Section III: Moving into the Tools in the Toolbox

Chapter 5—Executive Summary of Solomon Source—*Rural Revitalization & Empowerment Strategies (RRES)*

As mentioned previously, the following pages include most of a document entitled "A Vision to Transform the World". This was the original document that began the process of the writing of this book. What is included here encapsulates some of the over-arching principles, or theories, that are the foundation of this work. Based on conceptual ideas, their purpose is to lead toward real, doable solutions to the ever pressing problems being faced in rural regions all across the globe. This executive summary is only a small part of a much bigger picture, but can provide the reader an idea of the observations and ideas that can lead us to a more harmonious world. But the process has to start one "place" (e.g. region or community, or person) at a time, and then the successes can then be adapted to other places, dependent on the characteristics of those places.

Mission: To awaken people to the heart of the matter: our relationship with the planet – "We're all in this together, we must save Our-selves, *and* each other." - Skadberg

Four Important Aspects of the RRES are

1) The model is designed to be generic and adaptable to any context.

2) The model is replicable. That means that after the first successful implementation in a particular place (e.g. country), the idea is to initiate similar projects in other regions. This follows the "adoption diffusion" theory for moving ideas from one place to another. It is likely that the best way to accomplish this would be within countries since, in general, the socio-political context is going to be similar. However, it is important that even though the RRES is generic, it must always be contextualized into the socio-political and economic

environment.

3) The RRES can be created with parts of the model depending on the needs or situation where it is being implemented. Of course the concepts are being presented as a total solution, however, there is no way that it can be predicted which components will ultimately be developed. This is where the contextualization and Systems Thinking are required of the project coordinators.

4) Funding can also be varied depending on situation of where a project is being established. Of course, it would be best to have a significant source of financial support in order to do a speedy and comprehensive initiative, however it is not at all required. In fact, even though it might be the preferred strategy, in some cases a "boot-strapped" version could end up with very good results. The key here is to be smart and efficient with funding as with all aspects of the project. Really, our model or guide, for all aspects of what we do is nature. Nature has provided us innumerable examples of the efficiencies that are best utilized and there is never any wasted materials at the end of any process. This is what the Zero Emissions Research Initiative (ZERI) emphasizes is the natural systems are highly efficient and there is never any material left over as "waste", everything is utilized. You will find a description of ZERI in Chapter 12, Volume II.

Introduction

This document describes a simple concept of "people helping people, and the planet".

This document has developed over the last twenty four years from looking at issues behind environmental degradation that are usually driven by economics, and ignorance of the ultimate costs of environmental destruction. An important part of the solution has to do with educating people and providing opportunities for them to get exposure to the wonders of nature, and for them to experience nature in new ways – leading to an awakening of the spirit. Nature really is a powerful teacher. To this end this book is a first attempt to develop, and share, solutions that can be adapted and utilized in the current socio-economic paradigms.

Initially, this approach seems to focus on tourism or economic development. However, upon closer examination, it is apparent that these are used as vehicles for interaction, and platforms to establish opportunities for people to experience the out-of-doors. We use

the term "Experiential Tourism" to describe a very robust opportunity space, mainly because there has been so much fragmentation in the tourism industry, with new terms being constantly created (e.g. ecotourism, nature tourism, heritage, shopping, etc). Ultimately it all comes down to experience. Satiating people's curiosity and providing them with meaningful, memorable experiences.

We promote tourism and innovation, within context, while at the same time empowering rural communities and their citizens to expand the economy, creatively and responsibly (especially agricultural). Tourism must be blended and be complimentary to the existing economy. At the same time, careful considerations are made for a holistic approach to protect the environmental, social and cultural characteristics of the communities and the region. We also focus on rural, but it is important to note that a critical relationship exists in what is called the "rural-urban nexus". In short, these two exist in absolute dependence. Rural places provide the food, water, natural resource management and respite from urban life, while the cities utilize the products of the rural places. We have said for some time that "everyone can't live in the city", nor would we want them to. However, if we don't support rural places through policy and through rural and agricultural innovation, we will have even more serious problems than we currently do.

So as you read this document it appears to discuss many things. It does. But it is necessary to look at the bigger picture in order to blend these new opportunities into the environment and to advancing humanity. To move forward on these opportunities we must bring together teams of advisors, but more importantly we emphasize empowering the local citizenry to be the "masters of their own destiny". Because, at some point in time, the teams will go home and the community will need to carry on. So again, the solution is about education, and empowerment.

It should be obvious that we see the Internet, and new emerging technologies, as paramount to support these efforts. It is our opinion that we have barely tapped into the potential, however, we need to remember that these new technologies are only a tool. Ultimately we see tremendous hope for the changes that are happening, people awakening and developing "grass-roots" initiatives and recognizing the urgency of our task - to take care of each other, and the planet.

Executive Summary

The Rural Revitalization & Empowerment Strategies (RRES) describes a holistic regional and community empowerment initiative. It is grounded in the idea of developing and implementing community and individual change through pragmatic, "common-sense" solutions. These common sense approaches have been developed from a theoretical understanding of the world, but are based on pragmatic questions. The principles and approaches described here have been hammered out of many years of study and work in the area of "community development", mostly in rural regions but the approaches are designed to be generalizable and adaptable to any situation.

This document extracts from hundreds of pages of materials to provide the crux of the approach for our regional empowerment process. The document is organized as follows:

1) executive summary

2) an introduction to some of the theoretical concepts that provide a context for our approach, and

3) a refinement of specific "action centers" of the strategy including a) education institute, b) product and idea creation and development center, c) technology platform, and d) the community "toolbox".

4) Conclusion

It is not possible to cover the theoretical concepts beyond a rudimentary introduction. More details of the functional component presented as "case studies" in the following part of this Section. This Executive Summary will provide the reader with a good working understanding of the overall approach of thw Rural Revitalization & Empowerment Strategy (hereafter RRES).

The necessity for this "new model" comes from what we would term a "wholesale failure" of current methodologies to accomplish the goal of sustainable development in rural places. Additionally, in our evaluation, the performance of current means and methods of "traditional" agricultural and community development, to supply all peoples a satisfactory life, has not been met. At the same time our current basis for economic development

inadequately distributes wealth. Plus, they destroy the environment at the same time which further exacerbates problems and affects the quality of life for people and the natural world.

