Understanding Cooperative Extension Directors' Conceptualizations of, and Perceived Roles in, Internationalization

Benjamin Bryant Grove

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
In
Planning, Governance, and Globalization

Max O. Stephenson, Jr. Committee Chair
Thomas G. Archibald
Todd Schenk
David J. Kniola

November 6, 2025
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords:
Cooperative Extension, internationalization, higher education, community education, leadership

Understanding Cooperative Extension Directors' Conceptualizations of, and Perceived Roles in, Internationalization

Benjamin Bryant Grove

ABSTRACT

The Cooperative Extension System has been engaged in internationalization for decades. Ludwig and Barrick (1996) outlined five indicators of an internationalized Extension system. In the broader higher education literature Knight (2003) has conceptualized internationalization as a process. Extension directors have been identified as key leaders of internationalization within the Extension system. This dissertation investigated directors' conceptualizations of internationalization and their roles in such pursuits. I conducted semi-structured interviews with directors from across the U.S. to ascertain their understanding of internationalization as a phenomenon. I used Knight's (1994) internationalization cycle as a primary analytic framework and also drew on additional arguments from the higher education and Cooperative Extension System literatures. The study participants revealed a lack of a shared definition of internationalization. They articulated a perceived imperative that domestic audiences receive the primary benefits of internationalization and financial considerations as prevailing lenses for considering engagement in such initiatives. They suggested process-based, position-based, rationale-based, and system leadership-based rationales for such efforts. They also acknowledged the mediating impact of university priorities and resources on whether their systems would become involved in internationalization.

Understanding Cooperative Extension Directors' Conceptualizations of, and Perceived Roles in, Internationalization

Benjamin Bryant Grove

GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

The Cooperative Extension System has engaged with international audiences for decades. Ludwig and Barrick (1996) outlined five indicators of an internationalized Extension system. In the broader higher education literature, Knight (2003), has conceptualized internationalization as a process. Meanwhile, Extension directors have been identified as key leaders of internationalization within the Extension system. This study explored how directors view and understand internationalization and their roles as leaders in pursuing it. I conducted semi-structured interviews with directors from across the United States to learn about their understanding of internationalization as a phenomenon. I used Knight's (1994) internationalization cycle as a framework and drew on rationales from the higher education and Cooperative Extension System literature as well. The study participants did not share a common definition of internationalization. Directors were clear that benefit to domestic audiences and financial considerations were core influences on their decision making about internationalization. They articulated process-based, position-based, rationale-based, and system leadership-based rationales for pursuing internationalization. They also acknowledged the impact of university priorities and resources on whether their offices pursued such initiatives.

Dedication

To the people who work to improve the lives of others, at home and abroad, many of whom they'll never meet.

Acknowledgements

When you first meet someone, you cannot predict the impact they'll have on your life. However, during the first session of the first class I took with Max, I knew he was someone I could learn a great deal from, and soon after, I asked if he would be my advisor. He has been a constant, understanding, and insightful supporter during my studies. I will simply say a heartfelt thank you for the many ways he has helped me make sense of life during the time we have known each other. To my entire committee, I thank you for your encouragement, your patience, and your ideas. It has been my pleasure to learn alongside you and from you during this process.

To Ed Jones, thank you for interest in the topic and your willingness to open doors and encourage your colleagues to participate. To John Vreyens and the late Michael McGirr, thank you for the wealth of information you shared. I would not have been able to gain as rich an understanding without the context and historical information you shared. To Lindy Cranwell, thank you for checking in and gently pushing me to see this through.

Finally, to my family, thank you for graciously permitting me to spend so much time for so many years on this project. Thank you to Hudson, Finley, and Wells for asking me how my dissertation was going and always being positive, and for being sensitive when I was discouraged. To Lindsay, I could not have done this without you. You have modeled resilience and perseverance in a way that continually inspires me. Your no-nonsense approach to completing the work provided endurance when I struggled. This would not have been possible without your love and support.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

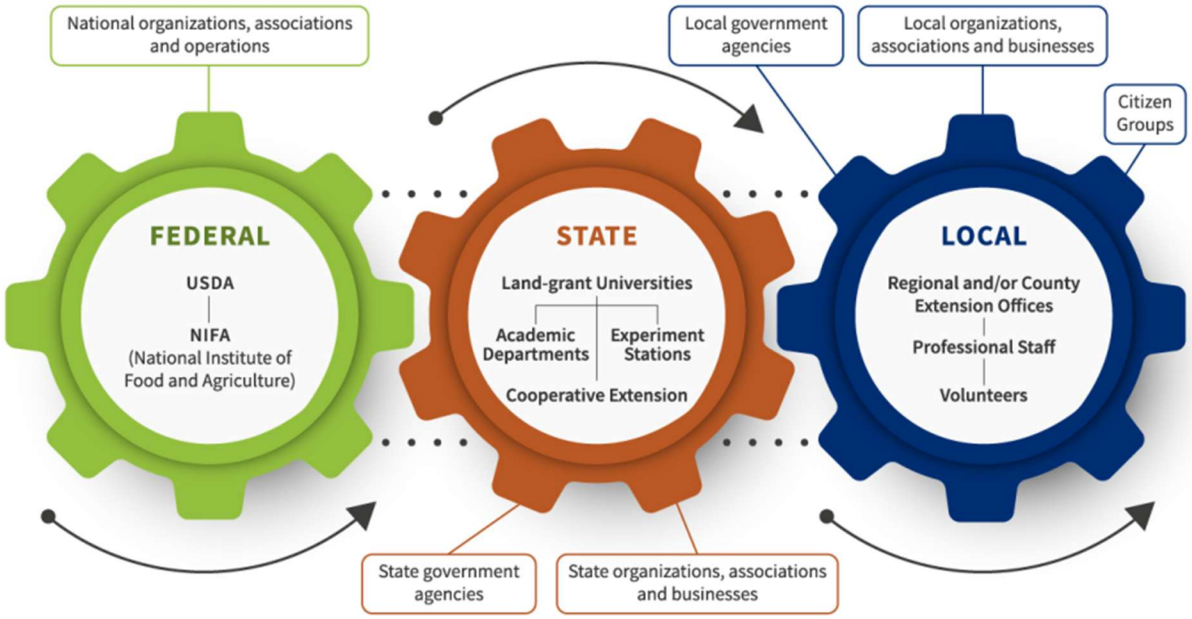
List of Tables

List of Acronyms

APLU — Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
CES — Cooperative Extension System
1862 — Land-Grant University Authorized by the Morrill Act
1890 — Land-Grant University Authorized by the Second Morrill Act
ECOP — Extension Committee on Organizational and Policy
FALCON — First Americans Land-Grant Consortium
FAS — Foreign Agriculture Service
GASEPA — Globalizing Agricultural Science and Education Programs for America
GEIN — Globalizing Extension Innovation Network
HEI — Higher Education Institution
IHERI — International Higher Education and Research
LGU — Land-Grant University
NAFSA — Association of International Educators
NASULGC — National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges
NIFA — National Institute of Food and Agriculture
1994 — Land-Grant College Authorized by the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act
NGO — Non-Governmental Organization
PAT — Program Action Team
PAEP — Polish American Extension Project
USAID — United States Agency for International Development
USDA — United States Department of Agriculture
VCE — Virginia Cooperative Extension

Relational Representation of U.S. Cooperative Extension System

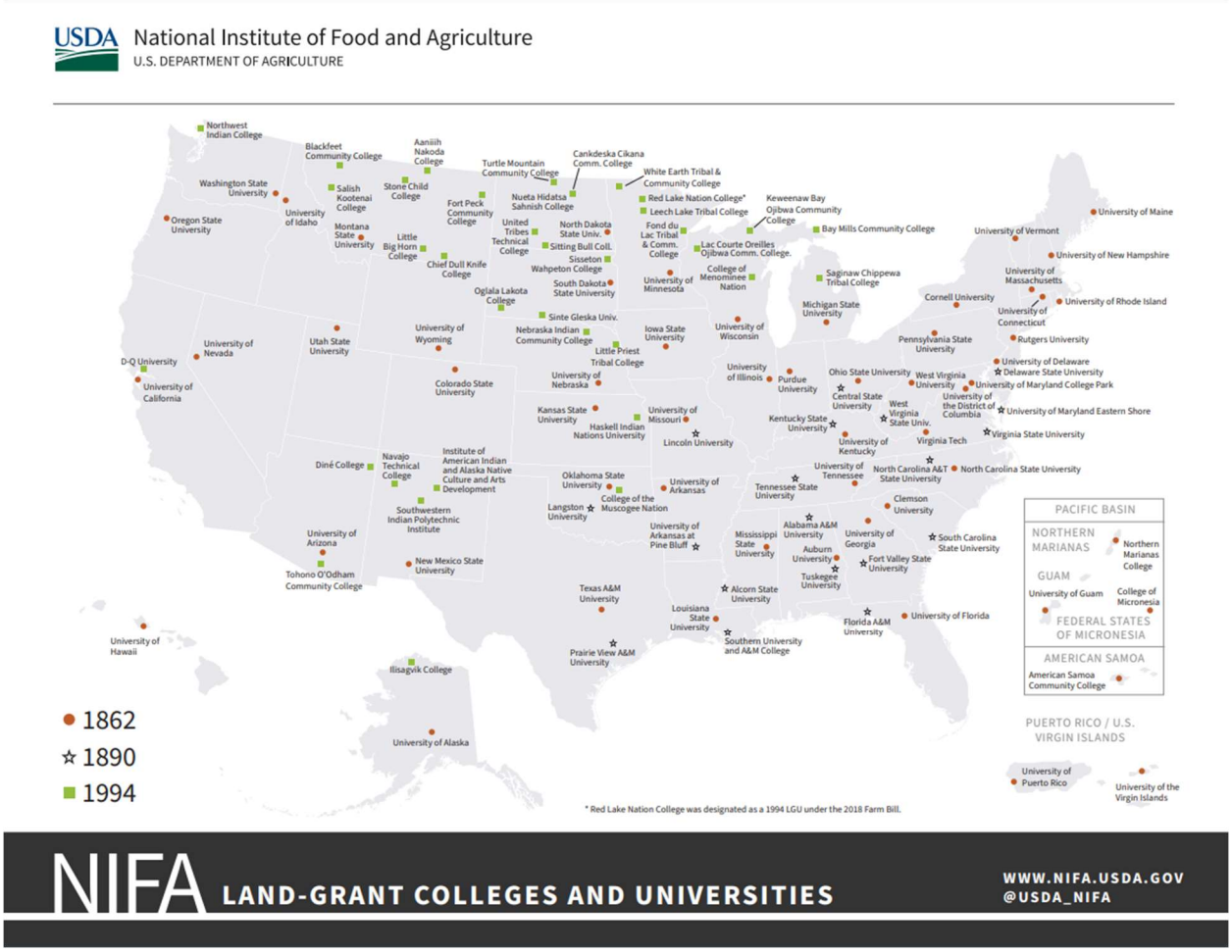
Figure 1



(USDA, n.d.–b)

Map of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities

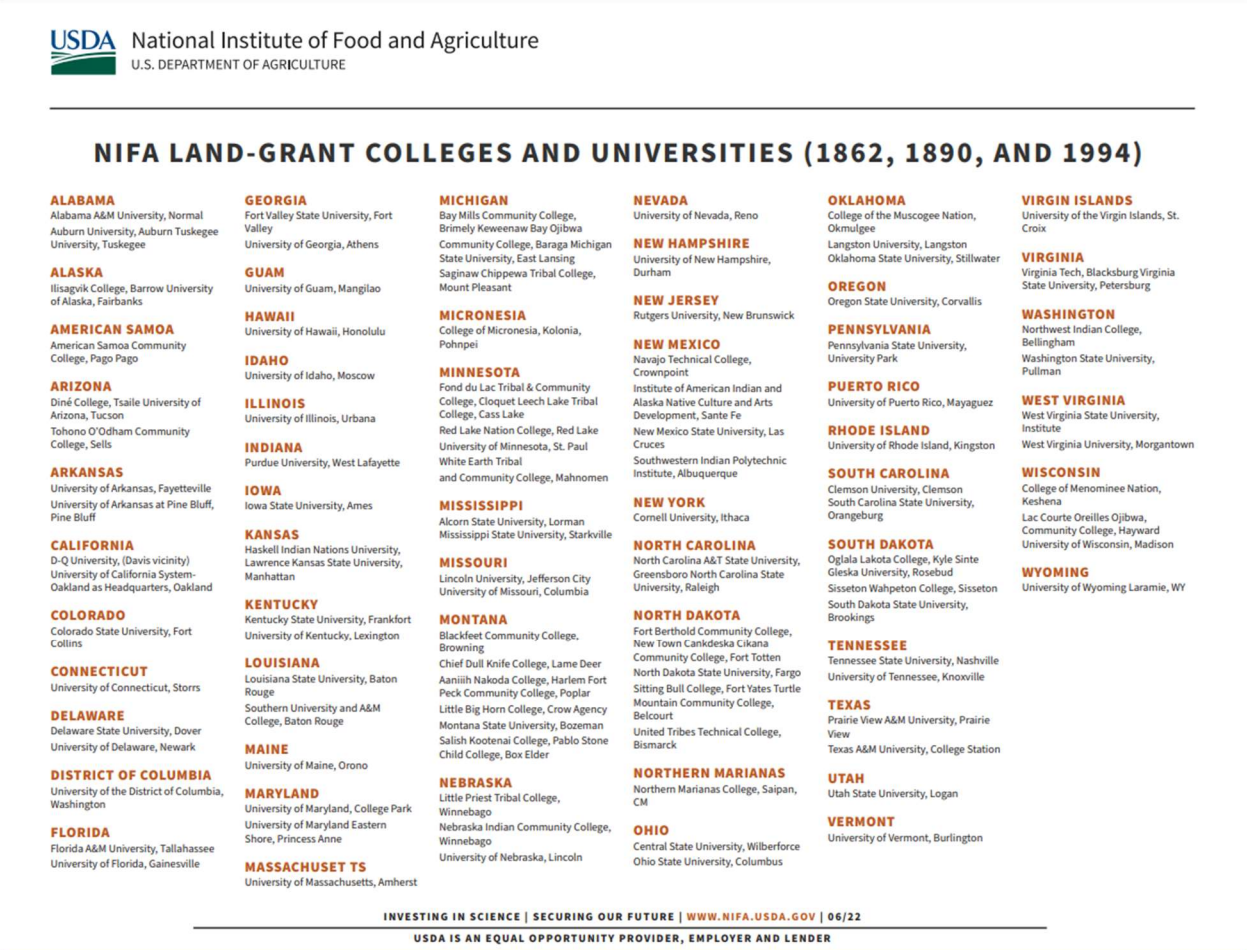
Figure 2



(USDA, 2022)

List of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities

Figure 3



USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NIFA LAND-GRANT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (1862, 1890, AND 1994)

ALABAMA
Alabama A&M University, Normal
Auburn University, Auburn Tuskegee University, Tuskegee

ALASKA
Ilisagvik College, Barrow University of Alaska, Fairbanks

AMERICAN SAMOA
American Samoa Community College, Pago Pago

ARIZONA
Diné College, Tsaile University of Arizona, Tucson
Tohono O'Odham Community College, Sells

ARKANSAS
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Pine Bluff

CALIFORNIA
D-Q University, (Davis vicinity)
University of California System-Oakland as Headquarters, Oakland

COLORADO
Colorado State University, Fort Collins

CONNECTICUT
University of Connecticut, Storrs

DELAWARE
Delaware State University, Dover
University of Delaware, Newark

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
University of the District of Columbia, Washington

FLORIDA
Florida A&M University, Tallahassee
University of Florida, Gainesville

GEORGIA
Fort Valley State University, Fort Valley
University of Georgia, Athens

GUAM
University of Guam, Mangilao

HAWAII
University of Hawaii, Honolulu

IDAHO
University of Idaho, Moscow

ILLINOIS
University of Illinois, Urbana

INDIANA
Purdue University, West Lafayette

IOWA
Iowa State University, Ames

KANSAS
Haskell Indian Nations University, Lawrence Kansas State University, Manhattan

KENTUCKY
Kentucky State University, Frankfort
University of Kentucky, Lexington

LOUISIANA
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge
Southern University and A&M College, Baton Rouge

MAINE
University of Maine, Orono

MARYLAND
University of Maryland, College Park
University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Princess Anne

MASSACHUSET TS
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

MICHIGAN
Bay Mills Community College, Brimely Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College, Baraga Michigan State University, East Lansing
Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College, Mount Pleasant

MICRONESIA
College of Micronesia, Kolonia, Pohnpei

MINNESOTA
Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College, Cloquet Leech Lake Tribal College, Cass Lake
Red Lake Nation College, Red Lake
University of Minnesota, St. Paul
White Earth Tribal and Community College, Mahnomen

MISSISSIPPI
Alcorn State University, Lorman
Mississippi State University, Starkville

MISSOURI
Lincoln University, Jefferson City
University of Missouri, Columbia

MONTANA
Blackfeet Community College, Browning
Chief Dull Knife College, Lame Deer
Aaniiih Nakoda College, Harlem Fort Peck Community College, Poplar
Little Big Horn College, Crow Agency
Montana State University, Bozeman
Salish Kootenai College, Pablo Stone Child College, Box Elder

NEBRASKA
Little Priest Tribal College, Winnebago
Nebraska Indian Community College, Winnebago
University of Nebraska, Lincoln

NEVADA
University of Nevada, Reno

NEW HAMPSHIRE
University of New Hampshire, Durham

NEW JERSEY
Rutgers University, New Brunswick

NEW MEXICO
Navajo Technical College, Crownpoint
Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development, Sante Fe
New Mexico State University, Las Cruces
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, Albuquerque

NEW YORK
Cornell University, Ithaca

NORTH CAROLINA
North Carolina A&T State University, Greensboro North Carolina State University, Raleigh

NORTH DAKOTA
Fort Berthold Community College, New Town Cankdeska Cikana Community College, Fort Totten
North Dakota State University, Fargo
Sitting Bull College, Fort Yates Turtle Mountain Community College, Belcourt
United Tribes Technical College, Bismarck

NORTHERN MARIANAS
Northern Marianas College, Saipan, CM

OHIO
Central State University, Wilberforce
Ohio State University, Columbus

OKLAHOMA
College of the Muscogee Nation, Okmulgee
Langston University, Langston
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater

OREGON
Oregon State University, Corvallis

PENNSYLVANIA
Pennsylvania State University, University Park

PUERTO RICO
University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez

RHODE ISLAND
University of Rhode Island, Kingston

SOUTH CAROLINA
Clemson University, Clemson South Carolina State University, Orangeburg

SOUTH DAKOTA
Oglala Lakota College, Kyle Sinte Gleska University, Rosebud
Sisseton Wahpeton College, Sisseton
South Dakota State University, Brookings

TENNESSEE
Tennessee State University, Nashville
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

TEXAS
Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View
Texas A&M University, College Station

UTAH
Utah State University, Logan

VERMONT
University of Vermont, Burlington

VIRGIN ISLANDS
University of the Virgin Islands, St. Croix

VIRGINIA
Virginia Tech, Blacksburg Virginia State University, Petersburg

WASHINGTON
Northwest Indian College, Bellingham
Washington State University, Pullman

WEST VIRGINIA
West Virginia State University, Institute
West Virginia University, Morgantown

WISCONSIN
College of Menominee Nation, Keshena
Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa, Community College, Hayward
University of Wisconsin, Madison

WYOMING
University of Wyoming Laramie, WY

INVESTING IN SCIENCE | SECURING OUR FUTURE | WWW.NIFA.USDA.GOV | 06/22
USDA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER, EMPLOYER AND LENDER

(USDA, 2022)

Chapter 1

Introduction

Several scholars have explored internationalization of the United States (U.S.) Cooperative Extension System (CES) during the last four decades (Andrews et al., 2001; Grove et al., 2022; Grove et al., 2024; Lamm & Harder, 2010; Ludwig, 2001; Ludwig & Barrick, 1996; Melevin, 1991; Place et al., 2000; Vergot III et al., 2006). During this period, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), at times in collaboration with the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) and its predecessor organization, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), has highlighted internationalization as an important component of Extension programming in a series of policy documents, calls to action, and reports.

The CES is an educational outreach program of the U.S. land-grant university (LGU) system, offered via cooperation among federal, state, and local governments. The shared investment of national, state, and federal funds positions governments as primary stakeholders in the Extension system. CES is tasked with connecting the education and research resources of participating universities to communities and people and vice versa (APLU, n.d.–b; USDA, n. d.–b). Those involved with this system seek to find ways for LGUs to work with community populations to address problems and challenges those groups identify. Ideally, rather than simply constitute a transfer of knowledge or findings from the university to constituencies, this reciprocal arrangement calls for sustained efforts on the part of relevant staff and faculty of these higher education institutions to understand residents' needs, and to engage stakeholders actively in the process of identifying those requirements. This process suggests a commitment to learning

about the lives of those served and using that information to inform university research and Extension programming.

The LGU system was established by the Morrill Act of 1862 with the explicit purpose of supporting the needs of a growing nation by focusing on agricultural and mechanical arts. This practical, technically focused approach contrasted sharply with the perceived elitist education offered to the upper classes through established universities. In 1890, the Second Morrill Act extended land-grant status to several institutions in the South serving Black students. The system was further expanded in 1994 through the Equity in Education Act, conferring land-grant status on several tribal colleges and universities. Within the CES these institutions are referred to as 1862s, 1890s, and 1994s, respectively (Bickell, 2024). While the creation of LGUs was meant to increase access to practical education for a broader segment of the population, there remained the problem of sharing the knowledge curated in those institutions with the public. To address this need, the U.S. Congress established the CES in 1914 in the Smith Lever Act (USDA, n. d.–a). Historically, Extension programs have promoted improved agricultural productivity and household management and nutrition outcomes for families, and positive youth development through the 4-H program. These initiatives served the needs of a largely rural clientele during the early part of the last century and that population continued to be the principal focus of the system through the mid-20th century. Thereafter, as U.S. population demographics changed, Extension faculty adapted and expanded their programming to meet the evolving needs of their clientele, while also serving legacy requirements. Today, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) contends Extension efforts:

> Translate science for practical application; Identify emerging research questions, find answers and encourage application of science and technology to improve agricultural, economic, and social conditions; Prepare people to break the cycle of poverty, encourage healthful lifestyles, and prepare youth for responsible adulthood; Provide rapid response

> regarding disasters and emergencies; Connect people to information and assistance available online through eXtension.org (NIFA, n.d.–a).

Modern programming priorities for the CES are influenced by several factors. At the local level, Extension professionals monitor existing and emerging needs through a variety of means. Extension personnel conduct needs assessments by intentionally gathering qualitative and quantitative data to understand issues. Such information may be gathered via survey, focus group, program participant evaluations, conversations with stakeholders, such as local government decision makers, or reviews of publicly available reports and publications. These processes may be evergreen or may occur as part of larger, formal processes at given intervals. For example, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) coordinates a state-wide program needs assessment process every five years and expects local units to participate in that effort and conduct continuous ongoing emergent needs assessments as well. Information gathered is synthesized by local and state faculty and organizational leadership and used to inform priorities. For example, the needs of farmers in a rural county may be different than those of gardeners in a suburban or urban setting. While both programs would be considered agricultural and natural resources programming and therefore under the purview of an agricultural Extension agent, securing household food production in a container garden is different than developing a profitable commercial vegetable operation. By regularly assessing the needs of the local audience, CES staff can adapt or develop their efforts to meet those requirements.

These data, when gathered and aggregated by district or at the state level, are useful in determining resource allocation. Approximately 60% of the land area in Virginia is in the Chesapeake Bay watershed (Virginia Department of Forestry, n.d.). Given the value of the Chesapeake Bay fishery, should themes related to water quality, such as preventing nutrient run-off, wetlands restoration, livestock exclusion from streams, or homeowner fertilizer management

arise consistently in an area or across the state, Cooperative Extension System leaders may allocate additional resources to programming to address those needs, including trainings, educational workshop development and delivery, and hiring individuals with related expertise. In this way, needs assessments inform resource allocation for ongoing and emerging priorities.

