



## Morrill Act Sesquicentennial Anniversary: Renewed Commitment of Public Universities

In 1862, the passage of the Morrill Act laid the groundwork for the democratization of public higher education. Today, more than 100 land-grant universities serve the nation and the world. Moreover, the land-grant philosophy of learning, discovery and engagement has been widely embraced by universities nationwide.

Land-grant and public universities offer graduate and undergraduate students access to highly qualified faculty interested in investigating phenomena and problems of both basic and applied nature. This combination generates a synergy benefitting both learning and discovery. It also fuels a dynamic engagement effort that uses new knowledge to drive economic activity, enhance agricultural and industrial productivity, and improve quality of life.

As the nation celebrates the myriad innovations and accomplishments of the past 150 years, land-grant and public universities are recommitting to their public service missions of educating students, seeking new knowledge, and helping to solve problems locally, regionally, nationally and beyond. To be successful, land-grant and public universities must act with moral and intellectual integrity, with independence, and without personal and institutional interest. They must live up to a distinguished historical legacy and the great expectations of society.

At the same time, land-grant and public universities are facing unprecedented challenges—challenges exasperated by the recent economic downturn. The time has come for a renewed partnership between public higher education and society. Our nation relies on a higher education system operating in the land-grant tradition of integrating learning, discovery and engagement.

The history of land-grant and public universities is rich, vital and of critical importance to the development of communities, states, and the nation. Public higher education continues the promise of the American ideal that each

### Morrill Act Sesquicentennial Presidential Steering Committee

J. Bernard Machen  
*President, University of Florida*

E. Gordon Gee  
*President, The Ohio State University*

Carolyn Mahoney  
*President, Lincoln University*

David Yarlott, Jr.  
*President, Little Big Horn College*

Nancy Zimpher  
*Chancellor, The State University of New York*

### Events Calendar\*

November 13, 2011  
Justin Smith Morrill Lecture  
124th Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA

June 26, 2012  
Morrill Act Sesquicentennial Convocation  
Ronald Reagan Building and International  
Trade Center, Washington, DC

June 27 – July 10, 2012  
Smithsonian Folklife Festival National Mall,  
Washington, DC

November 11, 2012  
Morrill Act Sesquicentennial Anniversary  
Closing Ceremony  
125th Annual Meeting, Denver, CO

\* Additional events will be added during the year.

generation will do better than the next. The Morrill Act Sesquicentennial Anniversary provides public higher education with the opportunity to enhance our ability to address pressing societal needs at home and abroad, including our missions of access and affordability, public service, and

innovative research and development as keys to national competitiveness.

## **THE MORRILL ACT SESQUICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY**

Upon the recommendation of a presidential steering committee, A·P·L·U will observe this important anniversary with a number of specific activities outlined below. Individual campuses are encouraged to offer their own programs as well.

1. **Commemorative Publication.** More than a dozen essays on the future of the land-grant system will be included in a commemorative publication. Daniel Fogel, former president of The University of Vermont, has created an overall structure for the document and funding for the publication is being provided by the National Endowment of Humanities. The essays will not only provide a historical review, but also challenge readers to think about the needs and efforts of land-grant and public universities in the coming decades.
2. **National Convocation.** A·P·L·U will host a national convocation on June 26, 2012, in Washington, DC. The convocation program will celebrate the myriad innovations and accomplishments of the past 150 years, while calling attention to the work of land-grant and public universities. The convocation will focus on promoting the learning, discovery and engagement efforts of these institutions to key decision makers and beyond.
3. **2012 Smithsonian Folklife Festival.** The spirit of the Morrill Act and the cultural impact of land-grant institutions will be celebrated during the 2012 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, June 27–July 8 on the National Mall in Washington, DC. Nearly 20 A·P·L·U -member institutions and the entire 1890 system responded to an invitation to participate. USDA, which will also celebrate its sesquicentennial anniversary, is a partner in this effort.
4. **Issue-Focused Meeting Series:** A·P·L·U will be partnering with member institutions on a series of issue-based meetings. Among

the topics identified to date: the public university role in the future of energy and sustainability; the role of university systems in providing efficient educational administration; understanding and increasing degree attainment; and alternate delivery models for public institutions. These issue-based meetings are aimed at bringing together university leaders for one-day workshops so they can learn about best practices, emerging trends and discuss and debate the problems while beginning to develop possible solutions.

5. **Toolkit.** This web-based toolkit includes background material, draft proclamations, talking points, etc. and ideas on how universities can collaborate on sesquicentennial efforts. This website can also be used as a tool to tell the overall story of public higher education and should be kept current after the anniversary celebration. (Universities are encouraged to add their efforts to an online calendar of events.) For more on the toolkit, visit: [www.aplu.org/Morrill150Toolkit](http://www.aplu.org/Morrill150Toolkit).

For more information on any of these efforts, please contact David Edelson at [dedelson@aplu.org](mailto:dedelson@aplu.org)