



MTGF

and University of Minnesota News

By LARRY VETTER
MTGF Executive Director

There have been a number of developments that impact members of the MGCSA in recent months. In somewhat chronological order, the first of these is that the Horticultural Science Department has a new Department Head, Dr. Thomas Michaels. He received his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Michaels comes to us from the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada where he served for the past seven years as the Associate Dean of the Ontario Agricultural College. In this role Tom was responsible for the college's undergraduate programs which encompass four campuses, as well as continuing education programs. Since his arrival on the St. Paul campus, I've had the pleasure of meeting with him on a number of occasions. As a result of these meetings it has become very obvious that he will be a strong supporter of the turf and grounds industries in this area.

More recently, Dr. Don White's replacement in now on board and we are all very excited to have this position filled. Dr. Eric Watkins, originally from Minnesota, comes to us from Rutgers University with a specialty in breeding and plant genetics. Dr. Watkins officially started on February 1st of this year and is quickly getting up to speed. After graduating from the University of Minnesota, Eric began his Ph.D. program in plant biology at Rutgers University where he was able to study and experience all aspects of a world-class turfgrass breeding program under the direction of Dr. William Meyer. Eric hopes to use the skills and knowledge that he gained at Rutgers to effectively train students in turfgrass science as well as develop an extensive turfgrass breeding research program at the University of Minnesota.

While the staff additions mentioned above are very positive, the same cannot be reported for the turfgrass pathology position. The MTGF continues to look for ways to assist the University in filling this

position. Given the current budget situation, it appears unlikely that this position will be filled in the near future. Dr. Chuck Muscoplat, Dean of COAFES, continues to state that filling this position is one of his highest priorities. However, until funding improves or retirements within the College take place, this position cannot be filled.

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Realizing how important this position is, particularly to the golf industry, the MTGF offered to assist in filling this position with a \$90,000.00 offer spread over three years. Unfortunately even this amount of financial support was not enough to bridge the gap between current funding and expenses. This offer of support remains on the table in the event that budget conditions improve at the University.

On a brighter note, the Board of Directors of the MTGF at its March 2004 meeting approved an extensive agenda in support of research, teaching and outreach in various areas of the turf and grounds industries. Funding for several programs in the Horticultural Science Department were approved totaling \$60,000.00. This donation has been made in support of the following: a research technician for Dr. Brian Horgan's program; maintenance of the TROE Center; Dr. Eric Watkins' research activities in developing new turfgrass varieties; Brad Pedersen's landscape program; and three different research projects being

conducted by Dr. Jeff Gillman that are associated with stem girdling roots.

Also at the March meeting a significant amount of funds were allocated for discussions with University officials in an effort to jump-start the planning stage for a building on the TROE Center site on the St. Paul campus. A meeting with the Executive Committee of the MTGF and University administration personnel is scheduled for early April to explore this possibility. This facility is now on the six-year University plan but the MTGF is hoping to help speed that process using this approach.

While the above addresses research activities and facilities, the MTGF Board of Directors also approved additional activities for the coming year. A Pesticide Recertification Workshop has been

scheduled for October 20, 2004 at Midland Hills Country Club.

Pending input from the MDA, an out-state workshop may also be added in the fall of 2004. In addition, the MTGF will be scheduling a Power Limited Technician recertification workshop in the fall of 2004. As a supplement to that workshop, the two-hour code requirement for this recertification will be scheduled during the

2005 Minnesota Green Expo. The scheduling of that session will definitely not compete with the Pesticide Recertification sessions at the Expo. The dates for the next Minnesota Green Expo are January 5, 6 and 7, 2005 with the Pesticide Recertification portion being January 7th. Your MGCSA Education Committee has met and come up with a great list of speakers and topics for the '05 Expo. Taking advantage of this great education and networking event is one of the best investments you can make for yourself and the future of your profession.

Your MTGF continues to pursue its mission "to promote the green industries in Minnesota through support of research, education and outreach at the University of Minnesota and elsewhere". MGCSA is certainly playing a lead role in the pursuit of that mission and together we are having a positive impact on the quality of the turf and grounds areas throughout this part of the country. Hopefully your courses have come out of winter with minimum damage and the coming season will be kind to all of you who work so hard to make the world a better place in which to live.