

PSU President Spanier Unveils New Direction For Extension

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of the academic colleges will be changed to reflect the broadened mission that includes extension liaison and coordination of each college. The Academic Council for Continuing and Distance Education will now be called the Coordinating Council of Outreach and Cooperative Extension. And regional councils will be formed in addition to the county directors who now operate at the local extension offices.

This new plan is intended to gain University-wide support for extension and enhance collaboration between extension and the other academic units within the Penn State," Spanier said. "In addition, it will create a more integrated coordinated state-wide presence for Penn State outreach overall. Ultimately it will improve extension's capacity to provide for the needs of the state. Social issues can be addressed, and the state's access to Penn State's knowledge resources will be increased."

Ted Alter, interim dean, spoke at the government luncheon and to

the alumni luncheon Tuesday. Alter's College report included what he called wonderful news. "We are fortunate and grateful that the appropriations by the Commonwealth legislature increased funding for both Penn State's research and extension budgets by 11.4 percent," Alter said. "Because of this increase, I am able to report that as of last Thursday, I have lifted the hiring freeze that has



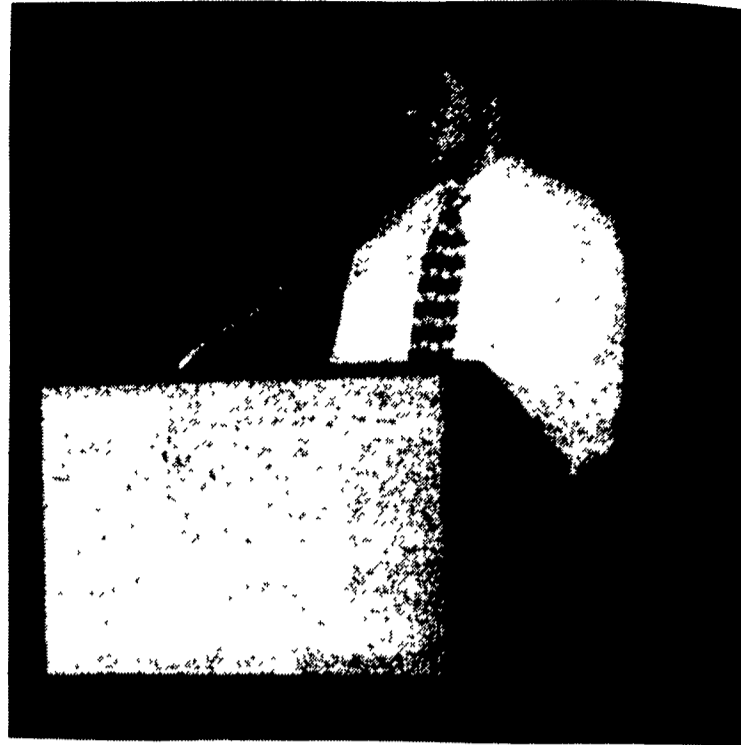
Ted Alter

been in effect for the last several years."

Alter said the present \$20 million in grant awards is nearly at an all-time high. Extension efforts in education covering critical areas such as profitable farming and agribusiness, strengthening family and community life, sustaining our natural resource base, and enabling people to reach better decisions in public policy issues.

Also making a guest appearance was U.S. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Richard Rominger. He flew in to Ag Progress Days by helicopter, and his remarks in both a special interview and at the government luncheon are covered at another place in this issue of *Lancaster Farming*.

Many state and local government officials usually attend the annual government luncheon at Ag Progress Days. This year the crowd was enlarged by many others within the Penn State system who were anticipating President Spanier's outline for Penn State Extension Service's new direction.



Graham Spanier

USDA Deputy Secretary Visits Ag Progress Days

VERNON ACHENBACH JR.
Lancaster Farming Staff

ROCKSPRING (Centre Co.) — Though limited in time, Richard Rominger, the deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, visited Penn State's Ag Progress Days activities this week, touring the site and speaking at the event's annual government and industry day luncheon.

While he addressed the body attending the luncheon and discussed the new farm bill and changes affecting agriculture, he said during a brief interview that the role of the agency will be to continue research and other efforts to assure food quality and leading production technology, and it is to also to continue coordination and oversight of some conservation programs.

He said the agency is also to focus on doing what it can to support the strength of the infrastructure that allows crops and livestock to be moved to market, including consistent and reliable exports.

Though Rominger didn't discuss issues in depth, the gist of his comments were that the United States consumer can be expected to pay up to 3 percent more for food, and that farmer income should increase.

The future of the independent family farmer under the direction of the current governmental outlook is to be even more his own making, and it includes taking on more risk of failure without government bailout help.

