



Education

March 2008

The Future of Plant Pathology Education

► **Purpose/Goals:** The US network of agricultural experiment stations, cooperative extension units, USDA-ARS research centers, and diagnostic laboratories have been the backbone upon which knowledge of plant diseases has been discovered and management strategies developed and transferred to wide-scale practice. This network is an increasingly vital element in our nation's efforts to ensure an ample supply of food and fiber at reasonable prices. The ability of university, government, and private sector entities to research and control plant diseases successfully depends on whether agricultural colleges and universities across the US can provide students with a strong knowledge of plant pathology and experience in applying that knowledge to the challenge of disease management. However, the historic strength of this vital "feeder system" is at risk. Recent data obtained by committees of the American Phytopathological Society document:

- A decline in the numbers of students completing advanced degrees in plant pathology,
- A deteriorating capacity in faculty numbers and expertise diversity,
- A diminishing ability of graduate programs to offer some curricular elements, and
- A decreasing capability to provide students with diverse educational experiences (including field experiences).

To address these challenges, APS seeks support for a national workshop to bring together educators, governmental leaders, employers, and students to:

- Enhance understanding of the current status of plant pathology education and the future needs for plant pathologists in the US,
- Identify strategies for strengthening plant pathology education and research training opportunities, and
- Develop action plans for carrying out the proposed strategies.

► **Principle Audiences:** The challenges facing education in plant pathology are shared by other disciplines, but we believe that the nature of plant pathology, as a cross-cutting and integrative discipline, makes it ideally suited as a "model system" for national discussion and strategic planning.

Apart from being a critical issue for universities and private sector employers, this issue is also critically important to government-sector employers and programs, particularly the ARS, CSREES, APHIS, EPA, the Forest Service, and state departments of agriculture.

► **Goals/Outcomes:** The health of our nation's food, fiber, and forest resources depends upon our ability to attract and train outstanding graduate students as the next generation of plant pathologists. The purpose of the proposed workshop is to identify strategies for strengthening the educational system and meeting national needs for plant pathology expertise into the future.

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