

January 24, 2003

Senator Ted Ferrioli and members of the OSU Range Working Group:

This is a brief report to you on decisions we have made at Oregon State University with respect to the Department of Rangeland Resources, its place in the University, and its budget. As I have said before, decisions that Oregon State University made about the Department of Rangeland Resources were made for reasons of budget and programming. In making those decisions, we believed that the University could continue to deliver excellent quality programs in rangeland resources and rangeland ecology employing a different organizational structure.

However, many of those served by the Department of Rangeland Resources see the present structure as serving the interests of students as well as range-related research and extension programs. We have heard these constituencies and are mindful of our long-standing responsibilities to natural resource management and natural resource-related industries in Oregon. Dr. Bill Krueger, the head of the Department of Rangeland Resources, and I have met several times during the past two weeks to discuss the issues. We have agreed on what constitutes a core program, and have examined various options for the department. After considering these options and being attentive to the needs of Oregon expressed to us by this Working Group and by other means, we have chosen not to close the department as previously announced.

The specifics of this decision, on which Dr. Krueger and I are in agreement and that he supports, include:

- Continuing the operation of Rangeland Resources as one of the academic departments in the College of Agricultural Sciences, with Dr. Krueger as its head.
- A reduction of the Department's budget that is in proportion with overall reductions being made by the OSU Extension Service and the Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station.
- A commitment by Dr. Krueger and myself, with the endorsement of the University President, to establish an advisory group comprising industry leaders, representatives of appropriate government agencies, and members of the University community. This advisory body will be invited to work with the Department and my office to develop—by January 2004—a shared vision for rangeland resources and rangeland ecology programs at Oregon State University that is a sound investment consistent with the University's budget. In encouraging this further thinking, our intent is to assure that the University can continue to be a leader with rangeland programs in instruction, research, and outreach that build on OSU's unique strengths.
- A renewed commitment to regular and open communication between the Office of the Dean, and Dr. Krueger and the departmental faculty. To this end, I have asked Dr. Roy Arnold, the College's executive associate dean, to work with the unit. This will serve to foster communication, advance the planning process, and clarify parameters by which the department will be evaluated over the next five years, including such things as student enrollment, numbers of graduates, and appropriate measures for its research activities.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate a message I have sought to make clear throughout what has been a difficult period for all of us. Both the College of Agricultural Sciences broadly and I, personally, as its dean have consistently envisioned and intended a strong rangeland resources program for Oregon. Where our differences have arisen have been on how best to achieve that.

Neither you nor I want anything to get in the way of a high quality program that is directed to the high priorities of Oregon. Dr. Krueger has told me he agrees that we can achieve that with what I have outlined for you here today.

Thank you for your continuing involvement and your patience in this matter. All of us in the College of Agricultural Sciences look forward to a constructive and productive relationship with you in the future.

Thayne R. Dutson
Dean
College of Agricultural Sciences
Oregon State University