

# Student Recruitment Theme Of Penn State Ag Council Meeting

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STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — "One of the greatest challenges facing us is ensuring a pipeline of students coming into the program. The leadership we have tomorrow and the years ahead depends on the flow of students from this institution and others," said Robert Steele, dean of the Penn State College of Agricultural sciences.

During a Penn State Agricultural Council meeting recently, delegates from agriculture organizations gave input, ideas, and suggestions on student recruitment to representatives of the College of Agricultural Sciences.

A previous session with the Council yielded ideas and suggestions for improve and change the ongoing process, Steele said.

**Recruitment Is**

**Everyone's Responsibility**

Jim Mortensen, associate dean for undergraduate programs, provided statistics about recent changes in the student body of the College of Agricultural Sciences. From 1985 to 1995, enrollment grew and peaked; however, the college has experienced decreases of various proportions since then. "We've also seen significant shifts in students' choices of majors," said Mortensen.

In 1995, for example, 57 percent of Agricultural Sciences students were environmental and natural resource majors, a number which has decreased to 33 percent today. The trend is toward animal sciences and ag production majors. In 1995 one out of five students had one of those majors while one out of three students are today.

Marianne Fivek, assistant to the dean for student recruitment and activities, reported on the college's efforts since the last meeting.

"Recruitment is everyone's responsibility," said Fivek. "Together we work to get the message — that agricultural sciences provides a world of opportunity — out."

A few of the action points established at faculty meetings include changing the image of the college of agricultural sciences, publicizing salaries and job opportunities, networking with high schools, being visible at statewide events, and developing a Webpage specifically for prospective students.

Efforts that pay off, said Fivek, are tours, stayovers, and open houses which bring prospective students to the university. In addition recruitment efforts include planning visits for high schools, youth groups, and individual families. The Pennsylvania Governor's School, a five-week term of undergraduate research, attracts 50 percent of the participants to Penn State.

"If we can get a prospective student on campus, we have a better chance of getting them to apply and accept their offer," said Fivek.

To end her presentation, Fivek showed a 13-minute video highlighting features of the College of Agricultural Sciences which will be shown to prospective students.

The university's second greatest challenge, said Fivek, is offering attractive freshman scholarships. Fivek cited several examples of other institutions of-



Speakers during the morning session of the council meeting included, from left, James Mortensen, associate dean for undergraduate programs; Earl Fink, board member of Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders; Walter Peechatka, executive vice president, PennAg Industries Association; Jana Malot, district conservationist for NRCS, Fulton County, representing the Soil and Water Conservation Society; Robert Steele, dean, Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences; Marianne Fivek, assistant to the dean for student recruitment and activities; and Dean Girton, Ag Council president.

fering big-dollar scholarships which help to lure students.

**Delegate Presentations**

To help introduce a few of the members involved in the Council, each year a few delegates introduce their organizations during the meeting. Opening this year's introductions was Earl Fink, representing Pennsylvania Dairy Stockholders.

The organization, said Fink, was formed to provide cohesive leadership in the Pennsylvania dairy industry. Beginning in 1992 the group hosted several conferences and officially organized in 1997.

Members include producers, processors, retail personnel, food handlers, and government representatives. The group includes 13 people on the board and more than 950 people on the mailing list.

Programs and efforts include videos and brochures, the Pace-setter Award, and the Business Planning Assistance Program, which connects experts with dairy producers to develop a business plan for the farm. "One of the best features of the group,"

said Fink, "is that it enables various segments of the industry to sit down and civilly discuss the issues to move the industry forward."


Walter Peechatka, executive vice president of PennAg Industries Association, summarized the organization's efforts since 1878, when the group was first formed. In 1996 the board amended bylaws to create councils. These councils will help consolidate the agriculture industry, said Peechatka.

In 1997 the first council was created. In 1998 the Pennsylvania Poultry Federation became the second council. Additional councils also include swine and

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