



**The West Virginia Extension Experience...  
A Powerful Tonic Blending Workforce  
Preparation, Economic Development,  
and the Engaged University**

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*“Contributing to the well-being of small towns and rural communities.”*

*“The West Virginia Extension Experience . . . a  
Powerful Tonic Blending Workforce Preparation,  
Economic Development, and the Engaged  
University”*

BACKGROUND PAPER

(prepared by Lawrence S. Cote and Dennis R. Godfrey)

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# **A Powerful Tonic Blending Workforce Preparation, Economic Development, and the Engaged University**

**Lawrence S. Cote**

## **Introduction**

Good afternoon. With your permission – as I have always done before teaching a class – let me first state my biases so you can keep them in mind today. I want you to understand that all I say is affected by these predilections.

- 1) I believe leaders make a difference.
- 2) I have an integrated systems point of view, increasingly blended with great respect for community-based learning and collaboration.
- 3) I have a total university – not just Extension – point of view about workforce development.
- 4) My comments related to West Virginia University-wide outreach, extension, and public service are based in the belief that many (maybe most) Research I land-grants need to undergo significant culture change to be effective, and even to survive in the new knowledge-based economy, the new Information Age.

Workforce development has, in a short period, become a topic of much discussion and interest for many of us in higher education—and in extension and outreach units specifically. Not that it's a new area of work for us; youth development through our 4-H programs and other special youth initiatives has been one of our primary program efforts in the Cooperative Extension System. Fee-based programs for business and industry are a mainstay of continuing education programs. These experiences for youths teach the “soft skills” many employers seek and build self-confidence--attributes critical for success in today's marketplace. Rather, the current environment is one that challenges us to respond in new, bolder ways, whether our state is at full employment, has high unemployment, is in the middle.

This afternoon, I would like to do two things. First, I want to share with you the importance of workforce development as viewed by employees and employers, and how it relates directly to the challenge that the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities has set forth for higher education to better serve students and society. Along the way, I'll share some information about the current climate of the economy in the Northeast.

Second, I'll try to stimulate ideas for collaborations to develop state and multistate initiatives by sharing with you some early workforce-related collaborative programs under way in West Virginia.

## **Part 1—Importance of Workforce Development; Future of State and Land-grant Universities**

For public universities, workforce development has been a part of what we do as educators ... although often we have not termed it “workforce preparation.” We teach, we attempt to instill lifelong learning skills, we help students lead fuller lives, and **yes** we help them acquire gainful employment upon leaving our institutions.

But workforce development has taken on an expanded meaning. In a letter from West Virginia University President David Hardesty to a member of his University System’s Board of Trustees who was inquiring about University’s workforce development programs, Hardesty wrote:

“I believe that workforce development involves the process by which a worker, at any level, acquires the ability to learn job skills and make wise career decisions, thus helping to provide the employing community with a knowledgeable and valuable workforce. Such career-enhancing experiences may be connected to workforce training, formal education, or other experiences that are sought by the worker or the employer. To put it another way, ‘Training and workforce development are those activities, informal and formal, designed to improve on job performance or enable a learner to acquire a new skill’ (Collier 1996). In its fullest context, workforce development includes three phases: being able and ready to learn; pre-career/job learning; and career-long learning.”

So, what are some of the workforce issues that relate to public universities in our time? After all, our nation has been enjoying unprecedented economic growth, the unemployment rate is low overall, and prosperity – for the most part – bounds, at least when compared to the last three decades. Where is the disconnect between jobs and qualified employees?

I live and work in a state that traditionally has had one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. In August of this year, West Virginia’s unemployment rate was about 6 percent, the lowest it’s been since 1978. Still, in interviews in all of our counties this past summer, voters identified jobs as among their top issues.

The number of jobs in West Virginia stood at over 728,000 in August, up from 599,000 in 1987, an increase of nearly 22 percent. But job growth – reflecting a booming national economy – is uneven in West Virginia. According to the state’s Bureau of Employment Programs, high unemployment remains in very isolated, very rural counties.

West Virginia also is experiencing a problem that other states share – the lack of high-paying jobs. While this problem may be most severe for youths graduating from high school, it’s an issue that affects all age groups.

National, regional, state, and local economies are facing an increasing crisis in workforce development—the process of identifying and developing the skills needed by businesses, nonprofit and government employers, individuals, communities, and other social institutions. Technological advancements in all

economic sectors have accelerated the need for improved technology and business skills among workers at all levels. Lifelong learning is now necessary – **not** optional in – order to obtain and maintain these skills.

