REQUEST TO ESTABLISH THE CENTER FOR RURAL STUDIES
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE
NORTH DAKOTA INSTITUTE FOR REGIONAL STUDIES

1. Proposed Center Name:
   Center for Rural Studies

2. Center Address:
   Institute for Regional Studies
   College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences
   North Dakota State University
   Fargo, ND 58105

3. Center Telephone Number:
   701-231-8338

4. Proposed Center’ Directors and Formal Titles:
   Dr. Gary A. Goreham
   Associate Professor of Sociology
   North Dakota State University

   Dr. Curtis W. Stofferahn
   Associate Professor of Sociology
   University of North Dakota

5. Who has the authority to commit the proposed Center to financial obligation:
   The Center directors, Director of the Institute for Regional Studies (Dean of the College
   of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences), the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the
   President of North Dakota State University.

6. Describe the proposed Center organizational structure:
   The Center for Rural Studies will be a component of the North Dakota Institute for
   Regional Studies. It will be administered by a Director and Co-director, both appointed by the
   Dean, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AH&SS).
   An advisory board, comprised of six to ten members, will be selected by the Dean,
   College of AH&SS to provide guidance to the Center. Board members will serve two-year,
   renewable terms. The board’s responsibility is to provide advice and recommendations to the
   Center’s Co-directors. The board will meet twice each year, and be organized with a president,
   vice-president, and secretary. These officers may meet on a more frequent basis with the
   Center’s Co-directors.
   Associates of the Center will include agriculturalists, social scientists, and humanities
   scholars throughout the Northern Plains states and Canadian provinces, with particular
   representation from North Dakota.
See Figure 1 for an organizational chart.

7. Will there be an advisory committee/council? If so list areas of representation:
The advisory board will include individuals who have expertise in rural social science, agricultural science, arts, and humanities, end users of the information collected by the Center’s members, and major contributors to the Center.

8. Mission, Goals, and Objectives of the Center:
The purpose of the Center for Rural Studies is to enhance the quality of life of rural residents of the Northern Plains through coordinated research and information dissemination efforts. The Center’s purpose will be accomplished through the following five objectives:
   1. The Center will stimulate and facilitate coordinated, multiuniversity, multidisciplinary multistate/province applied research projects pertinent to the social, economic, demographic, political, and cultural aspects of the Northern Plains. Participation in the Center is intended to be as broad and inclusive as possible. Cooperation among the region’s other institutions of higher education will be strongly encouraged.
   2. The Center will develop a network of research findings users who will recommend and support rural research projects.
   3. It will disseminate social and agricultural sciences, arts, and humanities information and research findings pertaining to the rural residents, communities, and social institutions of the Northern Plains.
   4. The Center will convene conferences and offer presentations pertaining to Northern Plains rural social science and humanities concerns.
   5. It will assist rural social and agricultural scientists and arts and humanities scholars to locate funding for research projects.

We anticipate that some of the activities of the Center for Rural Studies could include the following:
   1. Establish guidelines and policies for the Center, Center-sponsored research, and Center-sponsored publications.
   2. Build a network of regional rural social and agricultural scientists and arts and humanities scholars.
   3. Build a network of research findings users who will suggest and support research projects.
   4. Establish a research agenda toward which the Center’s members will be encouraged to work.
   5. Conduct a conference/symposium to discuss research agendas and funding sources.
   6. Seek funding for the continuation of the Center for Rural Studies.
   7. Conduct a Rural Life Poll to determine baseline conditions of North Dakota rural residents.
   8. Publishing the findings of the Rural Life Poll through the North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies.
   9. Establish a listserv consisting of rural residents, leaders of farm/rural organizations, agency heads and program administrators, legislators, and congressional staff for running conversations on rural issues.
10. Prepare a website with connections to rural organizations and agencies in North Dakota, the region, and nation. The website would include position and opinion papers on various topics available for downloading.

Potential research agenda items include, but are not limited to:

Agricultural Policy and Trade
Churches
Community and economic development
Coping with rapid change
Crime
Environmental
Families
Health
Impact of globalization, devolution, etc.
New generation co-ops
Poverty
Preparing for the 21st Century
Race and ethnicity
Rural industrialization
Rural institutions
Social capital
Sustainable agriculture
Sustainable communities
Technology
Value-added agriculture
Voluntary organizations
Waste siting
Welfare

10. Does establishment of the Center duplicate or enhance any existing NDSU programs? If so, how?

Although the Center for Rural Studies could have content-related overlap with some NDSU programs (e.g., Quentin N. Burdick Center for Cooperatives and the Northern Plains Policy Research Center), the Center for Rural Research will enhance the efforts of existing programs. The Center for Rural Studies is intended to be broad in its composition (multiuniversity, multidisciplinary, and multistate/province) and broad in its content (social, economic, demographic, political, and cultural aspects of the Northern Plains). The proposed center can draw existing programs together to address some of the major, multifaceted issues facing the Northern Plains and use the tools of existing programs (e.g., Group Decision Center and Center for Social Science Research). Additionally, the Center for Rural Studies will involve programs throughout the region, such as the Manitoba Center for Rural Development, Institute for Great Plains Studies in Winnipeg, and the Great Plains Institute in Minneapolis.
Identify and explain relationships to other institutions, agencies, and/or academic departments.

