading” Lists:** A set of suggested readings for eXtension customers who want to know about some of the best educational and research products available on key entrepreneurship topics will be made available to them.

- **Develop Entrepreneurship Training Curricula:** The eXtension team will develop, after careful examination of the current set of education resources existing within the Extension system, a well-integrated system of educational curricula that will build on the best Extension products available. New products will be developed to fill gaps that might exist in the current set of Extension educational curricula on entrepreneurship.

- **Build an “Ask the Experts” System:** The Entrepreneurship Pioneering Community of Practice team will launch and sustain an “ask the expert” system for use by eXtension customers across the United States. This effort will provide a mechanism for Extension customers to have quick responses on questions they may have on a variety of entrepreneurship-related topics or issues.

**E-Commerce**

**Bringing E-Commerce Know-How to Rural Businesses through Extension**

The SRDC serves as the lead entity for The Rural E-Commerce Extension Initiative: A National Demonstration Project, an important effort designed to advance the outreach capacity of our nation’s land-grant university system to develop and deliver high quality e-commerce educational programming. The SRDC has made significant progress over the past several months in further
advancing the quality of e-commerce activities within the nation’s Cooperative Extension Service system. In so doing, it is helping strengthen the delivery of quality e-commerce educational programming to small and micro-businesses in rural America.

In partnership with the Mississippi State University Extension Service and other Extension entities across the United States, the SRDC was instrumental in carrying out the following activities:

1. **Catalogued Land-Grant University E-Commerce Resources:** The SRDC has continued its efforts to identify, assess and catalogue land-grant university-based research publications, educational curricula, fact sheets and PowerPoint presentations that address e-commerce topics relevant to small business firms. These new products have been added to the Center’s e-commerce website, a resource that is available at no charge to Extension educators and others across the country and beyond.

2. **Invested in E-Commerce Training Workshops and Educational Curricula/Resources for Extension Educators:** The SRDC has continued to work in partnership with New Mexico State University, the University of Nebraska and Mississippi State University in the delivery of educational programs to Extension educators and rural businesses in these targeted states. All three institutions were initial recipients of funds supported through the Rural E-Commerce National Extension Initiative in 2003. Recent efforts undertaken by Mississippi and Nebraska in support of the e-commerce effort are noted in this document.

3. **Initiated the “eNews” Newsletter:** As a means of keeping Extension educators and other interested parties apprised of important new research and educational resources, upcoming workshops and success stories associated with e-commerce, the SRDC launched in August 2004 an e-commerce electronic newsletter that is being published six times a year. To date, 600 individuals are receiving this bi-monthly newsletter. All issues are also accessible on the SRDC-managed e-commerce website and the Center’s main website.

4. **Organized a National E-Commerce Extension Advisory Committee:** To guide the activities of the SRDC in its coordination of the National E-Commerce Extension Initiative, the SRDC established the National E-Commerce Extension Advisory Committee. The committee is providing input on emerging e-commerce-related issues that the SRDC should seek to address through its various activities (i.e., training workshops, educational curricula, etc.). Furthermore, the advisory board is playing a major role in defining the specific activities.

### 2005 E-Commerce Projects Funded by the SRDC

**Connecting Rural Communities**
- William Shuffstall, Pennsylvania State Cooperative Extension
- Rae Montgomery, University of Minnesota Extension Service

**Strengthening Competitive Advantage of Rural Businesses with E-commerce and Experience Economy Strategies**
- Miyoung Jeong; Ann Marie Fiore; Cheryl O. Hausafus; Linda Niehm; and Haemoon Oh, Iowa State University

**E-Commerce for Farm Businesses**
- Sarah A. Roth and Jeffrey A. Hyde, Pennsylvania State University

**An Economic Niche for Artisan Businesses**
- Pamela J. Brown, Texas A&M University Cooperative Extension

**Rural Food Retailing: Is the Internet a Silver Bullet?**
- Stan Ernst and Neal H. Hooker, Ohio State University
Reaching Rural Businesses through E-Commerce: Some Examples of Impact

In Mississippi . . .

- **E-Commerce Electronic Retailing: Selling on the Internet Workshops:** Mississippi State University Extension Service implemented this one-day intensive workshop targeting Mississippi small businesses. The focus of the workshop was to teach entrepreneurs how to use the Internet as a marketing channel for their businesses. E-Commerce experts led sessions on developing a web store, managing an Internet business, website design, and web marketing. Workshops were conducted in the following locations: Brandon, Greenwood, Meridian and Starkville. Since 2003, some 338 persons have taken part in these workshops. They include small business owners (79%), government agencies/educators (10%) and prospective business owners (11%). The E-Commerce Electronic Retailing: Selling on the Internet workshop has been used as a model and has been replicated by both Extension and non-Extension educators throughout the country.

- **Electronic Retailing: Selling on the Internet Curriculum:** In partnership with the University of Nebraska Extension Service, the Mississippi State University Extension Service has undertaken an adaptation and conversion of the E-Commerce Electronic Retailing: Selling on the Internet workshop resources into an interactive web-based learning experience.