Given the cooperative nature of CES, local data is but one source of information used to inform programming. Each LGU has a set of strengths, areas of focus, and priorities set by the institution. These influence the programmatic direction of affiliated CES offices. In addition, federal and nationwide priorities shape CES efforts. For example, the USDA requires each state to report on programming efforts to address critical needs, or issues of importance to the agricultural sector in their state. These descriptions include how the needs were identified, the timeframe during which they will be addressed (short, intermediate, or long-term), collaborations with other states or LGUs, and funding allocations, and educational programs that will/are targeting them (NIFA, n.d.–b). The CES also examines national issues of importance through the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP):

> ECOP is the Executive Committee for the Cooperative Extension System Section of the Board on Agriculture Assembly. It is composed of the deans, directors, associate deans of Extension representing all the land-grant universities with extension responsibilities. ECOP is a link between land-grant universities and the program officers within USDA focused on funding and policies that impact extension education programs across the country. It is the link to the federal partnership of the three-fold federal-state-local collaboration unique in the US Cooperative Extension System (J. Vreyens, personal communication, October 13, 2025).

ECOP supports programming via a Program Action Team (PAT) structure, which is charged with identifying programmatic needs, recommending actions, promoting collaboration and partnerships, and advocating for resource investment to address those requirements (Cooperative Extension, n.d.).

CES offices and staff are administratively housed within LGUs and serve their respective states. In general, Extension faculty and staff are either based on a university campus, at an affiliated research center away from the institution's main location, or in local offices. Central campus-based faculty often occupy tenure-track positions and may have split teaching, research, and Extension appointments. These individuals share technical information, research findings, and programmatic resources with community-based Extension personnel, as well as offer some direct educational programming to relevant stakeholders. Local faculty, referred to as agents or educators, share information provided by specialists through educational programs. CES administrators are typically housed on LGU campuses. These individuals provide system leadership and hold the position of Vice President, Vice Provost, Dean, Associate Dean, or similar titles, depending on the state university in which they work. Administratively, CES may be embedded within a college, such as a college of agriculture and life sciences, or it may be organized as a separate division or college within the university academic structure.

Each state, the District of Columbia, and several U.S. commonwealths and territories, administers Extension units. While each individual CES has the latitude to pursue aims relevant to its state and local stakeholders and operates within the context of its host institution, the U.S. Cooperative Extension System writ large is supported by the NIFA through the USDA, and the APLU.

As noted above, the *cooperative* in CES refers to the co-investment of federal, state, and local resources. A typical CES budget is comprised of federal (10-15%), state (20-50%), local (0-20%), grants (5-30%), and fee, contract, or gift revenue (5-20%) (APLU, n.d.–b):

> The federal government provides annual appropriations to LGIs [Land-Grant Institutions], often with matching nonfederal requirements. Extension programs are funded through capacity and competitive grants. Capacity grants provide federal funding to LGIs for the activities of all three pillars of the land-grant university system (teaching,

> research, and Extension), and funding is distributed according to formulas established by legislation, including the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 (38 Stat. 372) and the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (P.L. 95-113, §§1444-1445). Competitive grants are awarded through a peer-review process to specific Extension projects proposed by eligible applicants (Bickell, 2024, Summary).

While competitive funds are just that—competitive and awarded on the merits of proposals to address current priorities—capacity funds are awarded according to formulas that account for the primary missions or audiences of the recipient institutions. For example, capacity funds for 1862s account for the rural and farm populations in the recipient CES state while 1890 capacity funds are a minimum of 20% of available capacity funds. Congress awarded a total of $325 million in capacity funds for FY 2024 (Bickell, 2024). Capacity funds typically require a 100% match from non-federal sources, such as from state governments. Other capacity funds included the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program and the Renewable Resources Extension Act. While 1862 and 1890 institutions each receive capacity funds, 1994 institutions are funded with competitively allocated funds awarded through the Tribal College Extension Program: Capacity Applications (Bickell, 2024, p. 7). Competitive funds are primarily awarded through the Agriculture Food Research Initiative (AFRI). AFRI funds emphasize collaboration between CES and the Agricultural Experiment Station—the research counterpart to Extension—in each state (Northeast Extension Directors, n.d.). Most funds are capacity funds with competitive resources constituting a minority of the total awarded each year.

In FY 2024, 1862s received 80% of the total capacity funds allocation, 1890s received 17% and 1994s received 3%. When funding amounts by individual institution are considered, as detailed in Table 1, the gap is not as large between 1862s and 1890s as the totals offered would seem to suggest. Nevertheless, on average, an 1890 receives approximately 65% of the allocation

of an 1862 (Bickell, 2024, p. 15). 1994s receive relatively little funding compared to either 1862s or 1890s.

Table 1

FY2024 Federal Extension Capacity Grant Appropriations by Institution Type

	1862 Institutions	1890 Institutions	1994 Institutions
Funding Program	Smith-Lever Section 3(b) and 3(c) programs	National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977	Tribal Colleges Extension Program
Total Appropriation	$325 million	$72 million	$11 million
Total Number of Institutions	57	19	35
Average Appropriations per Institution	$5.7 million	$3.7 million	$0.3 million

Source: CRS, using appropriations act and conference reports from Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (P.L I18-42), Division B, pp. 9-10.

One could argue that 1862s typically have larger student bodies and serve a large swathe of the population, but one could conversely contend that with additional funding across the years 1890s could have increased their access and reach. 1890s are eligible for waivers of up to 50% of the match requirement as many have experienced difficulties securing required matching funds from their states. Persistent underfunding has been such a challenge that in 2023, the "Secretaries of Education and Agriculture sent letters to 16 governors, emphasizing that, over 30 years, they calculated a more than $12 billion cumulative funding disparity between the 1890 Institutions and their 1862 peers in their states" (Bickell, 2024, p. 16).

Background of the Problem (Statement of the Problem)

The USDA, APLU, and Extension scholars have exhibited sustained interest in CES internationalization since the 1970's. The national government, through provisions in the 1975

International Development and Food Assistance Act, and the 1981 Farm Bill, called on LGUs, through their teaching, research, and Extension missions, to support federal international food security, nutrition, and agricultural development programs (USDA, 1984). Numerous USDA and APLU (and its predecessor organization, NASULGC) reports, calls for action, and policy statements have suggested that LGU and CES executive leaders develop internationalization initiatives for their systems (APLU, 2017; NASULGC, 1997a, 1997b, 2002, 2007; Russo & Osborne, 2004; USDA, 1984, 1989). While Ludwig and Barrick have identified *indicators* of an internationalized system, there is no established or shared understanding of Extension internationalization or the role of executive leadership in promoting it. This study addressed this gap in the literature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the evolution of internationalization within the Cooperative Extension System by drawing upon and integrating conceptual and theoretical perspectives from the broader higher education internationalization literature into Extension scholarship. While internationalization has been extensively theorized and operationalized in higher education contexts, less attention has been given to how those frameworks could inform the work of CES, whose public engagement mission presents distinctive challenges and opportunities. This study sought to determine whether and how established conceptualizations and rationales of internationalization developed within higher education could be applied to, and enrich theorization of, Extension internationalization.

To achieve this purpose, I pursued three interrelated aims. First, I described and compared the existing literatures on CES and higher education internationalization, focusing on their respective conceptualizations, rationales, and approaches. Second, I investigated how

accepted models of internationalization in higher education might inform an analytical framework for understanding internationalization within CES. Third, I examined Extension directors' conceptualizations of, and perceived roles in, internationalization initiatives as a means of assessing the applicability and utility of an integrated higher education/CES analytical framework. Overall, the study offers a fresh and more analytically robust understanding of CES internationalization. It likewise offers insights into the roles of executive leadership in promoting and sustaining internationalization efforts, thereby informing both organizational strategy and future scholarship at the intersection of higher education and public engagement.

Significance of the Study

Extension directors have been regularly singled out in the various reports highlighted above and in the CES internationalization scholarly literature as essential to attainment of such aspirations (Andreasen, 2003; Lamm & Harder, 2010; Ludwig, 1993; Barbara G. Ludwig, 1999; Ludwig, 2001; Ludwig & Barrick, 1996; Ludwig & McGirr, 2003; USDA, 1984, 1989). However, despite decades of such reports, the process of institutionalizing Extension internationalization has not yet been thoroughly studied (Grove et al., 2022; Grove et al., 2024), and how directors conceptualize and view their roles in such initiatives remains little understood. This study sought to address that gap in knowledge by investigating directors' definitions of internationalization, their roles in institutionalizing such efforts, and their rationales for such pursuits.

Research Questions

As noted, Extension programming has emphasized internationalization for decades. However, there is a lack of information concerning, and understanding of, the views and

perceived roles of Extension leaders in institutionalizing such efforts. Ludwig and Barrick (1996) identified five indicators of Extension internationalization:

> 1) Clientele develop a fundamental understanding of global and national interdependence, 2) Extension educational programs in the U.S. stress the impact of international economic forces on agricultural markets, 3) Extension personnel incorporate international perspectives in ongoing programming, 4) Extension faculty and staff understand the connection between basic international issues and the Extension mission, and 5) Extension personnel evaluation systems reward international effort (p. 40).

Higher education scholar Jane Knight has articulated a cycle of internationalization suggesting institutions engaged in such initiatives move through 1) awareness, 2) commitment, 3) planning, 4) operationalization, 5) review, and 6) reinforcement (1994). When considering Knight's concept of internationalization, I argue directors are positioned to influence elements of the cycle, particularly through raising awareness, demonstrating commitment, providing resources for its operationalization, and reinforcing the value of such efforts to participants in their systems. Moreover, I was curious whether Ludwig and Barrick's definition first offered more than 25 years ago adequately reflects contemporary directors' views of internationalization. Finally, I hypothesized that an expanded set of rationales, drawing on the Extension and higher education literatures, could provide a more comprehensive valence through which to understand Extension internationalization. My research question, therefore, was: What are Extension directors' conceptualizations and perceptions of their roles in internationalization? To plumb directors' views further, I explored the following sub questions:

1. How do Extension directors describe/define internationalization?
2. From their point of view, why do Extension directors choose to pursue or not pursue internationalization?
3. What roles do Extension directors see themselves playing in internationalization?

4. To what extent do national calls to action inform internationalization according to Extension directors?

Organization of this Effort

First, I explore the Extension internationalization literature and review existing definitions, conceptualizations of, and rationales for such efforts. I contend that these are inadequate and suggest the broader higher education literature adds to our understanding of internationalization in ways the existing Extension literature does not. Second, I examine internationalization rationales from the higher education literature. I assert that those, too, while process-based and more comprehensive than existing Extension rationales, inadequately capture the phenomenon of Extension system internationalization. Third, I propose an expanded set of logics for Extension internationalization and outline how I employed that proposed framework to investigate current Extension directors' conceptualizations of, and perceived roles in such efforts. Finally, I consider higher education internationalization leadership and the perceptions of Extension directors of their place and role(s) in such LGU initiatives.

Dissertation Outline

Chapter 1 introduces the CES and contextualizes the structure and relational dynamics of the Extension system. Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature concerning CES internationalization specifically and higher education internationalization more broadly and makes the case for the lack of adequate conceptualization of Extension internationalization. In Chapter 3 I lay out my approach to researching the phenomenon, including discussions of my positionality, research design, strategy of inquiry, and sampling frame. In Chapter 4 I review the data from individual interviews I conducted with a sample of Extension directors. Finally, in Chapter 5, I discuss my conclusions and offer implications and recommendations arising from this study for future

practice and research. The appendices include the IRB approval letter, participant recruitment materials, the interview protocol, and other relevant information.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Extension Internationalization

Extension professionals have been engaged in international programming for decades. For example, the APLU (2012) cited the 1950 Point Four Program, which later became USAID, as a significant federal legislative milestone related to higher education internationalization. Andrews et al. (2001) have noted that John Hannah, then president of Michigan State University, wrote to President Truman in 1949 offering the resources of agricultural colleges and universities to support that new initiative. In the years since, Extension faculty have consistently contributed to development projects around the world through their land-grant universities, in collaboration with federal and state government agencies, with international entities, and non-governmental organizations (NGO). Indeed, Abaye et al. (2018) have argued that the teaching, research, and Extension model of modern LGUs continues to position those institutions well to address international challenges in developing country contexts. Extension faculty have also participated in sabbatical and short-term professional exchanges through programs such as Farmer to Farmer and People to People. Those faculty members have also engaged in study tours and served in study abroad roles.

Following a period of discussion and interest in the role of LGUs and CES in supporting international and agricultural development efforts brought about by USDA's (1984) *New Directions: The International Mission of the Cooperative Extension Service – A Statement of Policy,* and (1989) *Global Perspectives for Extension*, Ludwig and Barrick (1996) sought to describe Extension internationalization by identifying the factors that characterize it. Their

Delphi study engaged CES and LGU leaders with international expertise and identified five indicators of Extension internationalization mentioned above and detailed here, again:

> 1) Clientele develop a fundamental understanding of global and national interdependence, 2) Extension educational programs in the U.S. stress the impact of international economic forces on agricultural markets, 3) Extension personnel incorporate international perspectives in ongoing programming, 4) Extension faculty and staff understand the connection between basic international issues and the Extension mission, and 5) Extension personnel evaluation systems reward international effort (p. 40).

Ludwig and Barrick further argued that if one of these markers was missing, a state system could not be considered internationalized. These indicators have been consistently cited in the CES internationalization literature in the ensuing decades, and this schema has become a foundational framework in Extension-related internationalization research. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that these factors are largely static and binary. That is, a system in this framework is either internationalized or not, and only when the five indicators are reached can it be said to have attained that status. This objective-or milestone-based conceptualization of internationalization contrasts with the process-based understanding of the construct that prevails in the broader higher education literature.

Other lines of inquiry in this literature have focused on CES faculty perceptions of internationalization. Study populations have included state Extension system members in Florida (Harder, Lamm, et al., 2010; Harder, Place, et al., 2010; Lamm & Harder, 2010), Indiana (Selby et al., 2005), Louisiana (McClure et al., 2014), North Carolina (Franklin et al., 2004; Lakai et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith, 2008), and Ohio (Barbara G. Ludwig, 1999; Ludwig, 2001). Lundy et al. (2005) conducted a national study of CES personnel perceptions of such efforts, as well. These efforts focused on Extension personnel broadly, and not directors as a subgroup. Barriers to international Extension engagement consistently reported in these studies have included insufficient time, lack of money, inadequate standing as a programming priority,

resistance from local stakeholders, family obligations, and other work responsibilities. Grove et al. (2022) reviewed four decades of CES internationalization scholarship in five journals and found that the commonly cited benefits of such initiatives included developing global perspectives, knowledge and skills, appreciation for diversity, increased self-esteem and invigoration or renewed sense of professional purpose, benefits to local clientele, and strengthened belief in the value of international experiences and Extension.

Who Benefits from Extension Internationalization?

Although researchers have offered reasons for Extension system internationalization, the existing literature emphasizes the experience of U.S. Extension professionals as principal beneficiaries of such initiatives. While scholarship addressing the implementation of international extension projects exists and evaluates the outcomes and benefits to participants from a project standpoint, for the purposes of this inquiry I do not consider those analyses part of the CES internationalization literature precisely because they focus on project deliverables rather than the organizational process of internationalization.

Studies of the Polish American Extension Project (PAEP) illustrate how international project work, in the context of internationalization, is reported in the Extension literature. That effort sent U.S. professionals to Poland for up to six months to help develop that nation's extension-related capabilities. However, analyses of the initiative focused on the benefits to the U.S. of engagement in it. Place (1998), for example, found that American participants gained knowledge and skills, reported greater belief in the value of Extension, experienced increased self-esteem, and would recommend involvement in future international experiences. Likewise, Crago (1998) found that those engaged acquired knowledge and skills and cited higher aspirations for continued education and international engagement, and more opportunities

because of their experience. Other related studies have found that both CES personnel and U.S. clientele benefited from agents' international experiences (Place et al., 2000) and that those gains extended to near associates, such as family members and coworkers (Place et al., 2002). Following my review of this scholarship, the U.S. CES view of internationalization has largely been focused on its domestic benefits and implications and there has not been a rich discussion of its impacts—intended or realized—for audiences abroad. This is not to say there is not a robust literature exploring the outcomes of such extension project work, but that those initiatives have not been systematically explored within a framework of Extension internationalization.

Revisiting Ludwig and Barrick's definition of internationalization for Extension professionals, the term refers to a set of indicators that capture the activities of a given CES and not the outcomes of individual project work. Meanwhile, Knight (1994), in the broader higher education internationalization literature (which I treat more fully below) has defined the construct as, "the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching/learning, research and service functions of a university or college" (p. 3). That is, internationalization, both in the higher education and Extension contexts, refers to the substance of committing to an international orientation in organizational work, rather than evaluations of outcomes of individual activities or projects.

Extant Rationales

Ludwig and Barrick developed their definition of Extension internationalization in 1996 during a period of increased interest in such efforts prompted by several key pieces of legislation and reports. Although not originally framed as such, one could argue that Ludwig and Barrick's five indicators of an internationalized CES roughly translate into three key rationales related to such engagement: educating clientele, professional development of Extension personnel, and

developing CES organizational capacity to support internationalization. More recently, Harder, Lamm, et al. (2010), argued that rationales for Extension internationalization can be placed into one of two categories: professional development and enhanced organizational capacity and that the first listed must underpin all efforts to secure the second. Combining Ludwig and Barrick's indicators and Lamm et al.'s rationales yields three motivations for internationalization: educating clientele through programming, creating professional development opportunities for Extension personnel, and enhancing organizational capacity. However, I hypothesize that these rationales inadequately capture Extension internationalization and suggest the broader higher education internationalization literature can add to our understanding of such initiatives. I turn to that scholarship next.

Higher Education Internationalization

Higher education internationalization has been widely studied and is a growing field of practice (Bedenlier et al., 2018; Kehm & Teichler, 2007). Nonetheless, the phenomenon means different things in different contexts (Knight, 2004). That is, the term internationalization may refer to student or faculty mobility programs, such as study abroad, exchanges, or internship opportunities, or be used to describe cross national research relationships, establishment of dual or joint degree programs or branch campuses, or campus-based efforts to incorporate intercultural or international elements into curriculum and campus life. Irrespective of its specific focus, internationalization has been an enduring element of higher education in the post-World War II world.

Knight (2003) has argued that higher education internationalization is, "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education" (p. 2). Her definition emphasizes the "how" of

internationalization rather than the "what" (indicators) highlighted in Ludwig and Barrick's CES conceptualization. Knight (1994) has also articulated a cycle of internationalization meant to illustrate how institutions pursue the multivalent phenomenon. She has argued that institutions move through a cycle of 1) awareness, 2) commitment, 3) planning, 4) operationalization, 5) review, and 6) reinforcement as they seek to realize internationalization objectives.

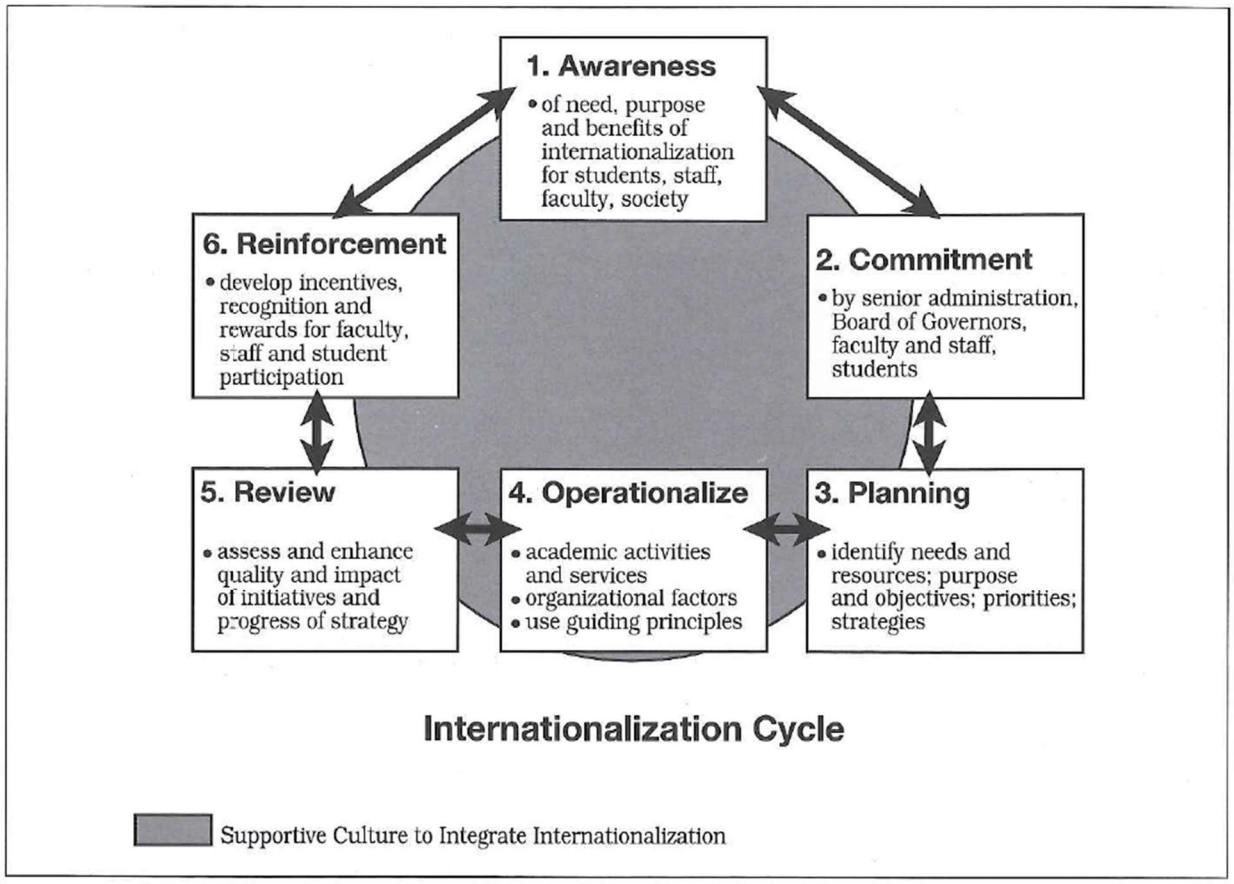


Figure 4. Internationalization cycle (Knight, 1994).

Knight has contended that universities and colleges move through the cycle in sequence, but she has also acknowledged that the process is not simply linear by showing possible movement back and forth among steps in diagrams depicting her model. Knight's definition of internationalization, first developed in 1994 and updated in the years since, has been widely accepted in higher education. Others have offered similar or slightly expanded definitions of

comprehensive internationalization (American Council on Education, 2019; Hudzik, 2011), but I consider them variations on a theme and contend Knight's definition accurately reflects the phenomenon. Her internationalization cycle can be used as a guide to engage relevant faculty and staff in such efforts. For example, Childress (2010) studied how institutions can encourage faculty to move from the planning to the operationalization phases of the process. Knight (1994) has suggested that commitment to internationalization by senior leaders, not just in terms of financial resources, but in visible, vocal, and symbolic ways, too, is critical to their success. As the CES literature has not developed an accepted framework for the process of internationalization, Knight's established model offers a novel way to examine the process of Extension internationalization, and the role of directors in such efforts.

Aims of Internationalization

Higher education institutions (HEIs) pursue internationalization for a variety of reasons. Knight (2021) has explored individual, institutional, national, and regional motivations for the phenomenon. And Hudzik and McCarthy (2012), in a report for NAFSA: Association of International Educators, suggested several rationales for its pursuit, including the core mission of higher education (education as a basic human good), implications for clientele (students, alumni, communities, and businesses), and the imperative posed by growing national global interdependence. In a much remarked report addressed to university leaders, the APLU (2017) called on those executives to view internationalization as critical to their institutions' missions. That effort specifically cited research operations, curriculum, opportunities for students, equipping faculty, and enhancing global operations as essential strategies to attain internationalization.

Rationales

Knight (2012) has considered motivations for internationalization from several perspectives. She has argued, for example, that institutions or other actors pursue and invest in such initiatives based on specifically articulated rationales. Knight (1999) earlier outlined four such justifications; academic, economic, social/cultural, and political. These have been adopted and used widely by others to examine and describe college and university motivations to internationalize (Childress, 2010; de Wit & Knight, 1999; Hudzik, 2011). I briefly explore each in the following sections.

Academic

Academic rationales are the most cited justification for internationalization given the relatively ubiquitous nature of study abroad and student mobility programs on campuses. Acker and Scanes (1998) have called for increasing the intercultural competence of students and faculty. They have also cited the benefits of access and research advantages for agricultural colleges, in particular, such as capacity to secure germ plasm and perform counter-seasonal research in other locations while crops are out of season in domestic research locations. Knight (2021) has underscored the significance of enhancing undergraduate curricula, addressing international academic standards, and ensuring curricular quality, as internationalization rationales. For their part, educational organizations have repeatedly cited internationalization as a means to enhance undergraduate curricula and academic opportunity (Hudzik & McCarthy, 2012; NASULGC, 1997a, 1997b).

Globalization, particularly, or changing economic and information flows and connectedness, has reshaped the nation's rural and agricultural economy in the last 50 years. Even as that sea change was occurring, the NASULGC (2002) released a thought piece, *The*

Extension System: A Vision for the 21st Century, which evaluated its implications for the U.S. CES. Specifically, NASULGC called on Extension to help its stakeholders grasp the multi-faceted potential implications and impact of globalization. Not long after this proverbial call to arms, Lundy et al. (2005) surveyed Extension agents across the country and found that the lion's share believed they should indeed work with stakeholders to help them understand international issues.

Economic

Scholars have argued that institutions pursue internationalization for a variety of economic reasons. For example, Altbach and Knight (2007) have posited that in addition to for-profit institutions pursuing revenue, financially struggling not-for-profits may be tempted to do the same in the form of international tuition and services. Indeed, the allure of tuition revenue, recruitment of academic talent, pursuit of rankings, and development of dual-degree programs are commonly cited economic rationales by scholars in the field (Croom, 2012; Knight, 2021).

Leading educational organizations have also made the case for internationalization in economic terms. The NASULGC (1997a) has argued that LGUs have a commitment to helping communities understand markets and trade. Indeed, that body has gone a step further and contended that universities should not only help communities understand changing economic realities, but they should also promote agricultural trade and help to develop export markets (NASULGC, 1997b). Similarly, Acker and Scanes (1998) have explicitly argued for internationalization in terms of access to markets and trade opportunities, as well as identifying new technologies for U.S. benefit. From a different vantage point, Childress (2009), in her study of higher education internationalization plans, suggested that such blueprints were useful to campus internationalization leaders in fundraising and resource acquisition.

Understanding markets and trade was foundational to Ludwig and Barrick's definition of an internationalized CES. The explicit calls for understanding markets and trade in the New Directions report and Global Perspectives for Extension pieces clearly articulated a key rationale for USDA support of Extension internationalization as well. The NASULGC (1997b) released Globalizing Agricultural Science and Education Programs for America (GASEPA) in 1997. That analysis called for information sharing (especially concerning markets), developing partnerships with foreign universities to support research and development and food production and safety, and promoting agricultural trade. GASEPA highlighted the role of CES in these efforts. Similarly, Acker and Scanes (1998) cited numerous benefits of globalizing agricultural universities (inclusive of Extension programs), including securing expanded access to markets, talent, and technology.

Social/cultural

The intercultural aims of internationalization might appear to be self-evident at first glance. For example, Knight (2021) has suggested individual, community, social development and national cultural identity as common rationales. Deardorff (2006) developed a model of internationalization with intercultural competence for students as an outcome. And while these considerations make intuitive sense, Childress (2010), has noted that intercultural competence is the most difficult justification for internationalization to evaluate and therefore the least studied. Additionally, viewed either from a structural/operational perspective or from a lens of social/cultural responsibility, HEIs that choose to enroll international students have an obligation and duty of care to those individuals. For example, a standard element of exploring new mobility and exchange programs is a campus visit to understand the physical and social wellbeing and support structures in place for students. As geopolitical events have unfolded, higher education

institutions have had an opportunity to respond to and support the international communities they steward. During the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 and the current Russian invasion of Ukraine, for example, Virginia Tech has helped not only students, but also faculty with connections to those countries. While I am not evaluating the effectiveness of these gestures, the act of voicing support demonstrates some understanding of the unique needs of diverse campus populations from multiple nations.

In addition to the economic aims discussed above, GASEPA advocated for incorporating global and intercultural programs across the teaching, research, and Extension missions of agricultural colleges and universities. Lakai et al. (2014) surveyed North Carolina CES faculty and noted a changing clientele and an imperative to address the impacts of ongoing globalization as key indicators of fresh competencies required of those individuals. Harder, Place, et al. (2010) went further to identify a range of specific capabilities CES personnel now must possess to offer effective Extension programming, including cultural sensitivity, interpersonal skills, technical expertise, and relationship building.

Political

Historically, one only needs to look as far as the U.S. government for political rationales for internationalization. The APLU (2012) has cited relevant legislative and policy milestones promoting such efforts, including the Fulbright Act of 1946, funding faculty and student mobility, the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948 supporting student mobility, the Point Four Program of 1950 (which later became USAID) and the National Defense Education Project of 1966. Furthermore, internationalization has been integral to the missions and strategy of many U.S. agencies, including USAID/Department of State, the Department of Education, the Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS), USDA, and others. The world is becoming increasingly

interconnected and intertwined socially, economically, and politically, and challenges for one country often become concerns for neighboring nations or for all. Knight has highlighted several additional political rationales for higher education internationalization, including technical service provision, policy, and national security (Knight, 2021). Childress (2010) noted an increased emphasis on internationalization and mutual understanding in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks and ensuing U.S.-led "War on Terror." Knight (2019) has argued that knowledge diplomacy is emerging as a distinct element of such efforts and, as the name suggests, it centers on higher education. Specifically, she contends International Higher Education Research and Innovation (IHERI) influences international relations and international relations reciprocally shapes IHERI. Higher education continues to be a powerful nation-building strategy. More recently, de Wit and Altbach (2021) have pondered the rise of nationalism and populism, as well as the general retrenchment of nations during the COVID-19 pandemic and suggested that these developments will continue to shape internationalization as people withdraw from or postpone travel to other nations. The long-term effects of these developments remain to be seen.

Campuses across the country continue to evaluate how to address the political dynamics resulting from conflicts around the world. For example, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has led to campus protests by pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli groups. Universities have responded in various ways from support or tolerance to removal of encampments and arrest of protestors deemed breaking laws or campus policies. The complexity of these actions has been magnified by the current presidential administration's decision to penalize universities alleged to be unsupportive of Jewish students and faculty. Furthermore, the administration's dissolution of USAID has resulted in the cancellation of billions of dollars of federal grants administered by

universities. Many of these institutions relied on U.S.-based faculty to support project implementation, often alongside in-country staff.

I have emphasized the cooperative investment of federal, state, and local governments in Extension. This arrangement requires that system leaders at the state and local levels interact with legislators and other elected and appointed political officials at those scales. This relationship demands that CES personnel understand the issues elected (political) government stakeholders perceive as important. Ludwig (1993) surveyed local and state community and agricultural leaders to ascertain their perspectives on internationalizing Extension. And while she found that her respondents generally favored such initiatives, local agricultural respondents were not as strongly positive as their state counterparts.

Melevin (1991) also studied Extension directors' perspectives on internationalization in the early 1990s and concluded that stakeholder resistance constituted a barrier to their support of such efforts. Other scholars, writing some years later, also found a lack of support among local clientele constituted an impediment to Extension agent and director embrace of internationalization (Franklin et al., 2004; Barbara G. Ludwig, 1999; Ludwig, 2001; Ludwig & McGirr, 2003). Interestingly, Ludwig found that directors that she interviewed perceived a lack of support by local clientele as more of a concern among directors than agents. Perhaps this emphasis can be attributed to those leaders' roles in interacting with legislators to secure funding for Extension programs and therefore a heightened sensitivity to such officials' concerns. And while this reluctance among local stakeholders has been widely cited, Vergot III et al. (2006) studied an internationalization program at the University of Florida Institute on Food and Agricultural Sciences that involved graduate students, Extension faculty, and local

commissioners and found that the elected government officials who completed it developed a greater appreciation for the value of the system.

Finally, Extension faculty frequently contribute to international development projects as members of university teams. These initiatives have often been funded by USDA, USAID, or the FAS and frequently require recipient(s) to specify the benefits of their engagement in them to the U.S. in their application for support. At a 2022 meeting of Extension and APLU leaders in Kansas City, USDA and FAS leadership considered ways to involve all elements of the public and LGU system in international projects. USDA presenters highlighted the need to demonstrate benefit to U.S. objectives, such as increased trade and agricultural product market development, as a criterion when considering international opportunities.

Expanded Rationales

Institutions and actors offer various rationales for pursuing internationalization (Knight, 2012). I argued above that combining the five indicators of an internationalized CES identified by Ludwig and Barrick with the two rationales for internationalization suggested by Harder et al. yields three overarching rationales for Extension efforts: educating clientele through programming, creating professional development opportunities for CES personnel, and enhancing organizational capacity. However, given the complex character of internationalization, these three indicators still do not allow for as nuanced consideration as Knight's higher education definition and process do. Nonetheless, Knight's rationales do not account for the explicit aim of enhancing CES organizational capacity for internationalization offered in that literature. Although adapting Knight's framework to the Extension literature offers a more complete mechanism by which to consider rationales for CES internationalization, I want here to suggest a

fifth justification or criterion: organizational. Accordingly, Table 2 outlines a set of internationalization rationales for CES that draw on three approaches or frameworks.

Table 2

Indicators and Rationales for HEI and CES Internationalization

Scholar	Rationales/indicators
Ludwig and Barrick	1) clientele develop a fundamental understanding of global and national interdependence, 2) Extension educational programs in the U.S. stress the impact of international economic forces on agricultural markets, 3) Extension personnel incorporate international perspectives in ongoing programming, 4) Extension faculty and staff understand the connection between basic international issues and the Extension mission, and 5) Extension personnel evaluation systems reward international effort.
Harder et al	professional development, enhanced organizational capacity
Knight	academic, economic, social/cultural, political
Proposed integrative CES rationales	educational, economic, organizational, political, social/cultural

Organizational

While elements of each of Knight's rationales are found in most previous studies and commentaries, I believe organizational justifications should be considered separately because participation is most often addressed through institutional efforts. Organization scale barriers to international engagement include many of those mentioned above: lack of time, lack of money, low programming priority, lack of support from clientele, insufficient expertise (Franklin et al., 2004; Barbara G. Ludwig, 1999; Selby et al., 2005); perceived negative effects on tenure and career (Place et al., 2000); and fear-related concerns such as illness, personal safety, language, and cultural differences (Lamm & Harder, 2010). Ludwig and McGirr (2003) found that in addition to time, money, and local clientele resistance, Extension directors perceived LGU administrative hierarchy and general lack of support, as well as lack of knowledge concerning

how to become engaged, as barriers to international engagement. Combining Knight (1999) academic, economic, social/cultural, and political rationales for internationalization with this fifth justification–organizational–affords a more complete treatment of the phenomenon while also accounting for those factors previously identified by Ludwig and Barrick (1996) and Harder, Lamm, et al. (2010). I have argued that current rationales for Extension internationalization do not allow for nuanced examination of the reasons why CES personnel pursue such efforts and have suggested the usefulness of adapting Knight's widely accepted higher education framework for internationalization to that context. By adding an organizational rationale to Knight's framework, I am contending (and exploring the proposition) that CES professionals are critical to efforts to Extension international engagement and internationalization.

Evolution of Rationales Over Time

Each of the five integrative rationales discussed above, academic/educational, economic, political, social/cultural, and organizational, has been consistently referenced in the literature during the last four decades. As I have contended, beginning in the 1980's USDA has persistently referred to the need to understand markets, to educate clientele, to equip Extension personnel with capabilities to work globally, and to improve CES organizational capacity as compelling reasons to pursue internationalization. Ludwig and Barrick argued similarly in the 1990's. It is noteworthy that the accepted definition of an internationalized CES (and therefore the rationales developed by Ludwig and Barrick) was informed largely by two USDA reports. As such, their complementary usage is not surprising. Later studies in the 2000's and 2010's built on the work of Ludwig (1993); Barbara G. Ludwig (1999) and Ludwig and Barrick (1996), citing not only their definition of an internationalized Extension system (rationales), but also replicating their analyses with different state CES populations. Social/cultural rationales for

internationalization began to appear in the Extension literature with more frequency beginning in the 2000s as scholars explored issues of diversity, changing demographics, cultural sensitivity, and global mindedness (Harder, Place, et al., 2010; Lakai et al., 2014; Smith, 2008).

Overall, this review has suggested that Ludwig and Barrick's definition has been accepted, without significant debate, within the literature related to CES internationalization for more than 25 years. Extension authors since have cited, but not challenged, those authors' five indicators or rationales for the phenomenon. More recent CES-specific studies have focused almost exclusively on the perceptions of faculty and administrators concerning internationalization and have not questioned the reasons for its pursuit. This may reflect a sense that such efforts are inevitable, a sentiment that Melevin (1991) has documented, coupled with a desire to understand the implications of the phenomenon for Extension faculty and staff. This result could also be related to the fact that the Extension internationalization literature has appeared largely in professional journals, such as the *Journal of Extension* and *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, the primary audience for which is that system's relatively small U.S. professional workforce.

Leadership of Internationalization Efforts

As noted above, Extension directors are the leaders of their CES, and personnel and stakeholders routinely turn to them for cues concerning organizational priorities and strategies. This is also true more particularly with respect to directors and Extension internationalization initiatives. For example, directors have been asked to support and set the tone for such efforts from the top (Ludwig & Barrick, 1996; USDA, 1984). Ludwig (2001) has argued that directors can support such initiatives by investing in personnel, professional development, and policies. Andreasen (2003) has suggested that directors can work to lower barriers for faculty engagement

in internationalization. And Lamm and Harder (2010) have called on these leaders to communicate the value of internationalization to their units. Their positionality puts directors squarely in position to encourage such initiatives should they wish to do so. Understanding, therefore, how those executives view their roles in internationalization will address a gap in the literature.

In addition to leading their respective systems, directors also address, individually and as a group, issues important to the U.S. CES. Extension is organizationally a part of APLU through the Board on Agriculture Assembly and ECOP. ECOP formed a committee of directors in 2019 to explore internationalization, in part to support such efforts among LGUs (APLU, 2019, April 11–12, 2019, July 11–12). While this committee has been largely inactive since it was established, Extension professionals with internationalization responsibilities, including members of the Globalizing Extension Innovation Network (GEIN), have highlighted the symbolic significance of ECOP's formal support. Eight state Extension directors met with members of GEIN during the summer of 2021 to explore ways to support internationalization within the CES. Extension directors are routinely recognized as key stakeholders in implementing national initiatives and supporting nascent collective programming efforts, such as a system-wide focus on health and urban programming. Understanding how directors perceive the value of internationalization efforts may yield insights into how those leaders may gain the support of actors throughout the Extension system to promote and implement such programming.

As stated earlier, APLU (and NASULGC) have issued numerous calls for university/college presidential and executive leadership of internationalization initiatives. These reports in the grey literature constituted responses to provisions in federal legislation calling for CES and LGU contributions to international agricultural development and food security (USDA,

1984, 1989). These are, these reports advocated, the greatest challenges of the new century (Russo & Osborne, 2004), and are, or should be, a critical imperative for university leaders (APLU, 2017). Alongside APLU, NAFSA: Association of International Educators has emphasized the pivotal role of clear and consistent university presidential and executive leadership to attain successful comprehensive internationalization (Hudzik, 2011; Hudzik & McCarthy, 2012). Croom (2012) has called for additional research on the role of presidents in internationalization efforts. Knight (1994) also emphasized presidential leadership as an integral element of the higher education internationalization cycle she proposed. Childress (2010), in a case study of two private universities, highlighted the centrality of presidential leadership to internationalization and acknowledged the need for more grassroots or faculty-based engagement in such processes. Childress, like Croom, called for additional study of the role of higher education institution presidents in these initiatives.

The emphasis on executive leadership in the higher education and Extension grey literatures, as well as the consistent acknowledgement of the significance of such roles in the scholarly literature, and the lack of current studies of Extension directors suggests that understanding the roles of these officials in CES internationalization more deeply can offer an important contribution to existing knowledge.

Neo-Liberalism and CES and Higher Education Internationalization

Neoliberalism "proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2007, p. 2). Harvey has further argued that neoliberalism grew to become the nation's dominant epistemic frame beginning in the 1970s and 1980's and remains the single most widely accepted worldview to

this day. More than broadly accepted, Harvey suggests the values espoused in neoliberalism have become dominant ways of knowing or patterns of thought. In fact, the fingerprints of neoliberalism are evident in the accepted rationales of higher educational internationalization and Extension internationalization. The value placed on increasing market access and understanding the impacts of trade on Extension clientele in such initiatives represents a case in point. And while neoliberalism rose in prominence during the same decades the federal government began to focus on the internationalization of LGUs and Extension systems, supporting agricultural producers and markets had been a core element of CES work long before neoliberalism was established as the nation's dominant frame. Rhoades and Slaughter (1997) argued that LGUs have been connected to industry since their inception, making it difficult for them to resist the influence of the for-profit sector. Extension, similarly, has been linked to economic development since its founding more than a century ago. That enduring focus on the economic or market-based benefits to communities is a cornerstone of CES work to this day. Given this orientation, critiques of neoliberal technology-focused solutions and market framing of opportunities should be considered when developing and executing international Extension activities.

As with Extension, higher education strategies are today often informed by neoliberal premises. The scholarship on academic capitalism critiques and laments shifting resource allocation, power dynamics, and institutional emphases as the result of market-focused HEIs driven by business frames (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997). This changing operating environment has not developed overnight, but rather has evolved alongside economic, political, and societal trends. For example, revenue is often needed in response to declining federal and state support for HEIs to ensure their fiscal solvency. That situation has arisen directly from the broad acceptance among legislators of neoliberal tenets. Revenue can be generated through tuition

increases, increases in philanthropy, and research funding, and through auxiliary enterprises, such as housing and residence life or athletic enterprises, and through international activities. These influences must be acknowledged when considering motivations for internationalization.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methods

Purpose Statement

I argue that Extension programming emphasizes internationalization, but also that there is a lack of information concerning the views and perceived roles of CES leaders in institutionalizing such efforts. When considering Knight's internationalization cycle (Figure 4) and as explored above, I argue directors are positioned to influence most, if not all, elements of that process, particularly through raising awareness, demonstrating commitment, providing resources for operationalization, and reinforcing the value of such efforts to their employees and stakeholders. Moreover, I note that I was curious concerning whether Ludwig and Barrick's definition now adequately reflects directors' contemporary views of internationalization. Finally, I hypothesize the rationales offered in Table 2 provide a more comprehensive valence through which to understand Extension internationalization.

Research Questions

As detailed in Chapter 1, I designed this study to explore the question: What are Extension directors' conceptualizations and perceptions of their roles in internationalization? To examine directors' views more deeply, I explored the following sub questions:

1. How do Extension directors describe/define internationalization?
2. Why do Extension directors choose to pursue or not pursue internationalization, from their point of view?
3. What roles do Extension directors perceive themselves playing in internationalization?
4. According to Extension directors, to what extent do national calls to action inform internationalization?

Ontological and Epistemological Commitments

My research frame is situated squarely in the constructivist tradition, and my ontological approach is relativism. That is, I believe there are multiple truths and multiple realities to be discovered (Guba & Lincoln, 2008). As such, my inquiry sought to discover the truths of the participants rather than an absolute truth. This contrasts with a realist orientation in which the researcher seeks to uncover an absolute or known truth. My epistemology is emic; that is, I ascribe to the belief that knowledge is socially constructed and as a researcher I was both a contributor to and conductor of the inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The lived experiences of the participants informed what they knew and how they knew it, as do my lived experiences.

Strategy of Inquiry

The few existing studies of Extension directors have largely been quantitative, survey-based inquiries (Franklin et al., 2004; Ludwig, 2001; Melevin, 1991). Patton (2002) has argued that qualitative research is appropriate for efforts aimed at a deep examination of individual perspectives, values, and beliefs. As my approach to this inquiry was in the constructivist tradition and I ascribe to the belief that an individual's experiences influence not only their perspectives, but also their framework for what is known and true, I contend that a qualitative methodology is appropriate for this analysis. Further, I believe that knowledge is socially constructed and when individuals interact, they draw upon the sum of their lived experiences and can together create new knowledge and understandings through shared discussion and understanding.

Data Collection

I conducted semi-structured key informant interviews with Extension directors. Brinkmann (2014) has suggested that conversation is basic to human interaction and

understanding. Further, such exchange follows a cycle of negotiating meaning, concrete descriptions, clarification, revisiting, coda, and repetition of those steps. During this process, individuals in conversation revisit and repeat ideas as they make sense of that which they are discussing. Semi-structured interviews allow for conversation and revisiting and repeating points of discussion in a comfortable manner. I asked each participant the same set of interview questions, but the flexibility of a semi-structured approach allowed me to follow up with additional queries and to seek clarification based on the flow of each conversation.

Interview Questions

I designed the interview questions to elicit directors' perceptions concerning my research question and sub-questions. Table 3 details the connections between this line of inquiry, prior research, and my interview questions.

Table 3

Connections Between Line of Inquiry, Research, and Interview Questions

Line of Inquiry	Relevant Literature	Interview Questions
How do Extension directors describe/define internationalization?	(Ludwig & Barrick, 1996) (Knight, 2003)	• How would you describe Extension internationalization? • How do Extension systems pursue internationalization? • What is the process of internationalization for an Extension system?
Why do Extension directors choose to pursue or not pursue internationalization, from their point of view?	(Franklin et al., 2004) (Harder, Place, et al., 2010) (Harder, Lamm, et al., 2010) (Lakai et al., 2014) (Ludwig, 2001) (Melevin, 1991)	• What rationales do you draw upon when considering the importance of internationalization? • What benefits do you perceive are realized for CES through internationalization? • What costs, if any, do you perceive of pursuing internationalization? • What barriers do you perceive to the pursuit of internationalization?

Line of Inquiry	Relevant Literature	Interview Questions
What roles do Extension directors see themselves playing in internationalization?	(Andreasen, 2003) (Franklin et al., 2004) (Lamm & Harder, 2010) (Ludwig, 2001) (Ludwig & McGirr, 2003)	• What do you perceive your role to be in supporting internationalization efforts in your state (or organization)? • What do you perceive your role to be in supporting Extension professionals in internationalization? • In what ways do you resource internationalization in your (CE) system?
To what extent do national calls to action inform internationalization according to Extension directors?	(APLU, 2017) (Childress, 2009) (NASULGC, 2002) (USDA, 1984) (USDA, 1989)	• To what extent do you believe calls to action, such as policy and vision statements, from APLU, for example, inform pursuit of internationalization? And have they done so in the past in your view? • To what extent do the findings of work groups and leadership committees, such as the ECOP international committee, inform your support/pursuit of internationalization? • What do you perceive your role to be in supporting internationalization in the U.S. CES writ large?

