



## TRUST IS A MUST BETWEEN DONORS AND COLLEGES

WITH shrinking government support for universities, educational leaders have been forced to develop new funding streams that include alliances with the private sector. While these growing relationships have become the new norm at institutions of higher learning, academic leaders must realize that donors expect everyone to follow written agreements. When written plans are altered after donations, trust may be broken for generations or more after administrative leaders move on.

That trust was definitely tarnished on a project to construct a new Wisconsin Center for Dairy Research and renovate the Babcock Hall Dairy Plant. On the university's planning docket since the early 2000s, life finally was breathed into the effort when three groups — university educators, state politicians, and dairy leaders — coalesced around the \$32 million dairy foods idea.

As the joint Wisconsin Center for Dairy Research and Babcock Hall Dairy Plant renovation project made its way through university committees, it eventually gained approval of the University of Wisconsin Regents, the system's highest governing body. That set the wheels in motion in the Wisconsin state capitol, where the state legislature and governor approved \$16 million for the project with one caveat: that the university, in a partnership with industry, raise the remaining 50 percent.

Industry more than met the challenge. Instead of raising the requested \$16 million

for the "Campaign to Secure Wisconsin's Dairy Future," the state's dairy processors and their partners from across the country donated \$18 million. With that response, one would think the only remaining tasks would have been construction and a ribbon cutting celebration. Not so, as excessive energy was expended from this past June to October to get the project back on track.

With an estimated \$11 million in cost overruns, some University of Wisconsin-Madison leaders proposed to substantially cut the Wisconsin Center for Dairy Research project while beefing up the Babcock Hall Dairy Plant. However, those voting with the \$18.4 million in donations never signed up for that shift in plans. Nor did state politicians or the University of Wisconsin Regents, based on written documents. That's when five months of closed door meetings ensued to re-clarify the project's original intent.

In a meeting that coincided with the start of the 50th World Dairy Expo, university leadership declared the original project back on track. A new design firm, refocused plans, and redrawn budgets all resulted from intense meetings. Even though all involved are singing from the same song book now, trust between donors and the campus remains tarnished. It may take a generation or more to bring the glow back as family-owned dairy businesses have long memories . . . far longer than tenure of campus faculty.

## COMMON DENOMINATORS IN TOP REPRO HERDS

WITH one herd topping out at a 46 percent pregnancy rate, this year's winners of the Dairy Cattle Reproduction Council's (DCRC) top reproduction awards represent an outstanding commitment to getting cows safe in calf. The group's collective success is no coincidence. With one editor from our staff visiting all six herds throughout five states during a seven-day window, we observed some common denominators among these shining stars.

First and foremost, these farm teams keep attention to detail. It was evident that all stress accurate herd health records and punctuality when following reproductive protocols. In every instance, this commitment to time and schedules was a farm-based theme. The simple fact that everyone was ready at the scheduled time for the Round Table photos spoke volumes, as many herd managers were in the midst of chopping corn at the time of our early September visits. In many cases, those pictured went far beyond the farm staff to include veterinarians, nutritionists, and A.I. personnel.

Speaking of teams, the top reproduction herds value outside advice. In this fast-paced world, it's challenging to keep abreast of every innovation. In our visits, we learned that these farm families and their employees rely heavily on outside advisers. These extended team members routinely talk to each other in person, on cellphones, and via email. They even engaged in meaningful conversation during our visit and photo shoots.

Cows clearly come first. It was not only voiced but witnessed by our editorial team. Turn to the Round Table and look at the photos, and you will quickly visualize that these farms have calm, curious cows that readily come up to people, even while flashes were popping during photos. Those content cows are a leading indicator of great husbandry skills.

We encourage you to read the Round Table on pages 707 to 709 to learn more about these herds who like cream in a field of 128 entries . . . a new contest record. New York's Dale Mattoon, a Platinum winner, offered this sage advice when asked about his reproductive program, "Focus on the basics, there is no magic bullet. Master good husbandry and focus on the target every day."

We agree with Dale and concur that all of these farm families and their extended farm teams are proof that when cows come first, good things happen.

## 131 YEARS AGO

*Pedigree without performance is like a lottery. There will be now and then a prize, but the blanks will be discouragingly frequent. But when a record of performance, running through two or three or four generations, accompanies a pedigree, one may reasonably expect the offspring to inherit a capacity for similar performance.*

*W.D. Hoard*  
Founder, 1885

## UNLIKE DAIRY, NOT ALL FISH LABELS CAN BE TRUSTED

FOR dairy, FDA's standards of identity have long protected product integrity and its healthy nutrition halo. Even with its low-fat and high-protein reputation, fish doesn't benefit from dairy's trustworthy standards of identity that fortify trust among consumers.

That label integrity issue came to full light when the environmental group Oceania conducted a DNA-study on some 1,200 fish products. After taking samples from 700 different stores across 21 states, it found one in three fish were mislabeled in clear violation of Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations. And the biggest discrepancies were in America's largest cities — New York, Boston, and Los Angeles. So much for consumer confidence building in America's largest population centers.

Seafood naturally lends itself to fraud. Once filleted, most fish looks the same. Plus, there is the fact that 90 percent of

America's seafood comes from overseas, according to FDA statistics.

As for remedying the fish issue, experts suggest that consumers look for trustworthy, third-party certification, with the Marine Stewardship Council being the top choice for wild-caught fish and the Global Aquaculture Alliance floating to the top for farm-raised fish. And another buying tip: Purchase U.S.-sourced fish when possible because it's the world's most regulated fish sector. Unfortunately, that's a lot for busy consumers to remember.

While dairy enjoys a strong domestic infrastructure and production base, dairy's standards of identity further protect our industry from fraud and deliver products that consumers can trust when making buying decisions in stores and restaurants. Any attempt to erode these well-defined dairy standards could lead us down the same fishy path as seafood.