

Testimony for the House and Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee Joint Informational Meeting

Rick Roush, Dean, College of Agricultural Sciences

The Pennsylvania State University

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It has been a year of achievements and successes for the College of Agricultural Sciences and Extension, but of increasing challenges for agriculture and the rural communities we serve. First, a few of the successes.

After a voluntary early retirement program last year, we've hired more than 40 new faculty and Extension Educators.

The new Agricultural and Biological Engineering building officially opened on June 8th at a cost of \$ 48.5 million to Penn State. Large corporate gifts from CSL Behring and Sartorius Stedim Biotech were provided for a fermentation facility that will significantly further our research on biorenewables and other products.

Penn State has allocated another \$90 million to replace the Henning Building, which houses parts of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences and Animal Science, with planning furiously underway. The support of the ABE and Henning buildings clearly demonstrate the strong commitment of the Penn State Trustees and administration to agriculture.

We're also very gratified that the Pennsylvania legislature passed, and Governor Wolf signed, a state budget which includes a 3% increase for Penn State in 2018, as well as the College of Agricultural Sciences Land Scrip Fund.

Our graduation and enrollment news is terrific too. In the spring, we graduated approximately 500 students from our total of about 3000. Our 2018-19 freshman class is about 700 students, a slight increase from last year and another record. 360 are at University Park, a five-year high, with the rest at other PSU campuses. 79% are Pennsylvania residents; 61% are women!

And our students continue to be recognized regionally and nationally for their accomplishments. Just as one example, our Agronomy Club beat Virginia Tech in semifinals and defeated Kansas State to win the Championship in the National Forage Bowl at the American Forage and Grassland Conference.

To help our students get to Penn State and succeed, we award \$2.6 M in scholarships annually, thanks to our generous donors over several decades.

Since 2016, as part of Penn State's 21st Century Excellence campaign, new gifts to the college total more than \$ 48.4M. This is a testament to our support in the community, which donates to support passions not seen as the within the role of government, generally as endowments, where we spend only the interest. We're still aiming for higher; the "Median Household Income of Students Who Applied for Aid" for the College of Ag Sciences is about 30% less than the average for PSU overall, and our average scholarship award is \$4,500 – about \$1,100 less than the PSU average. We aim to make sure that our students are at least as well supported as any others at Penn State, and that finances are no barrier to success.

Extension has been reorganized to better meet stakeholder needs, and we've launched ATLAS, our innovative new internet platform, which is already getting national recognition and requests for information from other states.

We have a record high in research grants of \$82 M, captured in national, competitive programs that depend on the basis of support we get from the Commonwealth.

All of this is accomplished by the dedication of our staff, faculty, students, and stakeholders, including yourselves.

However, there are challenges though to agriculture and rural prosperity in Pennsylvania that are of concern to the College. I'll mention just four.

The spotted lanternfly is a major new threat. Because this is the first population of spotted lanternfly outside Asia, it's difficult to assess the magnitude of the threat that it presents. However, it is potentially the worst introduced insect pest since the gypsy moth nearly 150 years ago, a significant threat to Pennsylvania agriculture, landscapes and natural ecosystems. This includes grapes, which already have sustained heavy damage, and the tree-fruit, nursery, and hardwood industries, especially if our products are quarantined to prevent spread of the pest. The spotted lanternfly develops well on hops and native trees in laboratory trials. Also threatened are biodiversity, outdoor recreation, and backyard enjoyment, as known all too well among those who have experienced the sticky mess made by the pest.

As part of the partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) and USDA, the Penn State Extension spotted lanternfly website, <https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly> , is the primary hub for the most comprehensive and up to date information on the pest. This is where the public

can report any potential sightings of spotted lanternfly outside of the quarantine zone for immediate action by PDA to thwart the spread.

Working with PDA, Extension just launched an online course where businesses can receive the necessary training and permitting required for all vehicles being used for business within and/or traveling through the quarantine zone. You will find that on our website as well. Extension is also staffing a spotted lanternfly toll-free hotline, 1-888-4BADFLY, to assist homeowners and answer questions.

College researchers are leading efforts to learn more about the insect's biology and control options. Still, the spotted lanternfly is a huge challenge, and we remain concerned that resources for research and control of the pest are inadequate, particularly for PDA within the quarantine zone.

Not to be distracted by the spotted lanternfly, water quality remains a key issue that the College is addressing. Much of the significant activity in Pennsylvania on this relates to the development of the Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan. The college is playing a key role in that plan, and our Matt Royer serves as a co-chair of the Agriculture Workgroup. We're also working on storm water management, and seek funding to develop a Master Water Steward program to engage volunteers in local storm water diversion projects, similar to education offered by the more than 3000 Master Gardeners serving communities across Pennsylvania.

Another major challenge is opioid addiction. Along with the College of Health and Human Development at Penn State, the College of Ag Sciences has been engaged in a research and extension program called *PROSPER* (PROmoting School-community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience), which is now proven to provide high-quality prevention programs for youth and their families. We're looking for funding to expand this program across the Commonwealth.

My fourth and final example is the financial challenges faced by the dairy industry. Our ag economists and extension team have been working for years to provide financial advice and options to dairy producers, but we've ramped up the intensity following the international trade challenges this year. Among other assets, the College has offered significant capacity to provide research support for milk processing and cheese production, which seems promising in economic analyses.

We've had a great year, but are acutely aware that we cannot rest. We remain dedicated to improving agriculture and rural life in Pennsylvania.