

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

The following document is provided by the
LAW AND LEGISLATIVE DIGITAL LIBRARY
at the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library
<http://legislature.maine.gov/lawlib>



Reproduced from scanned originals with text recognition applied
(searchable text may contain some errors and/or omissions)



UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

5703 Alumni Hall
Orono, Maine 04469-5703
(207) 581-1547
Telefax: (207) 581-1633

September 3, 1998

Dr. Terrence MacTaggart, Chancellor
University of Maine System
107 Maine Avenue
Bangor ME 04401

Dear Chancellor MacTaggart:

Attached is an update on our progress to date in forming the Board of Agriculture and establishing the Agricultural Research Center recommended by the Task Force on Agriculture. We want to keep you and the Board of Trustees informed of our progress.

We are well along on the appointment of the Board of Agriculture. We believe the Board will be in place by the end of September. We are waiting to hear from some of the agricultural groups that make appointments to the Board. We have also submitted to you, under separate cover, the names of the research faculty we are recommending for the Board of Agriculture. The Board of Trustees must appoint them.

While we agree with the recommendation to form an Agricultural Research Center, we have made less progress in defining its specifics. We feel that faculty input is needed to define the Center. Agricultural extension and research faculty travel all around the State during the summer, so we purposely have chosen to wait until classes began to start the process. We also plan to explicitly link the Center and the Board of Agriculture by asking the Board to serve in an advisory capacity to the Center once it is operating.

If you have any questions about our progress or the process we will be using to form the Center, please let me know. Also, please advise me if Dean Wiersma or his designee should attend the Board of Trustees' meeting in Fort Kent on September 28.

Thanks and best regards.

Sincerely,

John Alexander
Vice President for Academic Affairs
and Provost

pc: B. Wiersma
L. Bartel
S. Reiling



INTERIM REPORT ON THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND THE CHANCELLOR'S TASK FORCE ON AGRICULTURE

Introduction

As the Land-grant University for the State, the University of Maine has a long history of service to the agricultural industry of Maine. Agricultural graduate and undergraduate academic programs reside in the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture, and both the Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension are located on the Orono Campus. As part of their missions, the Experiment Station conducts agricultural-related research while Cooperative Extension provides educational programs and demonstration projects in agriculture.

Several events over the last ten years have had an impact on the University programs related to agriculture. Academic reorganizations of the colleges within the University have resulted in fewer but larger and more diverse colleges. For example, in 1987, agricultural programs were in the College of Applied Sciences and Agriculture, which was a smaller College that focused on agriculture and aquaculture. In contrast, the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture is much larger and includes all forestry programs, the School of Marine Science, all biological sciences and and geology. Furthermore, budget cuts reduced the resources available to support all University programs, including agricultural research and extension activities. This point is best illustrated by the cutbacks at some of the research farms, especially the Witter Center near Campus and Highmoor Farm in Monmouth. These farms are used by both research and extension faculty. Finally, coordination between Cooperative Extension and the Experiment Station has declined over the years as external forces have pushed the two units in different directions. These factors have contributed to a perception that the University is "less equipped to anticipate and respond to industry needs in an effective, systematic manner." (Chancellor's Task Force Report, p. 9)

In the spring of 1998, two separate but related actions were undertaken to address the current situation. First, the Maine Legislature passed L.D. 2004, which established a Board of Agriculture. The purpose of the Board is to "advise the Chancellor of the University of Maine System and the President of the University of Maine at Orono on matters concerning the operation and management of agricultural research conducted by the Maine Agricultural Experiment Station and university farm-based programs, including those of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service". In addition, the Chancellor of the University of Maine System established an Agricultural Task Force to "explore the needs of Maine agriculture and recommend ways in which the University System can refocus programs and resources to best meet those needs". The Task Force completed its report to the Chancellor in May with recommendations of how the University System can better serve Maine Agriculture.

The purpose of this interim report is to outline the University's actions to date related to the Board of Agriculture and the Chancellor's Task Force Report. Actions to be taken in the near future are also identified.

Board of Agriculture

Considerable progress has been made in appointing the Board of Agriculture. L.D. 2004 specifies that the Board of Agriculture shall consist of nineteen members. The membership of the Board, as defined by L.D. 2004, is shown below along with the status of the appointment of each of the members.

A designee of the President of the University of Maine; a person has been recommended to President Hoff to fill this position.

A designee of the Chancellor of the University of Maine System; a person has been recommended to Chancellor MacTaggart to fill this position.

The Commissioner of the Maine Department of Agriculture; Commissioner will serve.

The President of the Maine Farm Bureau; current president will serve.

The President of the Agricultural Council of Maine; current president will serve.

Eight members representing the agricultural industry, one person designated by each of the following:

Maine Potato Board
Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine
Maine State Pomological Society
Maine Vegetable and Small Fruit Growers Association
Maine Dairy Industry Association
Maine Landscape and Nursery Association
Maine State Florists and Growers Association
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

All eight groups have been contacted and five of them have selected the person to represent them on the Board. The other three will make their appointments by mid-September.

Two members of the joint standing committee of Legislature having jurisdiction over agricultural matters—one appointed by the President of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker of the House;

One farmer with livestock experience in an area other than dairy, chosen by the Governor from a list of three names submitted by a statewide beef and sheep producers association; three names have been submitted to the Governor.

