



In Bounds: A Call to Action

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It wasn't too long ago that I was a "Big Booster Boy" for the University of Minnesota and the long-range plan of creating a Turfgrass, Outreach, Research and Education Center. The U had recently hired a young gun named Brian Horgan, who inspired the development of a facility that was sure to place the University of Minnesota in a place of high esteem regarding its turf science program. Indeed industry was behind this new development and along with the MGCSA and MTGF contributed in excess of \$750,000 toward the cause.

The dream included the development of 16 acres dedicated to the study of grass, the building of a center to house equipment, offices and classrooms and continued funding to maintain a first-class program. What a wonderful concept con-

sidering that the state of Minnesota generates over a billion dollars in turf-related business. The University provided the land; industry inspired the development of the land and a steady stream of funding was being created by the MGCSA and MTGF.

Sadly I learned through an anonymous phone call last fall that the whole program was in jeopardy due to a "shift in position" of the University Long Range Planning Committee. No longer was the TROE Center head of the list; in fact, it had dropped off the radar along with the promised creation of a Turf Pathologist position. I immediately called the Dean of Agriculture Food and Environmental Science, Charles Muscoplat, to get the "total" picture.

The image he painted was one of a sad Picasso. Dark, shadowed and depressed,

certainly not what I had hoped for. I asked whom I needed to contact in order to make my voice of concern and frustration heard. He told me it was him. When I inquired about going straight to the top, President Bruninks, I was told that my doing so would upset him, Dean Muscoplat. In fact, Dr. Muscoplat told me that a barrage of e-mails and snail mails indicating industry frustration would only serve to irritate him personally and would NOT be in the best interest of the TROE Center or long-range plan.

I felt utterly defeated. Who were we, as an industry, supposed to talk to with our concerns? After contributing \$750,000 to the University in recent years, I expected a little respect for our dollars. And then I remembered how kicked around the turf community had been in the past few decades. All of the promises made and broken, the rosy dreams shared and shattered and the dishonesty, whether real or perceived. Same old, same old I guess.

Well, six months later and again times have changed. Suddenly there is renewed interest in the Turf Management Program at the University of Minnesota. A huge surprise to me is the grand potential of

(Continued on Page 31)

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In Bounds—

(Continued from Page 30)

converting an existing building, The Head House, conveniently located adjacent to 20 acres of available open land on campus, into the Center for Turf Agronomy at the University of Minnesota. And, there is even the potential for the recreation of a Turf/Horticultural Pathologist position.

Ouch, my neck hurts from the 180-degree turn the University took! Is this roller coaster ride normal? In hindsight I suppose so. It has been the old "two steps forward, one step back" game. 180 days ago there was so little interest in our concerns that I, the "booster boy," had completely blown off the University and was planning my disassociation and ending my personal financial support of the institution.

But slow and steady interest has created another fresh look at the turf program. And in turn I have changed with the tides and can again appreciate the potential of an improved long-range plan. Now what can be done to maintain this reinvigorated momentum?

The MTGF has re-contributed \$25,000 to the architectural fees necessary to gut and rebuild the Head House. The MGCSA has formulated a fund-raising committee with help from the University for the creation of monies necessary to implement the plan. And the transition of property from agricultural crops to turf has begun with the planting of a new

NTEP trial. This last item should not be of concern, for although industry has committed serious dollars to the TROE Center concept, the existing property where the investment has been made will be transi-

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tioned gradually (over a number of years) to the new, larger and more conveniently located site.

Excuse me, I forgot to mention the potential search for a new Plant Pathologist. The University has renewed their interest in opening an extension pathologist position for the whole horticultural department. In order to massage this opportunity to weigh heavier in the field of turf diseases we must show our support for the position.

These endeavors are good, in fact grand, but could potentially hit a wall if our membership does not make a vocal effort to maintain pressure upon "the powers in charge" to complete the project. I urge everyone to contact the President of the University of Minnesota with his or her desires and the industry needs.

Start the letter like this:

"Dear President Bruninks,

As a member of the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents Association I am excited about renewed interest the University has shown in the Turf Industry. You are to be commended in

your efforts to develop a program that is directly beneficial to a profession that generates over a billion dollars within the state of Minnesota annually. Thank you for your insightful action.

And as a professional turf manager I am thrilled to hear about the potential of a new extension horticultural pathologist position. The last season's weather proved to be quite challenging across the state and it would have been nice to send turf samples to "our own" diagnostic lab rather than outstate. Yes, the other facilities and pathologists are very good, but I would rather have had the support from my own University when I shared the results with my Green Committee and Ownership.

President Bruninks can be reached via e-mail at UPres@umn.edu or via U.S. mail at 202 Morrill Hall, 100 Church Street S.E., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455 or by phone at 612-626-1616, Fax: 612-625-3875. Office hours are Monday through Friday from 7:45 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Okay, you folks get the picture. Write a 200-word message, go straight to the top and let your opinion be known. Skip the Dean of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Science, and tug the chain on the top dog's collar. Let him know that there is a need in the industry; there is support for the new Center for Turfgrass Agronomy and that you are willing to work with the University to attain the common goal of becoming the Midwest Mecca for turf science.

Phosphorus Fertilizer Re-Training Program

Have you read the Phosphorus Fertilizer Re-Training Program information in the September 2005 issue of Hole Notes? If so, make sure you return this coupon to the MGCSA office. If not, the re-training information can also be found at www.mgcsa.org.

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