*What Business Wants From Higher Education*, according to research conducted by the American Council of Education (ACE) in 1997 (and published in a 1998 book under that title by Diana Oblinger and Anne-Lee Verville), are employees who are “problem solvers, problem identifiers, and strategic brokers. Employees need to be prepared for an environment that demands of them speed, agility, and flexibility!”

Are today’s higher education students prepared for this? Not well enough, according to many experts. Oblinger and Verville put it this way:

“New hires have little understanding of the role of the corporation. They do not have the flexibility required to function effectively in it. And they lack the critical skills: listening, communicating, defining problems, leveraging the skills of others in teams, functioning effectively in an ambiguous, complex and rapidly changing environment.”

This ACE study further reported that,

“A chasm separates the academic and corporate worlds. Corporate leaders are convinced that university employees—including administrators and faculty members—do not understand the requirements of the private sector and the need for students to be better prepared for the demands of a changing global economy. Academic leaders are equally sure that corporations have little respect for the campus and that U.S. universities are, in fact, world class. Recently employed alumni value their college experiences but report that they had too little direction and guidance in choosing and preparing for a career.”

It seems that we have widespread agreement about one thing: The key to economic growth and a stable society is a highly educated population. Business sees higher education’s importance continuing to grow as the world’s economic strength is increasingly based on an Information Age model. It’s estimated that 80 percent of the jobs in the United States within the next 20 years will be cerebral and only 20 percent manual—exactly opposite of the ratio in 1920. College-educated employees are generally more self-assured and have a better idea of how to think things through. However, business leaders question whether higher education can provide: (1) employees who come to business ready to work; (2) teachers who can help youth in grades K-12 achieve educationally, and (3) a system of lifelong learning (Oblinger and Verville).

Let’s look at another area where workforce training is critical—equipping former welfare recipients with the skills to acquire, maintain, and advance in the workplace. As folks in Extension know, welfare caseloads have dropped dramatically in recent years, yet it is acknowledged that former welfare recipients face serious problems as they enter the world of work. A July 1999 publication of the Southern Rural Development Center notes that: (1) 50 percent of parents nationwide who left welfare rolls in August 1996 have no documented job to date;

(2) low wages for many who have secured jobs are leaving them in poverty; (3) there are few opportunities for former welfare recipients to move up the career ladder; and (4) few have jobs that offer benefits such as leave or health insurance.

Educational level and work-related experiences determine the quality of jobs the welfare recipients are able to secure. As we know, funding support for training this clientele will be distributed in new ways within states beginning July 1, 2000, under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). As we know from our conference here in New Hampshire, the goals of the WIA are, in part, to invest in workforce efforts that:

- 1) increase the employment, retention, and earnings of participants;
- 2) increase occupational skill attainment;
- 3) help improve the quality of the workforce; and
- 4) reduce dependence on welfare.

Dillman, Warner, Christenson, and Salant concluded in a 1995 survey that:

- 1) lifelong learning has become a reality for most Americans;
- 2) getting educated once is not enough in our knowledge-based economy;
- 3) teaching conducted only in the traditional campus classroom will not meet the public's demand for tailored educational services;
- 4) distance education strategies have the potential to overcome significant barriers to lifelong learning;
- 5) although lifelong learning is a reality for most Americans, some people are losing out; and
- 6) public support exists for universities, and land-grants in particular, to do more than educate 18 to 22-year-old undergraduates.

The report further noted that despite the interest in lifelong learning on the part of many potential customers, most colleges and universities have shown little interest in meeting this demand!

#### **b. Relating this to the future of state and land-grant universities, Kellogg Reports**

Given this context, how do we view the role of land-grant universities—and extension and outreach educators within them? Since the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 that created the Cooperative Extension Service, this national system has operated on the belief that human progress can be enhanced if the products of research are translated to lay language and made available to individuals for decision-making (a linear model that is being replaced by a more dynamic, interactive model, simultaneously doing teaching, conducting research, and making applications to real problems—all for the public good).

Today across America, the role of state and land-grant institutions—indeed, of all public higher education—is being reexamined. “Engagement of society” **more fully** is a prominent call to action sweeping across our country. The third report by the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities –

known as the “Returning to Our Roots” series – introduces the concept of “engagement.”

