

**The Impact of the USDA's  
National Needs Fellowship Program On My Career**

**Barry K. Goodwin**

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to communicate the importance and impact of the USDA's National Needs Fellowship (NNF) program on my own career and personal development. Simply put, without the support provided by this important program, I would not have been able to pursue doctoral studies in agricultural economics.

In 1984, while finishing my master's thesis at Mississippi State University, I was contemplating an attractive job offer in the private sector. Dr. Travis Phillips of MSU told me about a new program that he had heard about that would provide attractive stipends to qualified students in areas for which a shortage of scientists (a "national need") existed. I very much wanted to continue my studies, though I had no plans to do so due to a lack of financial resources. I was already deeply in debt with student loans. I received a call one afternoon from Dr. Richard Perrin at NC State, telling me in his typically positive and encouraging way that I would be joining NCSU on a USDA National Needs Fellowship. The generous level of support provided to me by this program led me to decline industry job offers and begin studies in the Economics Ph.D. program at NCSU. This represented a dream opportunity for me to pursue what I really wanted in a career—an academic position in agricultural economics.

I must emphasize in the strongest way possible that this program *made my studies possible*. Without it, I would never have been able to pursue the career that I dreamed of. After completing my Ph.D. under this program, I took a faculty position at Kansas State University. This was followed by positions at Ohio State University and my current position—William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor in the Departments of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Economics at NC State.

The support provided to me under this program allowed me to complete my training and then to go to work helping other young scientists achieve their academic goals. I have directed dissertations for 20 Ph.D. students who are now working to advance economic science. I am currently directing 9 other students and I have worked with large numbers of master's and undergraduate students. I have authored or co-authored over 100 journal articles and two books and my research programs have received a number of awards. I owe the USDA's National Needs Fellowship program for any professional success that I have enjoyed in my career.

The USDA National Needs Fellowship program made my career possible. Without it, I would not be working in academics and would not have pursued a Ph.D. In my career travels, I have met many other former fellows, including many who were in this first class. These fellows have made immense contributions across a wide array of agricultural disciplines. I am very proud to have been associated with this very important program and remain honored to have the opportunity to work with fellows in our own program here at NCSU. I enthusiastically endorse the USDA's National Needs Fellowship program and I hope to have the opportunity to be involved with it over the remainder of my career.