Two research faculty members associated with agricultural research at the University of Maine, appointed by the Board of Trustees of the UMS; two faculty have been recommended to Chancellor MacTaggart to fill these positions.

The Director of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension; Director will serve.

It is our intention to have the Board of Agriculture fully formed by the end of September and to have the first meeting of the Board in October.

Chancellor's Task Force Report

While the Chancellor's Agricultural Task Force Report compliments the University of Maine System for the prominent role it has played in agriculture, it also notes that recent events have reduced the ability of the University to "anticipate and respond to industry needs" in a timely and systematic way.

To rectify the problem, the Task Force recommends that a School or Center for Agricultural Sciences be established on the Orono campus. The School or Center would accomplish three goals: create a unified, highly visible agricultural entity within the UM System; ensure responsiveness to the needs of Maine agriculture; and ensure coordination and collaboration between the University's academic programs, Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension.

Although the Task Force Report also contains other recommendations, we believe that the Center is the most important concept to address because it provides the vehicle through which the other recommendations can be addressed. For example, most of the "Recommendations for Continuing Dialogue" contained on page ten of the Report can be addressed once the Center is operational.

Preliminary discussions between the Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension have been held and we agree that a center is a positive recommendation. We also believe that two of the key issues that must be addressed by this new unit is to improve the level of cooperation and collaboration between Cooperative Extension and the Experiment Station, and to improve the level of communication between the University and the industry. Because a "school" is more closely associated with academic programs rather than extension and research activities, we believe that a "center" is a more appropriate concept. We are currently referring to this as the Agricultural Research Center.

The Task Force also offers five design elements that should be considered when organizing the Center. Each of them is addressed below.

The Center should be part of the existing College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture. We agree with this recommendation. It reduces the need for new administrative staff and allows the Center to more effectively utilize the resources of the College and the Experiment Station. We want to minimize bureaucratic structure by utilizing existing personnel and resources as much as possible.

A Director should be appointed to administer the Center, and the Director should report directly to the Dean of the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture. Steve Reiling has been appointed Associate Director of the Experiment Station. He will also be Director of the new Center once it is formed. He will report to the Dean of the College.

The Center should join together a core group of full-time University of Maine Faculty. All College/Experiment Station faculty who conduct agricultural research will

be invited and encouraged to become part of the Center. Furthermore, all statewide agricultural-related Extension faculty also will be invited to join the Center. Selected County Extension staff may also join. The Task Force also suggests that the Center draw upon the faculty and resources from other System campuses. Although we have no philosophical objection to this recommendation, we have not investigated how this would be accomplished.

The Center will require start-up funds, faculty incentives and a dynamic leader to move it from concept to reality; while we agree with this design element, we have not addressed budget or faculty incentive plans at this point. However, potential base R&D funding increases in the University budget should be of great help.

Part of the budgets of the College, Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension should be allocated to fund the Center and spending decisions should be made by the Center Director with advice from the agricultural community; This is a logical suggestion; the Center can not operate without funding provided by the Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension. These units cover all or part of the salaries of the Experiment Station and Extension faculty. However, initially at least, the agricultural-related academic programs will continue to reside in the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture. Hence, College funds will not be used to fund the Center. However, Experiment Station funds can and will be used to support the Agricultural Research Center. While federal regulations require the experiment station Directors' final approval this requirement is met by having the Center Director report to the Dean/Director. The inclusion of extension resources in this milieu, which is very important to attaining a seamless delivery of services from the Agricultural Research Center to our constituencies, is more difficult. Negotiations to solve this are currently underway.

In summary, we generally agree with the suggestions offered by the Task Force regarding the Center. We also believe that the Board of Agriculture has an important role to play in the Center. We plan to ask the Board to serve in an advisory capacity to the Center and to provide input in the design of the Center.

Future Actions

With respect to the Board of Agriculture, we will continue to work with the groups that need to appoint members to the Board to insure that it is formed by the end of September.

Several steps will be taken to form the Center for Agricultural Research. Given the nature of university governance, faculty input is crucial to the design and development of the Center. Because both Experiment Station and Extension Faculty spend most of their time working on research and extension activities off campus during the summer, we purposely postponed seeking faculty input until September. Currently, input is being sought from the Chairs of the academic departments that have faculty who work on agricultural issues. Discussions are also currently underway among Extension specialists who work in agriculture. Once these discussions are completed, a committee comprised of Experiment Station and Extension faculty will be formed to assist in developing the specifics for the Center.

Discussions will also continue between Cooperative Extension and the Experiment Station to improve coordination and to define the boundaries within which the Center will operate. Based on discussions to date, a committee has been established to determine whether split appointments (faculty who have formal appointments in both the Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension) would be beneficial to both units. Faculty with split appointments would have the dual responsibility to conduct research and provide extension education programs in their regular work assignments.

The Board of Agriculture will be informed of the status of the planning process for the Center for Agricultural Research at the October Meeting. Their input will be considered before the Center concept is finalized.

Finally, we hope to have the final plan for the Center prepared in time for the Board of Trustees to consider at the November meeting.