The RRES is established on foundational principles which are presented in this document in brief. Volumes could be written on any one of these topics. It is not the point to proclaim *the* solution. The intent is to introduce some new, and re-introduce some established principles and approaches to start to build a new "foundation" upon which to begin building a new structure for primarily rural regional and community economies based on strategies for enhancing cooperation, collaboration and creativity (see Nash Equilibrium Theory).

Paramount to all this is the consideration of the existing context (Systems Thinking) and the protection of the natural environment. Environmental protection is not discussed in detail in this book because the topic could divert us from the aim to introduce a focused approach to sustainable development. The reader must understand that environmental protection, management and enhancement, and the development of new practices for agriculture and all economic activities must be based on new models, or models using combinations of established methods that perform better for long term environmental sustainability. This is a topic for a future discourse.

Our position regarding environmental protection is based on evidence gathered from throughout recorded human history, and we are irrefutable on this point: that the costs for not protecting and sustaining that where our bounty comes from (Gaia, or the Earth) are exorbitantly high, not only in economic terms but in regards to human, animal and plant health and for the quality of life. The current "human-nature" paradigm of exploitation and dominance has failed. We need new models and practices, and we need them NOW, and for them to be implemented.

We foresee radical changes occurring in communities and economies in the future. However, we see that we must move from the current economic and social paradigm to the new one without a total collapse. The RRES presents a process that will fit within current paradigms, but move the communities towards those new models. We do not proclaim to know what those new models will be in total, but in certain circles we have

observed a more "micro-scale" economy to be more sustainable. We believe that regional based economies to be more supportable, efficient and workable. Based on trends in communities and larger economies, and our evaluation of what we see as structural problems in current corporate and macro-scale economics (e.g. the global economy), there will need to be significant changes for the creation of more sustainable communities. We have predicted for some years that more localized, regional models are more efficient and more sustainable. However, it is necessary to present the RRES within the existing economic, institutional and social contexts. In any case, it has been our belief that the new model will grow from the "grass-roots", based on individual empowerment which will lead to more creativity and cooperation, as opposed to the competitive model. It is envisioned that these approaches will aid in the evolution, or adaptation, of regions, communities, businesses and individuals to a more harmonious and sustainable way of life.

As a very general introduction we see that two of the most important principles reside at two ends of a spectrum – broad scale "context" and "individual empowerment". In order for our strategies to proclaim a holistic approach we must understand the larger "context" , this idea is related to the concept of "systems thinking", and at the other end of this spectrum is "individual empowerment".

Introduction to Vision, Guiding Principles and Conceptual Foundations

Prior to presenting the specific "action centers" of the RRES, it is important to provide five theoretical/conceptual principles for a project of this sort. This executive summary is organized as a progression from overarching "Guiding Principles" to specific components, initiatives and organizational structure. We additionally provide a case-study of a project that was implemented in 2003 in Texas which became the initiator of projects in a dozen states in the United States. This technology based "community network" project is still core to the RRES in regards to the creation of this holistic, community empowerment strategy. The final section provides a summary with the diagram entitled "The Big Picture in Simple Terms", and some concluding comments.

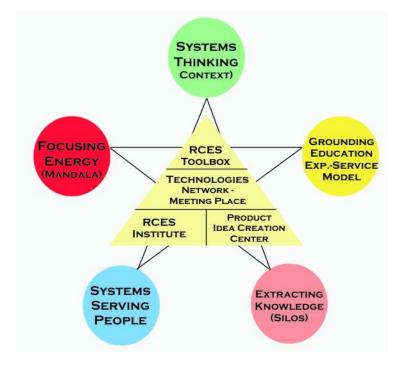*Guiding Principle* 1) Systems Thinking – Understanding Context

Diagram C5-1: The Solomon Source Inspiration Model – The RRES

Guiding Principle 1) Systems Thinking – Understanding Context

Effective strategies in every human endeavor require that "context" be considered. In short, Systems Thinking aims to "contextualize" things and to steer clear of simple multi-disciplinary models. No project can be properly developed without carefully considering the context and repercussions of the proposed effort or change.

Gharajedaghi, 2006, describes "Systems Thinking" in extensive detail in "*Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos & Complexity, a Platform for Designing Business Architecture*". And it is beyond the scope of this summary to discuss at length. As an introduction, however, all endeavors should give serious consideration to the potential environmental, social, political, economic, and cultural/historical repercussions and implications as they interact in the human-natural environment.

As an economic, social and educational endeavor, the RRES should similarly consider the macro-scale impacts since a project of this scope touches all aspects of community life and will be instrumental in shaping future societies. However, we would also include two other "micro"- considerations that might best be termed *human* and *spiritual* as they

relate to the foundations of our efforts to stimulate individual, personal empowerment that will then convert to community advancement.

Our strategy, discussed in greater detail below, is derived from the basic understanding that strategies aimed towards successful community empowerment require that we also comprehend the *"opportunity space"* objectively and comprehensively, and the ensuing impacts of our actions.

In general, historically and traditionally, human endeavors and scientific research (under the rubric of education) have tended to focus on independent multi-disciplinary pieces in which the whole is the sum of its associative parts. In our systems approach, we intend to look at the "big-picture", identify and examine the various pieces, reassemble the "puzzle," (Diagram C5-4) and then study it as an interactive system—a synthesis of processes, people, and subsystems which is the key to success. Evaluation is a critical element which is inherent throughout the process.

> The complexity of endeavors to serve human needs effectively, efficiently and responsibly demands that a dynamic and adaptive approach be used. Systems Theory (or Thinking) provides a strong foundation for such an approach. Systems Thinking does not simply entail a multi-disciplinary approach; rather, the real issues related to dynamic and changing situations involving human systems and services (engineered) is to develop ways to synthesize separate findings into a coherent whole. This fact is far more critical than the ability to generate information from different perspectives (i.e. from different disciplinary perspectives). To illustrate our point, we use the elephant story found in Persian literature as narrated by Molana Jaladedin Molavi (Rumi). It is presented as a metaphor in which several men are attempting to identify an elephant in the dark. The effort proves fruitless until another man shows up with a light. Gharajedaghi (2006) Page 108-109 presents this perspective in the following:

> "The light, which in this context is a metaphor for methodology,

enables them all to see the whole at last.

Rumi's version of the story means that the ability to see the whole somehow requires an enabling light in the form of an operational systems methodology." …. For our purpose here, … "one should be able to make one's underlying assumptions about the nature of the socio-cultural systems explicitly known and verifiable to oneself.