It says...“Engagement goes well beyond extension, and conventional outreach, and even most conceptions of public service. Inherited concepts emphasize a one-way process in which the university transfers its expertise to key constituents.”

But, as this report points out, the public is frustrated with higher education and with what is perceived to be our unresponsiveness to the “real problems of real people.”

Against this backdrop, many of our institutions are defining their commitments differently across all three core missions—teaching, research, and public service. Our leaders are calling for a shift from one-way communication to a two-way partnership. David Hardesty of West Virginia University interpreted this for his institution by noting in his “State of the University Address” earlier this year:

“An engaged university is an institution that has live, two-way, mutually respectful, on-going exchanges with other institutions and enterprises. Engagement today emphasizes partnerships – mutually beneficial collaborations with business, industry, school systems, the health and social service sectors, and government.”

This Kellogg Commission national “call for action” says that engaged institutions are those that look at their three-fold mission from the perspective of addressing community needs and, in the process, change the culture of their university. The report notes:

“By engagement we refer to institutions that have redesigned their teaching, research, and extension and service functions to become even more sympathetically and productively involved with their **communities**, however community may be defined.... The engaged institution must . . . (1) . . . be organized to respond to students’ needs . . . (2) . . . enrich student’s experiences (3) . . . put its critical resources (knowledge and expertise) to work on the problems faced by the communities it serves.”

At WVU, we view greater commitment to workforce development as very consistent with becoming a more engaged university...more engaged with society. Our state demands it!

Another of our institutions in the Northeast, Penn State, represents its role in workforce development as one that needs to be owned and integrated throughout the university. I quote from their June 1999 Report of the Workforce Development Task Force, prepared by the Penn State Coordinating Council for Outreach and Cooperative Extension:

“The potential for two Pennsylvanias is a distinct possibility – one Pennsylvania that reflects the creation of new wealth from a vibrant, competitive, emergent economy and another Pennsylvania that is increasingly isolated and vulnerable. . . . As Pennsylvania’s land-grant university, Penn State has a responsibility to actively participate in the

economic and social development of the commonwealth . . . . Workforce and economic development need to be identified as a University-wide, interdisciplinary strategic initiative.”

Our states’ governors are realizing the critical need to better link public university capacity across all three missions. Governor Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania has placed a high priority on workforce and economic development. He has said:

“To make Pennsylvania the national leader in job growth is a primary goal of my administration. Jobs are my number one priority. Retaining jobs that pay a living wage to Pennsylvania’s workers and creating jobs for the future of our state is key to our future success as a state.”

In my home state, one of our strongest private-sector leaders promoting vigorous economic and workforce development is Dennis Bone, CEO and president, Bell Atlantic of West Virginia. Dennis has observed that:

“In 1994, 3 million people were Internet users. That number has grown to approximately 100 million, with on-line traffic doubling every 100 days. This digital economy offers incredible growth opportunities to **qualified** businesses and individuals. But note, the emphasis being on ‘qualified’.”

Mr. Bone feels acutely the national crisis in the lack of information technology workers. Dennis chairs the Education Committee of the West Virginia Business Roundtable. Last year that group co-hosted (with the W. Va. Human Resources Investment Council) a first-ever statewide summit on workforce development needs. The research done for that summit was conducted by a WVU 501.c3 affiliate (the Center for Entrepreneurial Studies and Development), headed by a WVU professor of industrial engineering, Jack Byrd. Mr. Bone also had a major role in assisting the Governor’s Office—the state’s Science and Technology Council—develop a first-ever state strategic plan for the growth of science and technology businesses (an effort also well supported by numerous WVU faculty and senior administrators).

The shortage of qualified information technology workers nationally is staggering, and it’s projected to get worse. The U. S. Department of Commerce says 1.3 million additional information technology workers will be needed over the next 10 years. And make no mistake – these are high-quality jobs. In Pennsylvania, data from 1996 show average wages in the information technology industry were \$44,000 or 57 percent higher than the average private-sector wage of \$28,000. Again, referring to my state, the per capita income for 1997 was \$18,700. The mean annual income for information technology workers in West Virginia that year was \$42,290.

The Kellogg Commission has just released its fourth report *The Learning Society*. It notes that:

“To the demands of a changing workforce opportunities to continue their education and the pressures produced by an accelerated pace of technological change must be added to the increasing demands for professional continuing education, which are driven both by ambitious,



conscientious professionals and by state mandates....Our job in this emerging Information Age is two-fold. ...we must ensure that the remarkable growth in demand for education throughout the lifetime of virtually every citizen can be satisfied...we must demonstrate that we can meet this need at the highest level of quality imaginable, along with the greatest efficiency possible.”