- **eBay: Selling Online Workshop:** Evaluations from the E-Commerce Electronic Retailing: Selling on the Internet workshop indicated that entrepreneurs were interested in an in-depth educational program focusing on selling via the Internet auction format. To meet this need, the Mississippi State University Extension Service developed and implemented the “eBay: Selling Online” one-day intensive small business workshop. Two hands-on workshops (using the e-commerce project portable lab) targeted entrepreneurs who were interested in starting a part time business selling via the Internet or expanding an existing business into the Internet auction market channel. To date, 38 entrepreneurs have participated in the two workshops conducted in the state.

- **Workshop on Building a Web Store with Yahoo:** Using the e-commerce project portable lab, an intensive hands-on workshop, Building a Web Store with Yahoo was developed and piloted in Hernando, Mississippi in 2004. Twelve small business owners participated in the workshop. The workshop was used as a model and replicated in New Mexico at a multi-state regional Extension training in 2004 that was attended by educators and small business owners.
Reaching Rural Businesses through E-Commerce: Some Examples of Impact

In Nebraska . . .

• Delivered Electronic Retailing: Selling on the Internet at 13 different sites in Nebraska over the past year. In total, over 200 businesses were reached during these 13 one-day training sessions.

• Follow-up surveys were conducted with participants taking part in the Electronic Retailing workshops in four sites for the purpose of assessing the usefulness of these educational programs. Nearly 56 percent of the 104 participants completed the survey. The results show:
  
  • 96 percent rated the program as containing high quality up-to-date information.
  
  • Nearly 30 percent noted that the workshop has changed their marketing strategies for their products.
  
  • One in five business owners has now taken steps to work with a web designer to build an online store.
  
  • Twenty-eight percent of businesses that do have a website stated that they have witnessed an increase in their website traffic as a result of the workshop.
  
  • Nearly 70 percent stated that they secured resource materials that they could use in improving their retail businesses.
  
• A draft of a set of advanced e-commerce educational curricula has been completed and are currently under final review. These materials include modules on the following topics:
  
  • Advanced Web Marketing
  
  • Creating a Customer Communications Center
  
  • Online Financial Systems and Security
  
  • Finding Vendors and Suppliers
  
  • Advanced Web Applications and Design
  
  • Using the Internet for Inventory Control
content of the e-commerce competitive grants program the SRDC is spearheading as part of this national initiative.

6. **Launched the E-Commerce Competitive Grants Program:** The SRDC set aside funds in the amount of $100,000 from its FY04 allocation to initiate an e-commerce competitive grants program. The grant program, open to any land-grant faculty with a high level of experience and capacity to develop priority e-commerce products in the United States, was launched in early 2005. Projects funded are showcased in the sidebar on page 12.

**E2 – Entrepreneurship and E-Commerce Multi-State Workshop**
In May 2005, the Center hosted a week-long multi-state training that addressed important strategies for building the entrepreneurship and e-commerce skills of Extension educators in the South. This training focused on the building blocks of entrepreneurship and discussed barriers and market opportunities for small and rural communities. Led by a cadre of outstanding Extension small business and technology experts, the hands-on training targeted Southern Extension educators interested in increasing their knowledge and skills associated with entrepreneurship and e-commerce. The first part of this workshop focused on tools and programs to assist potential and emerging entrepreneurs. Later sessions focused on current e-commerce topics including marketing strategies, website design and use of search engines. Using a computer lab format, participants were able to follow instructors using hands-on applications, training modules and Internet-savvy techniques.

**SRDC Launches Study of E-Commerce Use Among Miss. Delta Businesses**
It is clear that small businesses contribute in a number of ways to the economic health of rural economies. One of the nagging problems is finding ways to keep these important operations financially healthy and solvent. Certainly, with the increasing advances being made in information and communication technologies (ICT), and the expanded opportunities taking place as a result of globalization, firms of all sizes have expanded opportunities to reach new markets with their products and services. And playing a central role in facilitating access to the global marketplace is the Internet. Despite the benefits that small businesses would be expected to realize as a result of embracing this technology, evidence seems to suggest that Internet adoption by small firms has been somewhat disappointing.

In response to this important challenge, the SRDC explored the use of e-commerce strategies by small businesses located in the Delta region of Mississippi. The intent was to uncover the factors that facilitate or impede the adoption of this innovation by a cross-section of firms in this region. While a focus on e-commerce adoption is not new, this study offered a rare examination of e-commerce use among firms located in a highly rural, socio-economically disadvantaged region of the country. Results indicated that many rural businesses have pursued only modest investment in e-commerce related endeavors. Consequently, the SRDC will be exploring the most appropriate and viable strategies for promoting e-commerce adoption by business establishments in this area of Mississippi.

**Rural Community College Initiative**

A new report, published by the Southern Growth Policies Board as part of its 2005 *Report on the Future of the South*, argues that the region’s capacity to promote economic and community development innovation in the rural South will be linked to the capacity of communities,
organizations and institutions to work collaboratively on issues of regional importance. Among
the key entities that the report urges to take on a more visible role in informing and guiding the
development of a strategic blueprint are the various institutions of higher education in the region
— be they community colleges, regional universities or land-grant institutions.

The Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) embodies the very elements that the Southern
Growth Policies Board report so strongly advocates in its valuable report. RCCI has, as one of its
foremost goals, a mission of fostering partnerships between the rural community and tribal colleges
and the land-grant university system to promote equitable economic development, engagement in
civic processes by typically unheard voices, and increased access to the educational programs of
the community colleges and the land-grant system.

Under the coordination of the Southern Rural Development Center and the North Central Regional
Center for Rural Development, the RCCI continues to expand and make a difference in both the
participating community colleges and the land-grant university system. This section looks at two
distinct areas in order to provide a sense of the program’s importance. These are highlights of the
role the SRDC has played to make the program a success over the past two years.

**Key Achievements Over the Past Two Years**

Building and sustaining a lasting relationship between land-grant schools and rural community
colleges served as a major focal point of the work of the SRDC over the past two years. The
strongly held belief was that rural people and communities needed and deserved the best of
what land-grant schools and community colleges could offer in terms of the provision of timely
information, education, and technical assistance. An important step in providing such assistance
was to initiate innovative approaches to institutionalizing the links between these educational
institutions. The following is a sampling of efforts undertaken in recent months that reflect a
commitment to further solidify the land-grant university/community college partnership.

- Coastal Bend College has looked to the SRDC, Texas A&M University and Mississippi
  State University to develop a state-wide entrepreneurial coaching continuing education
curriculum and implement this program in Texas and Mississippi. Coastal Bend College has
  also heavily involved Texas Cooperative Extension in developing literacy programs at its
  Kingsville campus and youth entrepreneurship at the Alice campus.

- Howard College has established a partnership with Texas Cooperative Extension to employ
two Extension educators whose focus will be on advancing the community and economic
development efforts of both Howard College and the Texas Cooperative Extension system.

- East Central Community College has utilized Mississippi State University to provide
  outreach programs targeted to local industrial training. ECCC has also been an invaluable
  partner in coordinating and hosting one of the Entrepreneurial Listening Sessions to gain
  insight into entrepreneurship networks in the region.

- The Western Carolina Partnership has utilized Extension expertise and assistance in
developing and delivering its Qualla-T Customer Service Training Program. The leaders of
  this team have also stated that they cannot imagine not partnering with Extension for future
  outreach programs.

- Piedmont Community College has developed a working partnership with Extension to host
  the second annual Agricultural Expo targeted at displaced tobacco farmers. Furthermore,
Extension has used PCC staff to assist in delivering leadership development training programs to targeted counties in North Carolina.

- The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service and the North Carolina Sea Grant Program have been vital partners in the development and implementation of Carteret Catch, a locally harvested seafood branding program.

The second major success of the program has been to increase the capacity of the community colleges to become more effective agents of change within their community and to increase the capacity of the land-grant system to work with the colleges. With regard to the former, many educational programs and events have been offered to the colleges in a successful attempt to not only make them aware of the systematic nature of the opportunities and challenges that face their service areas, but also to equip them with knowledge and tools that could be used to address these challenges and opportunities. These programs include:

- Appreciative Inquiry training hosted at numerous sites in both regions and at the RCCI related institutes and conferences.

- A conference on civic engagement hosted by the SRDC provided training in the areas of the LeadershipPlenty leadership development curriculum developed by the Pew Partnership for Civic Change, Vision-to-Action community strategic planning training conducted by Gene Theodori (Texas A&M University), and an exposure to Public Issues Forums conducted by Sue Williams and Renée Daugherty of Oklahoma State University. Approximately 15 RCCI-related personnel attended this training.

- Ron Hustedde and Tammy Werner of the University of Kentucky conducted a workshop on entrepreneurial coaching at Coastal Bend College. Participants included the entire Coastal Bend College RCCI team as well as most of the economic development organizations that are located within the college’s Bee campus service area.

With regard to the latter, the administrations, faculties and staffs of the community colleges have been exceedingly helpful in educating the land-grant participants about the mission, role and unique characteristics of the community colleges' mission as well as programs and activities used to achieve that mission. While there was, in some cases, a sense of distrust between the community colleges and the land-grant universities, this issue has long since been resolved, and the entities currently view each other as true, working partners. However, it is safe to say that this sense of partnership would not have been possible without the efforts of the SRDC.

**Roles the SRDC Has Played**

The roles played by the SRDC have been crucial to the success of the RCCI program. These roles have fallen into three categories.

**Facilitator to the Process**

Perhaps the Center’s most visible role has been that of process facilitator. Not only has the SRDC provided coordination to the overall effort in the Southern region and assistance to the other regions participating in the program, they have provided the following:

- Guidance on the planning process undertaken by the teams as well as helping the college presidents, team leaders and coaches choose the types of team members that will benefit the planning process;
• Support as encouragers and, in some cases, as “prods” to the process;

• Constructive feedback to the planning processes and project activities undertaken by the teams; and

• Network development facilitation by acting as a conduit between the community colleges and the land-grant system by providing venues for community college and land-grant university administrators to meet and learn about common missions and goals.

