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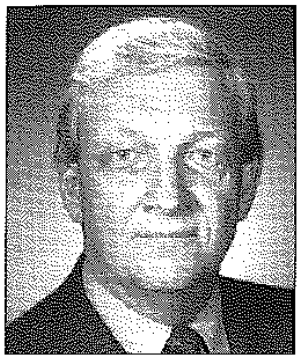

Extending the Humanities and Social Sciences in North Carolina

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During the past decade the Humanities Extension Program in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at North Carolina State University has evolved into the Humanities Extension/Publications Program. The story of this particular development is a model of educational vision, hard work, and exemplary success through engagement.

In response to our record and the achievements of the more traditional and widely recognized extension units on campus, the university faculty and administration long ago set up recognition programs, including financial awards. Also, more recently, NCSU established an Academy of Outstanding Faculty Engaged in Extension. It is also true that faculty members who achieve excellence in this part of the university mission are regularly selected to receive the highest honors conferred by special faculty panels and the Board of Trustees. Our rewarding work both completes and renews the vital tasks of research and teaching on our campus and in our world.

With the falling apart of the Soviet Union, Humanities Extension Co-Director Joseph P. Mastro, a Sovietologist, saw that both his academic discipline and the social studies textbooks about Europe and Asia for public schools students would be out of touch with reality. So he remodeled his career through his bold and visionary commitment to extension. Working with me and other campus colleagues and a group of consultant teachers from across North Carolina, he created an up-to-date sixth-grade social studies textbook titled *Living in Europe and Eurasia.* It was adopted by the North Carolina Textbook Commission in 1992 and became the preferred social studies text in virtually every sixth-grade classroom in North Carolina. Thirteen original videos shot on location abroad and produced by Professor Jim Alchediak supplemented the text. In March 1993 the North Carolina General Assembly acknowledged the success of this ambitious engagement of our land-grant university with the state's public schools by mandating that Humanities Extension produce new social studies textbooks and videos for grades 4, 5, and 7 as well as a new edition of the sixth-grade text for the next state adoption cycle in 1997. Seed money accompanied this

legislative mandate, and work on the new books and tapes began immediately, even as the sales of the Mastro book enriched both the professor and Humanities Extension.

Professor Mastro died unexpectedly in December 1993 of a heart attack. He was fifty-two. His ambitious project immediately became an inspiring memorial embraced by me as his co-director and by Dr. Burton F. Beers, the professor of history and vintage textbook veteran who became chief executive editor of the new four-book series to be called *Living in Our World.* Professor Alchediak continued in his role as the project's videographer.

NCSU addes the word Publications to Humanities Extension at this time as new consultant teachers, faculty, and staff worked with us and university administration to meet the 1997 deadlines for the completion of the four mandated books. Editors Chris Garcia and Gail Chesson joined the effort as news about the exciting developments spread into the classrooms of the state and into the world of corporate publishing. As a result, unprecedented teacher in-service workshops for the wise use of the anticipated books and tapes began while the writing and editing were still underway. Acknowledging the superior design and substance of our texts, the School Division of Macmillan/McGraw-Hill obtained a license for the sale and distribution of the *Living in Our World* series in the state rather than compete with North Carolina State University, the copyright holder, for the in-state market at grade levels four, five, six, and seven.

Our partnership with corporate publishing, with selected public school consultants and teachers and within the university, enabled the College of Humanities and Social Sciences to meet the legislative mandate, win adoption, and sell more than eleven million dollars in new textbooks in North Carolina. Schools in every system in the state bought classroom sets of at least one of our new books; two-thirds of the systems bought sets of all four. More than 320,000 boys and girls are studying these texts. Supplemental videotapes for all grade levels followed. Further, NCSU has cash reserves to produce new editions as well as new books for other grades and subjects.

