

Project/Activity Number: NE1749

Project/Activity Title: Enhancing Rural Economic Opportunities, Community Resilience, and Entrepreneurship

Period Covered: 10/1/2019 - 9/30/2020

Date of This Report: 7/2/2021

Annual Meeting Date: 5/4/2021

Location: Virtual

Participants:

Heather Stephens, West Virginia University, President
Craig Carpenter, Michigan State University and Texas A&M University, Secretary/President-elect

Yong Chen, Oregon State University
Liz Davis, University of Minnesota
Steven Deller, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Stephan Goetz, Penn State University
Jamie Greig, University of Tennessee
John Halstead, University of New Hampshire
Ayoung Kim, Mississippi State University
Dayton Lambert, Oklahoma State University
Sarah Low, University of Missouri
Wayne Miller, University of Arkansas
Dawn Thilmany, Colorado State University
Philip Watson, University of Idaho
Brian Whitacre, Oklahoma State University

Brent Elrod, NIFA
Peggy Brennan, Rutgers University, Administrative Advisor

Brief Summary of Minutes from Annual Meeting:

Each participant gave a brief update about the work being done at their university and their collaborations related to NE 1749. The notes from that are listed below.

After the updates, there was a discussion about opportunities going forward for the group. This led to a discussion about the need to help with planning and implementation support for the stimulus funds being disseminated throughout the country. Members in Colorado, Wisconsin

and elsewhere are seeing this need. There may be an opportunity to leverage the relationships from this group to help with this.

The group also deferred a decision on the next meeting until we find out more about in-person meetings and travel.

Finally, the group needs to nominate a new secretary and president-elect. Nominations were submitted and a vote will take place in July to determine who will fill this role.

Notes from Meeting (by attendee):

Craig Carpenter (Michigan State/Texas A&M):

- USDA NIFA-funded project: Economic Opportunity Mapping coming to close
 - With Rebekka Dudensing (Texas A&M), Scott Loveridge (Michigan State), Linda Niehm (Iowa State), and Anders Van Sandt (Wyoming)
 - Extension:
 - <https://communities.tamu.edu/economic-opportunity-maps/>
 - https://www.canr.msu.edu/economic_development/economic-opportunity-maps/
 - <https://www.uwyo.edu/uwe/economic-opportunity-maps/>
 - Articles
 - Health services locational choice:
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/hec.4242>
 - Bunch of other industries, review articles, spin-offs forthcoming
 - Measurement Error in U.S. Regional Economic Data forthcoming in JRS
- USDA NIFA-funded project: Military Veteran Entrepreneurs
 - With Charlie Tolbert, John Anders, Michael Lotspeich, and Adam Ingrao
 - Extension curricular development (how can communities support their vet entrepreneurs)
 - Working papers on long-term effects of military enrollment
 - Delays at NIFA transferring grant from TAMU to MSU

Dawn Thilmany (Colorado State):

- Half faculty and half in Extension and engagement at CSU
 - Turning Extension into faculty lines
 - CEDI with Stephan Weiler
- EDA grant with CARES dollars
 - Entrepreneurship
- USDA grant local and regional food system supply chains
 - Consumer survey
 - With Stephan Goetz and others

Peggy Brennan (Administrative Advisor):

- Internal advisor of the multi-state project
- Please emphasize work with other members of this group

Sarah Low (Missouri):

- Local food work with Dawn
 - Pre-COVID work with Dawn Thilmany on establishment dynamics and entrepreneurship in local food
 - Post-COVID work on online sales
 - AEPP
- Work with Steve Deller, Tessa Conroy (Wisconsin), Brian Whitacre on broadband
 - COVID emphasized
 - Triage on business side
 - New products for Wisconsin and Missouri
 - Journals articles and economic impacts of broadband
- New with COVID; EXCEED
 - Biweekly 2-page briefs
 - Social media
 - SBDC connections
 - Morphed into a newsletter around themes combining research and Extension topics

Stephan Goetz (Penn State):

- Determinants of spatial variation life expectancy by genders with Heather Stephens
 - <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277953619307543?via%3Dihub>
- Starting work with Steve Deller on female farmers
- Food insecurity and supply
 - Emotional analysis
- Special issue on Choices
 - Rural areas one year after the pandemic
- Resiliency
 - Religiosity
 - Latent innovation in local economies
 - https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048733319302276

Steve Deller (Wisconsin):

- Farm structure
 - COVID increase interest in food supply issues
 - Interest in trying to foster smaller scale establishments
 - Concentration of small-scale establishments and fostering resiliency
 - Finding that there is a hollowing out of the distribution of farms
- EDA

