

Penn State's New Ag Curriculum Discussed At BCCA Meeting

READING (Berks Co.)— The Berks County Cattlemen's Association (BCCA) held its quarterly information meeting on Saturday, April 21, 1990, at Penn State Berks Campus' Janssen Conference Center.

Following a brief directors meeting, the agenda included an update by Campus Executive Officer Dr. Fred Gaige and Dr. David Sanford, assistant professor of horticulture at the university, on the planned agricultural curriculum which will be offered at this local Penn State branch.

Dr. Gaige noted that Penn State plans a food science and horticulture emphasis on courses offered at this location. He noted the location at Berks Campus is ideally suited for College of Agriculture students because of its proximity to the city of Reading and surrounding rural Berks County, with its productive and diverse agriculture.

Gaige noted today's Penn State agriculture students are predominantly from non-farm backgrounds. Eighty percent of the ag students come from urban or suburban areas. He quickly added that those students who come to Penn State from the farm will benefit from the Berks Campus' smaller, more intimate class size.

Gaige said he is hopeful the new agriculture opportunities at the Berks Campus, which will allow more "hands-on" experience earlier in each student's college career, will help to stop the migration of Pennsylvania stu-

dents to other agricultural schools.

Gaige asked for the local agricultural community to support Penn State in its effort to provide this opportunity for students to study agriculture at Berks. He noted the Capital Campaign for building student housing, expanding present lecture facilities and laboratories, etc., has come close to reaching its \$2 million goal. The last \$100,000 is the hardest to achieve, he said.

Sanford pointed out Penn State Berks' efforts to offer the same courses by 1992 that would be taken during the first two years at University Park for any student studying agriculture. Additional staffing will focus on professors who can teach agronomy, animal science, soil science, and other subjects. According to Sanford, the school will be concentrating on horticulture and food science majors, since these areas are currently in demand. There are 5 to 10 job opportunities per graduate, he noted.

Along with offering courses for bachelor degrees in agriculture, Sanford said the university is contemplating offering associate degrees and certificate programs in agriculture.

"Here at Berks Campus, we are taking the pressure off University Park in horticulture and food science majors since this represents

the College of Agriculture's largest enrollment," said Gaige. "We have chosen to put the emphasis on ag business rather than ag production, which differs from what former dean of the college Sam Smith had envisioned five years ago when the university began serious discussions of an expanded agriculture curriculum at Berks Campus."

Dr. Smith left Penn State in 1985 to become president of Washington State University. Eventually, Dr. Lamartine Hood assumed the dean's position at the college, and realized the 1987 purchase of the farm adjacent to the Penn State Berks Campus.

The working-farm concept envisioned by Smith for the Berks Campus has since been rerouted to a program that offers more agribusiness, and probably will never offer a four-year agricultural degree. Gaige explained it would be cost prohibitive to try to duplicate the experts on staff at the main campus in order to provide the requirements of a four-year degree.

Next on the agenda was Packers and Stockyards Administrations' Durwood Helms of Lancaster. Helms, who was raised on a 375-acre southeast Alabama livestock farm, became supervisor of the Lancaster region for this branch of the United States



The Berks County Cattlemen's Association quarterly information meeting featured an update on the Penn State Berks Campus agricultural curriculum by Dr. Fred Gaige, campus executive officer, left, and Dr. Dave Sanford, assistant professor of horticulture, seated right. Durwood Helms, regional supervisor of the USDA Packers and Stockyards Administration, seated center, provided information on livestock sellers' rights to prompt and fair payment.

Department of Agriculture in 1987. He explained the primary mission of P & S is to assure fair competition through its investigative and law enforcement charge. The agency was created by the federal government in 1921 in order to break up a monopoly of meat packers who were controll-

ing market prices for meat and livestock.

Helms noted there are 12 regional offices of P & S Administration nationwide, with between 185 and 190 employees. His Lancaster region covers nine northeast states with seven field investigators to

(Turn to Page D11)

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