In public-educational terms, what is the meaning of the realization of Professor Mastro's extension/publications vision as it materialized under my direction and the editorial wizardry of Professor Beers and our staff? Some of the answers we know. For the first time in the history of North Carolina, adopted social studies textbooks for grades four, five, six, and seven meet exactly the standard course of study set forth by the State Board of Education. In other words, global economics and geography in the context of cultural diversity are presented at grade level for our children who live in our world. What Humanities Extension/Publications has produced and put into classroom service in this decade is unprecedented in the United States.

The model developed at North Carolina State University is now ready for the rest of the country to consider. We are eager to engage with colleagues in other states to describe our success in providing

print and video educational services to public school teachers and students.

Of course there is much more to Humanities Extension/Publications than the model social studies textbook/video project. The adaptations that typified Professor's Mastro's career path and our quick adjustments at the time of his tragic death also can be found in the earlier phases of this dynamic program, beginning in the late 1970s.

In those years our college did not organize its extension and outreach activities, but Dean Bob Tilman saw that founding an extension program in the humanities and social sciences would enhance the college's role both within the university and across the state. He worked with the National Endowment for the Humanities to fund a unique statewide program in which this college and NCSU's Agricultural Extension Service collaborated in bringing four-session, public, free seminars to the residents of North Carolina. Selected professors from the college faculty were employed to lead the first and fourth sessions on topics such as "First Amendment Freedoms," "Charles Dickens," or "The Small Town in American Literature." Extension agents at the county level booked meeting rooms, supplied refreshments, and registered local participants. Using outlines and original videotapes supplied by Humanities Extension, local discussion leaders selected by the county agents led sessions at two and three of these early seminars, the primary object of which was to move individual minds. The program was the first of its kind in the nation.

Registered for these public discussions of topics in the humanities and social sciences were adults of all ages and means, but increasingly prominent among them were public school teachers. These men and women found the substance of the reading materials, videos, and discussions far superior to the usual in-service diet offered by a local school system for their recertification. Before long the call came for Humanities Extension to provide certificate-renewal credit to teachers who completed our seminars. Next came requests for videos to supplement each seminar as curriculum materials for classroom use and for seminar faculty members' lectures to public school students and their special in-service workshops for teachers. Simultaneously, funding for this popular new extension program had been added to the university's state appropriations, and NEH designated it as a national model. Success created mountains of work.

While increasing the number of topics offered to general audiences through public seminars, Humanities Extension also responded to urgent requests from teachers. It set up an at-cost curriculum materials service for its print and video productions; established a newsletter called "We're Your Place;" and founded, with corporate support from Glaxo and Burroughs-Wellcome, a public school outreach program. By the mid-1980s these developments were dramatically increasing the college's presence across North Carolina

among the public schools and the general public. The curriculum of public seminars now included more than forty topics, and the annual census of separate seminars and teacher workshops reached adults in all of the state's one hundred counties. Outreach classroom visits by college faculty have averaged more than three hundred each school year; in 1998-99, they rose to 570.

Our annual summer writing camps for middle school boys and girls were first organized by me in 1987 in cooperation with county 4-H agents. These activities spread statewide in the 1990s and exerted a direct influence on the state's camping curriculum as writing became a regular activity for campers. Since 1997, Humanities Extension/Publications has earmarked textbook royalties to make grants to county and to state-level camps to support writing instruction and fund the development of a standard curriculum.

Civic-education initiatives in the public schools, healthful-living outreach for at-risk youth, and celebrations of county culture through public seminars and follow-up publications are three additional examples of how the adaptive engagement of the program has determined its exciting evolution with youth and adults. Likewise, routine in-service teacher workshops have developed occasionally into ambitious summer institutes, as when a group of our textbook-consultant teachers spent a month in Russia and another group came to our campus in Raleigh from across the state to reshape the world-literature curriculum for North Carolina tenth graders. Our recently completed fourteen-week workshop in Spanish language and culture for Cooperative Extension field faculty in thirteen eastern counties piloted a curriculum that will be introduced to the state's other extension districts where the Hispanic and Latino presence is dramatically enriching our traditional Tar Heel culture of work, worship, leisure, and learning.

