

# Farm And Agribusiness Leaders Present Views On Dean Search

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.)—About 50 people representing the agriculture and agribusiness community, along with members of the Dean Search Committee appointed by the Provost, gathered on campus on November 16. Some came to make formal presentations about the issues they see facing the next Dean, and to offer support from their industry groups to address those issues. Some came just to listen to the comments, silently expressing their interest in the future leadership of the College. Those on the Search Committee and those on the advisory committee to the search process came to hear the concerns of the College's constituents, hopefully to translate those comments into criteria they might use when considering applicants for the position.

There were 16 formal presentations, plus nine others who had submitted comments but were unable to attend. Comments covered a wide variety of issues, from those encouraging more College attention to smaller commodity interests to requests for more extension support in production agriculture and family farm concerns. Many concentrated the College's past support and stressed the importance of continuing and increasing support in the future. There were a number of comments that underscored the importance of the College as an advocate for Pennsylvania agriculture and agribusiness, stressing the vital leadership that is needed in the Dean and the College. The need for the external community to be involved in the College's planning was clear, as was the hope for more partnerships between the College and industry to help improve profitability in agriculture.

The meeting was sponsored by the Penn State Agricultural Council at the suggestion of Ag Trustee Dave Morrow to provide that group's Board of Directors with collective input to submit to the University President, the Provost, the Search Committee, and the Advisory Committee. Along with Dr. Morrow, other Ag Trustees Boyd Wolff, Sen. Roger Madigan, Guy Donaldson and Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brosius were at the meeting.

## PENN STATE AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL

"Looking Toward the Future—An Agricultural and Agribusiness View"

On Thursday, November 16, 1995, the Penn State Agricultural Council convened a meeting at the Penn State Scenic Center for the purpose of soliciting input from agricultural and agribusiness leaders about the issues and challenges that will face the next Dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences.

The Council's Board of Directors received prepared comments from those who responded to an open invitation to participate, and also from those unable to attend who submitted written comments. A list of presenters is attached to this document.

Following is the Board's summary of the major themes from the meeting, as well as more specific issues and observations made by the participants.

The participants, and therefore the comments, did not reflect the thoughts and opinions of the entire food system community. However, there were several broad issues that might be seen as relevant to the large agricultural and agribusiness clientele impacted by this College. The following are points from the meeting, as well as the Board's impressions of the challenges facing the next Dean:

- The future of Penn State Cooperative Extension is of major concern. There are hopes to give more emphasis to extension, to have more trainers in this group who can train the clientele, to have more direct contact with production agriculture at the farm, to be more production-agriculture oriented, and to reinforce the value of extension to the entire farming family.
- There is wide support to continue the three thrusts of the College—research, education and extension.
- There is a hope to focus more of the College's attention on the needs of production agriculture.
- As the challenge of producing and processing agricultural products becomes more competitive, there will be a need to bring together all the segments of the "food system" in production and processing to meet these challenges for everyone's benefit.
- There are those in the agribusiness community who want to produce commodities in the traditional way, and those who are interested in opportunities to produce different products or value-added products, based on what the market wants. These two groups are sometimes in conflict.
- Outreach efforts of the College need to be expanded to all segments of the agricultural and related interests served by the College.
- The public is not well-informed about agriculture, and more attention from the agricultural community, as well as the College, is needed to improve their understanding.
- Profitability in all areas of agribusiness is a primary focus and needs full College support.
- Because of continually declining resources, the College may need to narrow its focus and establish priorities based on cost-benefit analysis.
- There is a need for the public to recognize that "agriculture" is a cultural part of society—with a certain lifestyle, value system, etc.—that makes important contributions to rural America.

- It will be vital to the agribusiness community that the College be able to integrate its programs and interact effectively with producers, processors, etc., as they are faced with the changes in the way they do business.
- The agricultural and related community is looking for leadership and advocacy. They want more visibility in the University, as well as in the external policy arena (State legislature, etc.). While this may not be the College's role, there may be a need to actively facilitate the agricultural community in developing its own leadership and ability to advocate for itself.
- The history and tradition of the past must be preserved, but we must also look to the present and the future. This is an industry in transition. There will be a need to bridge from the past standards to more progressive approaches to production and processing.
- The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has a highly diverse agriculture. The number of agricultural commodities produced here present more complex challenges to this College and its Dean than states with fewer commodity interests.
- All groups in the agricultural and related community want a dialogue with the College, and they want involvement in how the College determines its programs and priorities.
- There is a major challenge in helping agriculture preserve the environment, as well as helping everyone preserve natural resources and still maintain profitability.
- The stature this College commands in the land-grant university community must be maintained to provide the opportunities for leadership in policy roles.
- Supporting external advocacy groups—alumni, industry, etc.—is a good investment. These external supporters are really a part of this College's community.
- Because Pennsylvania's agricultural community tends to be segmented and not unified in its interests, there are complex expectations for this College in being responsive to the diverse requests for assistance and support.
- Diversity in the breadth of the food and fiber system in Pennsylvania is both a strength and a challenge.

## PERSONAL LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

In addition to the major issues identified in the meeting, there were several points relating to the specific characteristics of the Dean's position that are useful to list:

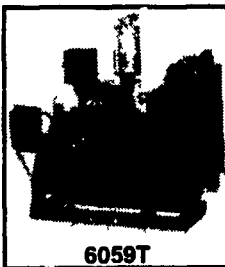
- The Dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences, because of the vast, diverse, external clientele base, has much more complex responsibilities than the Deans of other colleges in the University system.
- All people served by the College need an understanding of the major political responsibilities of the Dean, both within the University and in the legislative communities at all levels.
- The Dean will have to commit to an ambitious agenda, visiting and understanding every region of the state, as well as understanding the unique needs and diverse agricultural production challenges of Pennsylvania.
- The Dean needs to be aware of the large number of supportive constituencies available to this College and enlist their help as partners with Penn State.
- The Dean will need to help bring about changes affecting capital improvements to the College's facilities.
- Our Dean will need compassion, understanding, a very strong vision of agriculture, and the very clear determination and common sense to lead us into the future.
- The Dean must be skilled in articulating the mission of the College, both internally and to the agricultural and non-agricultural public. He needs to be a visible symbol—building on the strengths of the past while providing the vision for the 21st century.
- The Dean must be willing to drive change.

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