

# Former Agricultural Economics Faculty

## Lionel “Bo” Beaulieu



It was August 1973 when Bo first set foot on the Purdue University campus to begin his graduate studies. Although Bo came to Purdue to pursue a master's and PhD degree in the Department of Sociology, he was one of the first students outside of the Agricultural Economic Department awarded a graduate research assistantship in Ag Econ. Over the next four years, he worked closely with faculty and staff engaged in the department's burgeoning community development research and Extension program. It is the knowledge and experiences he gained during his research assistantship in the department that shaped his passion for community/regional development activities over the course of his 43+ years in academia.

Leaving Purdue with his PhD in hand in 1977, Bo accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Rural Sociology with the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. He remained on the faculty for 20 years, moving up the ranks from assistant professor to full professor during this span of time. Bo left Florida in 1997 to become the director of the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) at Mississippi State University. Working in collaboration with the region's 29 land-grant universities, Bo focused his energies on strengthening the quality and diversity of the Southern land-grant system's community and economic development research and engagement programs. Under his leadership, the SRDC was able to secure sizable funds to launch a myriad of new Extension and research programs. These included (1) *The Stronger Economies Together (SET) Initiative*, a program that guided the development of high quality plans of some 100 regions in 32 states; (2) *The National e-Commerce Extension Initiative* that resulted in the development of multiple curricula products designed to strengthen the adoption and application of digital strategies by communities, businesses, other anchor institution across the nation; (3) *Turning the Tide on Poverty*, an integrated research and engagement project launched in 14 high poverty rural communities in the South; and (4) *The Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics (RIDGE)* that resulted in the funding of 94 research grants involving 181 investigators pursuing social sciences-based research investigations on food insecurity, food deserts, child and adult nutrition programs, and more.

Bo returned to Purdue in early 2013 to lead the Purdue Center for Regional Development and serve as a faculty member in the Department of Agricultural Economics. In early 2014, he accepted an additional role as Assistant Director and Program Leader for the Extension Community Development Program for a period of five years. During his Purdue career, Bo was able capture extramural funds to help launch a variety of valuable and impactful new programs, including the Hometown Collaboration Initiative, the Rural Economic Development Innovation (REDI) initiative, the Rural Opportunity Zones Initiative, and the EDA University Center. He's the recipient of a number of awards, including the Distinguished Rural Sociologist Award from the Rural Sociological Society, Distinguished Career Award from the National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals, and the Community Development Achievement Award from the Community Development Society.

