

October 16, 2000

Dr. Dan Godfrey
ECOP Chair
North Carolina A&T State University
Greensboro, NC 27420-1928

Dear Dr. Godfrey,

At the October 2000, PODC meeting, considerable discussion centered on members' concerns about the erosion of the partnership between Extension in our states and USDA-CSREES. Several unfortunate and ill-timed events during the past year, including the recent Schedule A incident and the secrecy surrounding naming a new administrator, illustrate this erosion and have prompted PODC to request ECOP's assistance in restoring and sustaining this essential partnership. With a new CSREES Administrator, now is an excellent time to strengthen our partnership.

PODC believes the partnership conference scheduled for February 2001, is a positive first step. We strongly recommend that ECOP invite not only directors and administrators but also key associate directors, associate administrators, and program leaders. It may also be helpful to invite PODC and PLC members, since these two committees may be asked to assist in developing future strategies. We hope that CSREES will be involved in planning the February conference to further demonstrate commitment to a full and sustained partnership.

In addition to this first partnership conference, PODC believes that follow-up strategies will be needed to implement recommendations that may come out of the conference and in which PODC should be involved. For example, it may be helpful to have regional work sessions involving both administration and program groups following the February conference to improve communications within the partnership.

PODC would like to suggest the Partnership Committee consider recruiting a senior extension director or administrator from one of the states or a recent retiree from this senior administrator group who would be willing, with CSREES funding, to serve as partnership advisor for one year. Such an individual could monitor and work to improve communications, mediate differences, and facilitate activities to rebuild the damaged partnership.

We wish to work cooperatively with ECOP's Partnership Committee to improve communications and restore and sustain the original intent of the word "cooperative."

Sincerely,

Keith Niemann
PODC Chair