COLLEGE—Successes on a variety of fronts despite threatening economic challenges

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THE ECONOMY PRESENTED the nation and Idaho with the greatest challenges in decades during 2009. Declining state revenues and other problems affected all sectors of state government, including the University of Idaho and the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. In 2009, the college budget declined $4.7 million (17 percent). Despite cuts, some news reflected excellent work by students, faculty, staff, and Idaho ag leaders.

Enrollment up. This fall, the college’s largest enrollment in 30 years yielded 1,208 students, a 7.5 percent increase over 2008, the strongest across the campus.

Ag industry helps Parma, Tetonia. The J.R. Simplot Co. provided a positive note as the year wound down. Company and university officials reached a 5-year agreement through which Simplot will pay $300,000 annually to conduct research on part of the 200 acres at the Parma Research and Extension Center. The Treasure Valley’s tree fruit and table grape industries committed to support orchard and vineyard research for 3 years. The Treasure Valley Agricultural Coalition also promised to help fund maintenance of the main station through the end of the 2010 fiscal year and will help the college find long-term sustainable funding.

At Tetonia, the Idaho Potato Commission, Idaho Potato Seed Growers, and the Idaho Barley Commission provided $120,000 to help fund operations through the 2010 crop year.

At Sandpoint, community support led the college to use gift funds to continue operations at 60 percent through June 30.

New $3.2 million IGER T grant. A successful educational partnership directed by entomology professor Nilsa Bosque-Perez between the University of Idaho and Costa Rica’s Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center is renewed with a $3.2 million grant from the National Science Foundation to train 24 new doctoral students.

Food students lead the nation. Senior food science student Kellie Grant of Rathdrum led an Idaho-WSU student team to top honors in the leading national food product development competition, reflecting strength of our Bi-State School of Food Science.

Idaho agricultural producers see sales slip 17% to $5.4 billion. Crop diversity helps

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IDAHO AGRICULTURAL producers saw cash receipts from crop and livestock sales slip 17 percent to an estimated $5.4 billion during 2009.

The diversity of Idaho agriculture softened this fall. For the first time since 2000, crop sales of $2.75 billion outpaced livestock sales of $2.61 billion.

Net farm income is projected to drop 47 percent to $1.02 billion. A modest 2 percent decline in expenses could not offset a 14 percent drop in revenues.

Among crops, potatoes ranked as sales leader, bringing home $796 million, up $15 million, or 2 percent, from 2008.

Onions, sugar beets up. Sugar beet cash receipts provided the sweet spot among crops. Revenue soared 70 percent to $252 million, a $105 million increase from the previous year. Onion producers enjoyed a 43 percent increase in cash receipts to $43 million from $30 million in 2008.

Livestock cash receipts fell 23 percent in 2009. Milk cash receipts dropped $698 million to $1.4 billion, the lowest total since 2004. Cattle and calf sales, primarily beef, dipped nearly $100 million to $1.09 billion, an 8 percent decline.
They’re a Peach of a crop, Parma R&E research finds

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IDAHO ORCHARDISTS seeking crops for narrow market time-slots are keeping close tabs on a 50-variety peach and nectarine trial at the University of Idaho’s Parma Research and Extension Center. “Our growers want the option to fill the market at different times,” says Essie Fallahi, the university’s fruit tree physiologist. That lets them schedule their peach and nectarine harvests around harvests of their other crops—and to aim for a moving target of days or weeks when California and Washington fruit growers are temporarily low on production.

Under Treasure Valley growing conditions, Fallahi is evaluating yellow-fleshed peaches like ‘Zee Lady’ and white-fleshed peaches like ‘Snow Giant’ as well as both yellow- and white-fleshed nectarines. When he’s sufficiently tempted by Fallahi’s results, Canyon County fruit grower Roger Williamson plants new varieties in the family’s orchards.

“You’re talking about a 3-year selection process, and you’re going to live with that selection for 15 years, so you need to know as much as you can,” Williamson says.

FARM LAND AT THE PARMA R&E CENTER is devoted to research on many of the crops produced in the Treasure Valley.

The main station’s 120 acres are used for row crop and hop research. Two miles north of the main station are 80 acres of desert land, 20 of which are devoted to tree fruit and small fruit research programs.

Research at Parma is not limited to the field. The facility provides three greenhouses with 5,100 square feet of research space that is used year-round. Growth chambers used for entomology research total 540 square feet. Some 5,900 square feet of office space support work of faculty, support staff, and graduate students; also in use are 1,500 square feet of classrooms and 5,000 square feet of laboratories.

PARTNERS

USDA. Focus on viticulture and enology (wine making) by the USDA Agricultural Research Service at Parma provides important support for Idaho’s wine industry.

UI Regents. The University of Idaho Regents own 120 acres of the property used by Parma center researchers. One parcel was gifted to the university for agricultural research and educational uses and may revert to the original owner if use changes.

BLM. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management conveyed 80 acres to the university specifically for agricultural research. Those 80 acres must not be transferred or used for purposes other than agricultural research without consent of the U.S. Secretary of Interior. Those 80 acres may revert to the federal government. The current land value is estimated at $1.6 million. Infrastructure value estimate is $6.5 million. The depreciated value of center equipment is $329,000.

MAJOR PROGRAMS

Entomology
Insect pest management of mint, onions, beans, and other crops
Integrated management for mite and insect pests of hops
Pollinator research for alfalfa and other seed crops

Nematology
Control practices for potato and sugar beet nematodes
Nematode and disease diagnostic services

Plant Pathology
Plant disease research for seed crops, onions, potatoes, and fruits

Plant Science
Fruit physiology research to improve fruit quality and storability
Management of table grapes, Asian pears, and new fruit crops
Evaluation of small grain and potato cultivars for southern Idaho
Reduced diseases and disorders of potatoes and onions
Biofuel cropping systems

Soil Science
Yield-limiting nutrients in plants and soils
Improved fertilizer efficiency to lessen environmental impacts

UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO PARMA RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER

NEW CALS WEB
www.uidaho.edu/cals
THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL AND LIFE SCIENCES (CALS) UPDATED ITS WEB SITE TO MAKE ACCESS EASIER FOR POTENTIAL STUDENTS, CURRENT STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND ALUMNI.

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