Whatever the nature of the enabling light, my contention is that it must have two dimensions. The first dimension is a framework for reality, a system of systems concepts to help generate the initial set of working assumptions about the subject. The second dimension is an iterative search process to: 1) generate the initial working assumptions, 2) verify and/or modify initial assumptions, and 3) expand and evolve the emerging notions, until a satisfactory vision of the whole is produced. As Singer put it "Truth lies at the end, not at the beginning of the holistic inquiry" (Singer, 1959).

The challenges presented by our modern world, and agencies and institutions inadequate performance to rectify the "problems", suggest that we consider "stepping-back" to gain a new perspective which can provide insights to develop solutions and more effective "holistic" approaches.

The Duality – Engineered "systems" and People

Gharajedaghi presents an insightful and important discussion pointing to a conundrum in the structure for dealing with the realities of the world. He discusses three theoretical views: Mindless Systems: mechanistic, Uniminded Systems: A biological view, and Multiminded Systems: sociocultural systems. As you might imagine each of these perspectives involves considerable discussion. And in that process we add complexity which can cloud our perspective or clarity.

For our purposes here we will only focus on two systems that can be deduced from Ghaarajedaghi's discourse and our observations working in communities. These two are sufficient for our need to identify a core issue that must be addressed. They are 1) Engineered, and 2) Human. In our view all things that we have created are supposedly

designed to advance human life (e.g. governments, business, social endeavors). And all engineered solutions were created for this purpose. However, in our perspective the engineered world dominates our reality now. And attention to the engineered world has caused us to lose perspective on the reasons why we make all this "stuff", supposedly to make our lives better. But we see that the human and natural world have fallen into obscurity as we have become obsessed with technological advancement and "development".

The term "Engineered" in this contest includes organizations, agencies, roads, automobiles, etc. etc. In essence, and this can be traced back to the industrial revolution and to Adam Smith's economic view, all of the institutions, governments, corporations, educational endeavors have fallen into the "engineered" reality because "science" has presented us this framework.

Even though some minor change in perspective may have occurred, the evolution of how the two systems interact "built/engineered" and "human" has not changed. It is easy to apply a "systems" solution to a road, or a machine or even an institution or government, the challenge is how does that affect the "human" part of the equation? Machines and systems are predictable (for the most part), but people are not, even less so are natural systems. In fact, even the term "systems thinking" is couched within the problem. Vesterberg provides a concise definition of Systems Thinking.

> What is Systems Thinking? Systems thinking comes from a rigorous scientific discipline called General Systems Theory, which was developed in the 1920s. The theory centered on the natural world, the living systems therein and the common laws governing those systems. Its major premise was that such laws, once known, could serve as a conceptual framework for understanding the relationships within any system, and for handling any problems or changes encompassed by that system. Consequently, the theory emphasized the value of viewing a system as a whole, of gaining a perspective on the entire "entity", before examining its parts.

> The framework is based on the belief that the component parts of a system will act differently when the systems relationships are removed and it is

viewed in isolation. The only way to fully understand why a problem or element occurs and persists is to understand the part in relation to the whole. (http://www.vesterberg.se/systems-thinking/)

Even the language that is being used in this document is constrained with the "engineered" mentality using the phrase "systems thinking". If we look at how various institutions, corporations or governments operate, because they are structural, and thus systems, they implement engineered or "mechanistic" solutions. For example, if there is a gap in a program or some form of waste is discovered inside an organization what is implemented is a new policy, or regulation, or law usually consisting of a new form to be filled out and/or some type of police action in order that the "gap" be watched and monitored. For all intents and purposes this is like putting a new "gear" in the machine. But even in a machine, this will not work. Even more blatant, and we have confronted this challenge innumerable times, is to attempt to introduce a new "program" or innovation into one of these institutions. If there is not a box on the form to write that, the idea simply will be discarded. In order to consider, there would need to be a major policy or structural change to accommodate even a "pilot" or demonstration project. An analogy would be like trying to add a new apparatus to the internal combustion engine – it's not going to happen.

Where humans meet the machine cannot be described simply in mechanistic terms. It seems a bit ironic that "systems thinking" was originally derived from the observation of the natural world. But the natural world has been around much longer than this "mechanistic" view, and it would seem ultimately to be showing us the error of our ways. Because of our self inflicted crisis, we are having to turn once again to nature to find solutions. We need to move out of the rigid language and thinking to a more fluid, organic and natural process that allows for adaptation to new environments which are presenting themselves. In our discussion here, for lack of a better term, we are promoting a "grass-roots" approach.

To demonstrate how inadequate "engineered" thinking and language is to solve our crisis between our created systems and the natural world, would be to try to describe the beauty of a flower with engineers terms, much less the growth and development of a natural ecosystem, a landscape or a baby. It can't be done.

Our main point here is people don't respond like machines. So an engineered solution will not be adequate. For lack of a better term, people's lives are more like "soap operas", filled with drama, and uncertainty. And at the end, the systems don't ultimately serve the people's needs, they serve the institutions needs which use up precious resources that could have been better utilized. It should be accepted as a given that the systems we have created are supposed to serve people. Another example of how a "mechanistic" or engineered view fails is how institutions, or agencies monitor their success or performance. It usually just comes down to numbers. This is because engineered reality can essentially deal only with quantitative characteristics not qualitative. Everything has to be boiled down to numbers, even the qualitative measures have to be put into tables of numbers, so what ends up happening to the qualities? It's an important question. And even more importantly is the question that really is the bottom line in most people's lives whether it is in a family, community, region or nation - how is the quality of life?

This discussion is not proposing to address this philosophical or paradigmatic crisis. That too is really "raging against the machine", and would require exorbitant energies to change - precious energies that are better used to change the "system" from the ground-up, or from the "grass-roots". The institutional structure that has been created is rigid, and will ultimately crumble under its own weight. The point to introducing this important issue is to be aware as one starts to move down to the level of bringing innovation into communities and potentially "evolution" into individual's lives, it will be necessary to treat the people like "people" not "machines". They will respond much better. Of course, people indoctrinated into the mechanistic way of being will resist these structural changes, but we ultimately do not have to worry about this. The people who are ready for change, the early adopters, are the ones we are interested in. The key to our success will be to get practical, rewarding solutions into these people's hands and let them demonstrate to the remaining people and community, how new ways can open up opportunities and create a better "quality of life". We can find innumerable examples of this occurring throughout history, and in our current times. However, in most cases, these are fairly isolated. What we want to do is implement strategies that take these successful approaches, and make them available to others.

