

## **Mazel Tov: Budgetarily Speaking**

Budgetarily, the past several months have been intensely frenetic and stressful, characterized by the expression of passionate support by OSU President Ed Ray, our students, stakeholders from practically every walk of life, newspaper editorials, and key legislators.

The Governor's recommended budget for the Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station, OSU Extension, and OSU Forest Research Laboratory for the 2011-2013 biennium proposed an almost 20 percent reduction from the 2009-2011 budget. Once the magnitude of that reduction was clear, with the help of stakeholders, we mounted an effort to seek the legislature's support for an add back of \$12 million and holding the budget reduction to no more than eight percent.

Our stakeholders – representing the vast expanse of the natural resources and conservation groups, along with literally hundreds of farmers, ranchers, vintners, orchardists, cheesemakers, vegetable producers, foresters, nurserymen, 4-Hers and FFAers, Master Gardeners, bankers, lawyers, doctors, judges, grocers, and just plain citizens – from the left to the right of the political spectrum – stepped up to contact legislators.

At legislative hearings, stakeholders spoke passionately about the Agricultural Experiment Station, Extension Service, and Forest Research Laboratory – the so-called Statewide Public Service Programs. Some evoked deep emotions as they spoke of what these endeavors enabled them to do. President Ray spoke passionately about the Land Grant DNA of Oregon State University and how the Agricultural Experiment Station, Extension Service, and Forest Research Laboratory were core to that Land Grant mission. All urged legislators to add back \$12 million.

The \$12 million add back became the Mantra.

Stakeholders met legislators – particularly the leadership of the Oregon legislature's House and Senate – in their offices or in their districts and at grocery stores or in doctors' offices. They made telephone calls. They wrote letters. They sent postcards. In droves, they attended OSU Day at the Capitol and made their case with legislators, chanting the Mantra – add back \$12 million.

A passionate group of individuals mobilized other stakeholders who could provide personal narratives of the importance of funding the Agricultural Experiment Station, Extension Service, and Forest Research Laboratory. These narratives were repeated in many parts of the state: in Portland; in Bend; in Pendleton; in Medford; in Newport. Each told a unique and intensely personal story – about jobs and the economy, about mint, about ice cream, about cattle, about orchards, about food safety, about water, about air, about food, about exports, about 4-H, about Master Gardener, about wheat, about potatoes, about the range, about natural resources, about wine, about restaurants. Their stories depicted an amazing array of the

breadth of people and endeavors impacted by the Agricultural Experiment Station, Extension Service, and Forest Research Laboratory. Each ended their personal story and chanted the Mantra – add back \$12 million.

Newspaper articles were written. And editorials. Each ending with the Mantra – add back \$12 million.

The legislative leadership identified \$9.1 million. The stakeholders continued to chant the Mantra – add back \$12 million.

Legislative leadership identified an additional \$2.9 million.

More stakeholders reminded the legislators about – you got it, the Mantra – add back \$12 million.

Right down to the wire.

The \$2.9 million add back was part of what was referred to as a “Christmas Tree” bill. And it passed.

And, finally, the bill with the \$9.1 million passed.

The legislature responded to the stakeholders and came through: \$12 million was added back to the proposed 2011-2013 budget for the Agricultural Experiment Station, Extension Service, and Forest Research Laboratory.

While I was ready to pull out the noisemakers and celebrate – my colleagues Bill Boggess and Jack Breen reminded me we are still short \$8 million for the Agricultural Experiment Station, Extension Service, and Forest Research Laboratory for the 2011-2013 biennium. That is, of course, significantly better than the \$20 million reduction originally proposed!

We have identified a way forward that will include offsets from grants and contracts and loss of some services and positions due to attrition. We hope there might be additional Education and General budget dollars. Still, there must be an additional reduction in our overall endeavors.

Combined with reductions of the past few years, we are down about a third in overall state support for our endeavors. Longer term, we will need to work to reverse this, if we are to continue to have a significant impact on Oregon’s economy.

The ride over the past months has been intense, and I am glad we have the \$12 million added back. This would not have been possible without a bunch of heroes in this amazing, months-long effort: our passionate stakeholders and several key legislators.

The new biennium looks a lot better today than it did just a few, short months ago.  
And, let's hope it stays that way.

Mazel Tov and thanks, everyone!