

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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February 24, 2009

Senator John Nutting
Representative Wendy Pieh
Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
115 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0115

Dear Senator Nutting, Representative Pieh, and members of the Committee,

As Chair and Vice Chair of the Board of Agriculture, it our pleasure to provide the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry an annual report on the Board's progress and activities for the past year. The Board of Agriculture, as you know, was established in 1998 to provide input from Maine's agricultural community into the research and extension programs of the University of Maine including the programs in the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture, the Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, and the research farms operated by the Experiment Station and College. The College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture also informs the Board and requests input on its agricultural teaching programs.

We are in a dynamic period for University programs with both opportunities and challenges for agriculture, and the Board has strived to remain fully informed and well positioned to provide input as the University addresses budget challenges and responds to new opportunities for research and development for Maine agriculture.

The Board met at the State House in April 2008 to provide an opportunity for legislative members to attend the meeting or join us for lunch. Both the meeting and the luncheon were well attended by State legislators and House and Senate staff. The venue provided an excellent opportunity to discuss the initiatives and bills introduced into the legislature and their relevance to agriculture R&D with Governor Baldacci and many of our State legislators. The feedback on the meeting was very positive, so we plan to have the Spring 2009 meeting at the State House again.

The focus of the April meeting was a discussion of issues related to the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the biennium budget, the Governor's plans to consolidate key areas within State Government, the Maine Technology Institute Bond Program and its relevance to agriculture R&D, and the bond proposals submitted by the University of Maine. Invited guests included Governor John Baldacci; Representative Emily Cain; Elizabeth Crabtree, Manager, Maine Technology Asset Fund; Tim Glidden, Director, Lands for Maine's Future; and Jake Ward, UMaine Assistant Vice President, Research, Economic Development and Governmental Relations.

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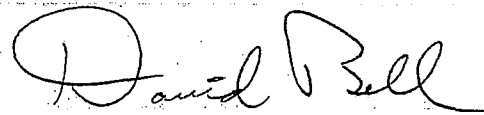
At the April meeting the Board also was presented updates on the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture and University of Maine Cooperative Extension research and extension programs and on the impacts of FY08 and FY09 University budget reductions. As in FY08, pending retirements and resignations for FY09 will present challenges for maintaining faculty positions critical to Maine's agricultural sectors given expected budget reductions.

Because of inclement weather the December 2008 meeting was rescheduled to January 2009.

The Board recognizes that agriculture in Maine will be facing many challenges in the future and we will all need to work together to ensure all of our resources are being utilized to meet those challenges. We welcome your active participation with the Board in helping to direct the future role of agriculture in the University.

Sincerely,


Donald Flannery, Chair
Board of Agriculture


David Bell, Vice Chair
Board of Agriculture

C: Robert A. Kennedy, President
University of Maine System Board of Trustees