

May 15, 1862
USDA Established

On May 15, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed into law an act of Congress establishing the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). President Lincoln called USDA the "People's Department" because he understood the importance of agriculture to the nation.

May 20, 1862
Homestead Act

The Homestead Act provided a process for a citizen to file an application and lay claim to 160 acres of surveyed Government land.

July 2, 1862
Morrill Act
(Land Grant College Act)

The Morrill Act donated public lands to each state for the endowment, support, and maintenance of colleges where the leading object shall be to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts.

March 2, 1887
Hatch Act

The Hatch Act authorized federal-grant funds to each state that would establish an agricultural experiment station in connection with the land-grant college established under the provisions of the Morrill Act of July 2, 1862.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Historic Milestones

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Last year in 2012, we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Morrill Act (also known as the "Land-grant College Act") that was signed into law by Abraham Lincoln on 2 July 1862. This single piece of legislation put on track the development of public "land-grant" institutions in every state of the union including the University of Arizona. This year we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of Arizona 4-H and next year we celebrate 100 years of Cooperative Extension. It seems appropriate to reflect on our history, consider where we have come from, and how we have come to be in the form that we see today at the University of Arizona and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

The early 1860's marked a significant period in our nation's history. Not only was the U.S. embroiled in the Civil War, but this period also witnessed the implementation of several important pieces of legislation. The U.S. Congress had been gridlocked since the 1850's due primarily to the political divisions associated with slavery. Before Abraham Lincoln's inauguration on 4 March 1861, seven states had seceded from the Union. Four more seceded after his inauguration, after which Congress began to move.

On 15 May 1862 Abraham Lincoln signed legislation creating a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Then on 20 May, Congress passed the Homestead Act which had a huge impact on the settlement of the western lands of the U.S. The Homestead Act provided for the eligibility of a purchase of 160 acres of land for \$18 by people living on and farming the land for five years. Any citizen or intended citizen was eligible if they had never taken up arms against the U.S., including female heads of households, and African Americans who became citizens under the 14th Amendment. Unfortunately, the Homestead Act provided one means for the displacement of the Native Americans.

The Morrill Act was passed and signed by President Lincoln on 2 July 1862 providing for the foundation of land-grant universities in every state of the union with the basic purpose of developing public universities in each state to "educate the populace in agriculture, home economics, mechanical arts, and other professions."

The basic foundation and philosophy associated with the formation of the land-grant institutions can be traced back to the thinking of Thomas

**August 30, 1890
Second Morrill Act**

The second Morrill Act secured additional funding for the land grant colleges and provided additional "separate but equal" land grant institutions for black students. This led to the creation of 17 historically black land-grant colleges.

**1913
Arizona 4-H Begins**

Boys and girls club work (now called 4-H youth development) had its beginning in 1913, when Mr. George P. Peabody organized a boys cotton club in Chandler.

**May 8, 1914
Smith Lever Act**

The Smith-Lever Act provided federal support for land-grant institutions to offer educational programs to enhance the application of useful and practical information beyond their campuses through cooperative extension efforts with states and local communities.

**September 28, 1994
Improving America's
Schools Act**

Land-grant status was conferred on 29 Native American colleges in 1994 as a provision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act. In Arizona land grant status was awarded to Diné College in Tsaile and Tohono O'odham Community College in Sells.

Jefferson in the very early years of the 19th century that were perhaps best developed in his writings on the "General Diffusion of Knowledge." In these writings he pointed to the need of a progressive republic to have a well-educated voting population. In the early 1800's higher education was available only to the very wealthy class of citizens. Thus, Jefferson saw the need for public institutions to provide an affordable college education to the general population. He also called for the need of these public institutions to "bring science to bear on practical problems."

With the implementation of the Morrill Act in 1862, we can see the connection to Jefferson's ideas and the root of the public institutions, such as the UA that we have today. The more complete development of the land-grant model took place with the signing of the Hatch Act in 1887 that provided for the formation of the Agricultural Experiment Stations associated with each land-grant institution. This was followed by the completion of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 that established a system of Cooperative Extension services associated with each of the land-grant universities.

The land-grant institution model is still entirely relevant to modern American society in the 21st century, consistent with the early visions of Thomas Jefferson. We still need a well-educated populace and the 21st century problems certainly require the application of good science and technology. The land-grant model we have today with the capacity of directing strong degree programs (Academic Programs), the development of robust research programs (Agricultural Experiment Station), and the bridging and engagement with the university and the public (Extension system) are absolutely critical features in this type of public institution. This is a university model that is envied in many parts of the world and it should be worthy of the public and our efforts to strengthen and build organizations such as the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences for the future needs of our society.

Cooperative Extension represents a unique three way partnership of the United States Department of Agriculture, the University of Arizona and Counties to provide local citizens' access to the Land Grant University System. Our roots in communities help us understand local needs and put university expertise and connections where they can make a difference – improving lives, communities and economies.

References

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Cooperative Extension in the 21st Century



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