

WCMA PERSPECTIVES



JOHN UMHOEFER

Executive Director
Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association
608-828-4550
jumhoefer@wischeesemakersassn.org

A Successful Campaign for Babcock

Last June, this column noted that the campaign to raise a new Center for Dairy Research in Madison and rebuild the Babcock Hall Dairy Plant was off to a fast start. Now even more great news: this fund-raising effort has been a success. The targeted goal of \$16 million in donations has been reached!

Dairy manufacturers, dairy industry suppliers and individuals from across the US, and firms headquartered abroad, have seen the value, the promise, of a world-class dairy research facility at the University of Wisconsin and have given generously. Take a moment and smile – the dairy industry in the United States is alive and well and looking to the future.

Donors to date can be viewed on-line at www.cdr.wisc.edu/building/pdf/building_update.pdf

The fund-raising effort hasn't stopped and needn't stop. Additional pledges arriving now will allow the University to expand the initially-proposed structure, with the target of building an even larger footprint and more square footage for the new Center for Dairy Research.

This new building, connected to the rebuilt Babcock Hall Dairy Plant, will house facilities for cheese research and pilot production, milk and whey ingredient research and scale-up, cultured products development, food applications labs, and state-of-the-art training/educational areas. Gunning for a larger footprint at this time means no need for a "Phase 2" addition to this facility in some distant future.

The rebuilt Babcock Hall Dairy Plant will include modern milk processing/handling, buttermaking, and ice cream manufacturing, which will help train the next generation of dairy students.

The Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association Board of Directors and others in industry support this march to maximize now the footprint of a new Center for Dairy Research building and WCMA members continue to give generously to this campaign.

It is with some pride that WCMA can report that 87 percent of donations to date have come from members of the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association.

A great deal of credit goes to the fund raising campaign co-chairs: Lou Gentine, CEO of Sargento

Foods and Dave Fuhrmann, president of Foremost Farms.

Their leadership has been an essential element in the rapid achievement of this fund-raising goal.

The campaign includes on-going donations of equipment and technology from dairy industry suppliers. These donations are now ramping up as plans for the dairy plant and the new Center for Dairy Research become more refined.

Industry donations are partnered with state of Wisconsin funds to make this building project possible. Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker kicked off this fund-raising campaign last April at the International Cheese Technology Expo in Milwaukee, and his administration will follow up that support with the concrete step of placing building funds in the state's next biennial budget.

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The state budget will provide \$16 million for this construction project.

This spring, WCMA will place its lobbyists and resources behind promoting and protecting this capital item in the state budget.

The budget will be officially announced in February, taken up by the Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance in March and debated in the Legislature in June. The Governor will likely sign a new, two-year budget in July.

This building project request (a fraction of the state budget) enjoys widespread support in the Legislature and with the Governor. And for good reasons:

- It's the future of the dairy industry. In Wisconsin. Dairy is a \$26 billion industry in the state supporting 170,000 state jobs.

- During the recent recession, Wisconsin dairy manufacturers didn't pull back, they grew, building new green-field dairy plants, adding to existing facilities and hiring hundreds of workers for full-time employment.

- Milk production and cheese production are continually on the rise, and Wisconsin is aggressively growing its value-added cheese industry and its already No. 1 whey processing industry.

- The professors and professionals in Babcock Hall's Food Science Department and the extraordinary team of researchers and experts in the Center for Dairy Research are respected and watched worldwide. Babcock Hall and CDR are the epicenter for cheese research, product application research, product quality and troubleshooting expertise, and industry short course training.

- Cheese makers, butter makers, whey processors and cultured dairy product makers look to the Center for Dairy Research as their primary R&D center. CDR has done amazing things cramped in a corner of a 1950's dairy processing facility. Their potential to educate new students, train dairy workers, develop new products and scale-up ideas in a new, world-class facility is unbounded.

With success in the state legislature, architectural and engineering work on rebuilding the dairy plant and erecting a new Center for Dairy Research could begin immediately next summer. These state building projects take time and contractors may break ground on the project in late 2014.

If you or your organization is still considering a donation to this campaign, don't hesitate to move forward. The dairy industry has met the goal to make this dream a reality. And now we're moving past that milestone to build the best possible Center for Dairy Research.

And while big donations have made this campaign a success, individual donations have made a statement about the personal commitment many have to this great industry. The Short Course Million Fund, initiated by Prof. Bill Wendorff, is seeking individual donations from everyone that has taken a short course at Babcock Hall. These donations will help support programming and facilities related to industry short courses in this new building.

Read about this challenge fund at www.cdr.wisc.edu/building/index.html

The campaign to rebuild the dairy plant at Babcock Hall and raise a new Center for Dairy Research in Madison is this generation's legacy to the next. Congratulations on your success.

John Umhoefer has served as executive director of the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association since 1992. You can phone John at (608) 828-4550; Fax him at (608) 828-4551; or e-mail John Umhoefer at jumhoefer@wischeesemakersassn.org