

OSU Research in Right Direction

Research and development are recognized as means to progress in business and industry, in science, education and government. They may not always achieve their goals, but the success ratio is high enough to prove that we must keep on trying.

Researchers usually must test dozens, hundreds or thousands of ways of doing things before making selections. The rejected methods are not necessarily wrong ways, but they might be.

The public, for the most part, supports research and does not become upset by the trial-and-error system, or by the cost. Negative reactions often result when the spotlight is turned on the occasional exotic, theoretical, meaningless or seemingly useless research project. This happens periodically.

When that occurs, the public laughs and gripes, while research administrators and scientists hunt for cover. Much more is said about the start of such projects than about results.

That is not the way most research is begun. It definitely is not the method being used to determine the future course of agricultural research at Oklahoma State University. An intensive effort is being carried on to learn what research projects may be wanted and needed by people who are in position to use results.

Dr. Frank Baker, dean of agriculture, and staff have launched a "people oriented system" that is designed to direct funds toward most needed and most favored research projects. It is based upon the premise that since not enough money is available to do all projects, priority should be given to those needed and wanted.

Working through an advisory group called Agricultural Research and Education Association (AREA), consisting of leaders in agriculture, family living and youth work in each county, input is being obtained from every part of the state.

The local AREA advisors consult with others in their communities to compile lists of problems, rating them for high, medium and low priority.

These lists, begun last fall, are now being placed in the hands of 21 task forces for analysis, under direc-

tion of Dr. James A. Whatley at the experiment station. They also will be reviewed by extension specialists directed by Dr. William A. Taggart and co-ordinated with teaching programs by Dr. Randall Jones. A seminar is planned for summer to review recommendations and determine order of priorities for the research program.

The statewide investigation has revealed that needed information already is available to answer many of the problems mentioned and it is being supplied. This releases man-

power and funds to work on unsolved problems.

Most research institutions do not have statewide organizations through which to conduct such an intensive and extensive study for project selection, but it is a good way to do it.

The OSU approach to research is not likely to get into the headlines or on the TV tube with the silliest project of the year. Instead, the results are pretty certain to contribute toward a more productive agriculture and a more prosperous state.