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Headline: *New Swank chair named*

Subhead: *OFBF, Nationwide help provide funding for position*

by Amy Beth Graves

The nearly year-long search for a new chair of the Swank program at Ohio State University is over.

Mark Partridge, a professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada, has been named the holder of the C. William Swank Chair in Rural and Urban Policy in OSU's College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Partridge, who starts Aug. 1, also is currently the Canada Research Chair in the New Rural Economy, which is a peer-reviewed chair funded by the Canadian federal government.

"I'm really looking forward to working with Farm Bureau and other groups that are interested in rural-urban issues," Partridge said recently from his office in Canada. "I've talked with Bill (Swank) and was most impressed with him."

The chair, which is endowed by \$2.74 million in gifts from Ohio Farm Bureau Federation (OFBF), Nationwide and others, is named after Swank, who worked for OFBF for 40 years and served as its executive vice president from 1968 to 1996 when he retired. Swank has received distinguished service awards from American Farm Bureau and OSU, been inducted into the Ohio Agricultural Hall of Fame and Cooperative Hall of Fame and was a chairman of the Ohio Farmland Preservation Task Force.

During the 1990s, OFBF approached OSU about creating a rural-urban research position and worked to raise money for the endowment. Many county Farm Bureaus donated money for the program, which was started in 1997 with the hiring of Lawrence Libby. A 17-member advisory council helps guide the program's priorities.

"Dr. Partridge has the academic credentials to do a very good job and the people skills to make him very likeable to our members," said Constance Jackson, OFBF's vice president of agricultural ecology, who was a member of the search committee for the new Swank chair. "He has gotten a lot of recognition for his research on land use patterns."

Partridge has doctorate and master's degrees in economics from the University of Illinois and University of Wyoming and has authored more than 60 academic and scholarly papers. He also has consulted with various governments in Canada and the United States and is the co-founder of the Canada-Rural Economy Research Lab (C-RERL).

Partridge said he was attracted to his new position because he would be able to observe first-hand the rural-urban challenges in Ohio over the next five years – the length of the endowment.

"Ohio is a prime example of the challenges created when small and large cities come closer together," he said.

Partridge said his goals are to do "international caliber research" on rural-urban issues and disseminate that research to policymakers and the general public. He also wants to create partnerships on projects that deal with rural-urban issues.

Jackson, who has met Partridge, said Farm Bureau will be working with him to help define the program's agenda.

"This is a prestigious position, and I'm impressed with Dr. Partridge's ideas. He'll be a good fit for this program," she said.