Access to Specialized Training Opportunities
The SRDC served as an important conduit for developing or facilitating access to a variety of specialized training opportunities on the part of the RCCI participating schools. Through such venues as the RCCI Institutes, the annual RCCA Conferences, and on-site classes and workshops, the SRDC has either provided or facilitated training opportunities such as:

• Vision-to-Action planning (the SRDC has also funded the development of a revised educational curriculum that has greatly streamlined the planning process);

• Specific community and economic development topics that are relevant to the goals determined by the individual college teams such as network development, Appreciative Inquiry, and targeted economic development strategies; and

• Participated in the development of a roundtable on community coaching with the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, Ken Hubbell and Associates, and Priscilla Salant of the University of Idaho. This roundtable has a goal of identifying and sharing best practices in this relatively new discipline.

Communication
Perhaps the most important role played by the SRDC in cooperation with the NCRCRD has been the development of specialized communication channels to facilitate the sharing of success stories achieved and challenges encountered, and the formation of a bond between the various teams to enforce the belief that they are part of a very special and successful program. The communication activities developed and coordinated included:

• Maintaining the website that is dedicated to the RCCI process and contains educational materials developed by land-grant university and community college faculty that are relevant to the basic RCCI tenets;

• Coordinating and hosting regularly scheduled conference calls for the community college presidents, team leaders, coaches and the RCCI Advisory Council;

• Assisting the NCRCRD in the publication of a monthly newsletter that highlights successful activities by the colleges, new information and tools that are relevant to the RCCI program, and extramural funding sources; and

• Providing primary coordination of the RCCI Institute, a major conference that engages all RCCI teams in comprehensive training and information exchanges.
Responding to Disaster: Building Important Partnerships

In response to the devastating impact of Hurricane Katrina on the coastal states of Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi, coupled with the damaging effects of Hurricane Rita on the additional Gulf Coast state of Texas, the SRDC launched an important partnership with the University of Florida’s National Rural Behavioral Health Center (NRBHC) in delivering critical and timely training on outreach education through a program entitled, Triumph Over Tragedy: A Community Response to Managing Trauma in Times of Disaster. Thanks to the generous response by the NRBHC to the SRDC’s request, the National Center has made their curriculum resources available at no cost to Extension educators who are providing training, or delivering direct outreach education, to individuals, families and communities impacted by these hurricanes. The entire set of curricula and related resources are accessible via the SRDC website.

Aside from making these educational resources readily available to Extension educators across the impacted region, the SRDC worked closely with the Extension leadership in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi to host a one-day training workshop at Mississippi State University for the purpose of providing Extension educators with a solid grounding on how to effectively utilize the Triumph Over Tragedy curriculum. These resources provide Extension representatives with a set of tools to better understand the early symptoms associated with post-disaster stress on the part of individuals, families and other community members (such as first responders). Twenty-six Extension faculty attended the workshop from the three Katrina-impacted states. Moreover, additional Extension educators joined the workshop from Louisiana and Alabama via video conference. Within days after the completion of the training, Extension educators were delivering the Triumph Over Tragedy program to colleagues in their respective states. Others applied their newly gained skills by addressing post-disaster stress issues in their counties or parishes. Still others spearheaded the preparation and dissemination of timely articles or new releases on approaches to responding to post-disaster stress.

Aside from offering important training, the SRDC has been involved in other long-term planning efforts to help address the community and economic development needs of rural communities impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. For example, the SRDC has achieved the following:

- Participated in an important gathering of approximately 60 national, regional and community foundations, nonprofits and intermediaries in Memphis, TN. The meeting was designed to help organize and strategically invest the resources of the philanthropic community in the areas heavily impacted by Hurricane Katrina in Mississippi and Louisiana.
• Provided input and guidance to the USDA Rural Development mission area as it seeks to design and launch a comprehensive rural development blueprint for those communities and institutions that have been significantly impacted by the Gulf Coast hurricanes. The SRDC offered its technical knowledge of the region and provided insights on the rural development talent and capability available through the land-grant universities in the South.

• Spearheaded an effort in partnership with Economic and Community Systems of CSREES/USDA and the Rural Sociological Society to host a summit of land-grant university faculty to help discuss, delineate and implement a comprehensive rural development strategy for the rural areas of Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. Such a strategic plan is needed if the land-grant university system is to be an effective partner in helping address the long-term needs being tackled by a variety of philanthropic organizations, various federal agencies, and state-based agencies/organizations located in the impacted states. The summit will be held in December 2005.

Advancing Research on Rural Education: A Continuing Effort of the SRDC

The SRDC has continued to build on the valuable investment in rural education research that it helped launch in partnership with the Economic Research Service and the Rural School and Community Trust in 2003. It was at that time that the three organizations assembled a team of education researchers and policy analysts to take stock of the current state of education in rural America. It did so by hosting a special social sciences-based research conference titled, “Promoting the Economic and Social Vitality of Rural America: The Role of Education.”