In our business of outreach, extension, continuing education, and distance education, we must begin to eliminate the silos created by our turf-oriented, exclusive—rather than inclusive—self-descriptive language.

I am slugging my way through a new book by Lester C. Thurow, economics professor and former dean of the Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His observations are stimulating, alarming, and challenging. He describes a broad range of issues regarding what he terms the “third industrial revolution in America” — the emergence of a true knowledge-based economy. Regarding workforce skill requirements of this new age, Professor Thurow suggests:

“ A knowledge economy requires two interlocking but very different skill sets. **Knowledge creation** requires highly educated creative skills at the very top of the skill distribution. **Knowledge deployment** requires widespread high-quality skills and education in the middle and bottom of skill distribution (by the way, reducing the need for unskilled workers dramatically and quickly)...education and skills in the bottom two-thirds of the workforce are as important as skills and education in the top one-third. Neither can reach their potential without help from the other.... **the education and skills acquisition system will have to become something quite different in the twenty-first century.**”

Now let me bring the matter closer home. Let’s look at just a few stats about the Northeast states’ economies.

### **Welfare Numbers:**

We are well aware that the number of persons on the welfare rolls has been reduced significantly nationwide since the passage of welfare-to-work legislation in 1996. Using numbers that reflect the families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (AFDC/TANF), we see, for example, that Maryland’s welfare recipients have been reduced by nearly 50 percent, from 80,256 to 42,113; Connecticut dropped from 161,317 families to 72,112; New Jersey shows a 40 percent decrease from 100,000 to 60,000 families; and Pennsylvania’s welfare caseload has decreased by 41 percent (531,000 to 312,000). Each of our states has seen reductions of that magnitude.

### **Unemployment Numbers:**

In the case of unemployment stats, you can see why we in West Virginia are focusing on this topic. Of the twelve states and the District of Columbia in our Northeast USDA region, only one state reports counties with unemployment over

10 percent. Eleven of the 55 counties in West Virginia had more than 10 percent unemployment, based on August 1998 statistics. Yet West Virginia's overall unemployment rate, as stated earlier, is at a 20-year low – about 6 percent (about the same level as the District of Columbia's). On the other end of the spectrum, four of the thirteen reporting jurisdictions show unemployment figures under 4 percent for the entire state. These are Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. In these states there is essentially full employment – likely, statewide – more jobs than there are qualified applicants.

The next group is five states reporting relatively low unemployment in about 75 percent of their local government jurisdictions: Maryland, Maine, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont. District of Columbia aside, the three remaining states in the USDA-designated Northeast region—New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia—may be, as we say in the Mountain State, “profoundly regional” in nature, at least in relation to riding the current long-run wave of prosperity. We each have wide variances within subregion economies in our states.

Does this mean only those states with comparatively high unemployment need to have their postsecondary education shoulder to the workforce development wheel? Not at all. In West Virginia, we have reason to be heavily involved in workforce development at both ends of the spectrum—from the high unemployment of our southern coal fields to the booming, more-jobs-than-qualified-people regional economy of our Eastern Panhandle, a full participant in the current boom in the Northeast and the nation. Labor shortages and job shortages are part of the complex mix we face as key players in helping our states establish and/or maintain stable and more diversified economies.

## **Part 2: West Virginia's (and Other States') Workforce & Economic Development Initiatives**

The second part of my conversation with you today — and one focus of the organizers of our conference here in New Hampshire — is to (paraphrasing from the brochure) “stimulate ideas for collaborations to develop state and multi-state initiatives.” I wish I had more to share regarding multistate initiatives. Frankly, I would cite this conference as an important, well-conceived first step.

With your permission, I will try to stimulate our thinking through a description of programs under way at West Virginia University – some institution-wide initiatives and partnerships and some specific to WVU Extension.

By the way, one indicator of “effort” in this arena is to look at sponsored projects for last year. At WVU, we were somewhat surprised and pleased to find that of all 1998-99 sponsored projects, about \$5.5 million were for “training-related awards”, representing 6 percent of total WVU extramural funding that year.

