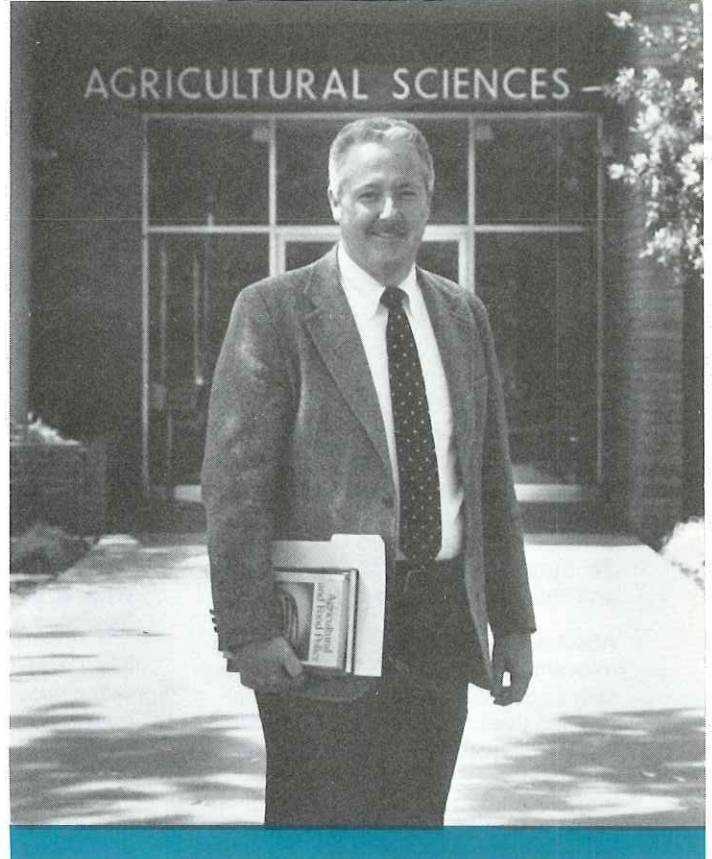


# John R. Shields

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## JOHN R. SHIELDS

Professor of Agricultural Economics



**T**he plaque on the office wall reads, “Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.” And judging from the background of Professor John Shields, he has indeed prepared himself for a varied career.

After earning a B.A. degree in Asian history (with a year's study in Japan) and completing a Secondary Teaching Credential at San Francisco State University, Shields became a Peace Corps volunteer from 1967 to 1970 in Botswana (Africa) and Turkey, teaching English, mathematics, and history. Then, before returning to the U.S.A., he backpacked for seven months through the Middle East, South Asia, and northern Europe with his wife, Elizabeth, whom he had met in Africa, where she was a volunteer science teacher from Northern Ireland. “Those were the most rewarding and adventurous years in our lives,” recalls Shields. “Special lifelong friendships with students and volunteers were forged and an internationally oriented career was born.”

Masters degrees in comparative education and public finance preceded doctoral study in agricultural economics at Michigan State University. “In 1978, just as I was about to accept a foreign service officer appointment with the U.S. State Department's Agency for International Development (AID),” says Shields, “CSU, Fresno approached me about a faculty position. The choice was difficult, but the

chance to come home to California after a long absence was enticing, and a nine-month teaching appointment would allow me to pursue international work during the vacation periods.”

Over the summers of 1981 and 1982, Dr. Shields evaluated technical assistance projects for AID's Africa Bureau. This experience led to his recruitment as a staff member for the President's Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD) from 1983 to 1985. “Being a policy analyst in Washington, D.C., certainly has its fascinations,” reflects Shields, “but I really prefer the cross-cultural excitement of working abroad.”

Professor Shields is now coordinator of the international agricultural program and chair of the school's curriculum committee. As a faculty member in the Department of Agricultural Economics at CSU, Fresno, Shields has taught core courses in economic principles, government policy, and research methods, plus elective courses he initiated in labor-management relations, international trade, export marketing, and economic development. He has served in the Academic Senate and on the university-level committees for budget and undergraduate curriculum, which stimulated him to study higher education administration at the University of Maryland in 1984 to 1985. “Friends kidded me about being an educational junkie,” laughs Shields.

### **What attracted you to the San Joaquin Valley and CSU, Fresno in particular?**

The ethnic diversity, which gives this rural region a cosmopolitan flavor, appealed to my international inclinations. The warm climate and Fresno's proximity to the high Sierras match my love of the outdoors. The university's location in America's richest agricultural county and the agricultural school's academic program and close cooperation with agribusiness industries offer a rich professional opportunity for teaching and service. Moreover, as an alumnus of the CSU system, I believe strongly in its special mission to provide quality undergraduate instruction.

### **What is most satisfying about being a professor at CSU, Fresno?**

Professionally, the unique opportunity to exercise leadership in curriculum development and to work with my colleagues and administrators in designing first-class B.S. and M.S. degree programs in agricultural business has been most gratifying. In 1985, the undergraduate program was recognized as one of only four model programs in the country by the National Agribusiness Education Project. Personally, I get great pleasure from nurturing students to think critically and creatively about problems and issues confronting a dynamic agricultural sector. The labor economist in me enjoys counseling students to map out