The Context, or Opportunity Space – The Urban Rural Nexus

Traditionally urban and rural are viewed as two separate entities competing for resources. In actuality it is a whole system. Rural economies are dependent on an influx of dollars from the city. Cities are dependent on rural places for food, water, fiber, natural resource protection and for leisure and recreational respites. In other words the two are inextricably linked. Diagram C5-2 below presents what we call the Rural – Urban Nexus which illustrates the dynamic interchange and interdependencies.

The challenge for rural places is real. Geography and supplying various services to rural places has been a constant challenge because services need to be extended across distances, without the "critical mass" of customers which will pay for the services. Cities inherently have better access to services, but one could argue that the quality of life is not necessarily better. Much could be written about this conundrum, which is not the point of this book. The key issue is to introduce the "opportunity space" for extending services to rural places, and to identify how urban centers and rural places are dependent on each other for ultimate survival. In a way this paper suggests first recognizing the interdependencies and secondly to build a bridge for enhancing the opportunities that are presented to support this important dynamic relationship. That bridge can be built via the Internet.

It is critical to extend services to rural communities, and, with the advent of the Internet, it can be viable economically to do so. There are cases of businesses that realized the rural opportunity such as Wal-Mart and Dollar General. Both became highly profitable. However, these examples do little justice to the opportunity that we intend to develop by extending services, education and empowerment tools and resources to support the local citizenry of rural communities to be grown from the community itself. The overall potential for success in building this bridge, in combination with the "systems approach" for managing negative impacts more effectively, is tremendous and not just economically, but more importantly for the quality of life.

The Urban Rural Nexus

Services Supported by: Rural Revitalization & Empowerment Strategy (RRES) The two are inextricable connected, each dependent on the other

Rural Provides ⟷ **Urban**

Entrepreneur centers or incubators
Technology support
Education
Regional & National Orgs.
Coordination
Etc.

- Food
- Nature protection
- Water
- Respite
  - R&R
  - Cultural
  - Ecotourism
  - Agritourism
- Etc.,

Consumption

Every one cannot live in the city!

Provide Services & Education
- Marketing
- Entrepreneurship
- Quality Assurance
- Organizational development
- Etc.

Touching People's Lives

Hope!! → Inspiration!! → Empowerment!!

Making People's Dreams Come True!

Evolving the Wal Mart Model - (Dollar General)
- extending services to rural places
  - following the model of the postal service, railroad rural electrification
- **The *New* Platform/delivery vehicle is the Internet!**

Managing the Natural Resources
Government agencies and corporations cannot/will not effectively manage the rural resources and landscapes.
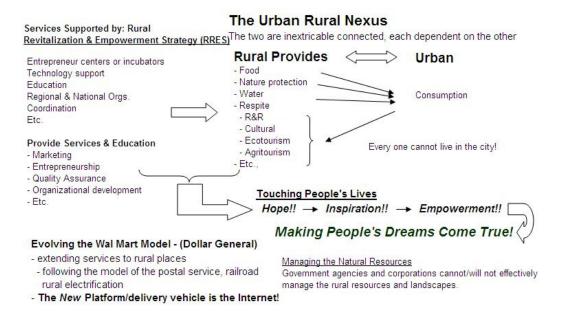
Diagram C5-2: The Urban – Rural Nexus – Building the Bridge

In Diagram C5-2 we highlight the provision of a group of services and information to empower rural communities (starting upper left). The key to this diagram is the process of extending services to rural regions and communities which have been historically underserved. The large 90 degree arrow points to the desired outcomes: the bringing of hope, inspiration and ultimately empowerment to individuals where success is ultimately grounded. The upper right quadrant of the diagram depicts the interdependent relationships between rural and urban places.

The bullet points in the bottom left of the diagram highlights that entities previously have extended services before and have been successful. However, our new opportunity is even greater with the advent of the Internet. In fact, we often point out that our new success will not be based on consumerism, selling people a bunch of stuff, but on providing resources to empower people through education and the various "empowerment tools" to capitalize on the inherent capital available in all places a) people, 2) the natural resource endowment, and 3) the history and culture of the place.

Finally, the last point in the bottom right of the diagram is included for those who would argue that private landowners cannot or will not protect the natural environment. This

observation is true to an extent. However, our experience working in Texas which is almost exclusively privately owned is that landowners love their land. And if they end up causing damages it is usually a result of ignorance. We observed that as land management education was made available to these people it was taken up and implemented with impressive success. The primary point of the statement in Diagram C5-2 about government agencies is that first, there is not the political will to make enough "effective" land management agencies for all lands, and secondly if there was, it would be such a huge endeavor it would almost surely fail. We have examples of this in the United States such as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the effectiveness of these organizations for managing the vast resources under their watch is dubious at best.

A basic fact could be stated as we look at the rural-urban question: not every one can live in the city! Nor would we want them to. One need only look at history to see what happens when too many people live in close proximity.

However, as one looks at economic pressures on the average rural citizen there appears to be significant challenges to be able to "stay on the land", so to speak. And pressures continue to grow on urban centers as mass exoduses occur from rural areas of people hoping to find a better life, especially in developing countries.

However, there are some deviations to these trends in places like the United States. Where people have freed themselves financially, there are growing numbers that are moving from the city to rural places, and/or buying second homes there. Some investigators are highlighting that rural places are flourishing. Needless to say as one travels in rural communities whether it is in the United States or any country there appears to be some level of revitalization. Nonetheless, in our observations, problems are still ubiquitous, especially for the poor. These problems can especially be seen in communities that have historically been on the fringe, economically, socially or geographically (e.g. urban) or are in areas of racial diversity.

Further stymieing the process of agencies or corporations extending services by that the efforts are "silo'ized" (discussed in detail in Extracting Knowledge and Converting discussed below) . Each entity (agency) segments their area of service and only tries to push a narrow set of ideas/programs onto their constituents – almost always utilizing a

"top-down" approach. Efforts are fragmented and lack quality and substance. We could cite several cases. In the process they are using up precious financial resources that could be better utilized by cooperating with other agencies and programs, that not only extend services from the top down, but start to build from "grass-roots". Often the agencies and institutions have policies to share and collaborate with other organizations, or to make what they offer more germane and effective through cooperation, but in the end we would argue this usually only is presented as "lip-service".

The time has come to bring more value and substance in the programs and services that are offered in the spirit of cooperation and efficiency, and utilizing new technologies. Drivers for this process go beyond the traditional, almost exclusive economic drivers to include things like, environmental sustainability, enhancing the "quality of life", innovation and inspiration in business and agriculture, creativity, enthusiasm, human connections, passion, spirit, intuition, love, etc.

