

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

Annual Report to Maine State Legislature

January 31, 2017

Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
c/o Legislative Information
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

CC: Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Dear Senator Davis, Representative Dunphy and Distinguished Committee Members;

As Chair and Co-Vice Chairs of the Board of Agriculture, it is our pleasure to provide the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry this 2016 annual report on the Board of Agriculture's progress and activities. The Board was established by the Legislature in 1997 to provide input and guidance from Maine's agricultural community into the agricultural research and Extension programs at the University of Maine. The Board's primary interaction is with the Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station (MAFES) in the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension. In the last few years the Board has also directly communicated on a regular basis with the Chancellor of the University Maine System (UMS) and the President of the University.

In 2016 the BOA continued its focus of the last three years on Agricultural, Aquaculture, and Value Added Food faculty capacity within MAFES and Extension at the University of Maine. UMaine is the key component of Research and Development capacity of Maine's Food Production Economy. The Experiment Station is largely the research component and Extension is largely the development component; however the research and development work is a continuum so there is functional overlap.

The key to having a successful research and Extension (development) effort is having a strong faculty and related professionals that have the expertise and creative capacity to assist food producers in addressing their challenges and business opportunities. A core strength of Maine agriculture is its diversity providing more economic opportunity for the state and insulating the food sector as a whole to cyclical business challenges of the individual parts. While this is an economic strength for Maine, it is a challenge for the University in that multiple faculty disciplines are needed to adequately support the different sectors.

Because of the contractions in the University budget beginning in the late 1970's, by the mid-1990 the point of critical mass in agricultural and food faculty capacity had been reached. While the BOA has been focused on faculty capacity since its inception, it has renewed its focus on this key component of R+D capacity the last three years with the budget challenges faced by the University of Maine System. Since 2014 the Board's three key priorities have been:

1. To retain key agricultural, aquaculture, and value added food faculty positions.
2. Work with the University to fill critical positions where expertise is lacking or demand exceeds faculty capacity.
3. Work with the University to have a transition program for long term faculty prior to their retirement such that their decades of industry knowledge can be successfully passed on to the new faculty member.

The Board met twice in 2016 with University and University of Maine System leadership with briefings both on the immediacy of current research and Extension program budgets as well as focusing on the longer term direction and support for agricultural R+D programs. Board leadership also communicated Board priorities directly to the Chancellor of the University of Maine System and the President of the University of Maine.

Since the Board's renewed faculty capacity focused effort began three years ago, 7 (6 in 2016) agriculturally related faculty positions have been refilled or filled and 6 positions are anticipated to be filled in 2017. Additionally, there are anticipated retirements of long term faculty members for which Extension is initiating searches in the coming year in order to implement transitions of long term faculty expertise. The Board appreciates the efforts of University leadership to meet these priority R+D faculty capacity needs as the System and University work to focus their resources on the core needs of students and the Maine economy.

In recent years the BOA has also been monitoring the System's efforts to implement a performance based budgeting system in support of the individual campus budgets. The Board supports a budget and financial system that rewards programs and campuses for superior performance in meeting their missions and budgets. However, the Board is concerned the current system does not fairly measure each of the campuses performance based on their mission and the cost to implement that mission. Specifically, the University of Maine has a tri-part mission of teaching, research, and formal public outreach such as Cooperative Extension. The University of Maine is the largest research institution in the state. All three missions need to be factored into measuring the performance and financial efficiency of the University of Maine.

The Board has great interest in System leadership (staff and Trustees) efforts to replace the current budget system such that metrics used to measure campus mission, output, and financial efficiencies fairly accounts for all related efforts and costs within the One University initiative. Even within the same institution, the cost of a credit hour of a purely classroom

based course is a lot less than a course with a laboratory component. In addition, Research and Development programs and activities have their own set of costs. The Board supports the goal of fairly measuring productivity and costs of related activities and developing incentives for performance within the University System.

The agricultural community is acutely aware of limited financial resources. We understand the need for wise investments in Research and Development (Cooperative Extension) and teaching within the University of Maine System. We appreciate the recent efforts of University leadership to address key faculty capacity needs. We will continue to work with University leadership to support core Agriculture, Aquaculture, and Food Research and Extension capacity.

We appreciate the resources the Legislature appropriates in support of Agricultural Research and Development through the University of Maine to protect and grow Maine's Food Economy.

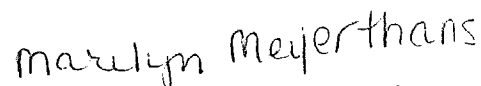
Sincerely,



David K. Bell
Chair



Don Marean
Co-Vice Chair



Marilyn Meyerhans (AHE)
Co-Vice Chair