This method of inquiry allowed for discovery and refinement of participants' views and beliefs. As a contributor to the conversation, I acknowledge the potential impact of my presence and frame of reference. Greenwood (1993) considered Argyris and Schon's work on espoused theory versus theory in practice in the context of nursing and noted the discrepancy between stated and personal beliefs. Further, she contended that espoused theories are learned from peers. As I have detailed above, directors, APLU, and USDA have individually and collectively voiced support for internationalization and the active engagement of directors therein. This consistent framing of the import of internationalization has likely had an impact on the collective, or espoused, views of the phenomena by Extension leaders. I sought therefore to be sensitive to the possibility of differences between the espoused support of internationalization and interlocutor's personal views on the matter. This required careful and attentive listening and asking follow-up

questions for clarification to discern true beliefs to the extent possible and where they might differ from initial responses.

Berger (2015) has contended reflexivity is the practice of constantly evaluating one's positionality relative to the research, participants, and oneself. Further, Berger has cautioned that researchers can get too close to their inquiry and reflexivity can help to counter that possibility. This practice should be applied to all aspects of inquiry, as individual positionality influences data collection, interpretation, and evaluation. Reflexive practice was an important aspect of my research given my positionality. That is, I am a mid-40's white, educated, male, who actively worked in the field of Extension internationalization at the time of the interviews. I was a founding member of the GEIN and served as the first GEIN Council chair. As such, I was engaged in formal national conversations addressing CES and LGU internationalization and served as a leader of grassroots efforts to develop a community of practice to support such initiatives. My personal and professional experiences with internationalization in CES and LGU settings could not be set aside when I donned my cap as researcher. Rather, I constantly considered how what I believed to be true influenced my reaction to the views and beliefs of my study participants. Conversely, I also sought to observe and understand the reactions of my interviewees to my questions and what concerns or factors may have elicited those responses.

Sampling Strategies

As explored in Chapter 1, the Morrill Act of 1862 established the LGU system. A second Morrill Act in 1890 conferred LGU status on historically Black colleges and universities, primarily in the south. The 1994 Equity in Educational LGU Status Act designated several tribal colleges as LGUs (APLU, 2012). Within the CES community, LGUs are commonly referred to as 1862s, 1890s, and 1994s, based on their founding/designation year. Today, the U.S. CES is

administratively divided into five regions: northeast, north central, western, southern, and 1890s (APLU, n.d.–a). The 1890 region consists of all 1890 LGUs, while the remaining four are geographic regions comprised of 1862 LGUs. Although the 1994 tribal colleges and universities interact collectively through the First Americans Land-Grant Consortium, or FALCON, these institutions are not commonly accorded a regional designation by NIFA/USDA.

My sampling approach was typical cases. That is, I recruited directors who were representative of CES institutions. As highlighted above, I acknowledge the three types of institutions are resourced very differently. The 2018 Farm Bill allocated 63% of Extension funds to 1862s, 9% to 1890s, less than 1% to 1994s and the remainder through competitive or other funding programs (Croft, 2019). However, there is variation within resourcing among the different LGUs and some 1862s receive less funding than some 1890s (E. Jones, personal communication, November 18, 2022). 1994 institutions focus primarily on local food production and systems for underserved Native American populations (USDA, n.d.–a) and often have limited financial resources to pursue that mission (E. Jones, personal communication, November 18, 2022). Further, I had not encountered 1994 institutions in the existing internationalization literature. Thus, my study focused on 1862 and 1890 directors. As mentioned above, Directors and administrators within the nation's five Extension regions interact regularly. Each region is supported by a professional executive director and an association, such as the Association of Southern Region Extension Directors. The regional directors often work together, and each region has a unique culture.

There are 57 1862s and 19 1890s. To obtain a diversity of perspectives, I interviewed two directors from each of the five regions. This strategy roughly corresponds to the proportion of institutions (20% of 1890s sampled vs 25% of total LGUs, and 80% of 1862s sampled vs 75% of

total LGUs). In some states, the dean of the home college or other campus academic leader is the official Extension director. However, day-to-day administration authority may be delegated to another person. ECOP maintains the Cooperative Extension Section Directors and Administrators for Day-to-Day Operations list. These individuals are tasked with managing their respective systems (E. Jones, personal communication, March 3, 2023). The ECOP blogspot page offers this list. I excluded VCE from the study as at the time of my field work I had leadership responsibility for the international strategy of the state's CES organization. I also excluded a director with whom I had previously published and presented on Extension internationalization.

Recruitment

Ed Jones, long-time but now retired associate dean and director, VCE, and former ECOP international committee chair, sent a note of introduction to his former fellow Extension directors regarding my study. His support helped with gaining access to potential participants as he is a respected peer of the population I studied and has been a proponent of CES internationalization. Using a random number generator, I assigned each institution a number and starting at one contacted the respective director/administrator. I contacted each director in turn by email. If I did not hear back in 14 days, I emailed a second time and requested a response within seven days. If I did not hear back after the second email I moved on to the next person on the list and repeated the process until I had secured two interviewees per region.

Given the geographic dispersion of the directors and my plan to sample from each region, I conducted my interviews via Zoom video conference platform. I pilot tested my questions with Ed Jones to ensure their pertinence and clarity. I recorded the interviews for transcription purposes. Videoconferencing has become a standard means of interaction, and the average

Extension director participates in multiple video calls per week, if not per day. As such, I did not find virtual engagement to have a negative effect on the quality of the interviews I completed. In fact, Gray et al. (2020) found that videoconferencing enhanced rapport between participants and noted the platform's convenience for sharing IRB-related documents. Indeed, each interviewee seemed comfortable with our virtual meeting. I followed an outline of introducing myself, asking for questions, and reviewing the interview format. When recruiting, I requested 60 – 90 minutes for the interview. The actual interview times ranged from 38 to 65 minutes.

Confidentiality

The small group of directors from whom I drew my interviewees is well known to each other and they interact regularly through numerous regional and national professional associations, committees, and workgroups. As such, confidentiality was essential. I anonymized all names, places, and any other identifying information in my results in pursuit of that possibility.

Trustworthiness and Reliability

Bailey (2017) has noted that careful attention to research quality, validity, and reliability is paramount in qualitative research designs, given that such studies often seek to understand individual beliefs and values and given too, the relatively small sample size of many such analyses. Guba and Lincoln, as cited by (Bailey, 2017), have argued that credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability better articulate the concerns of qualitative research quality than validity and reliability. Bailey (2017) has further suggested that trustworthiness and authenticity are appropriate aims for research and has suggested several strategies to ensure as much. Table 3 highlights the connections between my line of inquiry, the extant literatures in my area of focus, and the interview questions I asked study participants to

address. A clear connection between questions, literature, and stated aims of the study is an important element of research rigor (Bailey, 2017).

Trustworthiness can be gained through use of rich data such as thick descriptions and detailed notes that represent participant responses and views. Bailey (2017) has suggested triangulation can also improve research quality. Creswell (2009) has also argued validity and reliability can be improved through such strategies, including employing multiple methods, appropriate sampling, practicing reflexivity and clarifying researcher bias, including discrepant cases, and use of peer debriefing (Creswell, 2012). As discussed above, I selected participants from different CES regions and institution types, sought geographic diversity, and used semi-structured interviews to allow for deep examination of participant beliefs and perspectives.

I also used peer debriefing as I developed and refined my findings. Peer debriefing involves having someone not connected to the research, but with subject matter or methodological expertise, review research progress at different stages (Bailey, 2017). While my primary resource as I completed my inquiry and analysis was my committee chair, I also engaged John Vreyens, PhD., director of University of Minnesota Extension Global Initiatives, and Mr. Michael McGirr, retired USDA international programs specialist, as experts on CES internationalization. Vreyens was the chair of the APLU Board on Agriculture Assembly International Committee on Organization and Policy and immediate past vice chair of the GEIN Council. Vreyens has deep knowledge of the historical context of national Extension internationalization initiatives and is currently active in national efforts. McGirr, similarly knew Extension internationalization efforts well and provided invaluable historical context as I explored the literature. Both Vreyens and McGirr agreed to serve as subject matter resources as I conducted my study.

Bailey (2017) has also suggested the use of member checking or allowing participants to review and comment on initial findings and data. Mero-Jaffe (2011), however, has contended that while having participants review transcripts may help with accuracy and clarification, research has not shown the practice improves the quality of an investigation. Moreover, they argue any benefits of such reviews may be overshadowed by methodological and ethical concerns. If any participant had wished to have a copy of the transcription, I would have provided it, however none of the participants elected to review their transcripts. Thus, I analyzed the original transcription of the interviews I conducted.

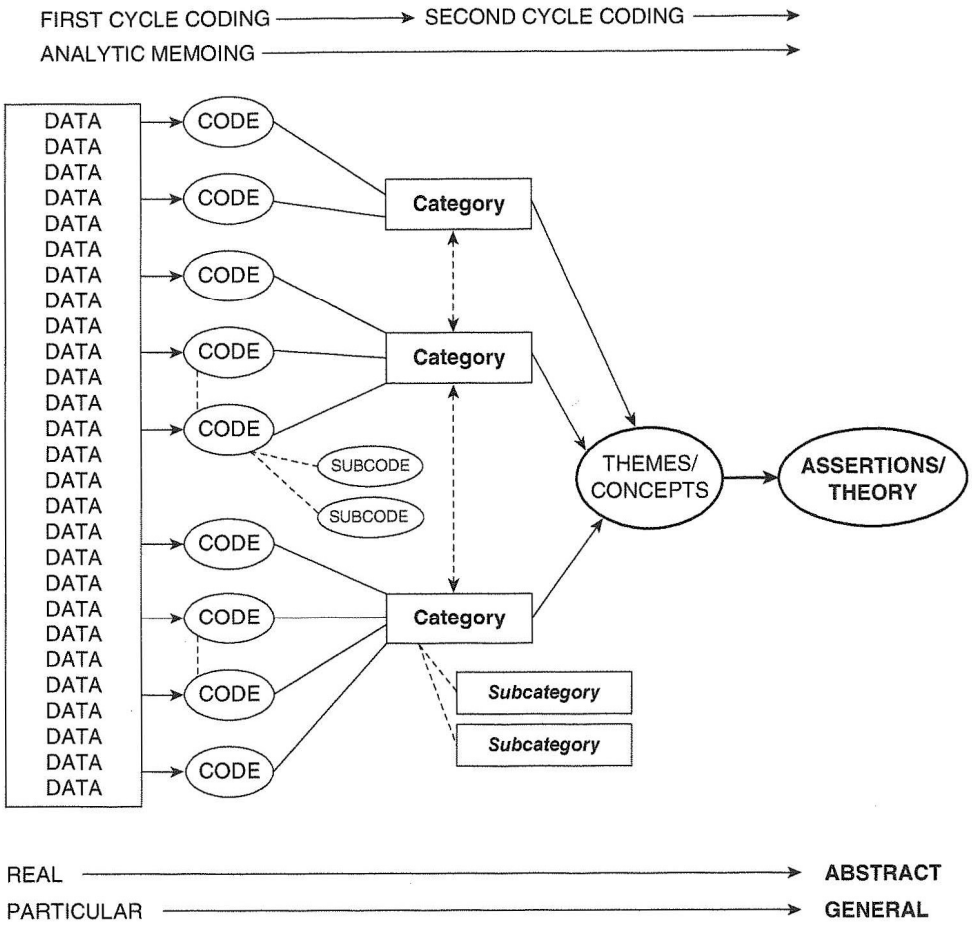
I audio recorded each interview and employed a professional transcription service, Rev, to transcribe the files. The firm guarantees 99% accuracy and utilizes non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements with its employees. I then reviewed the transcribed documents with the audio to confirm accuracy. (Bailey, 2017) has noted that recall diminishes over time, so I had the interviews transcribed within 48 hours of each conversation and reviewed them within 48 hours of receiving them from the transcription company. I also took field notes during each exchange, which served as additional data and allowed me to record salient points, reactions, and contextual observations as the interviews progressed. Additionally, I recorded initial observations from each transcript review in a running memorandum. These notes proved invaluable when completing my analysis. Had I not recorded that information as I went, my recall would have likely been diminished and at the cost of the richness of my examination.

Data Analysis

As detailed above, I randomly chose these directors from the five CES regions and conducted semi-structured interviews with each I selected. I recorded the interviews, transcribed them, and then coded the transcripts. (Saldaña, 2021). Coding is an iterative process of making meaning from data, such as interview transcripts (Saldaña, 2021). It involves reviewing and re-reviewing the data and identifying patterns. Saldaña has suggested a process of moving from granularity to generality, through multiple cycles of coding and analysis. See Figure 5 for Saldaña's codes to theory model for qualitative research (2021, p. 18). While this figure is helpful in visualizing coding as a process, my analysis concluded with themes as I do not propose a new theory of internationalization. Rather, I applied existing theory in a new context and employed a general qualitative approach for collecting and analyzing data to that end.

Figure 5

A Streamlined Codes-to-Theory Model for Qualitative Inquiry



Given that I proposed five rationales for Extension internationalization and used Knight's higher education internationalization cycle as a framework for understanding directors perceived roles in the phenomenon, a priori coding was an appropriate strategy. However, given the complexity of internationalization, I was aware that my a priori codes may not have captured all sentiments expressed by the participants. I therefore used a hybrid approach to coding the data consisting of a priori codes derived from the literature and In Vivo codes drawn from participants' responses. Table 4 outlines my coding strategy.

Table 4

Coding Strategy

A priori codes		
Framework	Sample Codes	Connections to literature
Rationales	Economic, educational, organizational, political, social/cultural	Proposed integrative rationales adapted from (Harder, Lamm, et al., 2010; Knight, 1999; Ludwig & Barrick, 1996)
Process	Awareness, commitment, planning, operationalization, review, reinforcement	(Knight, 1994)
In Vivo codes		
Capture phenomena not reflected in a priori codes	Derived from participants' responses	(Saldaña, 2009)

As I noted above, Saldaña (2021) has suggested multiple cycles of coding. As I read and re-read the transcripts, I applied the a priori codes and developed In Vivo codes. I first read each transcript from start to finish following the order in which I asked the questions, coding as I went. Next, I read the same question from each of the ten interviews to identify patterns, commonalities, or differences among the directors. I evaluated the a priori and In Vivo codes and developed categories and themes, paying careful attention to identify ideas not captured in Knight's internationalization cycle or integrative rationales. I re-read the interview transcripts until no new codes emerged. From there, I grouped the codes into subcategories and categories. Finally, from those I developed themes and assertions. Saldaña (2021) has also argued that analytic memo writing during the coding process will help capture decision making and is useful in establishing an audit trail, which is another strategy to develop trustworthiness (Bailey, 2017). As such, I recorded my decisions and observations in memos to establish an audit trail during my research.

Analytical Generalizability

As explored above, transferability is another means of considering the principles of generalizability. That is, how the findings can be transferred or generalized to other contexts. Bailey (2017) has contended that authenticity and trustworthiness can contribute to transferability. By following my research protocol, actively practicing reflexivity throughout the research process, and documenting decision making, reviewers of my research will be able to determine the applicability of the process, and my findings, to the existing theories and conceptualizations on which I predicated this inquiry.

Research Delimitations

I designed and conducted this study with a goal of better understanding Extension directors' views of and roles in internationalization. I also began this effort in the hope of more clearly elucidating paths to advance such initiatives within that system. I acknowledge that the views of the 10 directors I interviewed were just that—the perspectives of those individuals. Their outlooks were likely influenced by the priorities of their home institutions, the political tenor of their states, and the priorities of the presidential administration—as reflected in USDA policy and programming—at the time of the interviews. Therefore, the results of my study reflect a snapshot of a small group of individuals at a point in time. Additionally, my skills as a qualitative researcher are those of a student learning as I completed the study. I found the volume of information acquired through the interviews and the time it took to analyze the transcripts challenging.

Institutional Review Board Approval

Virginia Tech's Institutional Review Board requires that all studies involving human subjects undergo review and approval prior to commencement. This process is aimed at

protecting participants from harm and ensuring that research is conducted ethically. Board approval requires completion of training by researchers. As I had previously completed that certification, I worked with my advisor to develop a protocol for approval. That document detailed how I would recruit participants, inform them of any risks or benefits of their participation, procedures for data collection and analysis, data management and confidentiality, consent to participate, and withdrawal. My protocol was approved by the VT Human Research Protection Program (HRPP 22-1128). As I recruited participants, I emailed each a consent information sheet for review, which explained their rights as a study participant and outlined what participation in the research would entail. That document also explained the potential risks and benefits of becoming involved in the inquiry as well as how I intended to maintain privacy and confidentiality. The sheet also assured participants that they could change their mind and withdraw from the study (or their interview) at any point. I began each interview by confirming that individuals had received the information sheet and asking if they had any questions. Once those were addressed, if any, I proceeded with the interview. One participant contacted me 48 hours after their interview and asked to withdraw from the study. I deleted the recorded files of that conversation and confirmed I had done so. I then followed the recruitment process outlined above to secure another interviewee from that region.

Chapter 4

Research Findings

As described above, the pursuit of internationalization as an element of Extension programming has been contemplated for decades. Furthermore, as I have highlighted, academic and Extension leaders have been called upon to support internationalization and identified as key stakeholders in such efforts in both the higher education and Extension literatures. I designed this study to explore directors' understanding(s) of internationalization as a phenomenon, as well as their views on their roles not only as leaders of their systems, but also as together constituting the leadership of the national Cooperative Extension System.

In the higher education literature, academic, economic, social/cultural, and political rationales are cited as reasons to incorporate internationalization into university efforts. As posited earlier, I was interested in determining whether those rationales could specifically account for organizational outcomes cited in the Extension literature. Additionally, I wanted to understand how directors describe and define internationalization as the accepted Extension definition is milestone-or indicator-based, while the higher education definition conceptualizes internationalization as an ongoing process. Given directors' influence over and responsibility for leading their systems, I wanted to have a contemporary understanding of their views on the topic.

Table 5

Interviewees

Region	Pseudonym
1890	Sally
1890	Paul
North Central	Dan
North Central	Allison
Northeast	Jenny
Northeast	Libby

Southern	Stephanie
Southern	Kelly
Western	Clay
Western	Leon

I deliberately chose not to share Ludwig and Barrick's definition, my proposed integrative rationales, or Knight's definition or cycle with the directors prior to the interviews, as I wanted to assess current understandings and conceptualizations without the immediate (at least) mediating influence of previous scholarship. This admittedly put the directors in a position to answer without the benefit of putting a great deal of thought into the topic before the interviews. However, this approach gave me a glimpse into their raw and authentic understanding of the topic. From the first interview, it was evident that there was not a broadly shared definition of internationalization among the Extension directors in my sample, nor did my interviewees think of the phenomenon in concise or clearly defined terms. There was a lack of shared understanding of the topic and common language to describe and define internationalization processes among those with whom I spoke. What was clear and consistent throughout all 10 interviews were the prevailing lenses through which the interviewees viewed internationalization: the primacy of the local audience in their respective states and the impact of financial considerations on their thinking considering the phenomenon.

Altogether, four overarching themes emerged: process-based, rationale-based, position-based, and ECOP-based conceptualizations or understandings of internationalization. Process-based themes included activities, approaches, and programming that comprised or facilitated internationalization efforts. Rationale-based understanding included emphasis on the costs or barriers to securing internationalization, the benefits acquired through and rationales used to support such efforts, and the enabling environment needed to pursue such efforts. Position-based

understanding included ideas such as director's frames of reference, institutional position, relative priority they accorded internationalization, and their corresponding roles in such efforts. ECOP-based themes were related to the role of this national structure in facilitating system-wide internationalization. I treat each of these lenses and themes in more detail below.

Prevailing Lenses

Primacy of Local Audience

Extension directors must consistently evaluate their decisions and priorities based on the impact on, or benefit to, their local audiences. Local audiences do not always intuitively understand how international Extension activities may provide value for them. Kelly relayed her concern about stakeholders questioning international activities as, "You know, we hire Extension agents to be local educators. And there are people in their communities saying why are you there?" (Personal interview, May 2023). Clay expressed this feeling as "The question I think that we constantly feel like we are being asked explicitly or implicitly is, should [State] taxpayers pay for globalization? (Personal interview, May 2023). He added:

> Some of them, you know, want to know what's going on in the neighboring counties and why we're not doing that, you know, in theirs. But none of them have ever asked how come [State U] Extension's not doing more outside of the [State]. (Clay, personal interview, May 2023).

These sentiments illustrate the pressure leaders perceive to demonstrate how international activities align with supporting local programming needs. Interestingly, not everyone who perceived this pressure encountered questions or resistance. Rather, these responses were attributed to a combination of organizational lore, personal beliefs, and in a few cases actual questions about international engagement.

This felt pressure likely originates from multiple sources. As Extension is funded through federal, state, and local government investment, six directors reported both scrutiny of decision

making by funders and a personal/positional desire to ensure funds are used to the highest and best benefit of the communities for which they are allocated. When asked if she ever felt the need to justify her decision making, Libby replied, "Yes. At the local, state and federal levels." (Libby, personal interview, June 2023). Clay's example highlights the tension between running a state-wide educational system and the hyper-local focus that can develop within specific state Extension systems. His observation evidenced curiosity about programming being offered in other counties. Extension agents may perceive implicit or explicit pressure only to offer programming within the geographic bounds of the entities funding them. For example, if County A funds a portion of the agent's salary, and that individual offers programming in County B, stakeholders in County A may question why their investment is benefiting others not contributing to the agent's salary. This pressure, whether imagined or real, can lead to agent reluctance to provide programming in counties other than their own. It is plausible that county government stakeholders would relay such concerns to administrative leadership, which ultimately would be shared with the director. This general example plays out every day in Extension systems in which issues originating at the local level are elevated to the director, with whom ultimate responsibility for the system lies. It is understandable that those executives would be sensitive to perceived local concerns—real or imagined—about using Extension resources to support internationalization.

Financial Considerations

The importance of financial considerations cannot be overstated. Some interviewees identified the lack of available funding as a barrier to becoming involved in international engagement. Others identified ongoing fiscal support as an essential element of sustainable partnerships. Directors' attitudes concerning financial concerns varied broadly. While some

executives confidently used all manner of CES funding, others felt limited by restrictions on the source of funds. For example, Allison believed she possessed broad discretion to use resources to support her state's efforts and observed that she had not been questioned on her use of funds:

> I have not really been asked to justify it. So, you know, I think if we spent much money doing it, I would never use county money to do it. So, I have no problem using federal money to do it, because I think that's also a federal priority. And state money, we, you know, the money we get from the state has really no earmarks on it or targets, you know, it doesn't say, doesn't say you can't use money for that. So, I haven't really had to justify that, but I would suspect if I was spending a, you know, two or three million dollars a year on international, I might have to start justifying that (Allison, personal interview, April 2023).

Even though she was confident that using state and federal funding to support international efforts by her system was appropriate, it is noteworthy that she clarified she would never use local dollars to support such activities. Granted, her system was funded at a level that allowed her to invest in internationalization using state or federal dollars, while preserving local dollars for domestic investment. Similarly, Dan shared that "there's no state dollars that go into international Extension" (Dan, personal interview, April 2023). Libby noted that funding for international activities would need to come from grant support:

> You know, we're, we are lucky in, in this state, you know, we have our Smith-Lever dollars, we have our state match, you know, we have contract work and grant work and a tiny bit of philanthropy. And, and again, if we are going to do any international work, it's probably going to be because one of our faculty members sought out a grant opportunity or additional funding opportunity because of how constrained our dollars are (Libby, personal interview, June 2023).

Paul articulated yet another view on funding and observed that procedural constraints linked to federal resources limited his ability to pursue internationalization. For example, when using federal funds, he said "Okay, I've gotta get permission to utilize these funds for this purpose." (Paul, personal interview, May 2023). When I inquired whether he felt the same need to obtain

permission to use state funds for international work, he shared that state funds followed federal rules until the match was met:

> State-match funds take on federal identity, so you still have to spend your state-match funds in accord with the federal guidelines. Now, anything above your state-match dollar is considered true state funds, and so then you will be relying upon your state government as to how you can utilize those funds (Paul, personal interview, May 2023).

