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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 led 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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