In August 1998, our University first stated a vision for our efforts in this arena. That vision statement is:

## Overhead #1

**“Workforce development at West Virginia University is a system: an integrated, relevant set of services and programs throughout the state that meet the changing needs of the current and emerging workforce. These services and programs are delivered in a timely way in full partnership with local communities and with school, other postsecondary, labor, government, nonprofit, and business organizations.”**

We at WVU believe that workforce development has some key characteristics. There is a debate under way in our state about who, if anyone, in higher education other than community colleges, ought to be involved.

## Overhead #2:

### Workforce Development is about:

- **Leadership development**
- **Continuum of services**
- **Everybody’s job**
- **Reaching consensus, integrative thinking, collaborative action**
- **Delimiting definitions likely a mistake**
- **Higher education institutions: differing capabilities and unique strengths**  
“...the issue is how each and every one of our institutions will address it”
- **Beginning with the end in mind**

A national study by Tony Zeiss revealed twelve key workplace skills employers value and how they view the order of importance of these skills. Those skills, in order of importance, are:

## Overhead #3:

### ***The 12 Essential Laws for Getting a Job and Becoming Indispensable* by Tony Zeiss**

- |                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. <b>attitude</b>               | 7. <b>action orientation</b>    |
| 2. <b>communication</b>          | 8. <b>organization</b>          |
| 3. <b>work ethic</b>             | 9. <b>consistency</b>           |
| 4. <b>teamwork</b>               | 10. <b>continuous learning</b>  |
| 5. <b>problem-solving</b>        | 11. <b>academic credentials</b> |
| 6. <b>customer-service focus</b> | 12. <b>experience</b>           |

Note that the Top 10 are “soft skills” ... and Zeiss’ list is in priority order in the eyes of employers included in his national study. WVU’s Center for

Entrepreneurial Studies Development (CESD) found comparable data in a 1997 study, with our state employers wanting:

- basic skills, such as mastery of English comprehension and writing, information technology, and analytical thinking;
- general job skills, such as communicating, working in a team, personal self-discipline, having a good work ethic, being honest, being familiar with technology, etc;
- specific job skills, or mastery of the requirements of a specific job; and
- job learning skills, or the ability to learn across a lifetime of work, thus acquiring ever-advancing skills.

Through an e-mail survey of the Extension directors in the Northeast over the past few weeks, we asked what they saw as the top 5 to 10 skills people will need to be economically successful? The responses mirrored Zeiss' work and what we found in West Virginia. Among the most prevalent responses: communications skills (computer, writing and speaking); interpersonal skills; critical thinking. Receiving the highest marks was "the ability to work with people" that requires self-confidence, communications and teamwork, and the personal skill set that includes responsibility, time management, and decision-making.

We believe there are at least four major areas in which extension and outreach organizations can provide impactful assistance:

**Overhead #4:  
Extension and Outreach Initiatives:**

- **Developing youths capacity**
- **Improving workers' skills and productivity**
- **Improving community economic viability**
- **Building the workforce and economic development infrastructure – including through statewide and multistate links, and at the community level**

Here are just a few selected examples of some of our efforts. Regarding youth capacity:

- **Educating Child Care Providers**
  - FBI–Clarksburg; Hardy, Marshall county child care centers
  - A county agent advising the Governor's office on legislation re: in-home child care providers (we still like the term "county agent")
- **Enhancing Youth Literacy**
  - Energy Express
  - Read-Aloud
  - After-School Programs
  - 4-H programs

*Energy Express* is a summertime reading program, beginning its sixth year, for at-risk youths of elementary school age. Conducted in 38 of 55 counties in 1999

with close to 4,000 participants, the program is led by the Extension Service with support from 16 collaborating agencies. It concentrates on ensuring youths are able and ready to learn key workplace skills.

Adult literacy is not being addressed by Extension in West Virginia. It represents a major impediment to workforce development and an opportunity for Extension to assist.

In my conversations with other extension directors in the Northeast in recent weeks I learned of a very interesting Youth Entrepreneur Program (offered in Connecticut) called R.I.S.E. (Respect and Integrity through Skill and Education). This program develops the “soft skills” that I’ve mentioned. Maryland has developed a mentor program to meet the needs of adults transitioning off welfare assistance into self-sustaining employment.

On the matter of improving workers’ skills and productivity:

- Fire Service, Labor Studies and Research, Safety and Health
  - Focus on small businesses, on-site
  - Leadership development
  - Reduce property loss, labor disputes, and accidents

*Fire Service:* Each year more than 13,000 fire fighters and emergency responders throughout the state improve their skills through training offered by WVU’s Fire Extension Service. These programs help fire department personnel meet national certification standards and enhance their ability to protect people and property in their communities.