These reflections suggest that differently resourced systems view financial considerations in very different lights. And the funding source can determine the restrictions (or lack thereof) in use for international efforts. Interestingly, Libby observed that she had worked in a different state earlier in her career that had given her access to private funds to support internationalization. Her reflection on the value of such philanthropic support, along with Allison's caveat that she would not use local dollars, points out the complexity of these directors' perspectives. Allison's understanding was one of abundance. She felt comfortable using available resources and enjoyed the ability to employ resources from multiple funding streams. Her only stated concern was that eyebrows might be raised if she was spending multiple millions on international work. Libby acknowledged her system was in a good funding position but added the tack that new resources (grant dollars) would be needed to pursue internationalization. Paul, on the other hand, emphasized the constraints created by rules concerning how federal funding can be used based on the level of state funding provided. That is, even if a state is supportive, until that state has met the federal funding match requirement, state funding follows federal rules.

Land-grant institutions are grouped by legislative-year (1862, 1890, and 1994) and it is tempting to assume there is a certain level of operational or resource uniformity within each of those types. However, the interviews revealed a real or perceived stratification within the LGUs. For example, Jenny shared that her 1862 does not receive any state match. This is a challenge typically more acutely felt by 1890s directors. Libby noted that her 1862 is lucky to receive its

state match but must raise grant funds for internationalization. At the same time, she lamented the lack of organizational capacity within her system to pursue grants and to manage them once received. If one were to assume all the 1862s were similarly resourced, these significant differences would not be acknowledged. For limited-resource systems, regardless of institution type, this capacity question creates an additional challenge not necessarily experienced by larger system executives.

By way of example, recent VCE international projects have been supported by a variety of funding sources. For example, university-managed USAID projects often provided an opportunity for Extension agents to participate in project work. Funding was primarily used to cover travel expenses for participating agents. Project consumables were also supported by USAID funding. Occasionally, we used project funds to buy out salaries of agents or specialists for the time they committed to international projects. For certain domestic grant-funded positions, we bought out salaries to avoid a conflict of interest to allow faculty to participate when, without doing so, they would not have been able to complete international project work outside of the scope of their main grant funding. We used unrestricted Extension endowment income as matching funds to pay for airfare for faculty to travel to the project location. We also used unrestricted endowment funding for scoping trips. Having access to multiple sources of funding provided a degree of freedom not available to directors in states with less robustly resourced systems.

It is worth noting that in these examples one director believed they possessed discretion to use federal funding without concern. Another believed they must secure permission to use national funding. This inconsistency of interpretation demonstrates the confusion around what is

acceptable in terms of use of funds by origin (type). However, use of federal funds to support international engagement was clarified in the 2020 NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide:

> NIFA deems foreign/international travel to be an important part of several capacity programs, however prior approval of foreign travel is required. For Hatch and Evans-Allen Research programs, prior approval is delegated to the Experiment Station Director or Section 1445 Director. For Extension programs (Smith-Lever and Section 1444), prior approval of foreign travel is delegated to the Extension Director or Section 1444 Administrator (NIFA, 2020, p. 157).

That same policy statement also noted:

> For Smith-Lever and Section 1444 Extension programs, funds may be used to support foreign travel for purposes that will benefit the Extension program. Extension costs associated with foreign travel, such as collaboration with nations that are creating university-based extension within their agricultural universities that provide mutual benefit to the US LGU and their foreign collaborator and attending conferences where the U.S. Cooperative Extension System is a partner with foreign agricultural universities in developing university-based Extension at foreign universities (NIFA, 2020, p. 158).

This inconsistency in interpretation or application by CES directors bears further exploration. For example, with the volume of information directors receive, was this guidance simply missed by some? Or are program contacts within the federal organization communicating expectations clearly? Or, out of an abundance of caution and desire to avoid scrutiny, are directors adhering to old rules?

Themes

It is understandable that directors' views on internationalization would largely be influenced by stakeholder and financial considerations. Those I interviewed suggested that these factors guided much of their decision making about organizational priorities on the view that without adequate funding you cannot operate and without the support of stakeholders, resource acquisition is challenging. The organizational purpose is to serve stakeholder needs and Extension systems must have the resources to do so, so these considerations are inextricably linked. Looking beyond these observations, it is helpful to consider director's conceptualizations

of internationalization from the vantage point of the process-based, rationale-based, position-based, and ECOP-based themes that arose across the interviews.

Theme 1: Process-Based

Process-based themes included activities, approaches, and programming that comprise or facilitate internationalization efforts. Interviewees identified activities such as hosting international delegations, incorporating international perspectives in programming for domestic audiences, programming targeted at international audiences within the U.S.; creating outbound opportunities through project work or professional study tours for agents; and interacting with undergraduate and graduate students as examples of internationalization.

Activities

Directors identified numerous activities that they believed constituted international engagement. Those included in-bound or domestic international programming, including for audiences in the United States, bringing professional delegations from other nations to the U.S., university students' engagement with international Extension projects, and working with graduate students from other countries. Four directors emphasized the idea of internationalizing at home. Leon said:

> The third piece is becoming more and more important to me here at [State] is internationalizing Extension here at home. How do we get international students involved in or interested in us, so they understand our international program? (Leon, personal interview, June 2023).

Dan spoke about the value of hosting visitors and how those interactions can benefit faculty and staff:

> Ah, and when you put those international visitors that want to be involved in Extension and engagement, and you put them in the field, you know, once again, your local staff, your local colleagues, regional colleagues, they all benefit from working with these visitors. And so, it is really, really, important (Dan, personal interview, April 2023).

Out-bound activities included participation in discovery or scoping trips, participation in fellowships, such as Marshall or Fulbright funding, traveling abroad for project work, Extension activity as a component of larger projects through USAID or other funders, agent study tours, international specialist work, and professional exchanges. In fact, six of the directors had previously engaged in international work earlier in their careers as specialists. It is noteworthy that these activities included domestic programming, travel-based experiences, either inbound or outbound, work aligned with the academic mission of their university, as well as traditional international project work. Jenny reflected a balance of in-bound and out-bound engagement in her description:

> It is the way that Extension organizations bring in an international audience, through our programs, whether it's bringing folks here or also providing some leadership and technical expertise, for Extension folks to go overseas. I know there are instances where folks do a sabbatical if they're eligible for that and do some Extension work in other countries. But, you know, I think it's a combination of those two things, international audiences coming and participating in our programming, as well as us going abroad to provide some Extension work (Jenny, personal interview, April 2023).

Approaches

In terms of approaches to internationalization, reflections ranged from implementation-focused to philosophical. From an implementation standpoint, interviewees recommended being intentional and deliberate (as opposed to ad hoc) about including internationalization in their system's plan of work, identifying champions to promote such efforts, maintaining sustained stakeholder involvement, and using a systems approach to understanding pertinent issues. As Allison reflected on her system's approach to internationalization, she acknowledged the value Extension offers to the larger university due to its members' expertise in partnership formation,

> And, and it's the same way in other countries, you know, you don't get to just sweep into a country and, you know, a university partner and say learn this and say, 'Yeah, that's a great idea,' and then leave. You know, you can't do that if you're going to develop partnerships. And I think Extension more than any other college understands that the

> most, and I think we bring that to helping others understand how you work in an international situation (Allison, personal interview, April 2023).

Directors identified approaching the work from an altruistic vantage point, emphasizing curiosity and listening, embracing intercultural competence, and valuing co-creation from a philosophical vantage point. Stephanie shared that while the CES may have an idea of the approach or technical solution needed, successful projects work alongside the intended partner:

> There have been plenty of times that we've had ideas. I think most importantly, we go in with an open mind. We go in listening, asking questions and then understanding when the time is right to say, 'We have this idea, you know, and...' But to go in with a firm, 'Hey, this is what we're going to do. Y'all either get on board and do it our way, or that's it,' that doesn't work. That's when we're doing something to, and that really goes against our philosophy in Extension anyway, so... So, I think just building the relationships, getting to know, listening, asking questions, being able to, you know, bring up some ideas and get that insight and input, and then co-create what it looks like in the end together. And you know, sometimes it ends up looking like what we first imagine. Usually, it ends up better. So, I think there is room and space for that. It just... but just going in and saying, 'Okay, this is the project that we designed, so we have to deliver it only this way,' well, probably should have done that in the project development to start with, right, and... But I think once the relationships are developed, there's a huge ability to work those kinds of things out through that relationship. But the relationship is one that even when a project goes away, keeping that relationship open because there can be other projects or ideas, and whatever may happen from that point on (Stephanie, personal interview, April 2023).

Programming

In terms of programming, directors highlighted agricultural topics, family-focused initiatives, and youth development (as distinct from adult-oriented programs). These efforts could be delivered in international locations or directed at domestic or diasporan communities. Additionally, several directors noted interest in other countries learning about the structure of the U.S. Cooperative Extension System. In that setting, extension as an enabling structure was the programming priority. These efforts included sharing the CES programming model, learning theory, technical expertise, curriculum, materials, and resources. Dan noted that programming went beyond technical subjects:

> And so I am a big believer of sharing, you know, not only content expertise, but also, when we talk about adult learning, and adult learning theory, and, and how to work with producer groups, community groups and all that, you know, learning from each other, and reaching out to communities to help people improve their lives (Dan, personal interview, April 2023).

Paul added that part of internationalization is adapting content and materials for international audiences, both for Extension's use in programming and for use by such professionals in other countries:

> Well, for me, I think it is taking our programming, be it the model, be it the programs, be it the materials that we have, and putting them into a format and availing ourselves to work internationally making these materials available such that other countries can download them and have conversations with us or discussions about our materials. And so, we're moving our materials from pretty much a state, regional or national perspective, to now being state, regional, national, international for use when we're called on based upon our priorities and prowess to assist other countries (Paul, personal interview, May 2023).

Theme 2: Rationale-Based

Rationale-based understandings included an emphasis on the costs or barriers to internationalization, the benefits acquired through and rationales used to support such efforts, and the enabling environment needed to pursue that aspiration.

Costs and Barriers

Jenny identified two initial barriers. First:

> Our funding is really to be focused domestically. And I think all of us kind of have that, that feeling of responsibility, that our, our first responsibility is to the people in our states or our systems where we work (Jenny, personal interview, April 2023).

Secondly, she acknowledged that directors at times do not have the context or experience to consider what is possible in terms of internationalization, and this presents a barrier to ideation or possibility,

> But I think the second one is a lack of imagination, sometimes. It's like, 'Well, we've never really done that before. That hasn't been at least a big part of most Extension

> system programs.' So, we, we don't even really imagine, 'Well, what would it be like if we did it?' (Jenny, personal interview, April 2023).

Other barriers to internationalization included lack of buy-in among agents and specialists due to relative professional capacities, time constraints, and tensions with local priorities; limited organizational capability, experience and/or self-confidence, conflicting institutional priorities; funding concerns, funder opposition or restrictions, and differing institutional and local government structures. Directors also mentioned geopolitical tensions and personal safety as possible concerns. One interviewee identified stakeholder reluctance to help competitors in foreign markets as an example of the political risks of supporting internationalization. Interestingly, as a group, interviewees identified the lack of a clear definition of internationalization and a lack of perceived national support for such initiatives as a barrier. At the time of the interviews, internationalization was not listed as a NIFA priority. Given their responsibility to focus on NIFA priorities, directors saw that fact as a barrier to securing support for such efforts.

Other costs or barriers identified by interviewees included the cost of travel and programming materials and supplies; opportunity costs such as time spent encouraging faculty to participate and public perception of undertaking international work, and sunk time for projects for which there is little perceived domestic benefit.

> Never in 10 years has somebody come to us and say, 'Hey, can you put together a proposal to do something in Mexico or Canada or in Africa?' (Clay, personal interview, May 2023).

Benefits

Directors suggested they perceived several positive dimensions to internationalization such as the opportunity to work with limited resource audiences, the opportunity for domestic

clientele to be exposed to new ideas and perspectives, opportunities to encourage intercultural or global awareness and to supporting a significant educational mission of their institutions, skill development possibilities for their personnel, and improved job performance and satisfaction for those so engaged. In terms of working with limited resource audiences, international projects offer opportunities for Extension faculty to work with audiences and glean practices, approaches, or solutions from less well-resourced environments, and then apply those at home. Paul made a connection between the mission of 1890s and international audiences:

> In the 1890 community, and because 1890 Extension has a mission and mandate of working and serving underserved and underrepresented populations and communities, so much of the demographics, the behavior, the dynamics of the population we serve domestically kind of transposes to work internationally. Contexts are similar because you find small landholders and stakeholders in many international settings who are working hard to get up to speed on a lot of things such as, for example, mechanization or the utilization of technologies and innovations in agricultural production. We find we can help too from the standpoint of nutrition, healthcare, youth education and development. looking at career opportunities, development of themselves as individuals. (Paul, personal interview, May 2025).

Kelly saw learning from international programming as a way to stay relevant and improve service to domestic audiences, including immigrant populations:

> Well, I think we stay relevant. You know, it's continuing our relevance, showing that we understand the work we're trying to do and what impacts us. I think another piece of the internationalization is continuing to meet, reach broad audiences. When we talk about marginalized individuals those international audiences may or may not be here in our local communities, but then outside those local communities they may be predominant in a certain area in which we may be working. So taking away some of the assumptions that could drive the work we do because we understand that culture is an important aspect of the work we do (Kelly, personal interview, May 2023).

Other domestic audience benefits included learning how market systems affect domestic clientele, involving stakeholders in international programs or learning from agents returning from assignments, and deriving economic benefits for state populations. Allison noted:

> And, just to think about how within our programs, international issues affect us. And just, for example, agriculture, you know, especially in [State], 60% of our agricultural

> products are exported. So just thinking about that has a big impact on the clientele that we work with. So, I think a lot of it is just, you know, socializing the issues around internationalization, how international issues affect us here in [State] and the U.S. is the first step in doing that, I think (Allison, personal interview, April 2023).

Learning new ideas included differing perspectives, as well as fresh technologies and practices. Intercultural gains included awareness of diversity, non-English language exposure, an increased sense of place in the world and understanding of difference, openness to sharing, and developing comfort and camaraderie through peer learning and sharing. International projects create an opportunity to support educational missions through talent acquisition (graduate students and faculty) and experiential learning opportunities for students. Skills developed through international engagement include networking, applying learning in different contexts, improved listening and contextual understanding, practicing adaptability and flexibility, and better developed communication skills. Stephanie shared that Extension professionals returning home after international engagement appreciate how much they have learned through those experiences:

> Things that we learn, different ways to communicate and work together. So, how we work with our communities, our communities are getting more diverse. So, I think in what people comment on, you know, how much they learned, and what they gained from it is a true testament to some of the benefits (Stephanie, personal interview, April 2023).

Finally, international engagement can enhance faculty job satisfaction and confidence as returning Extension faculty are often esteemed in their communities, have an opportunity to share with their colleagues, learn to appreciate CES more, and also become better equipped to improve their practice through teaching others about the system. Clay noted that returning faculty help the Extension system be more intentional about international engagement and that those participants value the experience:

> So, for us, I think that's probably the biggest benefit of those who have done it, is that they help push us as a system to think about it more carefully. And I think they in some

> ways are feeling more, ... I don't know, it's hard for me to say what they feel. I do not want to say they have higher job satisfaction, but I haven't talked to anybody who has gone to an international trip either for research or Extension exploration purposes and come back and said they regretted it (Clay, personal interview, May 2023).

Enabling Environment

Directors identified several key elements of an enabling environment for international engagement. The conditions they identified included funding, such as grant opportunities incorporating international engagement, and latitude to use available funds to support international programming. As Stephanie reflected, "And even though our support comes from federal, state, county-based funding, and some other sources too, I feel very comfortable that we can participate globally with what we do" (Stephanie, personal interview, April 2023). Her ability to draw confidently on multiple streams of available funding gave her freedom to pursue opportunities that other state directors without the same resources may not experience. Those I interviewed indicated that support from university leadership is another critical consideration. As a group, the interviewees suggested that they believe they must at times sell the value of their international programs to upper administration by demonstrating the benefits of such work. Conversely, visible support from university executives increases the likelihood that directors will support internationalization. Four directors cited the importance of support from university or system leadership. As Paul shared:

> Well, you are going to have to obtain university support. You're going to have to have that support up the line. Your deans, your vice chancellors, vice presidents, and even your chancellors and presidents are going to have to be supportive of this. They're going to have to see a value proposition in it for the college or the university to get engaged in it (Paul, personal interview, May 2023).

Other enabling factors the directors I interviewed mentioned included the fact that Extension personnel with existing international projects can create opportunities for colleagues to participate in them. The same can be true concerning the development of collaborative

relationships with state departments of agriculture, through trade missions, for example. Stephanie reflected that from a life-cycle standpoint, the evolution of the U.S. CES and land-grant system followed a similar timeline:

> The way Extension was structured here in the United States is unique and we're seeing more and more countries saying, 'Hey, that's pretty awesome.' You know, and, and if I look at it, especially in certain parts of the world, if you look at how old their equivalents to land grants are, this is probably about the timeframe where in the United States we said, 'You know what? We must make sure we're serving everybody.' A lot of countries are there now. They have been trying to establish themselves as being really respectable research universities and they are getting there with that. They are now asking themselves, 'Now, what can we do for our communities?' The governments are seeing that, 'Hey, we've got these universities that are strong. How do we make the most of that to really help our communities around our country?' (Stephanie, personal interview, April 2023).

As HEIs in other countries mature, there may be more opportunities for international collaboration as those institutions seek to broaden their impact and engage more productively with individuals and groups in their communities.

Relevance of Expanded Rationales

As discussed above, I set out to explore whether an expanded set of rationales– economic, educational, organizational, political, and social/cultural might be helpful in more fully describing Extension internationalization. My interviews confirmed that animating proposition. Directors espoused economic rationales including international trade, impact of global issues on domestic clientele, increased academic rankings, and higher domestic relevance. Educational rationales included international student and faculty recruitment and undergraduate study abroad opportunities. Organizational rationales included professional development opportunities, better ability to serve clientele in a time of changing demographics and increased scholarly output. Political rationales included the need to ensure that international efforts were relevant to domestic audiences. Social / cultural rationales included increasing population

diversity, deepening connectedness around the world, raising the frequency of international travel, and the role of Extension programming in improving peoples' lives. These five categories are somewhat arbitrary as several rationales could be grouped under more than one. However, this conceptualization does appear to capture the principal reasons state Extension systems might resource and pursue internationalization. The addition of the organizational category addresses a deficit not examined in the higher education literature. Academic/education, social/cultural, economic, and political rationales can be viewed as outcomes-based, or externally focused. As such, they address issues important to clientele or customers, external stakeholders who are responding to changing social or cultural conditions. Organizational rationales, on the other hand, are inward facing and speak to the benefits that the organization will reap from participation in internationalization. To be sure, these may increase institutional capacity to address the other four, but I argue, based on the director's responses, that clarifying organizational rationales more completely treats the Extension context.

Theme 3: Position-Based

Position-based understanding included ideas such as directors' frame of reference, institutional position, relative priority they accorded internationalization, and their corresponding roles in such efforts.

Institutional Position

Extension systems are structured differently from institution to institution and Leon, having worked in several, reflected that organizational positionality matters in terms of his ability to promote internationalization within the university, "So the title and where you sit matters" (Leon, personal interview, June 2023). In his experience, a director who operates at the

university level rather than reporting to a dean within a college, has more visibility and perhaps opportunity. Allison expressed a similar sentiment:

> I get to set the agenda for Extension with the provost, to whom I report. But I know that not a lot of other directors of Extension have that standing and kind of latitude. And so that also comes into play here. (Allison, personal interview, April 2023).

Both Allison and Leon believed their position—higher in the administrative organizational chart than many other directors—gave them a degree of freedom to pursue internationalization strategies for their system, and to promote those efforts within their universities. As Clay similarly reflected:

> My role is to make sure that I have multiple roles in this regard. One role is to make sure that the vice president's mis-vision of us not prioritizing globalization/ internationalization is honored (Clay, personal interview, May 2023).

Clay contended that his approach to internationalization was constrained and defined by his supervisor. Interestingly, he also saw his role to support faculty in pursuing their passions. So, while his administrative approach was cautious, he personally believed in, and valued, international project work and that fact prompted him to find ways to support individual faculty efforts.

Prioritizing

Several directors acknowledged the challenge of giving internationalization attention, given their many responsibilities. Leon said, for example, “You know how many things hit my desk?” (Personal interview, June 2023). He had delegated primary international responsibility to a faculty member and later co-funded a position that supports internationalization for both the college and Extension. He suggested that having someone who pursued it each day would prove more fruitful in terms of operationalizing such programming than having no one in such a role.

He noted that if his designee sees an opportunity related to internationalization as important, they can ask that he focus on it.

Jenny, expressing a similar concern, lamented the lack of time she could dedicate to pursuing internationalization:

> Because, you know, mostly we're creative people, but we often just don't have the time to do that or haven't been asked, you know, given the time, I guess, in our busy schedules to do it (Jenny, personal interview, April 2023).

Dan saw his role as a leader to promote international engagement as he perceived that Extension professionals benefitted from such involvement in terms of pride and professional accomplishment,

> The main thing is to really promote the work, because there is this thing that even if there's reluctance with the local Extension board in letting their agent do this, that once you come back with the impact, and they see the agent in action in Ecuador or the Philippines, or wherever it may be, then it becomes kind of a point of pride, that their ag agent, or their FCS agent, or youth development agent, is an international scholar now (Dan, personal interview, April 2023).

Others expressed the view that directors prioritized internationalization to varying degrees depending on the individual executive's experience and interest. And, in keeping with the lens of financial considerations, Libby observed:

> Extension [internationalization], to me, that's a priority area when there's grant money involved, when there are public agencies involved, when there is a push possibly from federal partners involved to do this work (Libby, personal interview, May 2023).

Frame of Reference

I have suggested that the directors I interviewed viewed internationalization through the lens of how it could benefit domestic clientele and system finances. It bears reiterating that this orientation influences a wide range of decisions among those who adopt it. Another example of

how directors view internationalization is their shared view that to pursue it (or not) is a state-by-state concern. As Allison reflected:

> I think it's very much a state-by-state issue. I think it really depends on whether the dean or director has had international experience, if the dean or director have not had international experience, then the interest is [likely to be] very low (Allison, personal interview, April 2023).

Libby echoed the perspective that priorities differ by state and institution:

> Those conversations aren't happening like they happened at my previous institution, such as we want to be a global leader. … I mean, global was part of the language at my previous institution in all ways, shapes and forms (Libby, personal interview, June 2023).

All those I interviewed wrestled with the tension implicit in balancing the reality that they are expected to ensure that all programming benefits domestic audiences and the notion that it is up to the individual state or institution to discern how to do so, with recognition that there is value in such system-wide or collective efforts.

Roles in Such Efforts

Knight's internationalization cycle remains an elegant illustration of the process of incorporating such activities in an institution. She contended the process of integrating internationalization involves awareness, commitment, planning, operationalization, review, and reinforcement (Figure 4.). Without awareness of this model, directors nonetheless confirmed they saw themselves playing many of those roles for their systems. For example, identifying internationalization as a priority, encouraging faculty to participate, and communicating its value to funders builds awareness. Approving time, seeking funding, hosting international visitors, providing administrative process support, collaborating with central university international offices, reducing barriers to participation, and providing coverage while faculty travel helps

operationalize internationalization and demonstrates commitment. Kelly acknowledged she plays several roles:

> Well, I feel like I'm a banner waver because it really hasn't been done. I feel like I need to facilitate opportunities when they come available. Honestly, most of our international efforts probably come more from our faculty, so making sure there's communication and conversations that are broader than just one-on-one faculty is important. I think finding money is always going to be an important aspect of such efforts and of the prioritization of internationalization (Kelly, personal interview, May 2023).