The first product from this conference was a special report the SRDC, in collaboration with ERS and the Rural School and Community Trust, published in January 2005. The Role of Education is a 72-page policy document highlighting the importance of education to rural America. Nine articles offering insight into the important and often fragile relationship between rural schools and communities were compiled into three sections complete with full-color photos and illustrations. Media outlets, policymakers, governor’s offices, and state education departments across the nation were sent detailed press releases announcing the availability of this publication. Hundreds of copies were requested and mailed out, free of charge. The Center received requests from coast-to-coast, including Alaska and Hawaii, and many were granted multiple copies. This is believed to have been the Center’s first nation-wide publicity effort, and the results were overwhelmingly positive. This report is viewable online at the following address: http://srdc.msstate.edu/publications/ruraleducation.pdf.

“Everyone knows that a good education is important. What we don’t know is just how important, nor whether that importance outweighs the risks of losing the kids we educate – the dreaded brain drain. This report goes a long way toward supplying the answers.”

— Thomas D. Rowley
The Rural Monitor, Spring 2005
More recently, the SRDC and ERS have worked in tandem in organizing and preparing two special journal issues. These research volumes are intended to further advance the breadth and depth of research being carried out on education and workforce development issues in rural America. A recently released special issue of the Review of Regional Studies showcases five articles from the SRDC-hosted rural education conference. The underlying theme of the five articles is to understand and scientifically document the linkage between education/schooling and the economy, with special attention to how such linkages may differ from place to place, especially between rural and urban settings. The second special issue, slated for publication in late 2005, will be showcased in the Journal of Research on Rural Education. It includes four articles from the 2003 rural education conference. Three of these articles devote in-depth attention to issues having direct bearing on the progress of rural schools and students under the guidelines associated with the federally mandated No Child Left Behind legislation. The fourth draws upon a survey of 1600 rural employers nationwide to uncover major factors affecting participation in school-to-work and apprenticeship programs.

As rural economies continue to transform, it is clear that education and related human capital issues will play a central role in helping promote the generation and recruitment of good paying, higher skilled jobs. Without question, the articles published in the two special journal issues represent important steps in re-energizing the interest and commitment of the rural social sciences community in helping address the critical set of education and labor force issues facing rural areas of the country, both currently and in the years ahead.

**SRDC-Sponsored Articles featured in the special issue of the Journal of Research in Rural Education**

“Random Variation in Student Performance by Class Size: Implications of NCLB for Rural Pennsylvania”
– Stephan J. Goetz

“Work-Based Learning in Rural America: Employer Participation in School-to-Work Programs and Apprenticeships”
– Gary Paul Green

“How Do Rural Schools Fare Under a High-Stakes Testing Regime?”
– Frank D. Beck

“The Incidence and Impacts of Student Transiency in Upstate New York’s Rural School Districts”
– Kai A. Schafft

**SRDC-Sponsored Articles in The Review of Regional Studies**

“Education and Nonmetropolitan Income Growth in the South”
– Mark Henry, David Barkly and Haizhen Li

“Returns to Education in Rural Areas”
– Stephan J. Goetz and Anil Rupasingha

“Laying the Foundation for Employment: The Role of Social Capital in Educational Achievement”
– Glenn D. Israel and Lionel J. Beaulieu

– David A. McGranahan

“Education and Economic Well-Being in Racially Diverse Rural Counties: The Role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities”
– Elton Mykerezi and Bradford F. Mills
**Enhanced Publication Efforts**

**Communications Evaluation by the Frameworks Institute**

With help from a W. K. Kellogg Foundation grant, the SRDC received an independent assessment of three key communications materials from the Frameworks Institute. The mission of the Frameworks Institute, as noted on their website, is “to advance the nonprofit sector’s communications capacity by identifying, translating and modeling relevant scholarly research for framing and re-framing the public discourse about social problems. Frameworks conducts communications research to aid nonprofit organizations in expanding their constituency base, building public will, and furthering public understanding of specific social issues.” Following this evaluation, the Center’s communication staff has begun revisions to several products, including author style sheets for publications. A “Frameworks-friendly” SRDC Policy Series is also in progress. This information also has had impact for the combined work of the Regional Rural Development Centers’ communication staff.

**Around the South Electronic Newsletter**

First published in January 2005, the SRDC’s electronic newsletter, *Around the South*, features new publications, regional and national items of interest, funding opportunities, conference announcements, people in the news, and job opportunities. Prepared and distributed monthly, this newsletter has received positive feedback, and its subscriber numbers have continued to rise with each issue.

**SRDC Website**

The Center continues to expand the breadth and timeliness of the information and resources available on its website. For example, the Center has begun using the home page of the website as a bulletin board for posting new items of interest. This revolving information also showcases the website’s frequently updated status.

