MORRILL ACT’S 150TH YEAR—1862 dream still helps Idaho families & ag industry thrive

CONTACT BILL LOFTUS at bloftus@uidaho.edu

THE UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO’S College of Agricultural and Life Sciences today is still fulfilling the original intent of state and federal leaders who created the University of Idaho in the late 1800s to teach Idaho’s youth, conduct critical local research, and share research results with citizens statewide who would, in turn, help Idaho prosper.

UI research and extension centers near Salmon, Idaho Falls, Kimberly, Twin Falls, Caldwell, Parma, and Moscow still work year-round to support Idaho communities, families, businesses, and agriculture by tackling issues and extending research-based results to the public.

As a land-grant university, that mission reaches back to 1862 when Congress and President Abraham Lincoln passed the Morrill Act so every state’s children could be educated and each state’s citizens would have a way to keep up with research supporting key industries. Responding to that act, Idaho’s territorial leaders created the University of Idaho in 1889, a year before statehood. The University of Idaho’s Board of Regents created the Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station 120 years ago, on Feb. 26, 1892, to launch the university’s scientific enterprise.

Today, more than 300 researchers and staff members work in the centers and in University of Idaho Extension offices in 42 counties. “Without the collective efforts of our great team of people in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, vital scientific discoveries and crop and livestock advancements would not be possible,” said Kelly Olson, Idaho Barley Commission administrator.

On a committee advising the college’s operation of research and extension centers, Olson added, “Without question, our human capital is our most important resource and absolutely critical to agriculture’s economic success.”

The challenge ahead will be to ensure the college keeps both the capacity and the capability to help the state’s families and communities and to keep Idaho agriculture as the state’s No. 1 industry, said CALS Dean John Hammel. Capacity means updating facilities to support advanced research and retaining researchers skilled to do the work. “Without this capacity, CALS’ capability to establish partnerships and non-appropriated funding sources is critically weakened.”

Research to help Idaho farmers, communities, youth, and families stretches beyond the R&E centers. UI Extension educators and specialists sponsor programs in communities statewide that address local needs. Programs range from developing disease-resistant and healthier potatoes and grains and finding more water-efficient irrigation methods to designing and running 4-H youth development programs, and helping towns and businesses thrive via coaching, workshops, and UI student-faculty collaboration.

120 years of UI CALS research goes online

SEE www.lib.uidaho.edu/digital/uiext/index.html

The University of Idaho Library and College of Agricultural and Life Sciences joined forces to put a collection of nearly 120 years of agricultural and family sciences publications online. The digital collection spans the broad arc of the University of Idaho’s history in serving the state’s agricultural industry and all of Idaho’s citizens on topics ranging from food preservation to helping older relatives battle depression. Some 1,500 publications are accessible, with the rest to come.

The collection begins with Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 1, published in September 1892 (see story at right).

In February 1912, the college published Idaho Potato Culture Clubs, a booklet that planted the idea for boys and girls ages 12 to 18 to grow potatoes. The clubs grew into University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development, now celebrating its centennial.

That first 1892 bulletin also launched the college’s publishing efforts. Today CALS and UI Extension researchers publish findings on some 20 topics including business management, community development, livestock and crops management, family and consumer issues, forestry, gardening, water quality, and small-acreage farming.

Most of the current 800-plus publications can be downloaded for free. Find them at www.cals.uidaho.edu/edComm.

DID YOU KNOW? 108

The number of land-grant universities and colleges today: 57 from the 1862 Morrill Act; 17 in the Confederate South in 1890 (that act forbade segregation in land-grants); finally 34 on Indian reservations in 1994.

SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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