- The level of the professionalism in reports
- Hired professional publishers and designers to help
- Broadband
 - Tessa Conroy, Sarah Low, and women entrepreneurship
- Social capital work with John Halstead
- Entrepreneurship work with
- Student debt
- Access to healthcare and rural labor productivity
- Project with Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative (network of health providers)
 - Want to be more proactive with rural economic develop
 - Developing series of extension programs to help them with that
- Housing
 - Lots of Extension work
 - Housing stock in rural Wisconsin either poor or old

Philip Watson (Idaho):

- Education level
 - Can a region be over-educated?
 - How interact with amenities and entrepreneurship
- With Greg Alward
 - Generating multi-regional industrial reports from QCEW
 - “unsuppressed algorithm”
 - Goal to generate social accounts for every county
- How do people set economic goals for themselves?

Brent Elrod (NIFA):

- NIFA: focusing on the rebuild
 - Hiring an economist in KC
- Grant season
 - New administration stood up an econ development team internally
 - Considering stakeholder listening sessions this fall (no dates yet)
 - Provide feedback to NIFA priorities

Liz Davis (Minnesota):

- Shifted from labor market focus to studying childcare
 - COVID shifted focus to childcare being a critical infrastructure need
 - Though even before pandemic there were child care shortages especially in rural areas
 - Working with state of MN
 - Looking at areas where there were shortages of childcare and the effect on labor supply
 - Mapping of childcare access

Brian Whitacre (Oklahoma State):

- Broadband
 - With Steve Deller, related to rural entrepreneurship
 - Now focusing on policy evaluation
 - Hotspot lending – huge during pandemic
 - Laptop drives (donating laptops)
 - Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (starts May 12):
<https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit>
- Partnering with Alison Davis (Kentucky) to look at electronic health records. Reduce costs for urban hospitals, but not for rural hospitals
 - Looking at rural health services closures

Ayoung Kim (Mississippi State):

- Alternative heat and power facility
 - Interdisciplinary work with engineering
 - Looking at rural areas and locational choice modeling
- Resiliency and extreme weather events
- Heirs' property law and racial inequality – just getting started
 - Financial literature education
- Broadband policy in Mississippi – also just getting started

John Halstead (New Hampshire):

- Down to 2 faculty members with COVID buyouts
- Local agriculture and COVID shopping patterns
- Submitting Federal State Marketing Improvement Program from AMS grant on marketing
- Project on social capital with Steve Deller
- Journal of Agribusiness article on restaurant and local purchases survey

Jamie Greig (Tennessee):

- Looked at broadband and digital access effects on
- Project with Soybean board and Peanut board
 - Gathering data on board members access to internet
 - Are they digitally ready to take on certain technology?
 - What holding them back
 - How can we increase access?
 - Other commodity groups also interested
- Internet and home energy technology
 - (gap in access to smart energy metering technology)
 - Energy and internet access and burdens related to income disparities
 - International survey including Scotland

- With public health
 - Information access and health access
 - How internet access impacting diabetes management
 - Looking at intersection between prevalence of high mortality illnesses and physical/digital services.
 - Making index

Dayton Lambert (Oklahoma State):

- Project with student on Oklahoma's international port and river system
 - Expanded study to Colorado, Kansas and Arkansas
- Influence of property taxes on rental rates

Wayne Miller (Arkansas):

- Economic development, local government, and public policy
- Primarily extension working with communities develop regional plans and economic opportunities
- Published biannual Arkansas rural snapshot publication
- Economic impact of COVID on rural economic communities

Yong Chen (Oregon State):

- Project with student, resilience to natural disasters
 - Place-based resilience to hurricanes
 - Even though some hurricanes are more severe, as a system, the impact can be relatively limited due to interactions within local economies
- Project with Bruce Weber
 - Impact of skill sorting in rural context and protection of natural amenities
 - Partly due to limited housing price response
- Project looking at regional economic impact of integrating wind energy into current power system
 - Increases capacity available in region and also introduces uncertainty
 - Impact of uncertainty can sometimes outweigh the increased capacity because need more reserves

Heather Stephens (West Virginia):

- With Steve Deller looking at labor force participation rates
- Also, with Steve Deller, looking at working from home (big issue due to COVID)
- Impact of COVID on new business formation (with Mark Partridge, Ohio State)
- Project working with five female doctors at WVU
 - In 2019 almost no telemedicine, but switched to almost all telemedicine
 - Effect of internet access
- Project with Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) looking at entrepreneurship

Accomplishments:

The group has previously identified the following focus areas: 1) Rural Entrepreneurship and Community Well-being; 2) Community Resilience; and 3) Energy and Land Use policies in rural areas. In the past year, the group has made substantial contributions to the academic literature and in disseminating the findings of these studies.