**Grant Connections**

The SRDC’s *Grant Connections* electronic newsletter continues to supply more than 500 land-grant university faculty and community development professionals with new and innovative opportunities for extramural funding throughout our Southern region. This year, in an effort to make the newsletter more timely and effective, we have revised our distribution schedule and redesigned the appearance of *Grant Connections*. Funding opportunities are now released bimonthly, during the fourth week of the month. The newsletter’s new design also allows for easier browsing of available grant titles and summaries, and the all-new logo will aid the Center in achieving its visual identity goals for the future. Six issues were distributed over the last fiscal year, including the following:

- Volume 7, Number 1, November 2004
- Volume 7, Number 2, January 2005
- Volume 7, Number 3, February 2005
- Volume 7, Number 4, April 2005
- Volume 7, Number 5, June 2005
- Volume 7, Number 6, August 2005
Our ongoing activities are continuing to make a difference... nationally and regionally.
Sustainable Communities Innovations Grant Program

The SRDC continues to join forces with the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SSARE) Office in sponsoring a competitive grants program that invests in projects that strengthen both agriculture and Southern communities. It is intended to give focus to the explicit linkages between sustainable agriculture and community development and efforts that improve understanding of the mutual benefits of such linkages. The Sustainable Community Innovation Grant program aims to blend sustainable agriculture practices with new community development strategies to increase our ability to build resilient farms, businesses, families and communities in the South. These grants support research into ways that link farms, businesses, families and communities in collaborative problem solving and the application of innovative new tools to aid sustainable community development. Furthermore, they fund research into innovative strategies that utilize sustainable agriculture concepts and practices to create and apply new knowledge that supports and promotes community development.

Projects funded as part of the 2005 SRDC/SSARE sustainable community innovation grants program were:

- Healthy Livestock Agriculture & Healthy People: Connecting Local Pasture-Raised Food and Consumers in Central North Carolina
  Sally Norton, UNC School of Medicine

- Battlefield Farmers’ Market – Growing New Opportunities
  David Matteson, Walker County (GA) Young Farmers

- Farming and Conservation Easements: A Win-Win Partnership
  Mark Hostetler, University of Florida

- Agricultural Community Support Across Boundaries
  Tom Elmore, Land-of-Sky Regional Council

- Four County Farmers Market
  Cynthia Wilson, Webster Co. (MS) Development Council, Inc.

- Aquaculture Development in the Pine Mountain Region of Southeast Kentucky
  Paul Pratt, Southeast Community College

- Comer Farmers’ Market
  Tina McCullough, Comer (GA) Farmers’ Market

- Youth as Community Organizers
  Florida Organic Growers
• Linking Small-Farm Agriculture to Community Development Efforts in Northern Louisiana
  Elizabeth Higgins, Louisiana Tech University

• A Strategy for Sustaining Henderson County Agricultural Communities
  Lori Sand, Henderson County (NC) Planning Department

• Woman Taking the Lead for Kentucky Agriculture
  Gae Broadwater, Kentucky State University

• Sustainable Agriculture for Future Economics (SAFE)
  Wendy Allen, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program

Addressing the Food Assistance Needs of the South’s Vulnerable Populations

In partnership with the Economic Research Service, the SRDC carried out the following activities during FY05:

• Maintained a strong focus on a competitive small grants research program targeted to faculty located in institutions of higher learning. To the extent feasible, the SRDC continued to invest in research endeavors proposed by faculty located in the region’s 1890 land-grant schools. This effort is part of our continued commitment to strengthening the research capacity of 1890-based faculty.

• Worked with a panel of scientists from the region in serving as a Food Assistance Research Advisory Committee to review and select successful grantees of the small grants program. Furthermore, this committee advised the SRDC on new and emerging research topics used in the request for proposals released in Spring 2005.

• Continued the publication of the Center’s policy brief series highlighting key findings and implications associated with the small grants program.

• Conducted a midyear workshop with current grantees for the purpose of monitoring their progress and to lend valuable assistance toward the successful completion of their grant in a timely fashion.

• Worked to identify the significant impacts this program has had in investing in promising research on food/nutrition-related topics. In the coming year, the Center will work to publish a report on these findings.
Conferences and Trainings

The SRDC hosted a total of 425 participants at the following conferences and training workshops over the course of the 2005 fiscal year:

Third Annual Rural Community College Alliance Conference — Shining a Beacon of Hope on Rural Communities: New Directions for Rural Community Colleges
October 3-5, 2004 | Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

SERA-19 Rural Health
October 13-15, 2004 | New Orleans, Louisiana
April 11, 2005 | Lexington, Kentucky

E2 - Entrepreneurship and E-Commerce: Building and Expanding Economic Opportunities
May 15-18, 2005 | Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Joint Meeting of PLN, AEA & ASRED
August 28-September 1, 2005 | Charleston, South Carolina

Southern Institute for Rural Development
Scheduled for September 12-15, 2005 | West Monroe, Louisiana (Postponed due to Hurricane Katrina)
Rescheduled for April 24-26, 2006 | West Monroe, Louisiana

Conference Attendance by State Is Noted Below:
Other Publications and Websites

Publications:

• SRDC Policy Series on the Rural South
• Food Assistance Needs of the South’s Vulnerable Populations
• Measuring Rural Diversity Policy Series

Websites:

• Southern Rural Development Center: http://srdc.msstate.edu
• Rural Community College Initiative: http://srdc.msstate.edu/rcci
• Program Leadership Network: http://srpln.msstate.edu
• CECP: http://cecp-online.org/info
• Rural E-Commerce Extension Initiative: http://srdc.msstate.edu/ecommerce
• NACDEP: http://nacdep.net