In summary, some important points to consider when evaluating the "Rural – Urban Nexus"

- Rural landowners can provide much needed land and natural resource management, even if the "public will" was to create agencies to provide "land management" it is highly cost prohibitive, plus the performance of these agencies for long-term "protection", from a historical perspective, is not satisfactory.

- Rural areas are necessary for the "recreation respite", from the high paced, stressful lifestyle of cities. Nature is truly necessary for adequate rest and revitalization and large, quiet natural areas are not normally found in cities.

- Plenty of solutions are available in educational institutions and agencies that can be utilized to cope with the rural economic, social and environmental conundrum. The key is to develop the ways/means to extend these services.

- There is a tremendous opportunity to create a new service paradigm for "Extension education" via the Internet and technology tools.

- Value comes from real solutions. There are numerous "success stories" at various scales from around the globe (a few are presented in Book 2) by which general principles can be

derived and then those strategies adapted to various contexts.

Guiding Principle 2) Focusing Energy: Creative Synchronicities – The Mandala/Lotus Flower Metaphor

Following prior projects undertaken, we have found that it is critical to have a strong conceptual framework for its projects. Derived from work with the Vice President for Research at Texas A&M University, Diagram 3 highlights the necessity for creating a focal point for a regional empowerment model. This diagram creates conceptual foundation of our effort, highlighting the importance of education for improving people's lives.

RRES does not ignore traditional educational settings such as classrooms, workshops, seminars and short courses, but will utilize a dynamic combination of learning environments with an emphasis on experiential, learning, "conversations", and real-world learning. The aim and underlying purposes of the RRES strategy is to infuse our educational experience with an understanding of the truly spectacular planet where we live and our own inherent magnificence, and then to empower individuals and organizations to ignite the dreams and aspirations in their hearts.

To move from the theoretical to application this proposal develops specific "action centers" to adapt the RRES to any context. Diagram C5-3 is a metaphorical representation of a nuclear reaction. The key to getting an explosion is to focus a considerable amount of energy into the core of the reaction. However, after the critical mass of energy has been reached, the expulsion of energy is instantaneous and far reaching. We thank Dr. Ewing for sharing this vision with us before he passed in 2007. Below is a brief discussion of how we see this image providing another way of depicting our approach.
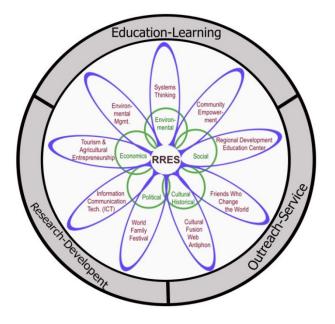
Diagram C5-3[1]: The Nuclear Reaction – or The Mandala (Lotus Flower): "*When a critical mass of knowledge and energy is reached, the results can touch the world!*"

The Center of Diagram C5-3 represents the core "nucleus" of the RRES which will be represented most significantly by the RRES Institute and the Idea and Product Visioning & Creation Center (IPVCC). The five "green" circles represent the "context" in which the project works in a community / region / country. We recognize that the world has been cut up into pieces by our scientific and human-oriented (separatist) perspectives. Depicting the general categories of disciplines (environmental, social, cultural/historical, political, economics) in the five, overlapping, inner circles in Diagram 3 will allow us to re-cognize the integral relationship of these disciplinary domains, providing a new context for re-aligning our efforts for a successful rural economic empowerment strategy.

1. We memorialize the inspiration for our "lotus flower" (or mandala) to Dr. Richard Ewing. Dr. Ewing was the Vice President for Research at Texas A&M University until Dec. 5, 2007. Thank You Dr. Ewing.

The RRES, as it develops its programs, will take into account each of these areas. Yet we recognize that the lines drawn between these "disciplines" are only a functional or

organizational delineation established by historical and contemporary authorities. In fact, as stipulated in Systems Thinking, there is a desperate need to re-examine and recombine these perspectives into a comprehensive whole after study or examination.

The "petals of the flower" in Diagram C5-3 depict the "outreach-service" delivery mechanism of the RRES. Our emphasis on Outreach-Service (extension) is developed from the Land Grant University System that was so powerfully transformative in the United States. However, we agree with John Campbell's[2] critique of the limitations of the Land-grant system as it has matured, mainly that the "Outreach" not been properly expanded and utilized.

Diagram C5-3 is a symbolic metaphor of a "nuclear reaction", (or a more spiritual view is of the lotus flower) which is our vision to powerfully extend the learning and research of RRES to re-connect education to the world, which is depicted in the outer ring of Diagram C5-3.

It is beyond the scope of this document to discuss all of the benefits of utilizing/revitalizing the land-grant model while empowering it with information communication technologies (ICT), however, in brief, this approach will re-vitalize the educational experience for students. It will also connect RRES to the mainstream of society, delivering a multitude of benefits: essentially creating a recursive flow of ideas, information, people and business to a world that is clamoring for these outputs of our educational system. The outer ring of Diagram C5-3 shows the original vision of the Land-grant model which framed the educational system on three legs (Education, Research, Outreach). We add to the model the ultimate outputs of this inspired model – Learning, Development, and Service.

The purpose of the Rural Revitalization & Empowerment Strategy (RRES) is to stimulate creative innovation in the economy through the creation of an experiential learning institution (see Diagram C5-9). We will begin with a core educational program derived

from a set of holistic, sustainable experiential education resources. Delivery will be supported by state-of-the-art hardware and software infrastructure, in addition to "train the trainer" community outreach. It is critical that both the technology and human elements be supported in a complimentary fashion. The "faculty" should be strongly

2. President Emeritus, Oklahoma State University – author "Reclaiming a Lost Heritage: Land-grant and Other Higher Education Initiatives of the 21st Century.

connected to excellent colleagues, experts and practitioners around the world. Working together, they can produce a unique experiential, multidisciplinary, international institution that will excel in education, research and outreach. Students will be able to expand their horizons enormously in this virtual and on-site learning environment.

Guiding Principle 3) Creating Systems that Serve People: The Infrastructure Serving People Community Model and Success Across Scales

From over fifteen years work with rural communities we have discovered two critical concepts which must be understood to make "systems" contribute to the success of the community: 1) the Infrastructure Serving People Community Model, and 2) Success Across Scales.