He said that while the USDA is to work closely with the U.S. Justice Department to ensure that collusion and too few companies are created through mergers that prevent competition, the independent family farmer will probably be more a niche farmer and perhaps produce for local markets, or be part time farmers.

"I think overall, we've got an optimistic outlook for agriculture and family farmers in this country," Rominger said.

"Even though we've seen the commodity program payments from the federal government declining over the years and they will continue to decline, we do have a situation now — especially with the grains and soybeans — with a better balance of supply and demand. We don't have the

surpluses that we had in past years that held prices down.

"We do have some good prices for those commodities. In fact, most things except cattle have pretty good prices right now," he said.

"So, I think the long-term outlook for agriculture is good. We've got some programs in the new Farm Bill to assist farmers, especially family farmers in coping with some of the problems they face.

"We've got some good environmental programs in the new farm bill that will provide cost-share assistance and technical assistance for addressing some of the problems on farms, whether they are livestock waste disposal, pest management ... we have some good new programs that will be helpful.

"We've also got some good rural development programs to help small rural communities. We have to have that infrastructure out there if we are going to continue to have a lot of family farms in this country. Those small communities have to survive too," he said.

"And we've got a good research program working in conjunction with land-grant universities like Penn State so we can keep the knowledge level and technology level of agriculture up right on the forefront so our farmers will have the latest technology to be able to compete worldwide, because we do have a global market these days and we have to be able to compete with other countries and their agricultural production.

"All-in-all, I think the outlook is optimistic. It doesn't mean that we're not going to have problems and we're not going to have tough times for farmers, because this Farm Bill also puts more of the risk on farmers as far as pricing goes, because we don't have the big commodity stabilization programs that we used to have in farm policy.

"Now, there could be more fluctuation in commodity prices based on what's taking place in the market on the supply and demand situation, so it does make it more important that farmers look at all the ways they can to manage this additional risk and certainly crop insurance plays a big part in that.

"So, farmers need to pay close



Richard Rominger, U.S. deputy secretary of agriculture, right, visited the Pennsylvania House Ag Committee meeting held at Ag Progress Days Wednesday. With Rominger are from left, Charles Brosius, Pennsylvania ag secretary, and Ray Bunt, chairman of the House ag committee.

attention to their needs as far as crop insurance goes."

Rominger said that the USDA will also be working as a watchdog to try to ensure that global and national corporations don't take over food production and control consumer prices and farmer prices.

"We do have concerns about where we are going in concentrations in all segments of agriculture," he said. "It's really come to the forefront most recently in the livestock industry, partly because of the fact that we have low cattle prices and when you have low prices of a commodity, you look around to see what's happening that might be causing those low prices."

He said the department has been concerned with the concentration of livestock slaughtering operations in the United States.

Those in the industry blame federal regulations, high labor costs, and consolidation of retail opportunities for eliminating the diversity in that arena.

"There is a lot of concern in livestock slaughter concentration," he said.

"We've had a study by a committee of farmers and other participants in that industry looking at that. We've come out with some proposals on what we're going to do to try to alleviate that situation

with more price reporting, better price reporting, more timely price reporting, so at least the farmer will know what other people are paying for livestock.

"That was a first step. We'll have some more recommendations coming out later on, on ways that we can improve the enforcement that we have authorized.

"We've also been working with the Justice Department because they have authority over anti-trust activities, that the combination or consolidations that (appear as though they) are going to be anti-competitive, the Justice Department will be involved, so we're working closely with them.

"There has been a consolidation of railroads, just like there has been in other industries," he said. "The latest proposed merger of railroads taking place west of the Mississippi River is one that we in the Department of Agriculture opposed because we thought it would lessen the competition and increase costs of transportation for farmers in the West.

"We are concerned about rail service, barge service and making sure we do have the infrastructure to move the crops in this country.

"That's one the strengths that we've had in this country com-

pared to a lot of other counties in the world where they don't have the infrastructure to move crops around their country or move their crops to an export facilities," he said.

"We do have that. We want to make sure we keep those facilities and they have to be competitively priced.

"Those industries are looking for efficiencies too, and we want to have those efficiencies, but not get to the point where we don't have the infrastructure and enough capacity to move our products.

"We look for states like Pennsylvania to continue to be important producers and exporters," he said. "Pennsylvania has been an important exporter of agricultural products."

He said that for 35 years United State agricultural world trade has been the positive aspect of world trade. He said the USDA will continue to work to reduce trade barriers.

"I can see Pa. farmers participating in that. There will be more emphasis, I think, on farmers working together, whether it's through cooperatives or other arrangements so that they can be as efficient in processing and moving their products."