

Dean Hood Looks For Innovation At PSU

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State College earlier this year, it was the first we lived in town since we've been married. That was not an easy decision for us to make. But given my schedule it just made sense. As you know, she travels with me a great deal. We just didn't want to spend all of our time trying to take care of the back 40.

Q. I know you have some concern that the University has become too dependent on federal funds. Would you comment on this and also give some possible solutions?

A. That certainly is of major concern. And I have set one of my major goals to change that situation. In days when those funds were plentiful, this wasn't a bad thing to be dependent upon. Even so, over the last four or five years, we have had at best level funding from the federal government while the University's costs have been increasing. What's likely to happen in the future is that the level of funding will decline. We all know the President proposed a 59 percent cut in funding for Cooperative Extension. We have turned that proposal around because people sent letters to the Office of Management and Budget at the rate of 20,000 per week saying the cut was a bad idea. OMB never had an issue that generated that kind of response.

Q. Where will the new funds come from?

A. There has been a change in the mentality in Washington to shift more of the responsibilities to the state and to the private sector. We are hoping the state legislature will recognize the need and allocate \$5 million for ag research and Extension. It's a very important prospect to those who think

Penn State is important to agriculture and related industries in this state.

Q. In many respects the physical facilities at Penn State have not kept pace with the up-to-date research projects that have been generated at the University. How far along are your building plans?

A. That's certainly true. We are operating in facilities that are very old fashioned. For example, our poultry research program is conducted in facilities that are of 1930 vintage. You can't do good research or good Extension programming when people see the facilities are the same as their fathers and grandfathers operated in. We must also upgrade our dairy research facility and build a new agronomy facility. We have a major building program that must be done. The good news is that we have been able to get \$13 million in the Capital Facilities Bill that was approved and signed by the Governor this past spring. And we have the prospect of getting more to match a similar appropriation in the 1985 Farm Bill. This farm bill appropriated \$20 million to upgrade facilities of ag universities around the country.

Q. I'm interested in a statement you made recently where you said we need more cooperation between the ag colleges. I know there has been some friction between colleges in the past. It is probably a barrier we need to break down.

A. I do think we do, Everrett, because we are in an era where we have inadequate resources to do everything. So we have to look at it in an innovative and perhaps a fresh way and think how we can most effectively utilize those resources to address the really

important issues. I think opportunities exist for cooperation in research and in Extension and probably in the area of training students. There is no logic, I believe, for adjacent states like New York, Ohio, Maryland and Pennsylvania to have research and Extension programs in a large way focusing on the same issues. I think we have got to look at what we do and make sure we are doing it very well. And also accept the fact that we are not going to be able to do some things. It's inconceivable to me that adjacent states feel they must have one of each when it comes to specialists on their college faculties. For example, we have two grape programs in New York and Pennsylvania. The labs are located 25 miles from each other in the western part of the states and there is virtually no cooperative effort between these two activities. In addition, we need to look at the way we have been doing Extension. Not that we have been doing it bad. But because of tight budgets, we must be innovative and share resources.

Q. What are some of the innovations Extension can incorporate into their program?

A. I think multi-county or regional efforts in cooperative Extension is a trend we will move to. In addition, we are moving away from as much one on one as we have had in the past. The reason we are able to move away from this is because of the advance we've made in communications. With the statewide computer network, other states look at our program with envy. We are unique with our computer system between county agents office. Let's put a computer in every county office.

We currently have about 250 units across the state. And I would expect in 10 years you will be tied into that network on your own farm. It will become a major way of dispensing information about growing crops, disease problems, how to deal with weeds and marketing forecastings. Home economics, family living and 4-H programs will also be included. It's going to become a tremendously viable communication network. Also video tapes will become a major way to disseminate information. Thirty percent of the households in this country have video capabilities. And it's estimated that in two years 60 percent of the households will have them. That's something everybody will have access to. And video tapes are inexpensive. And it's a great teaching tool. That's what Extension is—teaching.

Q. One of the notable changes in the Extension programs comes in the area of urban type education. Many production farmers think in light of the funding problems for Extension these urban city-type programs should be cut so we can have Extension address more time to agriculture itself. Is this the area we cut out first if funding is not available?

A. That is a very good question and one that there is not a terrible simple answer to. If you think about Extension as an education process (which I believe it is), and if you think about the fact that we are a land grant institution in Pennsylvania, I believe we have the responsibility to educate in whatever appropriate ways possible to all people in the commonwealth. If you are in production agriculture, that

education takes the traditional form of cooperative Extension. I think in the urban and suburban settings we have probably not had as effective or as active a program as we need to have in Extension. So I think Extension has a very important prominent roll to play in the nonrural settings. I often say that Extension has the responsibility to serve all 12 million people in Pennsylvania. But it's going to be in different ways. Because obviously we have a very different population density in those urban and suburban areas.

One of the exciting activities that we have seen in Philadelphia is a very rapidly developing and effective 4-H program. This is in Philadelphia County. Normally you think of 4-H as being related to the rural sector. But we got Extension staff down there that is very active and innovative. We do have and will continue to have some very good 4-H efforts. It ties to the urban gardening question. It ties to producing food. It ties to other agricultural issues. A term that is often used, which I think I am becoming more and more comfortable with, is urban agriculture. After all if you've got ornamental plantings around your house in a suburban or urban setting, it's the same kind of problems that the fellow that is producing corn in Lancaster County has in terms of disease, insects, weeds, nutritional problems and so on. Different plants. Slightly different environment. But those are agricultural problems. And I think we have a responsibility to work with them. I know in this my opinion is not a popular one with

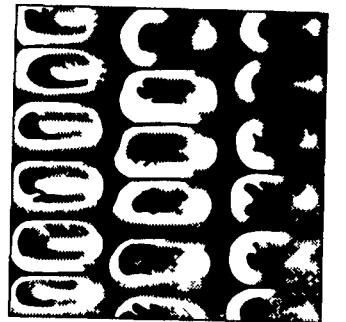
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