The Infrastructure Serving People Model of Community Development is depicted in Diagram C5-4, and shows, in a very rudimentary way, the flow of life in a community from an infrastructural and services perspective that lead to the community's goals and visions. Currently, in nearly all societies, we develop community supported infrastructure (Box 1) that *serve* the people who live in the community (Box 2), that leads the community to a collective or shared vision (Box 3), – while (by assumption) supporting individual community member's "pursuit of happiness". The basic, default, assumption is that the individuals in a community all share some basic values that are depicted as Box 3 on the far right "Vision/Dreams – Better life".
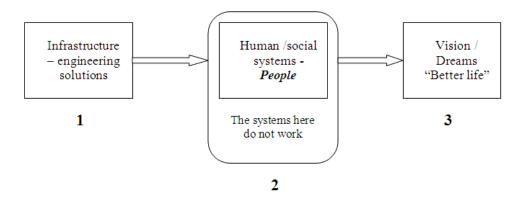

Diagram C5-4: The "Infrastructure Serving People" Model of Community Development:

Where is the Gap? – Converting the "potential" of Infrastructure and Services to Realize a Community's Vision.

The common practice is for government(s) to supply capital (derived from taxes) into a community to support infrastructure development (Box 1) (roads, sewer, water, electricity, etc.). The second box depicts the social/cultural context. This includes all of the human systems (organizational) and supporting governmental functions within the community. These two (boxes 1 & 2) components, in a "hoped for reality", would work in dynamic interaction leading to the advancement of the human system (socio-cultural community)—that is to say, to evolve the community towards some advanced state, supposedly leading the community toward a shared vision, and a better quality of life, theoretically and ethically this should be for all of the members of the community.

The ability for a community to realize a shared vision is highly dependent upon leadership. Over the years, working with a variety of communities and examining research that has been conducted, the process of creating this "vision/dream" in communities is becoming a stronger and more deliberate process. In fact, as one looks across the rural landscape, tools and businesses that are espousing advanced processes to support the development of community "vision" are expanding. But, in our experience, communities achieving goals and visions were most often stymied by community conflict or problems with leadership, agencies or political processes which often reflected a sort of "drama" usually associated with individual personality conflicts or power struggles.

Various techniques for resolving community conflict have been developed, but many expand on the concepts derived from a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). Our team's extensive work on a community development project inspired us to create this simplified version of the reality of places—communities and their citizens. A fairly simplistic model, however, it allows us to not get lost in the details of the community, using the old adage to avoid the trap of "not seeing the forest for the trees".

It has been our observation that public dollars are spent primarily on infrastructure (roads, sewer, etc.). This is where the state and national governments focus the funding that is available for rural communities. The remaining public monies (usually insignificant

compared to engineered capital expenditures) are allocated to social programs. Our observations have been that these do not adequately empower individuals or the groups that they are designed to serve (normally "hand-outs", or charity based). Most social programs of government agencies (or contracting companies) do not ultimately perform satisfactorily. When resources are limited, the demand for effectiveness should be extremely high. In almost all government programs monies that are available for building roads or physical infrastructure are many times greater than monies available for empowering the people.

We believe that ultimately institutions should be expected to utilize the resources allocated more effectively and efficiently. However, as stated above, changing these institutions is like trying to change the course of an oil tanker by pushing the front with a kayak. This may seem to be a pessimistic view, but we do not want get sidetracked in our discussion. You, the reader, can come to your own conclusions. Our experience in attempting to innovate in various agencies and institutions in the United States (especially Texas) for more than fifteen years has resulted in unsatisfactory success. We believe that during these dramatically changing times we will see one of two things happen with these agencies that have been assigned to "serve the people", they will either adapt and start serving more effectively, or they will ultimately go away. We predict no timeframe for this to happen. But the necessity for solutions is far too urgent than to be able to wait to see what happens.

We propose pragmatic, cost-effective strategies to be implemented at whatever level progress can be realized. The "success-across-scales" concept discussed next introduces some basic ideas for empowerment. Ultimately these strategies boil down to two basic ideas "education" and "empowerment", usually initiated by inspiration. The education principle is addressed in at least three subsequent sections of this executive summary (and extensively throughout the book), and is really the "hub on the wheel" and something that we can, from a practical and organizational level, address and implement. The most effective means will be through identifying a strategy and inviting other institutional (government, private, non-profit) partners, but ultimately moving forward with the strategy without waiting for buy-in. We will move forward with those partners that see the vision, believing ultimately most organizations will participate. The best

strategy will be to have partners that have a mission to serve at each of the scales identified in the following discussion, but if a proper strategy is implemented from the "bottom-up" the appropriate partners will come on board because individuals of influence who participate in the RRES (power-actors or "local stars") will bring them in as necessary.

Success Across Scales

The "Success Across Scales" principle emphasizes that to achieve organizational (or community) success, individuals and the different scales of organizations need to be supported. (e.g. family, business, organization, city, region, state, etc.)

One simple fact that can be learned from working with individuals and organizations in essentially any context is this: the success of collective groups, on the whole, is highly dependent on the success, or health and happiness, of its individual members. This truth applies at all scales and for all organizations or communities whether it is a family, a business, an organization, a village, a city, a region, or a nation.

Collective (or community) health can be measured by the community's ability to provide services to ensure that the whole "body" be healthy and prosperous. In other words success can be measured by how the members of the community are being served and thus prospering in health and happiness (spiritually physically, mentally and economically). This, to some extent, would be a result of services being provided through the group's efforts (education, infrastructure, social services). However, an individual's success is not dependent on a group's success, or are all groups dependent on other groups. For larger communities the typical "terms" or areas of concern that are important to a systems analysis would be social, economic, political, environmental and historical/cultural (as depicted in Figure C5-3). The success of all community services, and subsequently the overall health of the community, could be determined by creating measures and evaluation techniques that would examine the overall performance of the government or services sectors to fulfill and sustain the community in the most healthful, prosperous and meaningful way.

Much evidence supports the fact that most agencies and bureaucratic efforts have failed to accomplish the social programs that they have been assigned to fulfill. One need only spend some time thinking of personal experiences, or observations of the performance of

the organizations they have come in contact with. We could cite numerous examples, but will not for the purpose of brevity.

Taking Care of the Whole (person, community)

As Wallace D. Wattles so clearly stated,

"Those who do not quite fill their present places are dead weight upon society, government, commerce, and industry; they must be carried along by others at a great expense." (Wattles 1910).