You have already heard from Scott Loveridge about a number of our Extension programs focused specifically on community economic viability:

- First Impressions
- Community Design Team
- Recruitable Communities Program (in partnership with WVU Health Sciences Division)
- Others

*First Impressions for Businesses (New):* In one West Virginia community, we will introduce a First Impressions program for businesses next month. This is a community that is trying to keep many **local businesses** alive as a new Wal-Mart store opens in January 2000.

Under the First Impressions for Business program, selected University personnel anonymously visited the community to assess the strengths and weaknesses of local merchants – the image they portray through customer-friendliness and special services.

Among our potentially most impactful efforts in **all** of our states is our ability to build economic and workforce development infrastructure. In West Virginia...

- W.Va. Clearinghouse for Workforce Education
- W.Va. Human Resources Investment Council (Pennsylvania, too.....)

- New WVU offices of economic development and technology transfer
- Wood products development
- WVU, through its College of Agriculture, Forestry and Consumer Sciences and its Extension Service, is one of five partners in a new state alliance: the **West Virginia Wood Industry and Training and Technology Assistance Consortium, Inc.**, an initiative of the Governor's Office. Joining WVU in this new endeavor are the Division of Forestry, the W.Va. Development Office, the Wood Technology Center in Elkins, and the U.S. Forest Service. The mission of the consortium is to "train West Virginians to achieve high quality wood products; to transfer technology to industry; and to advise wood industry managers about industry trends and practices."

In addition to these programs that address community, individual, and organization workplace skill development, WVU Extension either hosts or supports a variety of engagement-related activities that have important impact on workforce development. A number of these impacts are tangential to one-on-one skill development but are important ingredients in the mix.

#### **Overhead #5:**

##### **Other Selected Workforce Development and Engagement Initiatives**

- **Mountaineer Parents' Club**
- **Spring 2000 W.Va. Conference: Core Academics Workforce Development**
- **Annual W.Va. Outreach and Public Service Conference**
- **55 "WVU and You" County Forums and a statewide citizen survey**
- **Kellogg national consortium: the W.Va. Expanded Community Partnerships**

I would like to end this discussion by offering a few comments on partnering and collaboration opportunities, including barriers and constraints to multistate workforce development initiatives as well as opportunities. Here, too, I will draw upon our experience in West Virginia.

#### **Overhead #6:**

##### **Workforce Development Collaborations**

- **Community colleges**
- **1890 land-grants**
- **Independent institutions**
- **Multistate issues**
  - ***Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin Consortium*** is an example of four states, **West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, and the federal government joining**

**together to address the issue of water quality and employment that emanate from this river basin area. The important consortium is currently chaired by WVU's economic development director and senior adviser, Scott Rotruck.**

**- Each of our states' competitive, inherently jurisdiction focus . . . issues of multistate regionalism**

- **Private sector and government**

One additional area of collaboration – within state and land-grant institutions and multistate – is research. This has been implicit is much of what I have said throughout this talk. Focused research on a variety of topics is key to a better understanding of what works and what doesn't in worker education and of changing regional and subregion employer needs for a labor force. Policy research to inform local, state, and national decision makers and myriad other problem-oriented research are another key way state and land-grant colleges and universities can meet workforce development needs.

In closing this afternoon, I want to recognize that each of our states – and our public universities and our statewide extension and outreach organizations – will answer this contemporary “call to arms” within the parameters and priorities of our communities, as we each may define community . . . local, state, regional, international. Yet I agree with Peter Magrath, president of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), when he suggests that economic development and its key corollary, workforce development, may have replaced the Cold War as the number one issue for ensuring America's national security. The capabilities of our public higher learning institutions – in particular their outreach and extension arms – and their capacity to engage communities, must rise to the call for action to be part of aggressive workforce development. It is a major example wherein “engaging society” and partnering will have significant impact in the public's interest. Such activity is closely aligned with our other strategic commitments as extension and outreach organizations.

#### **Overhead #7:**

**The West Virginia Extension Experience...  
A Powerful Tonic Blending Workforce Preparation,  
Economic Development, and the Engaged University**

Indeed this educational and training effort in each of our states can be a powerful tonic blending workforce preparation, economic development, and the engaged university. Thank you.

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