

ORGANIZING TO USE THE FEDERAL FUNDS
FOR RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND TRAINING

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We have reached, and we may have passed, the critical point in organizing to use the funds for research, development, and training available under the 1963 Vocational Education Act.

Although we had plenty of warning, we have seemed to be surprised that large amounts of money have become available. Most departments of agricultural education are not organized to take advantage of the new funds. Because they are not, control over research related to agricultural education may pass to the agencies within our institutions that have traditionally conducted research. This is especially likely because the new legislation encourages participation by economists, sociologists, psychologists, and others outside vocational education. Their participation is needed and welcomed but we must ensure that the new ventures are closely related to the schools and departments of education.

Agricultural educators will not get very far in using the new funds if they operate in isolation. They must become identified with broad programs of research, development, and training in occupational education which, in my mind, includes vocational and technical education, occupational counseling, and those phases of general education (including the practical arts) which have a bearing upon occupational competence. These programs cannot be developed without the help of our colleagues in the related sciences.

The advantages of close association with specialists in related fields are well illustrated here at North Carolina State. For many years Dr. Selz Mayo, Head of the Department of Sociology, has worked closely with the staff in Agricultural Education. Psychology is in the School of Education, making possible close relationships. For sixteen months I worked in the Agricultural Policy Institute, which is associated with the Department of Economics.

When the time came to consider the use of federal research and development funds, the Graduate Dean called together a high-level group from Education, Agriculture, Sociology, and Economics, who were enthusiastic about taking advantage of the new legislation. Responsibility for developing project proposals was delegated to a committee of four headed by Dr. George S. Tolley, a top-ranking professor of Agricultural Economics. Two from Education and one from Sociology were included in the planning committee, which will work closely with the Director of Research of the School of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The power structure of the institution was well represented in the decisions that were made.

The possible scope of the new program is such that a special agency is needed to conduct it, one closely associated with a school or department of education but able to use the resources of all schools and departments. A policy committee for the agency should include representatives from several colleges. An advisory committee is needed that is representative of the state department of education, other state higher institutions with stakes in occupational education, teachers, administrators, and lay citizens.

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An especially difficult problem is posed when the various forms of occupational education are dispersed among several higher institutions, as they are in North Carolina. The cooperation of all must be sought although a center for research, development, and training is needed in only one institution. Persons from two or more institutions may be included in conducting some projects. Some projects can be sublet by the center to other institutions. It is especially important that the Negro institutions be not overlooked in shaping the new structure.

The new agency should be set up to receive funds other than those from the federal government as well as federal funds.

The three functions of research, development, and training should be balanced and integrated. Care must be taken that the funds do not fall entirely into the hands of those interested only in research.

Special personnel for the new agency will have to be employed. Some can be transferred from existing departments in an institution but more will usually have to be brought in from the outside. The shortage of trained personnel for positions in an agency of this type is one of the problems our profession must face.

For decades I have complained that our federal vocational education acts made no adequate provision for research and development. Now that the 1963 Act does, are we equal to the challenge?