

Developing Diverse Leadership

Summary of Significant Trends:

Strong communities are places where natural, built, financial, and social resources are utilized, and are also places where the capacities of local individuals are identified, valued, refined, and mobilized. North Carolina is experiencing rapidly changing demographics. North Carolina population grew by over 21% between 1990 and 2000. This represents one of the highest growth rates of any state in the US (2000 Census data). Along with growth, the state has experienced great ethnic diversification. The numbers of whites and blacks have both decreased in NC in the past 10 years, while the number of Hispanics and other races has risen (1990 and 2000 Census Data). With these significant shifts in demographics, there is a growing need for new leaders that represent these emerging groups of society as well as an underdeveloped leadership force in many North Carolina communities.

A growing need for leadership development is evident in the demographics as well as in the changing nature of the problems community leaders are asked to address. "The great majority of public problems have no straight forward definition of the problem or diagnosis of a solution. These are murky issues like reducing drug abuse, improving the lives of children and families, or educational reform. [S]olutions will not come from the traditional power structure working alone, but rather from those most affected by the issue." (Pew Partnership for Civic Change,

2003). Due to these changes, leadership may need to be more of a "plaza than a pyramid" (Pew Partnership). Individuals within communities must develop the skills and capacity to work in collaborative groups to address these complex problems and improve the quality of life.

Lastly, the sheer percentage of the community population engaged in leadership roles needs to increase. Research has found that "communities where public life is vibrant have very different kinds of leaders, and a great many of them. You might say that they are 'leaderful,' with leadership and initiative expected of everyone" (Kettering Foundation). This will require a great deal of leadership development effort to actualize.

Relevance of Trends to County Programs:

Leadership development work is a hallmark of Cooperative Extension. As community problems become more complex and the diversity of populations needing representation grows, Extension must increase its efforts in training new leaders.

Solving community problems requires the talents and resources of all community members. Experiences in leadership development and community capacity building have been unavailable to or underutilized by all community members. Both leadership development and commu-

nity capacity building are key factors in the development and sustainability of communities that support families.

Programs that teach how to communicate effectively with and mobilize people from different cultures will be very important. We will also need to increase our understanding of leadership styles and practices across cultures. Informal leadership networks will need to be better understood and built upon.

We need to not only assess what communities now need, but what new abilities, resources and qualities our new demographic groups bring to the table. Only through developing leadership across groups within our growing demographics will we be able to meet the increasing demands and realize the immense benefits that our new diversity affords.

Sources of Supporting Data:

North Carolina Child Trends

<http://www.ncchild.org>

CYFERnet: <http://www.cyfernet.org/>

U.S. Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov/>

Sustainable Measures

<http://www.sustainablemeasures.com/>

Office of State Planning:

<http://www.ospl.state.nc.us/>

Pew Partnership

<http://www.pew-partnership.org>

National Issues Forum <http://www.nifi.org/>

Kettering Foundation <Http://www.kettering.org>

Independent Sector <http://www.indepsec.org>

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