Effecting change in any community requires the ability to understand and respect the many nuances of both terrain and population. Dr. Thomas G. Johnson has been a leader in the field of rural economic development, and has served as director of MU’s Community Policy Analysis Center (CPAC) since its founding, working to apply area-specific solutions to community development goals.

Under his leadership, CPAC has developed widely-recognized programs that include the Show-Me Model, a decision-making tool used to make fiscal and economic decisions; an online resource referred to as a “bio-power calculator,” used by Missouri’s electric cooperatives; and the nationally utilized Socioeconomic Benefits Assessment System, a tool for assessing the local economic impacts of loans, grants and technical assistance programs.

Dr. Johnson has engaged with communities at regional, national and international levels by providing new information and techniques, innovative solutions and training.

One nominator wrote, “Tom is, and has been, one of the creative and driving intellectual forces behind rural economic development at state, national and international levels for three decades…In all of his work, Tom demonstrates an ability to bring together people of different backgrounds to focus on a project and bring it to conclusion. I cannot think of a better person to receive this award.”