



Two Questions

By Monroe S. Miller

In one of what has become an untold number of pleas and conversations on behalf of the NOER CENTER, a person I was recently visiting with (a golf player) asked a two-pronged question that may crop up elsewhere. They're the kind of questions that deserve a response, not only in a one-on-one situation like I experienced, but a public one as well.

After kindly listening to me tell him why we needed to raise so much money for turfgrass research, he asked, "If the need for research is as great as you say, and I do believe you, then why doesn't the College of Agriculture provide the necessary resources? After all, that's one of the reasons we pay such high taxes in Wisconsin — our extensive higher education system."

Every question should be so easy for me to answer. The first and maybe most important point to make is that the CALS is dedicated to turfgrass research, education and extension. One of the best undergraduate programs in the country is available to students who want to pursue a career in turfgrass management. Jim Love started it over 25 years ago and Wayne Kussow directs it today. That educational program receives the full support of the College and of the University — that is how the bills get paid. The same is true for Dr. Newman and his teaching and extension and herbicide research. In Plant Pathology, the University has dedicated money and staff support to Dr. Worf, to the Plant Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (so ably managed by Mary Francis Heimann) for work on turfgrass problems. The story is repeated in Entomology — Department Chairman Chuck Koval spends part of his time dealing with turfgrass crops in Wisconsin. Phil Pellitteri, in my view one of the best and most personable entomologists in the country, directs the insect identification lab and has other responsibilities that bring him into contact with the turfgrass industry. The UW Extension meetings, which

set all kinds of attendance records this past spring, are state funded programs through the CALS.

But as an industry there is a sense of the need to do more, not only to help solve the problems of today in a rapidly changing world, but to provide the kind of information that will secure our future. That's what the NOER CENTER project is really about. IPM, ground water, sustainable agriculture and a thousand other things will require research and study and investigation that force the need for the NOER CENTER to center stage.

It's not like we are breaking new ground here. For example, there is a desperate need for a new school of business on the Madison campus. The legislature, probably through the state building commission, made its approval contingent on the school's ability to raise a substantial portion of the nearly \$30 million cost. In the CALS, we have seen program support, generous program support, from the dairy industry, from pork producers, cranberry growers, potato farmers and scores more. The reality is that the turfgrass industry is a johnny-come lately in putting some money on the table for a facility that is needed by us.

It took me far longer to answer that first question than it did for you to read this. No sooner had I stopped talking than he asked me the second question. Maybe you've heard it also. Paraphrasing, the question was, "Won't outside money like you are raising adversely taint the research results forthcoming from the project?" His implication that private dollars would somehow invalidate conclusions of work done at the NOER CENTER was more than I could handle. My fury was tempered by the fact that this question is extremely easy to answer when the focus is the University of Wisconsin.

The answer is a strong, absolute and emphatic NO. Take a look at the pledge card inside the fund raising brochure for the NOER CENTER. The gifts and

pledges are made through the University of Wisconsin Foundation to the university. No money is pledged or given to a person, a department or college. The UW only accepts money through the Board of Regents and that will be true for the NOER CENTER funds.

The school goes to the nth degree in exercising care when grants of money are accepted. The research which results from such monies is public information and reported accordingly. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, all research records are open for inspection. Faculty dealing with groups like the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association are always reporting such activities to departmental chairmen and deans within the CALS. This is also true when the money source is public. And, of course, the integrity of the UW staff who we deal with directly — Newman, Worf, Kussow and Koval — precludes any chance of contamination of research conclusions because of funding influences.

Actually, the deliberate and thoughtful person would view involvement of an interest group as a plus, a positive factor. Anytime you are able to convey the true needs and problems of your profession to those dedicated to helping find answers and solutions, everyone benefits. Surely this is true for the NOER CENTER.

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