Planning addresses the concerns that arise when thinking through opportunities, serving as a point of contact for partners, and acting as a facilitator for international opportunities. Reinforcement is demonstrated by incentivizing participation and rewarding international effort and participation in promotion and tenure decisions. Review is an element of director's roles when they work to ensure accountability and follow-up after assignments and ensure adequate sharing of findings.

Other roles directors saw themselves playing included working to ensure application of learning when faculty return home, modeling support for international engagement, opening doors to new opportunities, and providing support for such efforts. As Paul reflected:

> Again, I think it's that when these opportunities avail themselves and I have a chance to plug in a faculty member and it is something that they have the capability and the skillset to do and do well and we have the financial means to support it or they have the independent financial means to support it, I am in favor of it (Paul, personal interview, May 2023).

For my interviewees, application of learning included encouraging or requiring agents to make presentations when they return from assignments, thinking critically about the balance between domestic and international programming, and helping those involved process and disseminate their experience after their assignment concludes. Modeling support includes setting goals for international engagement, promoting such opportunities for faculty and staff,

personally participating in such activities, and sharing information concerning global opportunities and experiences with other directors. Sally highlighted the importance of showing her support:

> First, personal interest and drive is key. Personal drive and literal interest are very important, as is administrative support. If they know that they are being supported by me, they actually will start making connections and networking and establishing collaborations (Sally, personal interview, April 2023).

Opening doors involves facilitating meetings with state and elected leaders, building relationships among institutions, creating connections between Extension and the institution's international office, and promoting Extension to domestic and international partners. Providing overall support includes helping faculty navigate professional considerations for international assignments, listening for and sharing opportunities with interested faculty, seeking funding for projects and activities, and serving as a point of contact for international partners. Allison, for example, indicated in her interview that she has provided resources for hosting visitors and made connections with academic leaders on campus:

> We have also hired interpreters too, if that is needed. We also, depending on who the delegation is that is coming in, will make the arrangements for them to meet [relevant university officials]. For example, if it is a high ranking delegation [I help arrange for them] to meet with the president or the provost. Also, if there are other colleges that are interested in working in a country, I have arranged for my fellow deans to meet with groups visiting from there (Allison, personal interview, April 2023).

Directors play a variety of roles on a spectrum from making connections with the governor's office or senior university administration to encouraging faculty to become involved to participating personally in handling logistics of visits. I view this range of roles as a testament to the value they see in these efforts. If internationalization were not important, these busy executives would not devote the time and resources to them these examples demonstrate they do.

Theme 4: ECOP-Based

ECOP-based themes across the interviews were directly related to the role of that national organizational structure's role in facilitating system-wide internationalization. As with university presidents in the higher education internationalization literature, directors are key stakeholders in Extension internationalization efforts. ECOP is the structure through which directors coordinate and prioritize system-wide initiatives, and as such, understanding their views of ECOP-promoted programs helps to situate and contextualize the firmament in which Extension internationalization efforts are now unfolding.

Interview themes related to ECOP included coordination and cooperation, leadership, and relevance. Coordination and cooperation highlight the value directors see in ECOP as a framework for cooperation among systems, promotion of internationalization to stakeholders such as university presidents, and keeping the subject on the CES national agenda. In terms of leadership, ECOP can play a role in building awareness among directors, serve as a catalyst for ideation and imagination, identify internal champions, provide leadership for securing funds and building leadership capacity among directors. The theme of relevance bespoke the fact that directors expressed mixed views concerning the value of ECOP reports, calls-to-action, and committees advocating for internationalization.

Coordination and Cooperation

Directors also suggested international efforts offer an opportunity for Extension systems to collaborate to improve coordination and cooperation. As Jenny shared:

> We were looking at opportunities and trying to determine how we could as a regional group of directors think about ways we might participate in international programs. Could we send specialists abroad or could we host things regionally, like a, a study tour or something? And that conversation led to more consideration together of structure and budgets and things of that nature (Jenny, personal interview, April 2023).

She cautioned that her system was small, but when she worked together with her peers, ideas from their collaboration can surface. Stephanie recounted working in one country and not realizing that other U.S. universities were also working there to highlight the usefulness of communication and coordination at the national level. While it is impractical to imagine ECOP coordinating an effort across multiple universities in several countries, it is possible that the group could promote greater awareness of existing and potential Extension projects within the national system.

Allison observed that she believed ECOP is an important structure to keep internationalization on the national agenda. Specifically, she suggested her role within that body was "to continue to talk about the importance of internationalization for Extension" (Allison, personal interview, April 2025). Paul also saw ECOP committee work as important:

> Well, I think it helps to bring focus. When they have initiatives, when they bring ideas to the thing, it puts those on your radar and allows us to think about them. It allows and creates dialog and, and dynamics among institutions such that you may have a big school, like a [State U], that is embarking on an international project but that now will say, as a part of putting together its team, 'We'd like to have representation from 1890s on this or being a part of it.' So, I think it can bring about dialog, synergy, collaborations that can benefit all of us (Paul, personal interview, May 2023).

Leadership

Several directors described ECOP as a forum for providing leadership in internationalization. Paul spoke of the importance of the group's reports and calls to action in getting the attention of university leaders:

> I think that it has put it on the radar of college presidents and chancellors, who subsequently have developed an interest in getting their universities involved. And then from there, it has been pushed down, or it comes through the various colleges, for them to look and to see where opportunities are (Paul, personal interview, May 2023).

As explored earlier, in the higher education literature, university presidents and chancellors are identified as key champions for driving internationalization within their institutions. Paul's

comments reflect this same sort of sentiment as related to Extension. However, guidance or encouragement from ECOP does not always translate into direct action or buy-in from directors. As Clay remarked, “Well, I don't know if I feel like we have a mandate to support, you know, national efforts to internationalize (Clay, personal interview, May 2023). Clay’s system, at the direction of his college administrative leadership, has chosen not to prioritize internationalization. He emphasized the importance of recognizing the fact that not all systems agree with stated national priorities in his interview.

Several directors saw ECOP as a forum for creating space for directors to imagine or dream together about internationalization. ECOP can serve as a symbolic space and conversation catalyst to prompt discussion and exploration, promote an ability to conceive new possibilities for Extension international engagement, and identify champions to support and promote such efforts. ECOP can also provide leadership in funding acquisition and build leadership capacity among international participants.

Relevance

While many of my interviewees viewed ECOP as a structure for cooperation and coordination, and an important framework for leadership, not all agreed concerning the relevance and utility of ECOP’s work. Libby, for example, indicated she did not put much stake in reports or calls to action. She admitted that she had not read any emails or reports, nor followed ECOP committee work on internationalization. Moreover, she expressed some frustration with the operating realities of her system versus how it is viewed by ECOP:

> I say this with a great deal of respect for APLU and for ECOP, but I also feel like there is, I mean, don't get me started on a huge disconnect between what is happening in our land grant institutions and APLU and ECOP (Libby, personal interview, June 2023).

When I asked what, if anything, would change her view on ECOP, she returned to institutional priority and resources.

> You know, if my president or my provost told me that it was important to do, and again, it somehow would play a role in, you know, our funding or, you know, our resources Would it become more of a priority? Heck yeah (Libby, personal interview, June 2023).

Her sentiment reflects the overall lens through which directors perceive their work: the primacy the group assigned to meeting the needs of their state and a companion keen awareness of the financial resources required to do so. Moreover, ECOP making financial resources available through competitive grants would not likely serve as a silver bullet. Libby, for example, acknowledged that different institutions have different capacities to respond to such funding opportunities.

> I mean and I say this, and it makes us sound insignificant, and we are not. We are nonetheless a small land grant, we are not a Cornell, Penn State, UC-Davis that can put together these huge program teams, equally large grant projects with many partners. So again, I think, yes, would we be interested? Absolutely. But how do you structure these opportunities so all, I mean, so all in the system, perceive they have an opportunity to participate? (Libby, personal interview, June 2023).

Libby recognized the value of pursuing grants but noted that the amount of time and human resources required to put competitive proposals together was a limiting factor for her system. Her organization does not have dedicated research staff for grant support or the bandwidth to seek complicated funding opportunities. In many cases, this fact has meant forgoing the application process altogether.

Paul described the role of ECOP differently. He saw value in calls-to action as encouragement to participate in national initiatives, as well as resource acquisition to support such efforts:

> They can push down and say, 'Gear up and get yourselves ready and involved in internationalization of your programs.' But they can also play a role in bringing

> opportunities and resources to the table for us to get involved (Paul, personal interview, May 2023).

Stephanie also saw the value of reports but acknowledged that those can take time to build salience and momentum:

> The answer's yes. But I think for a number of years it was, 'Yep, we need to do that. We agree.' Every year, there're probably more and more folks saying, "Yeah, we agree. Right? We finally hit some critical mass. We've been talking about it. Enough people are putting it into action. And we're generating more and more momentum' (Stephanie, personal interview, April 2023).

Stephanie and Paul's comments suggest there is still perceived value in ECOP's formal calls to actions and reports. They believe these efforts create awareness and build momentum and support over time. In this small sample of Extension leaders, I found that some have not read or do not put any store in such reports while others still see a place for them.

Four Directors identified one element of ECOP work as a potential action item. As noted above, ECOP supports programming via PATs, which identify programmatic needs, recommend actions, promote collaboration and partnerships, and advocate for resource investment to address those perceived requirements (Cooperative Extension, n.d.). Leon asked, for example, "Have you thought about creating a PAT addressing international programs? Cause that's the wave of the future in Extension' (Leon, personal interview, June 2023). Kelly observed:

> Well, and, and the whole point of the program action teams is how they can help the whole system. And what you've been describing are action teams, but they have been evolving in specific areas that might help a regional concept or that might secure buy from some directors but not others. And those program action teams are really designed to be at a higher level and work with Extension Foundation to find funding eventually for them or to work with their fellows through the Extension Foundation. So, it is a good mechanism, I think, that has begun in the last five years to catalyze efforts to address specific topics. And the other piece of it is that it is an advocacy piece. So, is internationalization of Extension something that we need to think about from the Farm Bill perspective? If so, then, you know, I think a program action team is another reason to do that (Kelly, personal interview, May 2023).

Libby focused on the resources that would be allocated if internationalization were a PAT:

> And so, I just feel like, yes, I, would be all about that because frankly, there are times, again, we will participate in program action teams, but we may not participate in a grant opportunity because we do not have the bandwidth and we know we cannot compete. Like, there's no way that we are going to be able to compete in it, which probably means we are missing out. But, again, what are the priority areas? Where's your time best spent? (Libby, personal interview, June 2023).

Stephanie, however, questioned whether there should be an international PAT, or if, instead, internationalization should be a lens through which all PATs consider their work:

> Yeah, so here's how I would envision this if, if I was given the opportunity to do so. Our PATs are addressing climate, workforce, and health and diversity is an issue that crosses all of them. It's across all of them. You know, how do we make sure that we're serving and engaging our diverse communities across these program areas? Right. They're part of the solution. They have questions, they're affected by this, and oftentimes in different ways if we take climate as an example. I see the international aspect as a layer within PATs as well. That is, it crosses all of them. We need an overarching group where the heads of all the PATs can talk because there are things that cross the PATs. But, embedded within each PAT, I feel like we need to have, you know, people who are really thinking about programming through the diversity-equity-inclusion lens. I think we need to have the international component embedded within PATs in the same way. It's almost like its kind of a Catch-22. If you have another pillar or another PAT that's around diversity, well it becomes their job? (Stephanie, personal interview, April 2023).

Overall, it is appropriate to conclude that the interviewees' views on the role and value of ECOP efforts varied. Given that this organizational structure is in place and supports the system, directors have an opportunity to work within arrangements and processes to refine approaches to support potential system-wide initiatives, such as internationalization. From these interviews, it is evident that a subset of the director population sees value in ECOP's current position papers and reports, while others do not read that information. Nevertheless, the directors with whom I spoke agreed there is a role for ECOP in promoting internationalization as the governing structure for the Extension system. However, directors are beholden to their institutional

leadership. Navigating the potential for disconnect between system-wide goals and institutional goals will remain a perennial challenge for proponents of internationalization.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Future Research

As I prepared for this effort, I reviewed the existing higher education and Extension internationalization literatures. For more than a quarter century, Ludwig and Barrick's framing had served as a foundational conceptualization of Extension internationalization. And while their indicators are useful in identifying actionable efforts that a system aspiring to internationalize may undertake, I was struck by the dichotomy their analytic frame presented. Their understanding of internationalization was binary. That is, they argued that that all five indicators they posited must be present for an Extension system to be considered "internationalized." This is to say that an Extension system was internationalized, or it was not. This either-or conceptualization struck me, as it was in sharp contrast to the processual understanding Knight offered in the broader higher education literature. Knight argued that a university does not simply check off a list of milestones and become "internationalized." Instead, its leaders commit to work to create an ethos within their organization that is reflected in the core elements of their mission—teaching, research, and service.

In addition to this distinct contrast, the existing rationales for Extension and higher education internationalization seemed to me to fail to capture adequately why Extension systems pursued such efforts. By drawing on both literatures, I hypothesized a more complete set of rationales for Extension internationalization. I designed this study to examine Extension directors' conceptualizations of and self-perceived roles in internationalization. As the executive leaders of their organizations, I thought it important to understand how they conceive the topic. My line of inquiry was designed to capture how they defined internationalization, their reasons for pursuing it or not, their roles, and the role of ECOP and national structures in supporting it. I

interviewed 10 directors, drawn from the five Extension administrative regions, and asked questions designed to elicit their understanding, perceptions, and beliefs. I turn now to a review of the core elements of my analysis, its implications for policy, practice and future research, and to offer my concluding thoughts.

Internationalization Defined

Perhaps most basically, I learned in my interviews that there is no consensus on the definition of internationalization among directors. Instead, when asked to define the term, interviewees replied with a combination of activities, beliefs, approaches, and descriptions. Extension is first and foremost, an educational organization. Jane Knight's (1994) definition of higher educational internationalization as "the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching/learning, research and service functions of a university or college" (p. 3) remains valid for higher education today, and I have argued it is also an apt conceptualization for Extension internationalization. This understanding accounts for the value CES offers to the teaching and research missions of internationalization highlighted by the directors I interviewed. A process-based understanding more accurately reflects the dynamic nature of pursuing these complicated efforts. Additionally, a process-based conceptualization allows for growth and evolution as it assumes an active orientation to the work and continuous approach to efforts needed to institutionalize such an ethos. Additionally, Knight's definition accounts for the ongoing imperative necessary to secure integration of internationalization across university missions and programs.

Given director's lack of shared understanding of the term, a concise definition may be helpful in creating a uniform way of understanding the phenomenon. Nonetheless, it would seem frivolous to create another definition of internationalization. Instead, something like the

following version of Knight's definition, adapted to address the Extension context, might suffice: *Internationalization is the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the teaching/learning, research, and Extension/service functions of a university or college, that further the distinct mission and priorities of each such institution.* This definition is inclusive of the ways directors I interviewed viewed internationalization in terms of supporting undergraduate and graduate education, research opportunities, and CES work. While it does not explicitly account for the operational or organizational elements of internationalization captured in expanded rationales, I am less interested here in crafting the perfect definition than in acknowledging that consensus on just what internationalization is would be helpful. And I am persuaded that Knight has developed a remarkably durable definition which can be tweaked readily to include Extension explicitly, as I have just illustrated.

Furthermore, the directors I interviewed did not view CES as separate from their universities. While there are some divisions in funding and much Extension programming takes place beyond the confines of university campuses, their responses indicated they saw their daily Extension work as addressing the core missions of the universities they served. They did not view their Extension efforts as existing apart from academics and research, but rather as a part of their universities' overall mission and operations. That is, while Extension is doubtless a unique component of land-grant university work, it is an important and integral element of those institutions. As such, adapting a widely accepted higher education definition of internationalization for CES seems appropriate.

Regardless, this study's interviews revealed that even when an accepted definition of internationalization is created, the challenge of creating awareness and shared understanding of that construct among directors will remain. As Chapter 4 demonstrated, directors have no

shortage of urgent issues and programming priorities with which to contend daily. While creating shared understanding is important for consistency and clarity, a definition alone will not ensure agreement, buy-in, or prioritization by directors. That can only come with continued focus and persistent efforts by university presidents and provosts as well as CES directors and in the case of Extension, particularly, doubtless within Congress and the USDA, too.

Internationalization in Practice

I also learned in the interviews that a more relevant unit of measure than how directors define or describe internationalization is the degree to which they prioritize and support it for their systems. Those with whom I spoke understood the concept from four distinct vantage points: the process of pursuing it, their rationales for doing so, how their position enabled such pursuit (or not), and the role of ECOP. It is worth noting that the order and structure of my questions guided their discussion, but even so, this four-point conceptualization came through consistently.

Directors appeared to prioritize internationalization on a spectrum from deliberately de-emphasizing its pursuit to hiring dedicated personnel, funding activities liberally, and participating in such initiatives themselves. But even on that spectrum, there were layers of distinction as interviewees acknowledged the gap between their personal interest and participation and their roles as executives enacting what they perceived to be allowable or practicable organizational missions. For example, the same director who indicated that he actively de-emphasized internationalization, travels internationally for project work once or twice per year. And a director who has championed it, funds it, and encourages agents to participate in such efforts, has never traveled internationally for Extension work. These dimensions highlight the complexity of the director's role, and the highly personal character of

decisions each is making concerning the potential internationalization dimensions of their portfolios.

Finally, as elaborated above, directors support internationalization in various ways. Reponses ranged from de facto not supporting it at all to providing dedicated personnel and budget to such efforts and participating in them themselves. Nevertheless, as a matter of self-perception, each director argued they supported internationalization even if simply by approving time away from the office or providing one-on-one coaching to interested faculty. This observation acknowledges a paradox directors must face—moving organizational work forward through sometimes significant and sometimes trivial actions. For example, choosing to dedicate resources in the form of personnel and budget to support internationalization implies such efforts are more valuable than other efforts not selected for funding. More often, directors create an enabling environment through less costly means by removing barriers for others to participate in international efforts. This spectrum of support aligns well with Knight's internationalization cycle and the notion that these activities are nonlinear and require sustained and repeated efforts if institutionalization is to be secured.

Future Research

Internal Tensions

A rich opportunity for additional study would be to explore directors' engagement with internationalization from a lens of espoused theory and theory in practice, and their roles more broadly. For example, to what extent do leaders perceive conflict with the positions they must represent as members of ECOP, as partners enacting (admittedly) complex and layered federal priorities (as outlined by USDA and NIFA), their state governments, their host institutions, and their local partners? On which frameworks do they draw for decision making when actors

associated with these are not in clear alignment? In a nod to Jenny's observation in her interview, one may also ask to what extent imagination constitutes a limiting or enabling factor when considering such tensions. Surely internationalization is not the only programming opportunity concerning which directors experience tension or a disconnect and understanding more fully how these leaders navigate such concerns may be enlightening in terms of developing strategies to promote international activities across the CES.

Benefits of Internationalization

Directors espoused numerous benefits of internationalization. However, I did not discover a uniform way in which they conceived those benefits across those I interviewed. This, coupled with the lack of a shared definition, and the admitted lack of experience of several directors, points to the need for a shared language with which to understand, describe, and promote internationalization. Having clear messaging is important when seeking investment and buy-in and building energy around system-wide efforts. A study proposing and testing language concerning internationalization might prove a useful first step in such an effort. As explored in Chapter 2, Grove et al. (2022) reviewed four decades of CES internationalization scholarship in five journals and found that the commonly cited benefits of such initiatives included developing global perspectives, knowledge and skills, appreciation for diversity, increased self-esteem and invigoration or renewed sense of professional purpose, benefits to local clientele, and strengthened belief in the value of international experiences and of the Extension system. While that scoping review highlighted how the benefits have been reported in the past, it did not evaluate the extent to which those perceived positives ring true today. A system-wide study of the perceived benefits of internationalization might yield new insights which could be useful in making the case for such initiatives today. Conversely, such a study might confirm that those

potential gains already perceived remain accurate. An area of specific concern in any such study would be capturing and communicating the intangible benefits of internationalization. For example, engaging with individuals from another culture may yield insights concerning how to develop programming and educational content differently and according to accepted cultural norms. Those lessons could then be applied domestically when working with immigrant populations. For that matter, they could be applied working with any clientele group through efforts to improve problem solving, pedagogy, and practice. Many of the benefits identified can be accounted for from a transactional standpoint, and there is an important role for such gains. However, moving to a more holistic understanding of the value of internationalization is important if it is to be institutionalized successfully across the CES.

An Expanded Understanding of Internationalization

Another recommendation for future research is to dive more deeply into internationalization within two or more subgroups to understand better how principles of this work apply in different contexts. For example, 19 U.S. states share an international border. If one includes territories and minor outlying islands, that number increases. It would be interesting to explore the views of internationalization among CES directors whose systems engage in regular cross-border programming and commerce. To what extent do those executives view their responsibilities differently than others not similarly situated? To what extent do those systems even view their neighboring countries as international partners? For example, some agricultural value chains share equipment, expertise, inputs, and resources freely across borders, and products may cross borders multiple times before reaching a consumer. To what extent do those international production systems influence local views of internationalization? To what extent are such states CES's already delivering programming across borders and do their executives and

stakeholders view that as international work? On another note, there may be situations that affect a director's desire to work across borders. An interesting question would be to what extent such policy differences prevent or incentivize collaboration across national boundaries?

Similarly, I did not examine 1994 institutions in this study because of differences in the resourcing and size of their Extension programs as compared to 1890s and 1862s. However, tribal colleges and universities support populations who are members of sovereign nations. 1994s are supported by the U.S. government just as 1890 and 1862 institutions are, and federal partners should work in parallel with all three systems. However, to what extent is internationalization viewed differently in the context of relationships between LGUs in U.S. states, districts, and territories, and institutions representing sovereign nations? To what extent have historical relationships shaped the character of whatever dynamic now obtains? For that matter, investigating specific religious sects or subcultures within the U.S. might offer another interesting field of inquiry. While members of these religious groups are typically citizens of the U.S., for some, their desire to be apart from the broader society potentially creates an intercultural dynamic. To what extent would lessons gleaned from internationalization inform potential engagement with religious groups or other communities who keep to themselves and have a different view of the U.S. government?

Supporting New Extension Systems

I focused this study of internationalization on the perspectives of U.S. Extension leaders. One theme that surfaced several times was that Extension systems are often approached to provide education and support to implement like systems as educational structures in other countries. In most of the world, extension is government ministry, as opposed to higher education, based. For example, CES officers may be a part of the Ministry of Agriculture. Their

organizational structure may connect them with agricultural research offices, but they may not have the linkages with higher education typical in the U.S. Such arrangements can cause challenges with resource sharing, differing incentives, and a lack of cooperation among ministries. Other countries are often intrigued by the U.S. approach with its collaboration with higher education institutions. Similarly, as Stephanie reflected in her interview, higher education institutions in many nations are maturing and looking for ways to provide greater impact in their countries. An area of future study may be to understand best practices for countries developing university-based Extension systems and how those efforts either align or integrate with existing systems or if they should supplant or replace them. An element of such an inquiry could include best practices for working with foreign (U.S., for example) CES professionals to learn how to adapt existing structures or to what extent new organizations and processes are required to meet local conditions and contexts.

While none of the directors argued the U.S. Cooperative Extension System is without fault or could not be improved, several acknowledged the frequency with which other countries seek to emulate it. For directors unsure of where to start with supporting Extension capacity building in their units, it would be important to understand which resources exist for working with international higher education institutions, ministries, and other in-country partners when supporting new system development and institutionalization. There may be lessons from the international development or higher education literatures that could be identified and adapted for working with the nuances of higher education and CES delivery. The U.S. system is capital intensive and may seem insurmountably so from the outside looking in.