This quote contradicts much of our view of "helping people", but in reality there is great truth in this statement. In fact, empowered in a "certain way" we see that every person can make a contribution, although the problem really comes down to them realizing that. We would argue that the "charity" model for service has been institutionalized, but ultimately is doomed to failure. What should replace it is the model of "inspiration" or "empowerment".

We propose an analogy of an individual that elaborates this idea. The same analogy can then be extended to communities, nations and the world. Imagine if a person was to only take care of half of his body (if it could be done): to literally not feed it, bath it or take any efforts to assist it to be a healthy partner to the other half of his body. One can easily imagine how healthy or happy that person might be, dragging around a half-dead body.

This may seem to be a ridiculous analogy because there is no way that a person could only sustain half his body. However, is the analogy so ridiculous? If we extend the analogy to the world, at this time only about ½ of the world's population has access to clean water. That would seem to be the most basic human right, but one half of our "body" or "collective being" is not getting the most basic needs fulfilled. Now, if we take this hypothetical situation and extend it to any other "body" that exists in the human condition – a community, a nation, the world, wouldn't the actions of leaving behind and not caring for a significant portion of the those "communities", denigrate the whole?

Throughout human history we can see that this has been the case. Take the civil war in the United States. What was the result of the two halves of the nation fighting? – tremendous

strife and suffering (although elements of transformation resulted, including the Land Grant Education system). An endless number of examples could be cited. And currently, if one looks from this perspective across the globe, one can easily observe this "ailing body" syndrome. Dis-ease (allegorically used) is rife, poverty and human blight are ubiquitous, and extremely denigrated environmental conditions exist in every corner of the globe.

The solution to this dilemma *seems* to evade us. Yet as one looks in another place, in the lives of some awakened, or empowered, people, there seems to be great harmony, peace, prosperity and abundance. Is the solution so elusive and difficult that only a few can utilize and implement it? No! And this truth is well established in literature and spiritual traditions that has come to us throughout the ages. The solution is clearly stated in Wattles's book, to "<u>move from the competitive to the creative</u>", or to *awaken*.

The Solution: Inspiration Instead of Charity

As Wattles points out, the basis of revitalizing individual lives, and naturally communities, is not through charity but through inspiration.

> The poor do not need charity; they need inspiration. Charity only sends
> them a loaf of bread to keep them alive in their wretchedness, or gives
> them an entertainment to make them forget for an hour or two; but
> inspiration will cause them to rise out of their misery.
> Wattles, The Science of Getting Rich, 1910

Our challenge, and opportunity, is to assist each individual to realize this. No one is his brother's keeper. Les Brown states it clearly "Accept responsibility for your life. Know that it is you who will get you where you want to go, no one else." And the inability to empower the individual naturally extends to larger communities because the primary basis of social programs is based on a charity model, programs that give "hand-outs".

NATIONS
COMMUNITIES
ORGANIZATIONS
FAMILIES
INDIVIDUALS

Higher level
success depends
on lower level
success

Diagram C5-5: Success Across Scales: The success of each level of organization moving up with the arrow is dependent on the success of the lower levels.

The "Success Across Scales" Principle

Diagram C5-5 depicts our "Success Across Scales" principle. In very simple terms, this diagram shows that the success of the larger scale organizations (geographic, or structural) are dependent, first on the success of individuals, and then on the subsequent organizational success moving up the pyramid. This diagram contradicts the traditional top-down, hierarchical model that has over-taken most governments, institutions of higher learning, and corporations.

There appears to be an interesting paradigm shift occurring where these "top-down" systems are failing and are being replaced by systems that are based on the foundation of empowerment of individuals, and cooperative models (grass-roots). It is beyond the scope of this proposal to cite numerous examples, but one significant case is in banking, the success of micro-loan programs that are making tremendous impacts in Bangladesh, Guatemala and Colombia (as well as in other countries) (Banker to the Poor). The success-across-scales principle illustrates a natural, logical building of the "capitalization" of social systems, or in other words – empowering people.

It is our contention, as we propose a new development paradigm, one based on each individual awakening, that the next critical organization to re-align is the family. Practically universally, the family will be a pivotal "community" for the realization of a successful societal empowerment strategy.

Realizing this awakening, or transformation, is not about forcing the family to change, but

to empower individual family members to free themselves from limiting perceptions and mentality. Providing "a way out" of the cycle of suffering to a family member, to awaken and empower them to "demonstrate" personal transformation is possibly the most effective strategy. Ultimately, for the family, all of the members need to thrive, if they do not this decline is reflected as a diminishment of the overall health and prosperity of the family. And typically this diminishment is played out generation after generation. However, in some places this tide is being reversed.

We expect that the rate of societal change will advance rapidly as families are transformed and that transformation then "adopts and diffuses" into the larger community groups. So our efforts need not so much be focused on changing the family, as on reaching the "change agent" (or receptive individuals) in the family. *Change agents* are ripe and receptive and can be found throughout organizations, communities and societies. These individuals then become the carriers of the message, not through preaching, but through demonstration, through living a more empowered and awakened life.

Then, as the rest of the family watches their brother, sister, daughter or husband make their dreams come true and become free, the rest of the family will much more likely follow suit. We can see this phenomenon demonstrated in organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous, A Course in Miracles, Over-eaters Anonymous and other "self-help" organizations.

The family, given its importance in nearly all cultures, can be a pivotal influence to catalyze societal (global) transformations. This process is known in scholarly circles as "adoption-diffusion" and the process can be stimulated at all levels and across broad geographies. The key to success is to find "stars", "change agents", or "power actors" who will embrace "change and transformation" and then will show others how to transform their lives, to realize their dreams and aspirations. In other words, leaders from the people, so to speak, can be inspired to show others in the community how together they can change things. Often times these people are hidden, waiting for the right opportunity to, selflessly, show others the way.

In order for a region to successfully create collaborative initiatives, it will be dependent on the success of the communities within the region, and also the businesses, but ultimately

the individuals who operate those businesses.

Guiding Principle 4) Extracting Knowledge and Converting (idea creation & development)

A Complete Solution – Merging the Silo's and Creating Effective Interfaces for Service and Information Exchange

As with previous topics introduced, an entire book could be written on the topic of institutional "silos". However, for our purposes the main point is to realize that information and knowledge have become, in a term, "locked-up" in institutions of higher learning and agencies that were established to serve the public good. In higher education this issue was first addressed in the Land-grant education model created during the Civil War in the United States. The *Extension Service* was created, from the laws passed by Abraham Lincoln, with the intent to extend what was learned from land-grant colleges to the public at large. John Campbell was likely the first author to boldly reveal that the "extension" or service arm of institutions of higher learning have not been supported and evolved adequately (see Reclaiming a Lost Heritage: Land-grant and other Initiatives of Higher Education in the 21ˢᵗ Century). The Extension model serves several key functions, but one aspect is to put the institutional endeavors in context – fulfilling the needs of people.