1. Rural Entrepreneurship and Community Well-Being

Researchers in Michigan, Texas, Colorado, Missouri, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Idaho, Ohio, and West Virginia are engaged in research related to rural entrepreneurship and community well-being.

Researchers from Michigan and Texas are working on a funded project related to veteran entrepreneurship, who account for over one in ten rural entrepreneurs. Researchers in Idaho and Wisconsin are looking at rural entrepreneurship in general. Researchers from Missouri, Wisconsin, and Oklahoma have examined the link between broadband availability and entrepreneurship. Researchers from Missouri and Colorado explored the emergence of food manufacturing startups in rural America pre-COVID, which positioned them to quickly address disruptions to local food supply chains in the COVID period. Researchers in Wisconsin and Missouri have an ongoing research program related to female entrepreneurship, including an examination of how female entrepreneurs are affected by broadband availability. Researchers in Wisconsin have been looking at how to foster small scale farm establishments due to a hollowing out of the distribution of farms. Researchers in West Virginia have been examining how entrepreneurs can contribute to economic growth in lagging rural regions, in collaboration with the Appalachian Regional Commission. Researchers in West Virginia and Ohio have also been looking at the role of COVID in creating new business startups and researchers in West Virginia and Wisconsin have been looking at examining the factor associated with working from home, which was highlighted during the COVID crisis. Researchers in Minnesota examined the factors associated with the decline in the number of licensed family child care providers (child care entrepreneurs) and worked with a group of local experts to develop a model of financing for early care and education in Minnesota.

Researchers from Pennsylvania, Michigan, and West Virginia examined the spatial differences in the determinants of male and female life expectancy. They find that community characteristics are important in determining life expectancy and that there may be a role for policy makers in addressing factors that are associated with lower life expectancy in some regions. Researchers in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania are engaging in a research collaboration to investigate the impact of female farmers on community wellbeing. This research is a continuation of a previous project that looked at the role of female farmers in the United States by researchers in Pennsylvania. Researchers in Pennsylvania, with advisory input from colleagues in Colorado, are working on a NIFA funded project, which aims to develop and disseminate practical information that will allow rural communities and owners of small and medium-sized farms to benefit from the

growing consumer interest in on-farm experiences. Researchers in Minnesota have been working on budget forecasting which can affect the money available for community development which is similar to the work being done in Arkansas to understand local public financing. Researchers in Texas, Michigan, Iowa, and Wyoming have created economic opportunity maps, which are now used by Michigan State University Extension, University of Wyoming Extension, and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. This project involved extensive research with federal administrative data leading to several (new or forthcoming) publications and to the creation of online and interactive maps specific to various industries. Researchers in Wisconsin and New Hampshire are examining the role of social capital on community well-being.

2. Community Resilience

Researchers in Idaho, Wisconsin, Texas, Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Colorado, Arkansas, Oregon, and West Virginia conducted research related to community resilience. Specifically, researchers in Texas and Michigan joined the Community Resilience Estimates team at the U.S. Census Bureau as consultants. Individual and household characteristics from the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) were modeled, in combination with publicly-available data from the 2018 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), to provide tract and county level estimates. Researchers from Mississippi, Oregon, and Michigan have been looking at resilience related to extreme weather events and natural disasters.

Several researchers conducted COVID-related policy impact analyses related to rural-community well-being and resilience, including teams from Missouri and Colorado, and Missouri and Arkansas. In Arkansas, the research was focused on local public finance effects from COVID, including the distribution of federal relief funds.

In partnership with the USDA Ag Marketing Service, researchers from Colorado, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky are exploring Local and Regional Food Systems resilience during COVID. So far, there have been many Extension/Outreach oriented materials and webinars.

3. Energy, Land Use, and Rural Development

Researchers in Ohio, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Oregon, and West Virginia have been examining issues related to energy and land use.

Specifically, researchers in Ohio are working on a project examining the demographic and community well-being impacts of the shale oil and gas boom. Using proprietary data on well-level oil and gas production in the U.S., they are examining the impact on human capital formation, migration decisions, opioid overdose deaths, marriage and fertility decisions, as well as the distributional impacts. Researchers in Oklahoma have been looking the ports and river systems and their impact in Oklahoma and other regions. Researchers in Mississippi have been examining location siting for alternative heat and power facilities that could generate significant economic development impacts. In Oregon, researchers are doing similar work, but focusing on wind energy. Researchers in Ohio and West Virginia examined the impact of shale gas drilling on housing values.