In looking back over my more than three decades of faculty engagement at North Carolina State University, I cherish the actions little and large that have allowed me to spend my career on the campus I first knew as a 4-H member from a very rural county. Success in club projects enabled me to attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on a national 4-H scholarship. During and after completing graduate work in English at Duke University, I rose in the ranks here at NCSU, where public service was both expected and rewarded. I never applied for a job elsewhere. Here I have won recognition for my teaching and research as well as for my extension work. I am as fulfilled working among residents in the counties of the state as I am teaching students in the seminar rooms of the campus. If my discipline is English, my devotion is to learning — lifelong and formal as well as informal. Other faculty who may be unaware of 4-H can have an equally rich career because the excitement and enrichment of going out to the public awaken in most of us a sense of enlargement and commitment that makes what we read and write mean more than it meant before. When we engage the public at its own places and its own terms we return to

our campus with a more energetic sense of who we are, from where our traditional students come, and where we are going together. We see and think more relevantly because these engagements leave us more tolerant of ourselves and others and more eager to learn by doing. Thus our extension work gives us new ideas and purposes for research — new scholarly endeavors. And this drill keeps our learning and teaching fresh and vital.

Any young faculty member, therefore, who shuns extension assignments or opportunities because they may not contribute to promotion and tenure as readily as teaching and research is not nurturing a fully healthy mind and imagination. I would like to take him or her on a trip.

During July 1999 I led a group of four older and fully initiated North Carolina State University faculty members on an engagement with Kyrgyzstan, a former Soviet Republic in Central Asia. We chose this country because an agricultural economist from Bishkek, its capital, had visited our state and campus in July 1998. He helped us to coordinate our plans and met us in Kyrgyzstan this summer as we undertook our mission: to make a video documentary of his country as a supplement to our sixth-grade social studies textbook. Recalling how the disintegration of the Soviet Union had affected the destiny of Humanities Extension by significantly intensifying out publications activity, I am struck by the appropriateness of our focus on this republic as it tries to adjust to its own new era and responsibilities.

Our documentary, in fact, will tell North Carolina sixth graders about the very difficult transition Kyrgyzstan has been undergoing. The scripted video will be both beautiful and sad. For cultural geography in that part of the world relies on stupendously lovely mountains and equally wrathful rivers, hot desert sands, and disoriented if attractive citizens with willing hearts and sufficient literacy but little productive work beyond agriculture. Lots of leisure, little direction, American popular music and dress, and crowded street markets occupy them daily at the end of our century and millennium. In short, the sun is still going down in Kyrgyzstan. Morning still seems years away as the infrastructure at the top of the world loses power to potholes and politics. Men and women trained as doctors arrange tours for international visitors; engineers work as van or truck drivers.

North Carolina State University has extended itself into this beguiling human space and brought back for our students a different vision of everyday reality. Yet the feeling our exceptional experience produced in us four older faculty is the same feeling we have when we go to work in one of our own North Carolina towns or villages for a seminar or an outreach visit and return to campus. There is more exciting work to be done. And we feel the urge to get going — again. ■

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About the Author

Dr. Jim Clark (Ph.D., Duke University) is professor of English and director of the Humanities Extension/Publications Program at North Carolina State University. He holds degrees from UNC-CH and Duke and has served as president of The Thomas Wolfe Society. He is on the steering committee of the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame. Among his publications are numerous articles and video documentaries as well as three books: a history of 4-H in North Carolina, a bicentennial oral history of Raleigh, and an edition of Thomas Wolfe's novella *The Lost Boy.* He has won teaching, research, and extension awards in addition to the R. Hunt Parker Award given annually by the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association. In 1999 he was selected to receive the Alexander Q. Holladay Medal given for professional excellence by the NC State University Board of Trustees.