Organization Standing and Position

Two directors with whom I spoke mentioned that where they sat within their university's Extension organization chart mattered. Both perceived it to be beneficial to occupy positions that did not report to an academic dean in a college because such placement yielded, they argued, greater latitude to support internationalization. Leon has worked for more than one CES. He recounted in his interview that earlier in his career, when Extension was embedded within a college as opposed to the university level, the dean of the college would be invited to participate in international opportunities, even though that individual may not have had relevant experience. However, by position, they were the logical person to invite to serve, for example, on trade delegations. Contrasting that with experience later in his career, Leon noted that regular access to senior university leadership had given him personally the opportunity to represent Extension as an important complement to the University's international aspirations. Allison shared a similar sentiment. In her case, she noted that she reported directly to the provost. And she suggested she used this standing to advocate for Extension as a resource to support internationalization efforts across the university. For example, she touted the value of the expertise agents Extension offered in terms of developing community programming and being there for the long haul. These two examples highlight the varying degrees of freedom directors possess to press for internationalization given their placement in university hierarchies.

As I have noted, there is no single or uniform model for how Extension systems are administered within their host institutions. Some operate as their own college. Others are part of an institute. Others are embedded within academic colleges. These reporting relationships likely have implications beyond those they portend for the pursuit of internationalization. Studying director's perceived efficacy of influence on decision-making in general and freedom to pursue

strategies of their own devising based on their position in organizational structures would likely be helpful information to possess.

Implications for Policy and Practice

In my earliest conceptualization of this study, I pondered why Extension directors, who lead domestic programs, prioritize internationalization. This thought was the genesis of my study and evolved into my research question. Each director I interviewed said their ultimate responsibility was to support the constituents of their state. This deeply held belief regarding the CES mission surfaced repeatedly as they rationalized their time investment, resource allocation, prioritization, and orientation to stakeholder engagement. All were clear that their north star was serving the stakeholders of their state. Everything else was secondary, and every opportunity was viewed through the valence of the benefit it brought (or failed to bring) to their domestic audience. It became clear early in this study that for directors to buy-in, internationalization must be perceived to benefit domestic CES stakeholders.

Needs Assessment

One way to determine relevance to local audiences is through needs assessment. As discussed in Chapter 1, Extension system employees conduct needs assessments to understand the programming priorities of their stakeholders and intended or potential program participants. While it did not come up directly in my interviews, needs assessments are a foundational tool for establishing the relative priority of international programming. Incorporating lines of questioning in such efforts designed to uncover potential needs for and attitudes about international programming may offer a useful data point when considering the extent to which such initiatives benefit domestic audiences. If insights surface in a needs assessment concerning changing demographics or a need to reach populations with Limited English Proficiency or other

subpopulations in a community, such findings may be an indicator that broader international programming could offer benefits locally. By the same token, if related needs are not identified, directors may be reluctant to prioritize internationalization. Careful work with program evaluation units (or whoever has responsibility for developing needs assessments) is needed to ensure data gathering instruments are designed to reach and to highlight community needs. For example, marginalized communities may be reluctant to participate in data gathering out of fear or suspicion.

It is also important to consider the role of Extension and universities in looking over the horizon to discern needs not yet known or felt by communities. For example, the impacts of the late 1990's global financial crisis in Asia led to a reduction of hog prices in Minnesota to five cents per pound. Prior to that catastrophic moment, rural communities across Minnesota had no awareness of the volume of pork the state was shipping to Asia. In situations such as these, those most dramatically affected were not aware of the significance of global trade impacts on their economic and social well-being. Extension programs need proactively to identify needs and education relevant to their stakeholders before any possible adverse impacts are felt (J. Vreyens, personal communication, September 3, 2025). Relying simply on a local program needs assessment would not account for such issues. Similarly, university faculty often research ideas, technologies, or practices learned from or in partnership with international partners, before those innovations are widely adopted in the U.S. Those needs—or potential benefits—do not necessarily surface through communities, so an effective assessment must also include state and country-level thinking. It appears there may be a role for CES and other university faculty members to share such proactive thinking with the communities they serve (J. Vreyens, personal communication, September 3, 2025).

Understanding Stakeholder Value of Internationalization

I developed this study to explore the perceptions of internationalization among a sample of CES directors. Those I interviewed revealed a proclivity to defer to local stakeholders, funders, and decision/policymakers. To move from guessing what matters to Extension stakeholders, a study designed explicitly to understand their views on international engagement would be instructive. Clarifying what is believed by those audiences —as opposed to operating on a hunch or seeking to avoid scrutiny by not engaging in internationalization in the first place—might reveal valuable insights. Scholars may find that citizen groups are much more on board with their Extension faculty participating in international programming than many directors now (fear or) believe. Or they could learn that some or all such stakeholders have less interest in international engagement than generally imagined. Stakeholder perspectives may be influenced by the recent national America First political discourse. Regardless of what might be discovered, as of this study there is limited information available concerning how CES stakeholders value international engagement. Such studies need to be conducted to gain understanding at varying levels. For example, local government structures vary from state to state and understanding how those entities view and evaluate internationalization would be helpful in identifying salient considerations for those audiences. In some cases, county governing boards vote on the annual Extension budget. Directors may feel compelled to defer to local perceptions (informed or not) of international engagement when there are local dollars on the line. More commonly, state legislatures appropriate funding to support CES programming, and elected officials operating from that frame of reference may have unique views or concerns when compared to local officials.

It was clear from the directors' responses in this study that there is no consensus among directors concerning how each understands the priorities of their federal government partners. Clarifying and securing a shared understanding among system directors of the national view of internationalization is thus very important. As we have recently experienced, the views of governments can change drastically with an election. This reality makes it even more imperative for directors to have a clear and consistent interpretation of the rules of engagement as those are defined by each administration. Even before the rapid change of direction represented by the Trump administration, the responses of directors interviewed for this study highlighted the fact that there was inconsistency in director's understanding of how federal dollars could be used to support internationalization.

As explored above, beyond elected and appointed partners, it is also important to understand Extension users' view of internationalization. CES program participants, volunteers, partners, and parents would be another rich source of information. While local officials have their own views, in an ideal world they react to the concerns, perspectives and needs of their constituents. Hearing from those individuals would likely help to clarify a share of the confusion surrounding the value of internationalization for directors and citizen stakeholders alike. When seeking to understand better stakeholders' views, it is worth considering whether the term "internationalization" is itself problematic. I suggested the potential such initiatives imply for intercultural learning above, and given directors' perception that they need foremost to focus on domestic benefit when considering such programming, perhaps couching this work in terms of intercultural learning and skill acquisition (in the context of professional development) would result in fewer questions concerning its value.

Equitable Resourcing Strategies

As explored in Chapter 4, finances and local benefit are two principal lenses through which directors view internationalization, (and likely other matters of concern to their systems as well). My recommendations for future research in this domain include explorations of strategies to provide financial resources for international efforts, evaluations of the value of creating national support structures to promote internationalization, and ensuring funding equity across land-grant types (size, budget, 1862 vs 1890, etc.). This theme was evident in each interview question and especially so with respect to the role of ECOP and the incentives needed to encourage directors to pursue internationalization.

When thinking about financial acquisition strategies, the ability to compete for and manage the dollars received is an important consideration. Absent structures to promote equitable access to resources, the rich may get richer, and the poor remain marginalized. These impacts experienced because of such issues are likely compounded for the comparatively smaller 1890s, not to mention the 1994s. For example, the entire Extension staff at a 1994 may be one person, or Extension responsibilities just a part of one person's role. How are such thinly staffed entities expected to compete with major 1862s which may not only enjoy stable and diverse funding sources, but also a relative abundance of staffing with dedicated internationalization personnel, grantsmanship offices, and others with whom to share the workload associated with applying for and managing international grants?

Recent Effects of Domestic Policies on CES Internationalization

The implications of the elimination of USAID cannot be overstated with respect to CES internationalization. The USDA and LGU system were both established by the federal government in 1862. LGUs have been called upon by USDA and USAID for expertise when

those agencies lacked the staff or program officers for a project or technical need. Given this shared history, it is unsurprising that Extension administrators and university leaders closely follow the initiatives of these two agencies (J. Vreyens, personal communication, October 13, 2025). Five of the 10 interviewees mentioned USAID at some point during their interviews. Three of those identified the agency as an important funding source for projects which could include or support international Extension engagement. The other two had either participated in USAID-funded work or identified the organization as a programmatic opportunity but did not explicitly refer to funding. USAID Feed the Future Innovation Labs work directly on problems of food security and availability around the world. The 21 Innovation Labs involved more than 70 U.S. universities (APLU, n.d.–c), and they delivered projects that often included CES specialists or agents. Other Feed the Future projects awarded by USAID also involved LGU implementers. In Virginia, for example, the Feed the Future Senegal Youth in Agriculture project included support for institutionalizing the 4-H program in Senegal. The structure of that USAID project provided a scaffold for involving VCE in several ways including project leadership roles, delivering programming in-country, and engaging 4-H agents in ongoing training efforts in-country. Senegalese participants traveled to Virginia for observation and training visits and engaged with 4-H youth during events and visits. This multi-year partnership created numerous opportunities to highlight international engagement within VCE. Without the project's funding and direction, replicating the depth and duration of opportunities that occurred would have been challenging. Given the emphasis on USAID in the interviews, with the move of international development project leadership to the U.S. Department of State, ECOP will need to monitor closely the appetite of federal agencies for continued project work.

Federal programs and projects have long offered on-ramps to internationalization for CES programs. USAID-funded projects, Feed the Future Innovation Labs, Fulbright programs, and others have created structures that provide opportunities for which systems opt-in. Similarly, the PAEP created a years-long structure for Extension professionals to work in Poland for extended assignments. Today, a partnership with the Romanian-American Foundation and Fulbright are offering similar long-term programming opportunities to extension professionals from Romania in partnership with the University of Georgia (UGA). Three other land-grants ––University of Minnesota, Virginia Tech, and Penn State—participated in hosting early scoping delegations when the project was being developed. UGA received the award and VCE has helped host visiting fellows. This project illustrates the spillover benefits often associated with international project work.

Having stable funding for ongoing work not only ensures that there are opportunities available, but it also helps demonstrate or illustrate possibilities for people who may not otherwise know how to start. This helps address the limiting challenge of lack of imagination by creating clear paths to involvement. Additionally, stable funding creates the conditions for longer-term project sustainability. However, Americans have seen how quickly established structures can be dismantled, so any effort to increase funding for internationalization will need to incorporate diverse funding streams. The Trump administration has eliminated USAID but signaled that the State Department will lead international programs going forward. Non-governmental organizations have a role to play in funding international efforts, as do private foundations, and host countries. Extension systems are already feeling the impact of reduced funding. For example, NGOs are seeing increases in applications for available international project resources. Organizations offering renewals of existing project work which in earlier

award cycles would have had few applications are now seeing multiple applicants as support becomes more difficult to secure and fewer opportunities exist (Abaye, personal communication, August 2025).

This is all to say that a principal implication of the dismantling of USAID is the need for other international organizations and NGOs to determine their role in supporting Extension internationalization during this transition in the U.S. government's role in international development. While the structure of the U.S. cooperative system is novel, Extension as a method of reaching rural audiences is not. U.S. Extension systems may need to be more creative and intentional when working with new partners to pursue internationalization. If internationalization is not a federal priority, but directors can make the case that their participation benefits domestic audiences (and is paid for by partners), this may be a way to have robust international programming without relying on national funding. For example, major philanthropies such as the Gates and Rockefeller Foundations may be willing to invest in building Extension capacity around the world. So, too, many other countries' development organizations such as GIZ (Germany), AFD (France), JICA (Japan), international or regional development banks, and faith-based organizations. International extension organizations, such as those under the umbrella of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services, may need to play a more direct role in connecting countries desiring to learn from the U.S. CES model. This shift will not be easy, guaranteed, nor quick, but the Extension system is facing a moment during which it will need to rethink institutional structures and relationships. I have personally participated in international Extension project work and scoping work in East Africa and West Africa and observed the outsized positive legacy of decades of USAID support and so would personally contend that this effort is vital.

Finding viable alternatives to these known funding sources will be paramount to the ability to continue to fund international work in a meaningful way. Two directors suggested having internationalization explicitly stated as a priority in the federal Farm Bill would be a clear signal of the value of such efforts. Having the funding included is one step but having it allocated for spending is another hurdle. The Farm Bill is authorized by Congress, typically for a five-year spending cycle. However, the allocation of authorized funds is determined annually. In a recent Farm Bill, Congress authorized $5 million for the international science and education program and $10 million for research, teaching, and Extension partnerships during the five-year cycle, but those funds were never allocated (J. Vreyens, personal communication, September 3, 2025).

The FAS recognized the value of building relationships and markets through developing the technical capacities of foreign governments. For example, through programs such as the Borlaug and Cochrane Fellows, foreign delegations were brought to the U.S. to study production systems for agriculture and food products. Seeing the quality of those instilled confidence and helped develop markets for U.S. goods. FAS recognized the value of land-grant universities in supporting these delegations and awarded contracts to host visitors. This created international engagement opportunities in the U.S. as research, academic, and CES Extension faculty shared technical expertise and interacted with delegations (J. Vreyens, personal communication, September 3, 2025). As I write, the fate of these programs is, however, uncertain. How will we perpetuate the best of what was working while acknowledging that institutional memory is being lost with the major policy changes now afoot? What role can Extension play in meeting this important federal interest?

Perhaps the solution is a system-wide initiative. Ideally, NIFA would provide support. However, as with many federal agencies, USDA is in the process of a reorganization, and it

remains to be seen if internationalization will be a priority when that concludes. Ed Jones has suggested an approach similar to what the 4-H program has undertaken with its Beyond Ready Campaign (E. Jones, personal communication, September 4, 2025). Through the National 4-H Council, the 501c3 partner of the 4-H system, 4-H has raised funds on the theme of creating youth who are beyond ready for life. Council set an ambitious $500 million fundraising goal to support this effort and provides marketing and advocacy support as well. Might CES internationalization also benefit from similar sustained and significant coordination? It appears CES needs a more expansive, integrated and coordinated approach to internationalization, including a concerted effort and acknowledgment among leadership that such efforts constitute an important aspect that benefits faculty and the people the systems serve.

This is a time of great uncertainty for immigrant populations in the U.S. as the current administration has been aggressive with respect to law enforcement and deeply restrictive in policy terms. As with the dissolution of USAID, these efforts will likely have impacts on Extension programming. While the administration has argued it is removing "criminals" from the country, many innocents are being caught up in such actions. For example, people have been removed from courthouses, schools, universities, farms, places of employment, and so on. As explored in Chapter 4, domestic elements of internationalization can include reaching recent immigrant or refugee populations, diasporan entities, international students, via intercultural programming. One must ask to what extent federal government immigration enforcement will reduce these populations' willingness to engage with Extension programs. Will potential program participants avoid Extension programs they may otherwise benefit from out of fear this cooperative (federal, state, and local government) program would lead to their detention or removal from the country? Will their loved ones and community members in the country legally

similarly avoid CES programs out of fear or because of their association with the national government? And while one can argue this is a temporary priority of the current administration, should the next administration change course and offer a more welcoming posture to these populations, how long will it take to rebuild trust in institutions with damaged reputations? Similarly, to what extent will recruitment of international talent, both student and faculty, be affected by a less-welcoming U.S. government?

Operationalizing Internationalization Among Directors

When developing national calls to action, support structures, and programming opportunities, it will be important to acknowledge that internationalization—while an important aspect of overall Extension programming —is not a mandate for every system. Instead of a top-down push to require internationalization, creating a compelling opt in scenario may be more appropriate. As voiced by Clay in his interview, directors must navigate among federal, institutional, and personal priorities. In his case, he viewed his role to de-emphasize internationalization in accordance with the priorities of his college administration. He also noted that not every system is automatically on board with a national priority simply because it has been named as such. While this could be construed as contrarian, his position represents an important consideration when trying to create CES wide buy in. Whatever else might be said, it is surely challenging to align such a diverse array of institutions around a single aspiration, no matter how noble.

Two directors expressed interest in engaging with internationalization but indicated they lacked the personal experience and skills to pursue such efforts with confidence. Peer learning is often used in study abroad program development to encourage faculty members to create new courses and to develop connections. Developing a study tour with the explicit aim of increasing

senior Extension administrators' understanding of international engagement might increase the attention devoted to such efforts. Allison shared that she has been invited by her state's Governor's Office to participate in international trade missions. In some of those scenarios she has served as the higher education expert; in others, she has offered technical expertise based on her professional training. She argued that these multiple means of exposure not only have informed her understanding of salient issues but also created deeper connections between her CES and her state's department of agriculture and governor's offices. For other directors who do not have development or project experience themselves, understanding the multiple on ramps for such engagement may help them understand possibilities. An experienced director like Allison could be a part of a training team or travel with the group and share her firsthand experiences of navigating internal relationships in her university, working with her Governor's office and state department of agriculture, and how she invested in building international capacity within her system. When thinking about the complexity involved in creating and stewarding international engagement and relationships, it can be overwhelming to know where to start. Coaching or mentoring for inexperienced international leaders by those with experience may lead to more comfort and self-efficacy for directors reluctant or reticent to join existing efforts or to begin new initiatives. Cohort study trips may be a useful opportunity to fast-track exposure and peer learning and sharing among directors and to increase overall competence in internationalization among them.

One element of such an approach could be the creation of an internationalization training cohort for leaders within the system. Such a program could be developed under the aegis of ECOP and tailored to meet the specific training needs of directors. A model such as LEAD21, a leadership development program established by APLU and managed by the UGA, may provide

an exemplar on which to build. This cohort-based program takes LGU faculty through development curricula and experiences aimed at cultivating future leaders. APLU contracts with UGA, which provides program structure and administration. Replicating this approach with a specific focus on internationalization is a potential path to developing a cadre of leaders within CES with shared understanding of and skills related to pursuing internationalization. Others may also benefit from such an approach. For example, each of the five Extension regions is managed by an executive director. These professionals coordinate activities, communication, and meetings among the directors in their respective region. As such, they serve as important sources of information within their jurisdictions and among the other regions. The Northeast Region director was formally assigned as the liaison to GEIN and was tasked with keeping the other directors abreast of that committee's efforts. A cohort-based program would be a means for new regional directors to explore internationalization with participating directors. Additionally, as I have argued above, university leaders influence directors' prioritization of internationalization. Encouraging deans or other administrative leaders to participate with their Extension system directors in such programming could build shared understanding and a deeper institutional commitment to internationalization across all missions. Furthermore, there has been significant turnover in directors in the last several years and more is likely in the coming years as the current group of leaders enters retirement. Any such effort would need to be ongoing and not a one-off. Interestingly, GEIN developed a similar concept aimed at Extension educators (and not directors, specifically), but the effort lost traction as principals in that effort transitioned to new roles.

Key Recommendations

Based on the themes identified during my interviews, I offer several key recommendations for consideration aimed at supporting Extension internationalization:

- Develop training programs, messaging, and curricula to increase practical knowledge of internationalization among CES employees in general, and for directors, in particular.
- Deploy the messaging suggested above to create broader awareness of the value and contribution that internationalization can add to the priorities of key external audiences.
- Create long-term international project opportunities for Extension systems and/or professionals, and stable funding mechanisms to support such efforts.
- Establish structures for partnership development and support among Extension systems.

These efforts address many of the challenges and gaps identified by those I interviewed. As explored earlier, while Extension systems are part of a federal network, they are also highly individualized in response to the needs of the states, host institutions, and local communities they serve. This multidimensional approach seems to work reasonably well for meeting the unique needs of their respective stakeholders but creates challenges in terms of system-wide buy-in regarding shared aims. Working on shared understanding, stable funding for project opportunities, and structures to create partnerships among Extension systems can help address these challenges.

With respect to a lack of imagination, as I have noted, some directors simply do not know where to start. An element of curricula and training programs could focus on working sessions addressing the basics of partnership formation, financing, international project implementation, navigating institutional structures, working across institutions, grant writing and management, and other topics. Such trainings could be offered to directors or to other designees within their system to develop overall capacity. The USDA international programs office could be an important partner, as could the 1890 Center of excellence for Global Food Security and Defense.

Developing support structures will be paramount to the success of all collective internationalization efforts. Another existing Extension structure that could support such an effort is the Extension Foundation, through its Impact Collaborative. Pulling together a group of directors, perhaps by region or topical area, wishing to work together through the Impact Collaborative Summit infrastructure would allow focused time and resources to begin to move some of these ideas forward. The Impact Collaborative provides a structure for teams to work together on ideation, communication, resource development, and action planning. Trained facilitators walk teams through a structure and provide coaching. The Extension Foundation offers small grants, as well. GEIN was formed through the Impact Collaborative. Extension has no lack of tools and techniques for facilitating groups, but there need to be champions to move internationalization ideas forward. GEIN also serves as an illustration of the need for champions *and* funding. GEIN was successful in creating champions. A core group of professionals with leadership responsibility for international programming met regularly for five years. They presented at professional conferences around the world, met with Extension leaders including professional associations, ECOP, and directors, and developed resources. They offered programming and served as professional development resources for each other. Volunteer leaders are often called in multiple directions, and a combination of a lack of consistent leadership and a lack of funding to implement ideas lead to an end to the group's work.

I suggest that further research on understanding the benefits of internationalization is important to develop a shared understanding of the value of such efforts. I have also argued that the current understanding of Extension internationalization is inadequate and suggested Knight's definition is appropriate to extend to CES efforts. Once a comprehensive set of benefits and rationales for internationalization have been identified, curricula and training programs should be

developed to increase system-wide understanding. To increase the likelihood of adoption, any curricula or training programs would need to be vetted by and disseminated through the appropriate programmatic channels. These may include ECOP to signal top-level support, through the USDA International Programs Office for federal buy-in, through Program Action Teams—either as a standalone team or a lens through which all PATs consider their work, through professional associations and communities of practice, and through curricula developed for Extension users. Efforts at this scale will require leadership and funding. PATs are one such way to secure resources and assign leadership, but other logical avenues may exist, such as through support from the Extension Foundation or USDA International Programs Office. Regardless of the route chosen, dedicated funding and leadership will be required for the effort to succeed. GEIN was successful in creating a community of practice for Extension professionals with international interests but struggled with a lack of funding and rotating volunteer leadership. Steady funding and formal leadership would be essential to the success of any CES internationalization initiative.

In addition to the efforts described above aimed at creating awareness and buy-in to internal audiences (such as Extension personnel, ECOP, and USDA), there is a need to promote the value of internationalization to key external audiences with interest in CES. Decision makers at the local, state, and federal levels, university leadership, potential funders and partners, are all key actors for Extension system internationalization efforts. Sustained efforts to increase awareness and commitment to these external audiences, akin to those already targeted to internal stakeholders, may increase buy-in, funding, partnership opportunities, and overall acceptance of the value of internationalization to meet shared aims. Pursuing internal efforts alone would fail to address the need to be attentive to the motivations and influence of external stakeholders.

This is to underscore the fact that a major challenge for sustained internationalization is the need to build a more resilient financial strategy to support international engagement. As I explored above, we are in a time of significant change in terms of U.S. international funding. An often-lamented challenge in international work is the time horizon of such support. Funders call for proposals for five years of funding, and then either extend the program or move on. Extension has been serving the U.S. for well over 100 years and prides itself in being the people who were there before the issue arose, were there to address it, and will be there long after everyone else moves on. This long-term orientation has surely benefitted relationship formation and trust in the communities the CES serves.