National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals

The National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) is an organization dedicated to improving the visibility, coordination, professional status and resource base of community and economic development Extension programs and professionals. The SRDC has continued to support the work of NACDEP during this year in the following ways:

• The Center maintains the NACDEP website
• The Center is coordinating the 2006 annual conference

Evaluating Innovative Intervention Programs in the Mid South Delta Region

The SRDC has teamed up with colleagues from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and Tellurian Group consultants to assess and evaluate important community and economic intervention efforts being undertaken by nonprofit intermediaries in the Mid South Delta Region. The innovative intervention programs, being introduced in select counties in Arkansas and Mississippi, are being carefully studied to determine how well they are contributing to measured improvements in the social, educational, and economic conditions of these localities. This important evaluation research is being supported by the Walton Family Foundation.
Aside from its strong working relationship with the Southern region’s land-grant institutions, the SRDC has built important partnerships with a number of entities across the region and nation. These organizations share a common commitment to advancing the well-being of rural people and communities in the rural South.

| Association of Extension Administrators | National Rural Behavioral Health Center, University of Florida |
| Association of Research Directors | National Rural Funders Collaborative |
| Association of Southern Region Extension Directors | Ohio State University |
| Cherokee Preservation Foundation | Pennsylvania State University |
| Delta Regional Council | Regional Rural Development Centers: |
| ECOP eXtension Initiative | • North Central Regional Center for Rural Development |
| Extension Disaster Education Network | • Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development |
| Farm Foundation | • Western Rural Development Center |
| Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, Kansas City Branch | Rural Community College Alliance |
| Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, Oklahoma City Branch | Rural Community College Initiative |
| Ford Foundation | Schools in the South: |
| Foundation for the Mid-South | • Carteret Community College |
| Frameworks Institute | • Coastal Bend College |
| Iowa State University | • East Central Community College |
| Louisiana Community and Technical College System | • Howard College |
| Montgomery Institute | • North Florida Community College |
| National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals Center for Rural Entrepreneurship | • Piedmont Community College |
| National Coalition for Rural Entrepreneurship | • Western Carolina Partnership: |
| National Institute for Community Colleges | o Haywood Community College |
| | o Southwestern Community College |
| | o Tri-County Community College |
| | Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) |
Ongoing Activities

Rural School and Community Trust

Rural Sociological Society

Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors

Southern Good Faith Fund

Southern Growth Policies Board

Southern Rural Development Initiative

Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)

Tellurian Group

Texas Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, Texas A&M University

Texas Rural Community College Network

University of Minnesota

University of Nebraska

USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service

USDA Economic Research Service

USDA Forest Service

USDA Rural Development, Louisiana and Mississippi

W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Walton Family Foundation
FY05 Presentations by Bo Beaulieu, SRDC Director

“Building on Local Strengths: Identifying Community Assets”
- Oktibbeha County Leadership Program — September 25, 2004
- Sociology of Community Graduate Class, University of Mississippi — March 3, 2005
- Mid South Community College Fellowship Institute — July 19, 2005
- Florida Community Development Association Conference, Clearwater, FL — June 9, 2005

“Finding New Ways to Build the Rural Economy,” National Conference of Job Loss and Recovery in Rural America, Lumberton, NC — October 1-2, 2004

“The Focus of Activities and Priority Setting Strategies of the SRDC,” Joint Meeting of the Regional Rural Development Centers, Baltimore, MA — November 10-12, 2004

“Current and Emerging Activities of the SRDC”
- Delta Council and US Forest Service “Rural Economic Development” Mini-Forum, Stoneville, MS — November 19, 2004
- Joint Meeting of the 1862/1890 Extension Directors and Administrators, Charleston, SC — August 31, 2005

“The Goals of the SRDC and a Perspective on the Rural Development Challenges Ahead,” LSU AgCenter Statewide Conference, Baton Rouge, LA — December 14, 2004

“The Key Elements for Building a Viable Inter-University Consortium,” Meeting of the Florida Inter-University Center for Child, Family and Community Studies, University of Florida — January 31, 2005

“Exploring Economic Development Opportunities for Rural Areas: It’s Not More of the Same”
- Louisiana Governor’s Rural Economic Development Conference, Hammond, LA — February 3, 2005
- CARET/AHS Southern Region Meeting, Clemson University — August 8, 2005
- Southeastern Association of RC&D Councils Regional Meeting, Orlando, FL — September 8, 2005

“It’s More than Schools: How Families and Communities Promote Student Achievement,” Annual Meeting of the Southern Rural Sociological Society, Little Rock, AR — February 6-8, 2005

“Moving from Talk to Action,” Tri-County Community Leadership Program, Wood College, Mathiston, MS — February 11, 2005


“Breaking Walls, Building Bridges: How Social Scientists Can Improve Their Relevance to Rural America,” Food and Resource Economics Department Seminar Series, Gainesville, FL — March 11, 2005

“The Challenges and Needs Associated with University Engagement” Panel Member, North Carolina State University Outreach and Engagement Conference, Raleigh, NC — April 27, 2005


