

# UI ag research yields healthy return on investment, study finds

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

Like most land grant universities across the country, the University of Idaho’s agricultural research facilities are showing their age. And despite the critical work performed at those facilities, funding for upgrades has been limited.

The Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station in the university’s College of Agricultural and Life Sciences has supported the state’s agribusiness industry and the broader economy for 125 years, but its nine research and extension centers are about 50 years old.

“We’re dealing with an aging infrastructure” and equipment that is older than the new researchers the university hopes to bring on board, said Mark McGuire, IAES director.

“We need to step up. We need to make some changes,” he said.

That need prompted an outside analysis of the economic impact of the research centers to demonstrate return on investment.

“We’re trying to show the state’s investment in the research and extension centers has a very good return,” he said.

The analysis — performed by Emsi, an economic analysis company based in Moscow, Idaho — weighed the economic impact of three of the largest



Work at the Aberdeen Agricultural Research & Extension Center. A study commissioned by University of Idaho officials found that its nine research and extension centers bolster the state’s economy.

research centers, those at Kimberly, Aberdeen and Parma.

It found their \$8.1 billion in research funding in FY 2016-17 created \$11.5 million in economic activity. That’s a 141 percent return on research funding — or a return of \$1.41 for every \$1 spent by the research facilities.

Those three centers also generated \$3.8 million in new grant funding and created \$5.1 million in additional income and an additional 137 jobs across the state.

The analysis also estimated the direct impact of intellectual property from the research — ranging from plant breeding

to irrigation efficiency — and found it would generate \$11 million in additional income and \$37.6 million in additional sales if farmers fully implemented those varieties or practices.

In 2011 alone, university researchers’ early detection and warning of potential stripe rust damage to wheat crops generated a one-time economic impact of \$178.5 million in income and \$230 million in sales for Idaho’s wheat industry and the state’s economy, Emsi reported.

The research not only benefits agricultural producers but all of Idaho, providing additional jobs, tax revenue and sales.

It also provides environmental benefits through improved agricultural management practices that reduce water and chemical usage, McGuire said.

But the research facilities and equipment are so old that people served by IAES wonder how researchers can find solutions for the challenges they bring, he said.

Significant funding is needed for repairs and maintenance and to replace laboratories, some of which are well over 50 years old.

That plan involves allocating IAES dollars, support from the Legislature and funding from commodity groups.

## Idaho ag college dean outlines \$25M research & extension plan

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

PARMA, Idaho — During a March 8 meeting, the dean of the University of Idaho’s agriculture college laid out the basic outline of his goal to invest \$25 million in UI’s nine research and extension centers.

The average age of facilities at the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences’ research stations is 50 years old and the college plans to spend millions of dollars to build modern ones that can help the college recruit top researchers, said CALS dean Michael Parrella.

He said the plan starts with the Parma facility, which conducts research on multiple crops, including beans, potatoes, onions, hops, mint, tree fruit, wine and table grapes, cereals and seed crops.

“If we can build a \$6 million facility here (at Parma), that is a game-changer. That is transformational. That’s what I’m shooting for,” he told about 50 members of the state’s farming industry.

Parrella said that when CALS announced it was holding a visioning session to talk about the future of the Parma



Michael Parrella, dean of the University of Idaho College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, speaks about his hope of investing \$25 million in nine ag research centers March 8 during a visioning session at Parma Ridge Winery.

research station, some people asked him if the university was considering closing the station.

“No, it’s just the opposite,” he said. “We’re going to make it better and invest in it. And we’re not going to stop at Parma. We’re going to invest in all of our R and E centers.”

The visioning session was held to garner industry input on what it needs from the research centers and Parrella said CALS will take that input and put together a blueprint

for moving forward.

The money needed to invest in the research stations will come from a three-way partnership between the college, industry and the legislature, Parrella said.

People who attended the event told Capital Press they believe industry members would be willing to contribute financially to accomplish CALS’ vision of investing in the research stations but they will have to be convinced the college has a solid plan.



Shelly Boshart Davis is seeking election in Oregon House District 15.

## Boshart Davis makes run for state House seat

By MITCH LIES  
For the Capital Press

Albany, Ore., straw farmer Shelly Boshart Davis long believed that one day she would serve her community in a public forum.

She just didn’t think it would happen this fast.

Davis, 38, has announced she has filed to run for the Oregon House District 15 seat.

Her filing was precipitated by the announcement in late February that seven-term Rep. Andy Olson, R-Albany, would not seek re-election. With Olson’s encouragement, Davis decided it was time to make the leap.

“I’ve been talking to Andy about this for a while, and when I was asked to consider representing our district in the legislature, I knew it was time to step up to the plate,” Davis said.

“I knew that someday I would give back to the community in some form of public office, but I thought that would be further down the road,” she said.

Davis, who is running unopposed in the May primary, said that if elected, she believes she can juggle her legislative duties with her responsibilities with Boshart Trucking, which bales over 20,000 acres of straw each summer, and as vice president of Bossco Trading, which negotiates straw sales internationally.

“The timing is good,” Davis said. “The long (legislative) session (held on odd-numbered years) ends around the Fourth of July, which is typically when we start baling. And I am only twenty minutes from the Capitol.”

“If I had lived in Malheur County, this wouldn’t be an option,” she said.

Also, she said: “The legislature is not a full-time job, and Oregon is meant to have a ‘citizen legislature’ made up of ordinary people. Most in

the legislature have other jobs and many still run businesses. It is all about priorities.”

House District 15 has a long history of supporting Republican candidates, but Republicans hold only a 2.5 percentage point advantage over Democrats in the largely blue-collar district, and winning the seat isn’t seen as a sure thing.

Davis said she plans to run a full-scale campaign, with the big push coming in September and October, after harvest.

She added that while she has never run for office, she is no stranger to campaigns, having been involved in efforts to defeat Measure 92, the GMO-labeling measure that voters rejected in 2014, and Measure 97, the gross-receipts tax measure that voters rejected in 2016.

Davis also is no stranger to the Capitol.

“I have probably testified on anywhere from 20 to 25 different issues over the past few years, from diesel to emissions to labor, manufacturing, pesticides — all of these multiple issues that have hit us (in agriculture) over the past few years. And I am very involved in the Oregon Seed Council, Oregon Aglink, Oregon Women for Agriculture and Farm Bureau.”

She also has served on the Government Affairs Committee of the Albany Chamber of Commerce, on an advisory committee for the Agriculture Transportation Coalition and, since 2016, on the Linn County Budget Committee.

Davis, who is married and has three daughters, said she has received tremendous encouragement and more than \$15,000 in campaign donations since she announced her plans.

“People have been calling, asking how they can support,” she said. “I think it is encouraging and humbling, and I hope it keeps going.”

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