

**Statement of  
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**Representing  
The Board on Agriculture Assembly  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities**

**Before the  
Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Energy, and Research  
Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives**

**Implementation of the Research Title of the 2008 Farm Bill  
September 30, 2009**

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I am pleased to appear before you on behalf of the Board of Agriculture Assembly (BAA) of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) to discuss implementation of the Research Title of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246).

The BAA's Farm Bill Committee, which I chair, and many individuals throughout the land-grant system were very involved in helping to craft Title VII of the 2008 Farm Bill, which reshaped the USDA science structure and reauthorized the many research, extension, and teaching programs that sustain land-grant universities and related institutions in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the insular areas.

My testimony today is in three parts. First, I will briefly describe the major elements of the Research Title that pertain to land-grant universities. Second, I will outline our view of the progress made by USDA to implement these provisions. Third, and finally, I will discuss what remains to be done to fulfill the goals set forth by the land-grant system in our CREATE-21 effort to "Create Research, Education, and Teaching Excellence for the 21st Century," which — as you know — formed the basis for much of the Research Title.

**Land-Grant Provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill**

Without a doubt, the most important provision for land-grant universities was the creation of the new National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). Building upon the success of the joint federal-state partnership funded through and overseen by the Cooperative State Research, Extension, and Education Service (CSREES), NIFA will elevate food and agricultural science and education to a higher level.

To accomplish that objective, NIFA will be led by an eminent scientist appointed by the President to a six-year term. The NIFA Director will manage the agency's capacity programs which provide critical base funding for the 1862, 1890, and 1994 land-grant institutions and the competitive programs which fund research, extension, and education efforts at land-grants, as well as other public and private universities.

The NIFA Director is to be aided and guided in this work by the USDA Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics (REE) and his high-level team within the newly created Research, Education, and Extension Office (REEO). The REE Under Secretary, who is now the Chief Scientist at USDA, is charged with producing a USDA Science Roadmap and coordinating and managing the department's extramural programs funded primarily through NIFA and the intramural programs conducted by the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and the Economic Research Service (ERS).

All of the tried and true capacity programs previously managed by CSREES were moved to NIFA and reauthorized for the five-year life of the bill. The flagship competitive grants program at CSREES — the National Research Initiative — was expanded significantly and is now known as the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). This key program permits the agency to fund a full spectrum of basic, applied, and integrated research, extension, and higher education efforts through competitively-awarded, peer-reviewed grants.

In addition to AFRI, the 2008 Farm Bill authorized four new NIFA programs that provide competitive grants for organic research, specialty crops research and extension, biomass R&D, and efforts that help beginning farmers and ranchers. These four programs are authorized to receive mandatory funding and appropriated sums. (Only the mandatory funding has been provided to date.)

### **Implementation Progress**

Overall, I would observe that USDA has a good record when it comes to implementation of the most significant elements of Title VII. In this portion of my testimony, I will describe the accomplishments made over the last 16 months, leaving a discussion of the unfinished items until the next section.

Before the Bush Administration left office, Dr. Gale Buchanan, then REE Under Secretary, assumed the mantle of USDA Chief Scientist, began work on the Roadmap, and named a distinguished group of individuals as directors of the six REEO divisions. Dr. Buchanan and Dr. Colien Hefferan, the CSREES Administrator, also moved quickly to make the first increment of mandatory funding under the Specialty Crops Research Initiative available for competition by September 30, 2008. Finally, USDA Secretary Ed Schafer issued an implementation memorandum on October 1, 2008, directing that the NIFA Director is to report to the REE Under Secretary and not directly to the Secretary. (The language in Title VII stated that the Director was to report to the Secretary “or his designee.”)

The land-grant system was generally supportive, but not entirely satisfied by these decisions. We would have preferred, for example, that the NIFA Director report directly to the Secretary, but we understand the absolute importance of close collaboration between the REE Under Secretary and the NIFA Director to ensure that the agency successfully achieves the ambitious goals established for it by this subcommittee.

With respect to the REEO staffing, we were pleased by the quick action to get the six division chiefs in place and the high-caliber individuals who were selected. However, the law specifies that the REEO may contain as many as 30 individuals and — given the importance of the tasks at hand and the anticipated work load — we believe it would be wise to provide each division chief with at least one deputy. Such a

modest expansion could prove to be extremely beneficial, especially if the administration moves forward, as has been rumored, to return the initial REEO division chiefs to the agencies from whence they came and to name distinguished scientists from outside USDA to these six positions under authority of the Intergovernmental Personnel Act.

