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TRACTOR ALUMNI AND THE LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITY

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Vice President for Academic Affairs

The Morrill Act, signed into law by Abraham Lincoln in 1862, was perhaps the most significant event in the history of American higher education. Long the province of the privileged scions of wealthy and influential families, a college education, for the first time, was placed within the reach of the working man.

This egalitarian approach to higher education was to influence the institutions of the day to the point that broad educational access became the model for the United States, and the elitist colleges and universities based upon the European system were soon dwarfed in numbers and importance by institutions of the common man following the "land-grant" pattern established as a result of the Morrill Act.

Though few would dispute the importance of opening of access to higher education to the general public, the land-grant universities share another, equally important, characteristic that distinguishes them from institutions of other types.

That distinction is the commitment of service to the citizens of their own region and state by such universities. The development of the service commitment and the close ties between a state and its land-grant university were developments not foreseen even by Justin Morrill, the farsighted author of the Morrill Act. While other universities and colleges certainly provide excellent service to their communities and their regions, the total institutional commitment of resources and direction encompassing the tripartite mission of teaching, research, and service toward meeting the needs of the state is a uniquely land-grant characteristic.

The service perspective, nowhere more evident than in the sparsely populated agriculturally oriented midwest-

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On the Cover: Ray Hoops, vice president for academic affairs at NDSU, will leave soon to assume the presidency of a neighboring land-grant university, South Dakota State University. In this issue Dr. Hoops explains his view of the land-grant system. Photo by James Berg.

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and probably can be predicted more accurately than cash market prices. Therefore, futures market hedging during periods of adverse price movements can be an effective method of reducing price risk.

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ern and western states, has been especially evident at North Dakota State University. Historically, agriculture has been perhaps the single most competitive enterprise in this country. Faced with the intensely competitive demands of their professions, farmers and ranchers were quick to recognize the resource represented by the concentration of highly trained professionals comprising the faculties and staffs of the land-grant colleges and universities. The demands placed on the land-grant universities and the support given them by the agricultural community have been instrumental in building the land-grant system into what it is today.

That special relationship between the farmer and rancher and the land-grant university has never been more important. Both are facing what is, historically, perhaps their most difficult period. The intensely competitive nature of agriculture requires that crop varieties and livestock breeds be developed or enhanced to match the specific ecological and climatological conditions of an area such as North Dakota. Weed and pest control procedures must be equally specific. If reliance is placed upon research in other parts of the country, it will not always fit the conditions here, and our farmers and ranchers will fall behind the competition. In today's intensely competitive market, the loss of that edge could prove fatal. Any dilution in the focus of resources toward the problems of North Dakota agriculture, in the education of our young people who will take positions in or in support of agriculture, in the research into the solution of problems facing the state, or in the service communicating the latest techniques to solve problems, would have serious consequences. North Dakota agriculture simply cannot afford to drop behind the rest of the nation. The result of any diminution of competitive posture would have serious ramifications for all sectors of the state and its economy.

The national press often refers to the "subway alumni" of Notre Dame. These are city dwellers who have not graduated from that institution, and who may have never even seen it, but who have adopted its athletic teams with all the fervor of alumni. In an even more basic sense, everyone associated with agriculture in the state of North Dakota is a "tractor alumnus" of North Dakota State University. If you are associated with ranching or farming, even if you graduated from some other university, or never went to one, if you support some other football team or even if you dislike the Bison mascot, you are still a tractor alumnus of NDSU. And, we need from you all the contributions usually expected from a dedicated alumnus if NDSU is to do the job that you, the agricultural community, must have from the University.

North Dakota State University needs from its tractor alumnus support, advice, and, most importantly of all, involvement. If the University is to continue to strengthen and nurture this very special concept of service to North Dakota and to North Dakota's agricultural community, the involvement by agriculture in the University and its functions is essential. That involvement may take a variety of forms, from service on formal advisory bodies, to membership in the **President's Ag Club**, to assistance in determining research and service priorities, to encouraging support for the University's needs over coffee with a local legislator. But, for the sake of both the University and agriculture in North Dakota, that involvement on the part of agricultural practitioners is essential. We hope everyone associated with agriculture in North Dakota will become active tractor alumni of North Dakota State University.

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