COLLEGE—Faculty excel, student numbers grow despite loss of 70 jobs, 1 R&E center

IDAHO'S NO. 1 INDUSTRY—agriculture—demonstrated its strength in 2010 even in tough times. The University of Idaho’s College of Agricultural and Life Sciences showed similar resilience despite erosion of nearly a fifth of its workforce—70 positions—due to budget cuts.

ENROLLMENT UP. Fall semester’s student enrollment rose by nearly 10 percent, demonstrating strong interest in academic disciplines that offer a solid foundation for career building.

NATIONAL FACULTY RECOGNITION. College faculty in turn showed that student confidence is well placed, winning recognition as teachers and experts in their fields. The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities honored agricultural economist Stephen Devadoss with its West Regional Teaching Award, one of only six nationwide. Devadoss, whose graduate students tackle real-world issues, is CALS third faculty member to win the award since 1997. Amin Ahmadzadeh, associate professor of dairy science, won in 2007 and this year won a distinguished teacher award from the American Society of Animal Science.

USDA officials tapped CALS Associate Dean John Foltz as an advisor to the National Agricultural Economics Service, which provides essential data to world markets.

University of Idaho Extension’s successes: Marilyn Bischoff and Bev Healey, both family and consumer sciences professors, won honors from the Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Education for their success teaching Idaho adults estate planning basics.

COLLEGE DOWNSIZES. Financial forces that ripped through state budgets forced the college to downsize even beyond the 70 positions. Faculty shuffle: Former Department of Microbiology, Molecular Biology and Biochemistry faculty split to realign research and teaching programs. Animal- and plant-focused researchers shifted to food science and plant science. Faculty with a biomedical focus are now with the College of Science, taking 100 former CALS students with them. R&E Center cuts: Economic challenges for college research and extension centers eased as public/private partners stepped forward to shoulder some costs.

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Idaho Ag rebounds with 12% increase

CONTACT See “The Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture 2010” at www.cals.uidaho.edu/aeors/resources.htm

AN ECONOMIC FORECAST by University of Idaho Extension economists shows Idaho agriculture righted itself in 2010, posting an estimated $5.78 billion, a 12% increase in cash receipts after a scary 18% slide the year before. Farmers’ net income surged 55% in 2010, according to “The Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture, 2010.” Key to the turnaround were rebounding milk income rising 36% over 2009 to $1.95 billion and stronger beef markets, up 10% to $1.11 billion.

A 27% increase in milk prices and 7% production increase added some $520 million to 2010 cash receipts. In November, Idaho’s dairy herd passed New York’s to become the nation’s No. 3 milk producer.

The annual report underscores again that in Idaho, agriculture’s mix of crops and livestock stabilizes ag revenues. Crop receipts dipped an estimated 2% to $2.6 billion. Potatoes remained the No. 1 crop at $690 million, a 12% slump from 2009. Wheat ranked No. 2 among crops with $542 million, a 6% rise from 2009. Onions brought tears of joy to growers’ eyes, posting a 93% increase to $76 million in 2010.

If there’s a story hidden within these statistics, said UI CALS Dean John Hammel, it is: UI CALS’ research and extension help keep Idaho’s agricultural industry strong. Productive herds and a diverse variety of disease-free crops are a powerful benefit to the state.

College corn maze draws 10,000; earns students $$

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MORE THAN 10,000 VISITORS navigated the 10-acre Idaho-shaped Clearwater Corn Maze at the Lewiston Roundup Grounds in October, an engaging business experience and fundraiser for UI CALS student clubs.

John Foltz, the college’s associate dean for academic programs, said some 175 University of Idaho students donated more than $1,250 hours to grow and operate the maze, partnering with Kaufman Farms of Lewiston and the Lewiston Roundup Association.

College of Agricultural and Life Sciences student clubs will share more than $14,000 based on their members’ contributions of time.

Student Idaho Cattle Association members rounded up nearly $2,500 as the top hands at the maze. Some proceeds will fund a scholarship.

"The way it ran exceeded my expectations both in attendance and the way the students really stepped up," Foltz said. College Dean John Hammel considers it a “great learning opportunity” for students to be involved in corporate service learning, Phil Kaufman, a 2006 college alumnus, farmed the corn for the maze and said it reminded him of Disneyland. "Talking to people coming to the maze made me think we had the happiest place in Idaho," he said.

DID YOU KNOW?

$18.3 MILLION

AMOUNT OF GRANTS EARNED BY UI CALS FACULTY AND STAFF IN FISCAL YEAR 2010. ALL OF THAT RESEARCH DIRECTLY BENEFITS IDAHO CITIZENS AND INDUSTRY.

Source: University of Idaho Office of Sponsored Programs, 2011