In addition to these actions, CSREES issued three formal requests for comment on programs created or changed by the 2008 Farm Bill. The BAA provided written comments and suggestions in each such instance and informal comments on other matters and rather than reiterate all of that here I ask that the full text of these comments be entered into the hearing record.

### **The Unfinished Agenda**

**1. NIFA Establishment.** Title VII requires that NIFA is to be established on or before October 1, 2009. We had anticipated that the administration would move ahead with establishment before the statutory deadline, but given the presidential transition, the press of other business, and the hundreds of tasks involved in a bureaucratic restructuring, such optimism was probably unrealistic.

Nonetheless, we urge you to communicate to the administration the importance of making NIFA a fully functioning agency as quickly as possible after October 1. The final quarter of the calendar year is an especially busy and critical period for development of the federal budget and unless the agency and its director are “up and running,” NIFA could be at a significant disadvantage as its budgetary priorities are reviewed and finalized by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

**2. NIFA Director.** Selection of the first NIFA Director is extremely important to the future of the agency (especially in these formative years) and we welcome the news that Dr. Roger N. Beachy, the founding president of the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center, will become the NIFA Director on October 5. Dr. Beachy is an extremely well-qualified scientist with impeccable credentials, proven management skills, a broad vision, and an open mind. We look forward to collaborating closely with him and Dr. Shah as they finalize the NIFA structure and address other pressing start-up issues.

**3. NIFA Structure.** Representatives from the land-grant system have had several meetings with Dr. Shah since his confirmation as REE Under Secretary about the NIFA structure. Through these discussions we have learned that the Under Secretary and Dr. Beachy are considering an organization comprised of four divisions (or “Institutes”) each of which will focus on broad subjects: (1) plant and animal production; (2) human nutrition and health; (3) food safety; and (4) communities and human capacity development.

*We believe that such a structure could prove advantageous, provided that all elements of the land-grant system — experiment stations, cooperative extension services, academic programs, international programs, and minority-serving institutions — are well represented within each of the divisions and that scientific outreach and education are key missions of the whole agency.*

The structure of NIFA, and the leadership of the Director, are vital if we are going to achieve what this subcommittee envisioned with the creation of NIFA (as set forth in the Statement of Managers), namely

that: “NIFA will be commensurate in stature with other grant-making agencies across the federal government, such as the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation.”

**4. Mandatory Programs.** The land-grant system is very pleased that congressional and executive branch decision-makers have (thus far) honored the mandatory funding provided to NIFA for the four programs mentioned previously. This was not the case for the previous mandatory program— the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food systems (IFAFS) — which was routinely “raided” by either the appropriations committees or OMB. These new competitively-awarded and narrowly-targeted programs are accomplishing precisely what this committee intended and must be protected. Of course, I would be remiss if I did not mention that all of these programs could benefit by the appropriation of additional sums (as provided in the statute), but protecting the mandatory monies remains our main priority.

**5. Unrecovered Indirect Costs.** We now have experience with two years of funding for one of these four programs, the Specialty Crops Research Initiative. Based upon this experience we recommend that the committee consider making permanent the legislative language included within the last two Agriculture Appropriations bills permitting universities to count their unrecovered indirect costs against the matching requirements set forth in the statute for this and the other three programs with mandatory funding.

**6. REEO Structure and Operations.** We made several REEO recommendations that have not yet been implemented. We reiterate those recommendations here, because we believe they still have merit:

- Working as a team, the Under Secretary, Division Chiefs, and other REEO personnel must enhance programmatic integration and eliminate administrative duplication among NIFA, ARS, ERS, the U.S. Forest Service, and the National Agricultural Statistical Service, and maximize allocation of staff resources among these agencies.
- The Division Chiefs should utilize the land-grant system’s education and extension capability to deliver research results produced by all agencies within USDA to the department’s various stakeholders and customers.
- The Division Chiefs should assist the Under Secretary in identifying, prioritizing, and addressing continuing and emerging agricultural research, education, and extension needs, including funding requirements.
- Each REEO division should be staffed by personnel with professional experience in the division’s respective mission area(s).
- In addition, personnel with families, youth, and community development professional experience should be represented throughout the REEO staff to ensure integration of these functions into the operations of the individual divisions and the Research, Education, and Economics mission area as a whole.

