



# The Legacy and the Promise: 150 Years of Land-Grant Universities

Penn State University Park  
State College, Pennsylvania  
*June 23 and 24, 2011*

## About the Conference

To honor the 150th anniversary of the passage of the Morrill Land-Grant Act, Penn State will sponsor a scholarly conference to examine the past and the future of the land-grant mission. The conference will be held at the University Park campus on **June 23 and 24, 2011**.

When the Land-Grant Act became law on July 2, 1862, its goal was to promote collegiate education in the practical fields of agriculture and the mechanic arts—and to place them in institutions equal to those that taught the liberal arts. It also invested in public resources—in this case, federal land—to make college accessible to the “sons of toil.”

From their very beginning, land-grant institutions had multiple missions: advancing agriculture and other “practical arts”; providing education opportunity to the “industrial classes”; mobilizing public support of higher education; and contributing to national economic growth. Such varied goals were often contested among the act’s constituencies of farmers, scientists, workers, and businessmen, all expecting to have their interests served. Both conflict and accommodation ensued as the land-grant colleges and universities defined their roles during the decades when American higher education underwent unprecedented expansion.

Today, the land-grant colleges have become some of the largest and most respected universities in the world, but the land-grant mission itself is undergoing redefinition. The value of higher education as a public good, which inspired the original Morrill Act, is now being challenged. Public support for state colleges and universities is diminishing, along with consensus on public responsibility for higher education. The role of land-grant institutions in providing access to higher education has become far more complex, requiring further interpretation. Relationships with the “practical arts” have grown enormously, and now encompass varying facets of research, commercialization, and economic development. Moreover, these universities have assumed responsibilities for service and outreach with few apparent limits.

## Call for Papers

The conference organizers invite proposal papers that will bring scholarly inquiry to bear on the relevance and the future of the land-grant mission and land-grant universities in the 21st century. The proposals should focus on either the history of land-grant universities or their contemporary challenges. The conference will provide some support for contributors, and subsequent publication of selected papers is anticipated.

Proposals will be considered until **December 31, 2010**; however, early submission is recommended.

Send paper proposals to Roger Geiger at [rlg9@psu.edu](mailto:rlg9@psu.edu).

## For More Information

**Roger L. Geiger,**  
Distinguished Professor,  
Higher Education Program  
Center for the Study of  
Higher Education  
Phone: 814-863-3784  
E-mail: [rlg9@psu.edu](mailto:rlg9@psu.edu)

**Roger L. Williams,**  
Executive Director,  
Penn State Alumni Association  
Affiliate Associate Professor,  
Higher Education  
Phone: 814-865-6516  
E-mail: [rlw1@psu.edu](mailto:rlw1@psu.edu)

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