The focus of the Center for Rural Studies is to address issues facing the Northern Plains from a multiuniversity, multidisciplinary, and multistate/province perspective. Thus, faculty and specialists from institutions, agencies, and academic departments throughout the North Dakota University System and the region will be invited to participate in research and information dissemination.

11. Identify and explain relationships to state or federal programs.

The Center for Rural Studies will be instrumental in drawing together agriculturalists, social scientists, and humanities scholars from the Northern Plains states and Canadian provinces to determine research needs, obtain funding, conduct research projects, and disseminate the results. Much of the determination of research needs will be based on the end-users of research, such as government agencies, private organizations, and social service agencies. Partnership relationships will be forged with the end-users by including them in developing research agendas. They will, thus, be instrumental in helping to seek grant funding. Examples of agencies that have expressed a strong interest in the Center for Rural Studies include the US Department of Agriculture, North Dakota Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, Department of Social Services, Job Service North Dakota, Rural Electric Cooperatives, North Central Center for Rural Development, and congressional offices.

12. Give an assessment of the potential value to both the University and other clientele:

A Rural Research Symposium was held at North Dakota State University in October 1998 to determine the interest and feasibility of a Center for Rural Research. Over 39 people attended the symposium including the organizers (Gary Goreham and Curt Stofferahn), two introducers (Larry Isaak and Tom Riley), two funding source panelists (Cornelia Flora and Bob Koopman), six research end-users, and 27 attendees. The attendees were led through a series of exercises to determine the topics they believed would be the most urgent on which research should be conducted. Some of the leading topics included: (1) long-term economic viability and sustainability; (2) job opportunities; (3) effective leadership, partnership, and cooperation; (4) vision of what is possible to achieve in the region; (5) infrastructure for health care, legal services, etc.; and (6) agricultural sustainability.

All those in attendance were asked to complete an evaluation form. The results are displayed in Figure 1. Two-thirds of the respondents found that the symposium was “very useful” in stimulating multidisciplinary, multiuniversity research. Nearly half (47%) said the symposium was “very useful” in generating new research ideas. Nearly half of them said the symposium was “very useful” in providing opportunities to network with other researchers (47%) or with end-users of research (47%). The visit to the Group Decision Center was “very useful” to 42% of the respondents. Forty percent found the amount of information provided “very useful”, and 20% found the opportunity to network with funding agents to be “very useful”. Nearly 80% said they would be inclined to attend next year if the Center for Rural Studies sponsors a Rural Research Symposium, and 86% would recommend the symposium to others.
13. Compare the Center’s objectives with alternative means of achieving the same objectives:
To the best of our knowledge, no other program in the region currently is based on multiuniversity, multidisciplinary, and multistate/province research.

14. How will you evaluate the effectiveness of the Center in terms of costs, stated objectives, and benefit to clientele and university?
Although some start-up seed funding will likely be sought, the Center should be self-sustaining. An evaluation of the cost of the Center will be based on its ability to obtain funding for its functions. The Center’s directors will prepare a set of goals to accomplish each year, and an annual evaluation will be conducted to determine the degree to which those goals have been met. The results of this evaluation will be submitted to the Directors of the Institute for Regional Studies.

15. What are the funding requirements (both immediate and future)? Will the Center use appropriated (hard) monies and/or grants and contracts (soft) monies? Will there be special conditions or restrictions on funding?
Funding ($3,400) was obtained from the ND-EPSCoRE, Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs to conduct the 1998 Rural Research Symposium. We anticipate that similar symposia will be conducted each year at about the same price. Additionally, secretarial/administrative assistance will be required, the estimated cost of which will be $2,950 per year. Other funding depends on the projects which are initiated. For example, the Rural Life Poll will cost $10,000. Thus, the base funding for the Center will be $16,350. We anticipate that the Center will use (soft) monies from grants and contracts.

16. Will the Center have statutory authority?
No.

17. Are there any other anticipated relationships between the Center and the administrative structure of the University?
No.

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**Figure 1. Attendees' Evaluation of Symposium (in %)**

- Stimulated multidisciplinary research
- Generated research ideas
- Network with researchers
- Network with end-users
- Visit Group Decision Center
- Amount of information provided
- Network with funding agents

0 20 40 60 80 100

[Very useful] [Somewhat useful] [Not useful]
18. What are the Center’s space requirements? How will they be met? The Center would be virtual in that only limited physical facilities are anticipated at this time.

19. What are the Center’s staffing requirements? How will they be met? The co-directors are faculty in the departments of sociology at NDSU (Gary A. Goreham) and UND (Curt Stofferahn). Secretarial/administrative assistance will be obtained through the NDSU Department of Sociology/Anthropology.

20. What are the Center’s equipment requirements? How will they be met? The Center will use the equipment currently available through the departments of sociology at NDSU and UND. Departmental computers will be used to develop and maintain an Internet website.

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APPROVALS

Proposer                               Vice Pres. for Business & Finance

Department Chair                      Vice Pres. for Academic Affairs

College Dean                           President