**7. NIFA Funding.** The final issue that I would touch upon this morning is the matter of funding for NIFA’s capacity and competitive programs. When the 2008 Farm Bill was under consideration, I often heard it said that NIFA would be a “vessel” ideally suited to receive increased federal funding. That remains as true

today as two years ago, even though there have been some missed opportunities along the way, such as the one-time increase of \$200 million for AFRI in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that we sought but were not able to get included in the final bill.

***Clearly, this new agency will only reach its full potential through greatly enhanced funding. Therefore, we strongly urge the members of the Agriculture Committee to see the efforts of their good work in the Research Title of the Farm Bill through to fruition by working with members of the Appropriations Committee to ensure that all NIFA programs are funded at their full, authorized levels.***

### **Concluding Remarks**

Mr. Chairman, let me thank you on behalf of the land-grant system for your leadership in drafting Title VII of the 2008 Farm Bill and your continued interest in the implementation of the statute as evidenced by today's hearing.

Creation of NIFA represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to advance and expand food and agricultural science and education within the United States and thereby improve human health, agricultural productivity, and rural development. We must all rise to the challenge and help the USDA leadership develop a well-structured and adequately funded National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

To again quote from the Statement of Managers, "The Managers intend for NIFA to be an independent, scientific, policy-setting agency for the food and agricultural sciences, which will reinvigorate our nation's investment in agricultural research, extension, and education."

We look forward to working closely with you, Under Secretary Shah, Director Beachy, and our mutual stakeholders to meet the high standards you set with the creation of NIFA.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify this morning. I would be delighted to answer any questions.

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# D.C. Coston

## Executive Summary

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### Education

BS – Horticulture – Basic Science Option (High Honors), North Carolina State University, May 1972  
MS – Horticulture – Plant Physiology, Michigan State University, June 1974  
PhD – Horticulture – Plant Physiology, Michigan State University, August 1976

### Additional Education

Good Laboratory Practices in Scientific Research, Summer 1996  
Higher Education Management Development Program, Harvard University, Summer 1993  
W.E. Demming Quality Leadership Program, Winter 1992  
Milliken Corporation Quality Leadership Program, Fall 1990  
Institute of Intensive French, University of Florida, Summer 1986

### Professional Experience

North Dakota State University	6/05-	Vice President for Agriculture and University Extension and Professor of Plant Science
Oklahoma State University	6/95 -6/05	Associate Director, Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station
Oklahoma State University	1/97-3/99 and 1/04- 6/05	Interim Associate Director, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (Concurrent with Experiment Station Position)
Oklahoma State University	6/95-6/05	Professor, Department of Horticulture
Clemson University	8/88-5/95	Associate Dean/Associate Director, SC Agricultural Experiment Station
Clemson University	1/90- 5/95	Coordinator of University Biotechnology Programs (Concurrent with Experiment Station Position)
Clemson University	1/93-5/95	Director of “Alliance 2020” Program sponsored by W.K. Kellogg Foundation (Concurrent with Experiment Station position)
Clemson University	1/90-11/91	Interim Director of International Programs, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Concurrent with Experiment Station position)
Clemson University	8/78-5/95	Horticulture Department Professor, June 1986-May 1995 Associate Professor, July 1982 to June 1986 Assistant Professor, August 1978 to June 1982
Virginia Tech	7/76-7/78	Horticulture Department, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist
Michigan State University	6/72-6/76	Horticulture Department, Graduate Research Assistant (3/4)
North Carolina State University	1970-71	Department of Plant Physiology, Summer Research Assistant

Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Required Witness Disclosure Form

House Rules\* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2006.

Name: D.C. Coston  
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Organization you represent (if any): North Dakota State University  
Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2006, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do **NOT** require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:

Source: NONE Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

2. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2006, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:

Source: \*See Statement Below\* Amount: \$66 million

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: 

\* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(4) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: *Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.*

PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.

\*North Dakota State University Experiment Station and Extension programs received approximately \$66 million in federal grants during fiscal years (2006, 2007, and 2008). These grants were received from numerous federal agencies and departments, including USDA.