

Chris Peterson

Director

Homer Nowlin Chair of Consumer-Responsive Agriculture
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As director, Peterson oversees all aspects of the Product Center's programs—venture development, accelerated growth services, and strategic research. He founded the center in 2003 with the help of many internal and external partners, and he has been its director ever since. With staff and stakeholders, his work focuses on the strategic direction of the center including improvement of existing programming and envisioning new programs and service for the future. He is responsible for the funding strategy of the center and the conceptual framework that guide the center's staff both on campus and in the field. His primary direct work with clients involves facilitating strategic planning for high growth firms.

In addition to his work with Product Center clients, Dr. Peterson has facilitated strategic planning efforts with nearly 100 organizations ranging across corporations, cooperatives, and non-profits. He has served as an outside director on three cooperative boards: St. Paul Bank for Cooperatives, CoBank, and the Michigan Sugar Company. He is currently on the advisory board of Michigan Food and Beverage Council and has served as a board member for the Michigan Small Business Development and Technology Centers. As the Nowlin Chair, Peterson works on sustainability as a critical area of research and outreach. He is known for his work on “wicked problems” and the role of new knowledge and multi-stakeholder engagement necessary to make progress with complex, value-conflicted situations. This work has involved multi-stakeholder groups in Detroit, Sao Paulo, the Netherlands, Nairobi, Johannesburg, Hyderabad, and Singapore. The emergence of a controlled environment agriculture industry has been a major theme in his sustainability and metropolitan agriculture work. Dr. Peterson has his Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from Cornell University and his MBA from the Harvard University Graduate School of Business.

Peterson is well recognized for his expertise. In addition to board memberships and extensive industry engagement, he has received the following awards:

- 2015 Award for Excellence in Extension Outreach, Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics, Michigan State University
- 2014 Outstanding Extension Specialist, Michigan State University Extension
- 2012 Distinguished Alumnus Award, Juniata College
- 2010 Fellow, International Food and Agribusiness Management Association
- 1998 Michigan State University Teacher-Scholar Award
- 1992 Edwin Nourse Doctoral Dissertation Award from the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives.