Forming the University Brain
Trust for International Agriculture Development

Jeffrey Armstrong, Dean
College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
Michigan State University
Questions:

What capacities and features as a brain trust does the U.S. university community offer that distinguishes it from other brain trusts?

What can the U.S. university community uniquely offer as a brain trust on such issues as international agricultural development, global food security, economic growth and natural resource management?
Distinguishing Features of University Brain Trust

- Intellectual capacity
- Cutting edge agricultural science
- Trans-disciplinary scholarship
- Holistic approach
- Expertise in international agriculture and partnering
- Commitment to serving the “public good”
Intellectual Capacity of Faculty in International Agriculture

- Extensive international experience
- Diverse disciplinary expertise
- Extensive international networking and collaboration (understand the context)
- Ties with international alumni in developing countries
- Ties with multi-national corporations, NGO’s & other stakeholders
- Foreign scientists from developing countries in U.S. university faculty positions
Cutting Edge in Agriculture

- Expertise in cutting edge science (e.g., biotechnology, international trade, agribusiness, human nutrition, community & leadership development, etc.)
- Capacity for “forward thinking”
- Capacity to find new sustainable solutions to persistent challenges facing agriculture
- Positioned to provide leadership to public debate on emerging issues
  - Thus inform sound policy decisions
Trans-Disciplinary Scholarship on Global Agriculture Issues

- Global issues are complex and require trans-disciplinary dialog and research

- Solutions to global agriculture development challenges require input from social scientists, economists, agronomists, geneticists, food scientists, nutritionists, engineers, environmental scientists, political scientists, etc.

- “Agriculture,” by its inherent nature, is multi/trans-disciplinary
Global Agriculture Issues Demanding Trans-disciplinary Scholarship

- Global climate change
- Availability and affordability of food
- Biotechnology
- Energy availability
Global Agriculture Issues Demanding Trans-disciplinary Scholarship

- Depletion and degradation of soil and water resources
- Environmental quality
- Food, society & sustainability
  - Context of culture, community & family
  - Sustainability of agriculture systems
  - Food Safety
  - Trade
Holistic View of Sustainability

Supply chain dynamics / labor / Ethics of cost of food

Animal Health & Welfare

Human health

Environment / Ecology / carbon footprint

Public attitudes / assurance

Food Safety
Contributions of University Brain Trust on Global Issues

- Expertise in institutional capacity building and human resource / leadership development
- Experience in bringing stakeholders together
- Experience in engaging communities and agricultural sectors
Expertise in Bringing Stakeholders Together

- Agriculture commodity value chains
- Public and private sector special interest groups
- Communities
Expertise in Participatory Research

- Working with farmer organizations to address complex issues as water quality, competitiveness, etc.
- Working with rural communities to establish development priorities and improve community welfare and sustainability
Serving the Public Good

- The “Land Grant” mission
  - Economic development and quality of life
- A commitment of university faculty to both domestic and global service
- University faculty have experience in serving as “bridges” between public and private sector groups to address emerging challenges facing agriculture
U.S. University “Brain Trust”

- Superior research capacity
- Superior ability to build capacity
- Leaders in advancing knowledge and technologies

Thus, USAID has the opportunity to access the world’s leading brain trust for strategic planning and programming to achieve its foreign assistance mandate in agriculture, economic growth, natural resource management and food and nutritional security.