In our observation this "lack of context" or focus on really serving people is how technologies and community development also are undertaken—in a sort of vacuum. In essence, they become isolated in their development with little consideration of how they could advance the ability to extract and deliver the much needed knowledge and technical assistance that communities are desperately seeking, (information, technical assistance) ways to solve the challenges they face.

Diagram 6 depicts the concept of bringing the three "silos" that are germane to our approach into a common domain with the aim to extract the knowledge from the "knowledge silos", and use the communications infrastructure (Internet) to deliver viable, common-sense solutions to communities, at any scale: city, town, organization, business, family. At this point, our observation is that finding information via the Internet is like

sifting through a haystack, although an incredible amount of knowledge is available. We believe that agencies and institutions should be dedicating considerable resources for how to adapt and evolve their knowledge into this "new" communications and delivery platform (by the way, just creating a Web site is not adequate). If they were to evaluate their mission, in the context of the possibilities afforded via the Internet, they would realize an incredible opportunity was open to serve their constituencies - an efficient and cost effective way to accomplish their mission.

A subsequent result of these efforts will be a sort of "co-evolutionary" process between these three "silos". If the proper methodologies for evaluating performance are created, and specific strategies for improving services are designed, then each of these "entities" ability to utilize the dynamic information and service exchange will be enhanced, further evolving the performance of each domain (or silo).

Diagram C5-6 shows how we first "extract" the knowledge from the knowledge "silo" then either directly to the constituents (Community Development), or through the Nodal Network, we deliver the information that has been encumbered inside of various institutions (libraries, institutional repositories, etc.). This process is not about converting all books into "digital books", but in extracting and adapting, in a very deliberate way, the information that will provide much needed insights for constituencies and individuals.
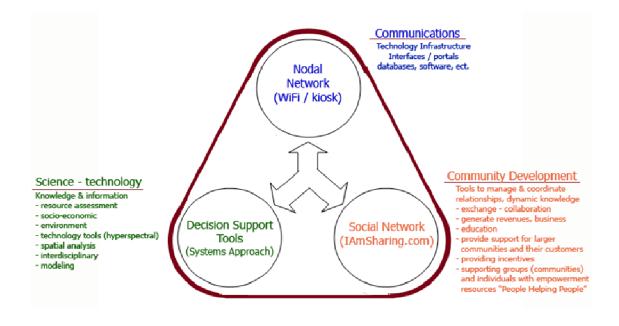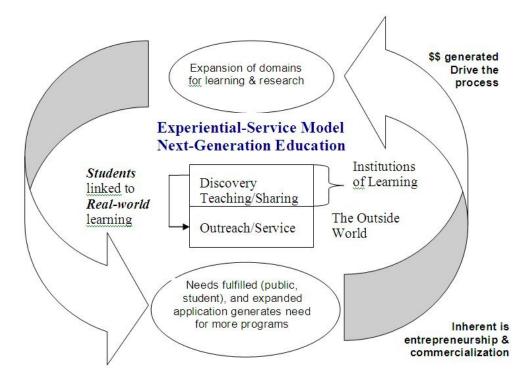
Diagram C5-6: Merging the Silo's and Creating Effective Interfaces for Service Exchange
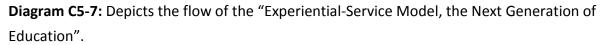
Guiding Principle 5) Grounding Education Principle: Experiential-Service Model – Next Generation Education

Observing the performance of contemporary educational systems, and a long term view of experiential education and the service (Extension) side of the Land-grant system, we suggest that there is a more dynamic and results oriented model that could be developed and utilized for the RRES (see Diagram C5-7). The main objectives of this model are to connect the project benefactors to real-world learning, and also create a better flow of benefits to the public at large.

Diagram C5-7: Depicts the flow of the "Experiential-Service Model, the Next Generation of Education".

Communities and citizens are in great need of what institutions of higher learning have to offer. However the flow of knowledge out of the institution is not adequate. The flow of knowledge (and services) include, but are not limited to 1) student practical experience, 2) training in entrepreneurship/commercialization, and 3) technical assistance with an innovative dynamism outside of traditional disciplinary realms.

In our proposed model the institutions of learning would focus on a more interactive (hands-on) discovery approach for Teaching/Learning/Sharing – (in the center of diagram C5-7). This would be directly tied to an Outreach/Service (bottom center) function which would make the educational component of the RRES Institute more applied and also develop a community benefits model that would be perpetually expanding.

The over-arching theme, or driver, would be the needs of communities (businesses, organizations, institutions, individuals) (bottom circle) which, when fulfilled, provides incentives for the creation of more programs that fulfill needs and are more benefits based. As more and more students are reached, and the subsequent learning programs

are expanded, there will be a resultant expansion of the domains for learning and research.

Additionally the Experiential-Service Model for delivery of educational programs emphasizes "Experiential Learning". The highlights of this approach are to allow students (constituents) to learn practical skills and knowledge to advance their lives. The "real-world" practicality is derived from providing discovery/learning opportunities from *experiences* in actual *real-world* situations. This "discovery/teaching/sharing" process then leads to opportunities for "Outreach and Service". Outreach and active learning in communities and businesses leads to fulfilled community "needs" which will naturally evolve to more opportunities to fulfill those needs. The outcome of this process is students with a more applied and practical education, and communities being more engaged and informed about what actually is being taught, and how it can benefit them.

A final critical element of the model relates to the emphasis on the educational programs being self-sustaining. The courses/programs being taught should be pertinent and generate enough revenues to support their own continuance. If a course becomes a burden and requires being "subsidized", then it should be carefully evaluated to be discontinued or replaced by another course/program. Inherent in the process needs to be an understanding that there should be a business model behind this process. Having a guiding principle of "entrepreneurship and commercialization" (or "dream making") can provide an enhancement of student's interest in participating in the programs. Instead of seeking funding from institutions and non-profit organizations, the model could be perpetually self supporting if a portion of all business endeavors that develop from the model are fed back to fund the continued growth and development of this new educational paradigm.