“The Adoption of the Internet/E-Commerce Strategies by Rural Businesses: A Case Study of the Mississippi Delta Region,” Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society, Tampa, FL — August 9-11, 2005

“Rural America’s Economic Challenges and Opportunities: What Role for Researchers and Practitioners?” Annual Meeting of the Anthropologists and Sociologists of Kentucky, Western Kentucky University — September 30-October 2, 2005

**FY05 Presentations by Alan Barefield, SRDC Associate Director**

“Value Added Agriculture,” Presentation at the 2005 NACDEP Conference, Las Vegas, NV — February 17, 2005


“RCCI Report to the Nation,” Presentation at the 2005 RCCA National Conference, Duluth, MN — September 12, 2005

“The Delta Context: A Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile of the Mid-South Delta Region,” Presentation to the Deep South Delta Consortium, a convening of Delta policy makers organized by Senator Robert Jackson, Greenville, MS — November 5, 2005

“Greene County Economic Development Opportunities,” Presentation to Greene County policymakers and stakeholders, Leakesville, MS — March 24, 2005

“Marshall County Economic Outlook and Profile,” Presentation to the Marshall County Economic Development Summit, Holly Springs, MS — April 28, 2005

“Healthcare - A Link to Community Economic Wellness,” Presented to the Mississippi Rural Health Association, Raymond, MS — November 8, 2005
“Disaster Planning for Agritourism Enterprises,” Presented to the Mississippi Association of Agritourism Enterprises, Mobile, AL — December 7, 2005


**FY05 Presentations by Mark Harvey, SRDC Postdoctoral Research Assistant**

- Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society — August 2005
- Roundtable presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association — August 2005
We are striving to be proactive... planning a bright future for the rural South.
Cooperative Extension Curriculum Project (CECP)

CECP is a multi-state curriculum development project for Extension in the Southern Region. The initial focus is curriculum for professional development competencies. Supported by the Association of Southern Region Extension Directors, the 1890 Extension Administrators and the Southern Region Program Leadership Network, the intent of this project is to increase the breadth and quality of training while using human and financial resources more efficiently. The SRDC has taken on the role of coordinator for the curricula being developed by the CRD program leaders. The SRDC is currently assisting with the following CECP courses:

- CARE for Your Local Economy: Strategies for Local Economic Development
- Ca$hing in on Business Opportunities: A Guide to Building a Home-Based and Micro-Business Program
- Introduction to Watershed Management
- Mapping the Assets of Your Community: A Key Component for Building Local Capacity

Community Development Certification Program

Land-grant universities in the Southern region of the United States have demonstrated increased interest in expanding their work in the community development arena. They have done in response to the expanded demands by their constituencies for assistance by the Extension Service in addressing the variety of challenges impacting the long-term well-being of their rural communities. Unfortunately, the fiscal challenges present in many land-grant schools in the region have made it near impossible to hire Extension educators with advanced degrees in community development or related fields of study. As such, Extension educators with an interest, but limited formal training, in community development are accepting the challenge to support the information, education, and technical assistance needs of rural communities in their states.

In an effort to strengthen and promote the community development competencies of Extension educators in the South, the SRDC has been working in tandem with land-grant specialists across the region in the design and delivery of a comprehensive set of courses targeted to Extension educators. An important companion effort is now underway involving the SRDC and the Southern Region Community Development Program Committee. They are working jointly to establish a “Community Development Educator Certification Program” that when launched, will offer a formal mechanism for recognizing Extension educators who have completed a established course of study in community development. The key elements of the certification program will be completed in FY06 and will submitted to the 1862 and 1890 Extension leaders for their formal review and endorsement.
SRDC Strategic Planning

Document the Impact of Past SRDC Efforts
The SRDC will continue documenting the impact of its regional activities. To accomplish this, the Center is working with a team of evaluation experts in the region to address the accountability needs of the SRDC through the development of success stories on recent activities coordinated by the Center. Moreover, an effort will be made to build an accountability database that will facilitate the collection and reporting of quantitative information of outputs and outcomes.

Implement New Strategic Planning Effort
In order to remain relevant to the needs of the region’s land-grant university system and other rural development stakeholders in the region, the SRDC is launching a strategic plan that will involve key land-grant and non-land grant partners in the South. The intent will be to develop and pursue rural development research and outreach education activities that are in line with the high priority rural development challenges facing the region. This important effort, supported with seed funding provided by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, will serve as the building block for the Center’s priority activities over the next 3-5 years.
Our Center continues to capture and distribute Extension and research funding at a record pace.
FY05 Funding
The SRDC has enjoyed another year with sizable levels of extramural funding. In FY05, extramural funding exceeded $1 million. The SRDC is grateful to the agencies and organizations that have made a financial investment in the important work of the Center.
Trends in Extramural Funding, FY98-05

The following chart highlights the level of extramural resources that the SRDC has been able to secure over the past eight years. Total extramural funds generated by the SRDC over this eight-year period has now exceeded $5.1 million.
The Southern Rural Development Center is one of four regional centers coordinating rural development research and Extension education programs cooperatively with the land-grant institutions regionally and nationally. The Centers’ are supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.