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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Small Towns, Big Ideas: Case Studies of Innovation

CHAPEL HILL, NC – The School of Government, in collaboration with the North Carolina Rural Center, has released *Small Towns, Big Ideas: Case Studies in Small Town Community Economic Development*. The publication is the result of a yearlong study by Will Lambe, associate director of the Community and Economic Development Program at the School of Government. The collection features real stories, from real places that are successfully confronting real challenges similar to those facing small communities everywhere, such as globalization, geographic isolation, urban sprawl, aging populations, and natural disasters.

Small Towns, Big Ideas profiles towns in 18 states ranging in population from 175 (Chimney Rock, N.C.) to 15,000 (Helena-West Helena, Ark.). The case studies are told in an engaging narrative that includes information useful to civic leaders in small communities and policymakers dealing with rural development issues.

According to Lambe, “One of the main themes emerging from these case studies is that successful small towns tend to employ a range of strategies that cut across community and economic development broadly. The case studies allow us to take the strategies apart and to draw conclusions about how and why particular strategies work across a wide range of small communities.”

Lambe is also interim director for the North Carolina Local Government Service Corps, a three-year initiative that will place graduates of the Master of Public Administration programs at UNC-Chapel Hill, UNC-Wilmington, and Appalachian State University into the service of economically distressed rural communities, beginning in 2009. The Service Corps was initiated as a result of observing—during the *Small Towns, Big Ideas* study—the need for economic development and capacity-building assistance in many small communities.

Small Towns, Big Ideas can be downloaded from www.cednc.unc.edu/stbi. The site also features a database of the case studies, searchable by criteria such as community type, location, and population. A hard-copy of the publication can be ordered through the Rural Center’s website at www.ncruralcenter.org.

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