Impacts and Indicators:

In the past year this project has led to several media articles about project members. Members also recreated a number of reports that were disseminated within their states related to their work. The following is a partial list of media coverage related to this project.

1. <https://news.psu.edu/story/611083/2020/03/09/research/community-factors-influence-how-long-you'll-live-study-shows>
2. <https://news.psu.edu/story/649290/2021/03/01/research/new-study-examines-importance-and-unique-characteristics-us-female>
3. <https://www.agdaily.com/lifestyle/study-shows-unique-characteristics-female-farmers/>
4. <https://news.psu.edu/story/625451/2020/07/09/research/researchers-create-roadmap-fostering-successful-agritourism>
5. <https://www.magzter.com/stories/Business/Central-Florida-Ag-News/Exploring-Agritourism>
6. <https://minnesotareformer.com/briefs/minnesota-researchers-craft-proposal-to-guarantee-child-care-for-all/>
7. Blog post by Elizabeth E. Davis, March 23, 2021 "Even Before the Pandemic, Child Care Finances Were Broken." (The Gender Policy Report: genderpolicyreport.umn.edu)
8. November 21, 2020. "Missouri Farmer Today, Missouri's rural communities find ways to thrive."
Available at: https://www.agupdate.com/missourifarmertoday/news/state-and-regional/missouri-s-rural-communities-find-ways-to-thrive/article_c7a219c6-291d-11eb-ad68-ef24015b4ffd.html
9. July 23, 2020. "The Check-In: Rural Towns Getting By." Call-in show, hosted by Janet Saidi, KBIA (Missouri Public Radio). <https://www.kbia.org/post/check-rural-towns-getting#stream/0>
10. Colorado ag experts commend industry's 2020 'resiliency,' anticipate innovative 2021. Quoted in article by Josue Perez. Montrose Press. Dec 4, 2020.
11. Farms Are Becoming Popular Staycation Destinations. Quoted in Modern Farmer article by Lindsay Campbell. <https://modernfarmer.com/2020/07/farms-are-becoming-popular-staycation-destinations/>. Jul 19, 2020
12. US meat plants close, but supply strong for grilling season. Interview with Breitbart News. April 2020. Online at: <https://www.breitbart.com/news/us-meat-plants-close-but-supply-strong-for-grilling-season/>
13. Farmworkers risk coronavirus infection to keep the U.S. fed. Interview with National Geographic. April 2020. Online at: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/04/farmworkers-risk-coronavirus-infection-keep-us-fed/>
14. Farmers markets get creative in midst of pandemic. Interview and policy brief cited in Ag Journal. March 2020. Online at: <https://www.agjournalonline.com/news/20200327/farmers-markets-get-creative-in-midst-of-pandemic>

15. As Coronavirus Ravages Businesses, Small Farms and Independent Restaurants Rally for Economic Relief. Interview and policy brief cited in: Civil Eats. March 2020. Online at: <https://civileats.com/2020/03/24/as-coronavirus-ravages-businesses-small-farms-and-independent-restaurants-rally-for-economic-relief/>.
16. “Some States’ Unemployment Claims Surged as National Rate Fell.” By Gwynn Guilford. April 23, 2020. The Wall Street Journal. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/some-states-unemployment-claims-surged-as-national-rate-fell-11587681889>
17. “How long will it take for small businesses to recover from pandemic?” By Suzanne Elliott. The Dominion Post. April 18, 2020. <https://www.dominionpost.com/2020/04/18/how-long-will-it-take-for-small-businesses-to-recover-from-pandemic/>
18. “WVU economist discusses vulnerabilities that could hinder economic recovery in the state.” By Rodney Lamp. WBOY-TV Online. April 3, 2020. <https://www.wboy.com/news/health/coronavirus/wvu-economist-discusses-vulnerabilities-that-could-hinder-economic-recovery-in-the-state/>
19. “Colorado homes near oil wells face lower values, new study finds.” By Aldo Svaldi. The Denver Post. December 8, 2019. <https://www.denverpost.com/2019/12/08/colorado-homes-near-oil-wells-lower-values/>
(Also ran in The Sacramento Bee, The San Antonio Express News, and The Charleston Gazette.)
20. “Study shows shale development adversely affects home values.” The Dominion Post. November 18, 2019. <https://www.dominionpost.com/2019/11/17/wvu-study-shows-shale-development-has-negative-impact-on-home-values/>
21. “Report: Oil, Gas Drilling Impacts Housing Prices.” By Jess Mancini. The Intelligencer/Wheeling News-Register. November 20, 2019. <https://www.theintelligencer.net/news/top-headlines/2019/11/report-oil-gas-drilling-impacts-housing-prices/>

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