

Building a Model for Sustainable Human Capacity Development in Mexico
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Mexico and the US are in the throes of a migration problem which has created difficult economic and social issues for both countries. The US has often gained excellent workers but with a resultant depletion of many workers in Mexico. With a joint commitment, universities in both countries are in a unique position to find ways to help farmers and rural Mexican communities remain viable. Additionally, US universities can enhance their cultural capacity to work with migrant populations in various communities in the rural US.

The purpose of this partnership is to build an emergent model of leadership and cultural capacity at the University of Simon Bolivar (USB) and the Ag Leadership, Education and Communication Department (AgLEC) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to address various aspects of community development and viability in Mexican communities and Nebraska communities with Mexican residents.

The methods include developing a master's degree in community and organizational leadership at UNL, establishing a rural community development focus in Mexico, increasing USB faculty capacity to lead community and organizational research in Mexico, language and cultural experiences for AgLEC faculty, development of micro-enterprise activity in rural communities and providing a leadership and training program for small farmers to address their issues.

The procedure for the research/teaching/outreach effort includes exchange visits to plan and develop relationships, use of onsite and distance teaching and consultation, assistantships for USB faculty to experience some of the master's program at UNL, research and outreach visits to both Mexican and US communities and scheduled distance consulting and coaching sessions to provide continuity and support. We hope to secure grant support to facilitate the activities of the partnership but we are committed to move forward without it.

Conclusions. Anticipated outcomes include increased leadership skills of administrators and faculty, USB faculty completing the masters degree, a cadre of community leaders who can influence change to address economic and social needs, and increased language and cultural understanding of all those participating.

Questions for discussion. Is this strategy sound? What are the greatest barriers to success? How can expected outcomes best be documented? What are possible unintended consequences of this partnership? What additional spin-offs might occur? What might be the next steps beyond what has been described?

Educational importance. In-depth understanding of the migration problem is necessary to build the capacity for problem solving. Universities can use their technical and human resources and capacities to develop different ways of thinking about and addressing these complex social issues. This is one effort to move beyond the stereotypical responses about our Mexican neighbor and demonstrate that educational partnerships can make a difference. Potentially lessons learned can be applied to other communities and universities.

Handouts will include a description of the masters program, leadership curriculum to build capacity, and the evaluation strategy.