With shared understanding and available funding, another important element is development of partnership tools for Extension systems to participate in these programs. As I have argued, not all Extension systems are resourced equally. While larger, well-funded, well-staffed systems have historically been able to compete for, secure, and manage large projects themselves, the talent residing in smaller institutions may not always be able to compete. And these resource-constrained systems may have faculty members uniquely equipped to address the needs and challenges of limited resource audiences in other countries. Efforts to create pathways for smaller institutions to partner with larger institutions can remove barriers for smaller institutions to contribute meaningfully to project work. While universities often collaborate, acknowledging some of the unique challenges of working internationally and creating collaboration channels is of particular importance when engaging smaller systems. Examples of scales of collaboration could include working within the five Extension regions and intentional partnerships with 1994s. Managing partnerships across institutions is innately challenging. However, the Extension system has a precedent for collective reporting of activities, through its

National Impacts Database. This system is used to gather information from across state systems to report program impacts to partners. Perhaps information can be collected through this platform to begin to develop information concerning current international programming efforts. While such initiatives have been undertaken in the past, they have been sunset as responsible faculty retired or moved on to other positions. Awareness of opportunities for collaboration is a perennial challenge, as is keeping databases up to date once established. Universities experience similar challenges when trying to get a picture of the full complement of international activities undertaken by their faculties.

Concluding Thoughts

It is worth pondering how the current political moment is affecting our collective national psyche with respect to norms and expectations about federal, state, and local government cooperation. We find ourselves in a situation where established approaches are being dismissed and dismantled wholesale. Political loyalty and expediency are replacing decades of precedent about the role and value of civil society and civil servants. States are making independent decisions that upend precedent that has underpinned mutual cooperation on issues of national importance. One must ask whether this changing social contract concerning governance will endure and, if so, how individuals and institutions will be expected to work together towards national aims. With such vastly different world views and ideas of reality, collaborative government efforts can seem exhilarating, intimidating, invigorating, exasperating, or any other adjective one chooses. So, in such a dynamic environment, how much faith and store can we put into federal structures? How does this affect Extension efforts? Is the system better served to focus on locally-or state-led initiatives? What might be the implications of the nuances of federal, state, and local priorities and tensions for system-level collaboration? I want to believe

there is still a role for federal collaboration and coordination, but these questions are worth asking.

Similarly, we must face a changing view of higher education. At a recent meeting of Virginia Tech's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Dean's Advisory Council, a member said, "Something happened during COVID. Virginia Tech became the government." This small business owner articulated the changing perception of higher education by the public. Now, this is just one man's observation, but a telling one as we ponder how the public (Extension's desired stakeholders and program participants) view the institutions which believe so ardently that their role is to serve their public first. This study focused on internationalization, but the changing views of society point to a profound erosion in public trust. How are public institutions to serve a public that does not trust them? For many years I have said publicly that Extension is the most relevant, significant and meaningful work we do as an institution. I continue to believe that. And my hope is that others will continue to view Extension as an essential bridge between higher education and communities.

Finally, I was struck by how consistent and pervasive funding considerations were in the conversations I had with the directors. Funding is core to the ability to travel internationally and deliver projects. Funding is core to the ability to staff leadership of internationalization efforts for a system. Funding is necessary to have sustainable collaborations. Funding is a key political consideration with respect to the source of funds used, the perceptions about use and permission for use, and the fear that international efforts might be at the cost of domestic producers and markets. As I reflect, I am left with the conclusion that it simply is not enough to see a need and do the right thing or for there to be an identified need. When spending the public's resources – and assuming their trust in doing so – there must be a clear case for support and a value

proposition for the benefit to domestic audiences to gain resources needed for this important work. And those guiding principles – domestic benefit and financial considerations – loom large over all decision making by directors.

If my assessment is true, and financial considerations and benefit to domestic audiences are the lenses through which international (and other) activities are viewed and valued, how then can we make the case for the intangible benefits of internationalization? How do we put a price on the value of deep relationships, mutual understanding, cooperation, and a greater sense of connectedness? How do we put a price on making others feel welcome and supported in a community? How do we change the paradigm to think of collective benefit? And, how can interested parties support Extension directors in understanding and articulating those values?

References

Abaye, A. O., Archibald, T., Vaughan, L., Thompson, T., Thomason, W. E., Mbaye, D. F., Mamadou, L., Abdoulaye, S., Gueye, F., & Snyder, G. (2018). *Internationalizing the Land Grant Mission: Lessons from Senegal*. V. C. Extension.

Acker, D. G., & Scanes, C. G. (1998). A case for globalizing US colleges of agriculture. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, *5*(1), 59–62.

Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *11*(3-4), 290–305.

American Council on Education. (2019). *CIGE model for comprehensive internationalization*. Retrieved May 4, 2019 from https://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/CIGE-Model-for-Comprehensive-Internationalization.aspx

Andreasen, R. J. (2003). Barriers to international involvement. *Journal of International Agricultural and*, *10*(3).

Andrews, M. P., Place, N. T., & Crago, N. E. (2001). A globally focused Extension service. In F. L. Brewer (Ed.), *Agricultural Extension systems: An international perspective* (pp. 125–151). Erudition Books.

Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. (2012). *The Land-Grant tradition*.

Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. (2017). *Pervasive internationalization: A call for renewed leadership*. A. o. P. a. L.-G. Universities. http://www.aplu.org/library/pervasive-internationalization-a-call-for-renewed-leadership/file

Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. (2019, April 11–12). *Meeting of the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy*.

https://www.aplu.org/members/commissions/food-environment-and-renewable-resources/board-on-agriculture-assembly/cooperative-extension-section/ecop-members/ecop-documents/2019%20April%20meeting.pdf

Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. (2019, July 11–12). *Meeting of the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy*. https://www.aplu.org/members/commissions/food-environment-and-renewable-resources/board-on-agriculture-assembly/cooperative-extension-section/ecop-members/ecop-documents/2019%20April%20meeting.pdf

Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. (n.d.–a). *Cooperative Extension regions*. Retrieved 12/12/2021 from https://www.aplu.org/members/commissions/food-environment-and-renewable-resources/board-on-agriculture-assembly/cooperative-extension-section/ecop-members/regions.html

Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. (n.d.–b). *Cooperative Extension section*. Retrieved May 3, 2019 from http://www.aplu.org/members/commissions/food-environment-and-renewable-resources/board-on-agriculture-assembly/cooperative-extension-section/

Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. (n.d.–c). *State, foreign operations, and related agencies*. https://www.aplu.org/our-work/4-policy-and-advocacy/federal-budget-and-appropriations/state-foreign-ops/

Bailey, C. A. (2017). *A guide to qualitative field research*. Sage Publications.

Bedenlier, S., Kondakci, Y., & Zawacki-Richter, O. (2018). Two decades of research into the internationalization of higher education: Major themes in the Journal of Studies in

International Education (1997-2016). *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *22*(2), 108–135.

Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative research*, *15*(2), 219–234.

Bickell, E. G. (2024). *The agricultural Cooperative Extension System: An overview*. Retrieved from https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R48071

Brinkmann, S. (2014). Unstructured and semi-structured interviewing. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 277–299). Oxford University Press.

Childress, L. K. (2009). Internationalization plans for higher education institutions. *13*(3), 289–309.

Childress, L. K. (2010). *The twenty-first century university: Developing faculty engagement in internationalization* (Vol. 32). Peter Lang.

Cooperative Extension. (n.d.). *ECOP Program Action Teams*. Retrieved 3/4/25 from https://pats.extension.org/about/

Crago, N. E. (1998). *Extension organizational factors that influenced American participants in the Polish/American Extension Project*. The Pennsylvania State University.

Creswell, J. (2009). *Research Design* (3 ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). Educational research. *Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*.

Croft, G. (2019). *The U.S. Land-grant University System: An overview*.

Croom, P. W. (2012). Internationalization and institutional strategy. *The International Journal of Higher Education and Democracy*, *3*(1), 99–119.

de Wit, H., & Altbach, P. G. (2021). Internationalization in higher education: global trends and recommendations for its future. *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, *5*(1), 28–46.

de Wit, H., & Knight, J. (1999). Quality and internationalisation in higher education. *Paris, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*.

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *10*(3), 241–266.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). The discipline and practice of qualitative research introduction. *The landscape of qualitative research*, 1–43.

Franklin, E., Al-Hassan, A. A., Elliot, J., & Knight, J. (2004). State Extension Service directors' and administrators' interest in international opportunities. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, *11*(2), 45–53.

Gray, L. M., Wong-Wylie, G., Rempel, G. R., & Cook, K. (2020). Expanding qualitative research interviewing strategies: Zoom video communications. *The Qualitative Report*, *25*(5), 1292–1301.

Greenwood, J. (1993). Reflective practice: a critique of the work of Argyris and Schön. *Journal of advanced nursing*, *18*(8), 1183–1187.

Grove, B. B., Bush, S. A., & Elliott-Engel, J. (2022, April 4 – April 7, 2022). Benefits of International Extension Experiences: A Systematic Review of the Literature. Conference of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education, Thessaloniki, Greece.

Grove, B. B., Bush, S. A., & Elliott-Engel, J. (2024). A Scoping Review of International Experiences by US Extension Professionals: Lessons and Opportunities. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, *31*(1), 127–144.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research* (Vol. 1, pp. 255–286). Sage.

Harder, A., Lamm, A., & Vergot III, P. (2010). Explore your world: Professional development in an international context. *Journal of Extension*, *48*(2), 1–9.

Harder, A., Place, N. T., & Scheer, S. D. (2010). Towards a competency-based extension education curriculum: A Delphi study. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *51*(3), 44.

Harvey, D. (2007). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Hudzik, J. K. (2011). *Comprehensive internationalization: From concept to action*. http://sustgglobaleducation.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/59358291/2011-Comprehensive%20Internationalization%20by%20John%20Hudzik.pdf

Hudzik, J. K., & McCarthy, J. S. (2012). *Leading comprehensive internationalization: Strategy and tactics for action*.

Kehm, B. M., & Teichler, U. (2007). Research on internationalisation in higher education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *11*(3-4), 260–273.

Knight, J. (1994). *Internationalization: Elements and Checkpoints. CBIE Research No. 7*. ERIC.

Knight, J. (1999). *A Time of Turbulence and Transformation for Internationalization. CBIE Research No. 14*. ERIC.

Knight, J. (2003). Updating the definition of internationalization. *International Higher Education*(33).

Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization remodeled: Definition, approaches, and rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *8*(1), 5–31.

Knight, J. (2012). Concepts, Rationales, and Interpretive Frameworks in the Internationalization of Higher Education. In D. K. Deardorff, H. de Wit, J. D. Heyl, & T. Adams (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of International Higher Education* (pp. 27–42). SAGE Publications.

Knight, J. (2019). *Knowledge diplomacy in action* (British Council, Issue.

Knight, J. (2021). Higher Education Internationalization: Concepts, Rationales, and Frameworks. *Revista REDALINT. Universidad, Internacionalización e Integración Regional*, *1*(1), 65–88.

Lakai, D., Jayarante, K., Moore, G. E., & Kistler, M. J. (2014). Identification of current proficiency level of Extension competencies and the competencies needed for Extension agents to be successful in the 21st century. *Joural of Extension Human Sciences*, *2*(1).

Lamm, A., & Harder, A. (2010). Don't drink the water: Recognizing the fears associated with international Extension work. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, *17*(3), 31–41.

Ludwig, B. G. (1993). Attitudes toward internationalizing. *Journal of Extension*, *31*(2).

Ludwig, B. G. (1999). Extension professionals perspectives on global programming. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, *6*(2), 61–67.

Ludwig, B. G. (1999). Globalizing Extension professionals. *Journal of Extension*, *37*(4), 1–8.

Ludwig, B. G. (2001). Two decades of progress in globalizing US Extension systems. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, *8*(2), 15–22.

Ludwig, B. G., & Barrick, R. K. (1996). Internationalization of Extension: What does it mean? *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *37*(2), 40–46.

Ludwig, B. G., & McGirr, M. J. (2003). Globalizing Extension–A national initiative for US land grant universities. Proceedings of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education,

Lundy, L., Place, N. T., Irani, T., & Telg, R. (2005). Perceptions of extension personnel regarding internationalizing agricultural extension. Annual Conference of the Association of International Agricultural and Extension Education, San Antonio, TX.

McClure, C., Danjean, S., Bunch, J., Machtmes, K., & Kotrlik, J. W. (2014). Louisiana Extension Educators' Perceptions of the Benefit and Relevance of Participating in an International Extension Experience toward Their Career. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *55*(1), 92–105.

Melevin, P. T. (1991). *Globalization and Cooperative Extension: Results from a mail survey of state and territorial directors*. S. a. E. S. R. Center.

Mero-Jaffe, I. (2011). 'Is that what I Said?' Interview Transcript Approval by Participants: An Aspect of Ethics in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *10*(3), 231–247. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691101000304

National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. (1997a). *The global university for the twenty-first century: A strategic plan.* https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED417640.pdf

National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. (1997b). *Globalizing agricultural science and education programs for America*. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED417641.pdf

National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. (2002). *The Extension system: A vision for the 21st Century, a resource document*.

National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. (2007). *A national action agenda for internationalizing higher education*.

National Institute of Food and Agriculture. (2020). *National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Federal Assistance Policy Guide*.

National Institute of Food and Agriculture. (n.d.–a, 2/25/25). *Extension*. Retrieved 3/4/25 from https://www.nifa.usda.gov/about-nifa/how-we-work/extension

National Institute of Food and Agriculture. (n.d.–b, 1/23/25). *NIFA Reporting System frequently asked questions*. Retrieved 3/4/25 from https://www.nifa.usda.gov/data/nifa-reporting-system/nrs-faq

Northeast Extension Directors. (n.d.). *Funding & federal partnership*. Retrieved 3/7/25 from https://northeastextension.org/about-cooperative-extension/funding-federal-partnership/#:~:text=Capacity%20funds%20are%20the%20backbone,meet%20them%20where%20they%20are

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Place, N. T. (1998). *Domestic implications of the Polish-American Extension Project: A case study*. The Pennsylvania State University.

Place, N. T., Evans, D. E., Andrews, M. P., & Crago, N. (2000). Implications and impact among American Extension professionals and near-associates resulting from the Polish-American Extension Project. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, *7*(1), 5–16.

Place, N. T., Jacob, S. G., Andrews, M. P., & Crago, N. E. (2002). International experience: Pathways to personal and professional growth. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, *9*(3), 15–22.

Rhoades, G., & Slaughter, S. (1997). Academic capitalism, managed professionals, and supply-side higher education. *Social Text*(51), 9–38.

Russo, S., & Osborne, L. (2004). *A call to leadership: The presidential role in internationalizing the university: A report of the NASULGC Task Force on International Education* (Washington, DC: the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, Issue.

Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (Fourth ed.). SAGE.

Selby, K. A., Peters, J. L., Sammons, D. J., Branson, F. F., & Balschweid, M. A. (2005). Preparing Extension educators for a global community. *Journal of Extension*, *104*, 60–68.

Smith, D., Moore, G., Jayaratne, K., Kistler, M., & Smith, D. (2009). Factors affecting the global mindedness of Extension agents: Implications for building global awareness of Extension agents. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, *17*(1), 59–67.

Smith, D. B. (2008). *The impact of international experience on the global mindedness of Extension agents employed by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service*. North Carolina State University.

United States Department of Agriculture. (1984). *New directions: The international mission of the Cooperative Extension service - A statement of policy*.

United States Department of Agriculture. (1989). *Global Perspectives for Extension*.

United States Department of Agriculture. (2022). *NIFA Land-grant colleges and universities*. https://www.nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2023-04/NIFALGUs_MapREV_AI0522_508.pdf

United States Department of Agriculture. (n. d.–a). *Cooperative Extension history*. Retrieved 11/15/2021 from https://nifa.usda.gov/cooperative-extension-history

United States Department of Agriculture. (n. d.–b). *Cooperative Extension System*. Retrieved 11/15/21 from https://nifa.usda.gov/cooperative-extension-system

United States Department of Agriculture. (n.d.–a). *1994 Tribal Land-Grant Colleges and Universities Program*. Retrieved 11/18/2022 from https://www.usda.gov/partnerships/1994-program

United States Department of Agriculture. (n.d.–b). *How we work*. Retrieved 4/1/2022 from https://www.nifa.usda.gov/about-nifa/how-we-work/extension/cooperative-extension-system

Vergot III, P., Place, N. T., & Dragon, S. L. (2006). Internationalizing University of Florida IFAS Extension professional development and institutional building. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, *13*(1), 15–27.

Virginia Department of Forestry. (n.d.). *Chesapeake Bay watershed and Virginia*. Retrieved 3/30/25 from https://dof.virginia.gov/water-quality-protection/learn-about-water-quality-protection/chesapeake-bay-watershed-and-virginia/

Appendices

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Appendix B: Informed Consent Document

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Appendix D: Email Invitation to Participate in Study

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

VIRGINIA TECH

Division of Scholarly Integrity and Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120 (MC 0497)
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-3732
irb@vt.edu
http://www.research.vt.edu/sirc/hrpp

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 27, 2023

TO: Max O Stephenson Jr, Ben Grove

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Understanding Extension Directors’ Conceptualizations of, and Perceived Roles in, Internationalization

IRB NUMBER: **22-1128**

Effective February 27, 2023, the Virginia Tech Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review under 45 CFR 46.104 (d) category(ies) 2(ii).

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit an amendment to the HRPP for a determination.

This exempt determination does not apply to any collaborating institution(s). The Virginia Tech HRPP and IRB cannot provide an exemption that overrides the jurisdiction of a local IRB or other institutional mechanism for determining exemptions.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

https://secure.research.vt.edu/external/irb/responsibilities.htm

(Please review responsibilities before beginning your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Determined As:	**Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category(ies) 2(ii)**
Protocol Determination Date:	**February 27, 2023**

ASSOCIATED FUNDING:

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this protocol, if required.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

***Please note: The HRPP office has stopped stamping documents for Exempt protocols. It is your responsibility to maintain these documents and make current versions available on request.

Date*	OSP Number	Sponsor	Grant Comparison Conducted?

* Date this proposal number was compared, assessed as not requiring comparison, or comparison information was revised.

If this protocol is to cover any other grant proposals, please contact the HRPP office (irb@vt.edu) immediately.

Appendix B: Informed Consent Document

Title of research study: Understanding Extension Directors' Conceptualizations of, and Perceived Roles in, Internationalization. Protocol 22-1128.

Principal Investigator: Max O. Stephenson, Jr., 540-231-7640, mstephen@vt.edu

Other study contact(s): Ben Grove, 540-231-7640, ben.grove@vt.edu

Key Information: The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether to participate in it. You will find more detailed information below.

The purpose of this research is to understand current Extension directors' conceptualizations of, and perceived roles in, internationalization. Prior research has identified Extension directors as key stakeholders in such efforts. As an Extension director, your views are invaluable for themselves and for understanding the roles of your colleagues in like roles.

Detailed Information: You may obtain more detailed information about this study and your rights as a participant in it by contacting those identified below.

Who can I talk to?
If you have questions or concerns about this study, please contact the research team directly to share them: Ben Grove, 540-231-7640, ben.grove@vt.edu or Max O. Stephenson, Jr., 540-231-7640, mstephen@vt.edu.
This research has been reviewed and approved by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may reach individuals in that office at 540-231-3732 or irb@vt.edu if:

- You have questions about your rights as a research subject
- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team
- You cannot reach the research team
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team to provide feedback about this research.

How many people will be studied?
We plan to include approximately 10 people in this research study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

- If you agree to participate, in a Zoom interview Ben Grove will ask you a series of questions related to your perceptions and understanding of internationalization, and your role in such pursuits in your capacity as an Extension director.
- The interview will last 60-90 minutes.
- Your responses will be audio recorded, transcribed, and coded.

- The research team will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of your responses and you will not be identified individually.
- Ben Grove will schedule an individual Zoom interview with you during March, April, or May 2023.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?
You can leave the research at any time, for any reason, and it will not be held against you. If you decide to leave the research, please contact the principal or student investigator so that they can delete any data pertaining to your participation.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me? (Detailed Risks)
There is some small measure of risk that you might be uncomfortable revealing your personal views on this subject. As such, confidentiality will be important. The student investigator will assign pseudonyms for each respondent. All names, places, and any other identifying information will be obscured and confidentially will be maintained in presenting interview results.

What happens to the information collected for the research?
We will make every effort to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information only to people who have a need to review it. We cannot promise complete confidentiality. Individuals that may inspect your information include the investigators and Virginia Tech (IRB)-Human Research Protection Program staff.

All information collected as part of this research will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

The results of this research study may be presented at conferences, in presentations, academic papers, and as part of Ben Grove's dissertation.

Implied Consent:
By agreeing to participate in the interview you are consenting to the terms of the research study outlined above.

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

How are you today?

Thank you, again, for agreeing to be a part of my study. As I shared before, I'm associate director of strategy and administration for Virginia Cooperative Extension. I've worked with VCE in different capacities for sixteen years, and am looking forward to completing my study and my PhD. My program is in Planning, Governance, and Globalization, in the School of Public and International Affairs.

Brief overview of my professional background - 10 years in development, 5 years with CALS Global, now VCE leadership; work with establishing GEIN.

Before we get started, do you have any questions or concerns about the consent information sheet I shared?

[pause]

I plan to ask you a series of questions and will follow up, as needed. I am recording our conversation so that I may focus on your responses. I will take notes as the interview proceeds, as well.

I'm going to hit record now.

Before we get started with the interview questions, would you please share your title with me?

Understanding Extension Directors' Conceptualizations of, and Perceived Roles in, Internationalization

RQ 1 - How do Extension directors describe/define internationalization?

- How do you define internationalization in the Extension context?
- How would you describe Extension internationalization?
- How would you describe the process(es) by which Extension systems pursue internationalization?
- To what extent have you personally engaged in Extension internationalization?

RQ 2 - Why do Extension directors choose to pursue or not pursue internationalization?

- What are the principal rationales for Extension internationalization in your view?
- What benefits do CES realize through internationalization?
- What costs, if any, do you perceive of pursuing internationalization?
- What barriers to internationalization do you perceive CES or CES leaders to face in the pursuit of internationalization?

RQ 3 - What roles do Extension directors see themselves playing in internationalization?

- What do you perceive your role to be in supporting internationalization efforts in your state (or organization)?

- What do you perceive your role to be in supporting Extension professionals in internationalization?
- In what ways do you resource internationalization in your (CE) system, such as through funding, personnel, or other resources?

RQ 4 – A number of major reports from ECOP and APLU have called for internationalization of Extension in the last forty years. What role in your view have such reports had in generating interest and action towards internationalization among Extension directors?

- Have calls to action, such as policy and vision statements regarding Extension internationalization, from APLU, for example, informed the pursuit of internationalization? And have they done so in the past in your view?
- To what extent do the findings of work groups and leadership committees, such as the ECOP international committee, inform your support/pursuit of internationalization?
- What do you perceive your role to be in supporting internationalization in the U.S. CES writ large?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix D: Email Invitation to Participate in Study

Subject: Invitation to participate – Qualitative Research Study of Understanding Extension Directors' Conceptualizations of, and Perceived Roles in, Internationalization

Dear XXXXX:

My name is Ben Grove and I serve as the Associate Director of Strategy and Administration for Virginia Cooperative Extension. I am also a Ph.D. candidate in the Virginia Tech School of Public and International Affairs. My doctoral research seeks to understand Extension directors' conceptualizations of, and perceived roles in, internationalization. I am recruiting two directors from each of the five Extension regions for my inquiry.

I have selected your name randomly from the directors in the XXXX (insert name) region and would like to invite you to participate in the study. Your involvement will consist of a Zoom interview, which I estimate will require 60-90 minutes, during which I will ask you a series of questions related to my topical interest. I plan to audio record and transcribe our exchange for my analysis. I will maintain confidentiality and use pseudonyms to anonymize your responses.

Please let me know if you are willing to participate in this study (IRB # 22-1128) and I will provide you with additional details, including a consent information sheet. Feel free to contact me at ben.grove@vt.edu with any questions you may have. I would appreciate your reply by XXXX date (two weeks from date of sending).

Sincerely,

Ben Grove