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Walsh Resigns as Dean of CALS

Dr. Leo Walsh, dean of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison since 1979, announced on November 21 that he will step down from the position in 1991.

Walsh guided one of the nation's largest and most respected agricultural colleges during a decade that brought financial strife to many people involved in agriculture. While the 1980s economy produced serious budget problems for the college, the nation's farmers struggled through their worst financial crisis in 50 years and several years of severe drought that further sapped economic strength. The period also was marked by heightened public and political concern for farm profitability, environmental protection, genetic engineering, food safety and survival of farm families and rural communities.

Walsh will return to the Department of Soil Science where he will be involved in research and extension education. His primary emphases will be in the areas of soil and water conservation, soil management and water quality.

"It has been an honor for me to serve as dean of one of the nation's truly outstanding colleges of agriculture," Walsh said in commenting on his term in the dean's office.

"I'm proud of what has been accomplished, and I credit the college's talented faculty and staff, and my capable administrative group for the success I have enjoyed. I look forward to continuing my professional service to the college and the university as a research and extension professor," Walsh concluded.



Dr. Leo Walsh

UW-Madison Chancellor Donna E. Shalala said Walsh's skills and talents as an administrator of one of the University's key academic and research units will be missed.

"Leo Walsh will be a very tough act to follow," Shalala said.

"He lead the college through a very difficult period, a time when agriculture was undergoing difficult change, yet the college remains one of the crown jewels of the University and Wisconsin," Shalala said. "That's testimony to his ability as a leader."

For Wisconsin farmers the recession during the early 1980s produced a financial crisis unparalleled since the 1930s. The troubled economy triggered budget cuts that lead to major reductions in the college's extension

faculty and loss of some research positions as well.

"We also lost some very talented and promising faculty members because our salaries were not competitive with those in other universities and industry," Walsh said. Two recent salary catchup exercises have helped to narrow the gap.

Fiscal pressures and diminishing budgetary flexibility have been constant concerns for Walsh. He responded by helping to form the Council for Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching (CARET) — a national group that marshals support for increased federal funding of agricultural research and education programs. Walsh led efforts to create a similar group in Wisconsin and also greatly strengthened college efforts to attract more private gifts and donations. The turf-grass industry is represented on the CARET group. In addition, Walsh formed a College Board of Visitors, a group of advisors who help guide college research and academic programs as well as funding efforts and external relations.

Among the first to grasp the importance of genetic engineering and biotechnology to the college, Walsh proposed a biotechnology center within the college in 1982. Later he supported an expanded version of the proposal, which established the campus-wide Biotechnology Center. More recently, Walsh led efforts to obtain state and federal support for a new \$26-million biotechnology and genetics building. Appropriation of required state and federal funds is expected during the next two years.

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But biotechnology, like many new technologies that affect agriculture, has been controversial. The college's proposed research on the efficacy and safety of bovine somatotropin—also called bovine growth hormone—set off a firestorm of farmer, consumer and political protest, and a nation-wide effort by some to stop the new technology.

"The college has been and should be embroiled in problems, opportunities and public policy issues that excite and move the people of Wisconsin," Walsh said. "This college is an institution born of the needs of people and will remain vital and strong only if it continues to address those needs."

Walsh's administration was keenly aware of the evolving context of the college and its historically important strengths, accomplishments and obligations. While he was dean, the college celebrated a host of centennials, including those of the Wisconsin Experiment Station in 1983, the Farm and Industry Short Course in 1985 and the college itself in 1989.

While celebrating the college's past accomplishments, Walsh appointed in 1986 a long-range planning committee, which focused attention on the college's future. A second major faculty group is currently reassessing the college's curriculum and programs to strengthen faculty instructional skills.

Born and raised on a farm in Moorland, Iowa, Walsh earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural education from Iowa State University. He received his master's and doctoral degrees in soil science from the UW-Madison and joined the faculty in 1959. His major research and extension interests were in the areas of soil fertility and management.

As an extension soil scientist, Walsh urged farmers to adopt practices that would protect soil and water resources. Shortly after becoming dean, Walsh took a strong stand against continuous row-crop farming practices that result in excess soil losses. In 1982, he called for tougher sanctions against farmers who blatantly disregard soil conservation practices.

The 1980s brought a new intensity to environmental issues and growing interest in minimizing agricultural chemicals and conserving soil and water resources. Special interest groups demanded that the college work harder to develop farming systems that maximize profits and reduce purchased inputs while protect-

ing the soil and water resources that sustain agriculture. Walsh worked with these groups in establishing the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems—a program designed to help develop farming systems that will improve the sustainability of Wisconsin's farms, rural communities and environmental resources.

The social and economic devastation of the farm crisis prompted Walsh to propose a special program—the Farm Financial Analysis Program—to monitor better the financial health of Wisconsin farms. In 1990, he also supported creation of the Agricultural Technology and Family Farm Institute. This program will analyze the implications of new technology to agriculture and rural development, and help public policy makers and others respond appropriately. In 1984, Walsh helped form and guide the Wisconsin Rural Leadership Program, which promotes the development of leaders from rural communities.

To expand the demand for farm products, Walsh provided leadership in developing the Center for Dairy Research on campus in 1986. The

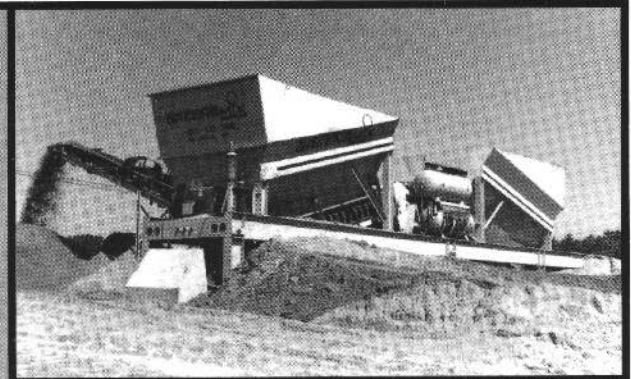
center is devoted to enhancing dairy product sales through new and improved products and processing and marketing techniques.

In an effort to meet the demands of an every-growing urban agriculture presence, Walsh strongly supported the formation of the O.J. NOER CENTER for TURFGRASS RESEARCH. That facility is currently under construction.

Walsh also continued his personal interest in international agriculture, begun with his involvement in agricultural development projects in Egypt and Brazil. While dean, he appointed the college's first associate dean for international studies and nurtured the college's international efforts on trips to China, Indonesia, Germany, France, Peru and Brazil.

In 1987, Walsh's commitment to international development brought him an appointment from President Reagan to the U.S. Board on International Food and Agricultural Development, a policy advisory group to the U.S. Agency for International Development.

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