



A Brief History of the ISU Agricultural Endowment, 1937-2022

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Beginnings. The ISU Agricultural Endowment was established in 1937 during the heart of the depression. The non-profit corporation was begun with gifts of farmland and contributions from Clifton Robert (C.R.) Musser, a man who saw first-hand the problems facing agriculture at the time and who had a vision to help farm families solve some of those problems. The formation pre-dated the beginning of the ISU Foundation.

Musser was chairman of the board of the Muscatine Bank and Trust Company. The Musser family had long-time lumber interests in Muscatine. Working with Iowa State President Charles Friley and Dean of Agriculture H.H. Kildee, Musser laid the groundwork for what was originally called the Iowa State College Agricultural Foundation. Musser also owned a highly-respected purebred Hereford beef cattle farm, and it is believed he and Kildee became acquainted at prominent livestock shows.

In 1938, Musser donated nine Iowa farms to Iowa State and \$100,000. In 1942, he donated another three farms. The Agricultural Foundation was organized as a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation affiliated with ISU's College of Agriculture. The Foundation leased the farms to families. Musser was alarmed by the depletion of soil and the lack of skills and resourcefulness on the part of farmers that were needed to ensure sound farm operations. With the Foundation's leadership, its farms were used to demonstrate better ways to manage and operate the land. Mr. Musser's vision was to carry out educational programs to improve agriculture for the benefit of the State of Iowa. He wanted a way to help farmers and their families at a time when they faced many obstacles.

Operations. Over time, the Foundation's set of farms changed. Some were sold when it was determined they no longer met the purpose at the time. Others were bought to fill a need at the time. Many of the farms had extensive demonstration/research projects, some done in cooperation with Iowa State faculty and others developed by the Foundation's staff and trustees.

The Foundation's trustee list reads like a who's who of the history of Iowa agriculture and Iowa State University. The first trustees included Friley and Kildee, Iowa State Extension Director R.K. Bliss, Director of Agricultural Relations George W. Godfrey, farmer J.H. Anderson, businessman Deane W. Trick and Musser himself. Other familiar trustee names through the years included: William Murray, Floyd Andre, Carl Hamilton, Marvin Anderson, Carl Hertz, James Hilton, John Pesek, W. Robert Parks, Lanoy Hazel, Neil Harl, Lee Kolmer, David Topel, Kelly Tobin, Alan Tubbs, Jim Christensen, Jeff Plagge, Steve Berger, Steve Tubbs, Catherine Woteki, Joe Horan, Madeline Meyer, Joyce Neill, Marylou Ahrens, Jim Hultgren, Robert Butcher, Kevin Drury, Wendy Wintersteen, Kate Frieberg and many others.

At one point, 18 farms totaling nearly 5,500 acres were owned and managed by the Agricultural Foundation. At other times, the Foundation assisted Iowa State in purchasing land for research and education. In the early years, the methods of farm management, including crop and livestock share leasing arrangements that were practiced by the Agricultural Foundation, became widely known. James Wallace, who managed the farms for more than a quarter of a century, was well-known as a pioneer in absentee farm management. Wallace gave presentations around the country on the land management ideas of the Foundation. Wallace was one of the founders of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers. (By the

way, Wallace was not related to the famous Iowa family of Wallaces, which included Henry A Wallace; he was originally from Pennsylvania.)

The ISU Ag Foundation/Endowment has had several strong leaders or executive directors through the years including James Wallace, George Ayers, Larry Trede, Cathy Good, and Mark Honeyman. The current executive director is CALS Associate Director Carmen Bain.

The tenants working on the farms felt they had a valuable partnership with ISU and the Foundation. One tenant, who rented a Foundation farm for several years before buying his own in 1946, had glowing comments on his relationship with the Foundation: "I am glad I own my own farm. But I'd rather rent from the Foundation than from anybody else I know. They are absolutely fair. A person who meets them half-way will have every opportunity to make good. The manager treated me like a business partner: we pooled our ideas and worked out our plans together....The manager pushes you a little with new ideas. He sold me on soil conservation and on raising hogs on clean ground."

Another tenant in the 1940s said: "The Foundation wants to build up the farm. They are willing to spend money on the soil and to make the farm a better place on which to live and work."

In 1956, Clifton Musser died at his home in Muscatine. At that time nearly 20 years old, the Agricultural Foundation continued to move forward assisting Iowa families active in agriculture.

New directions. The Iowa State University Agricultural Foundation (a name change that was approved in 1961) and its management systems worked well into the early 1960s. Agriculture had entered a period of rapid change, as farms began growing larger and more mechanized and rural populations began to shrink. The farms began to take on a stronger research role and less of a tenant emphasis. During this time, the Foundation continued to support agriculture at Iowa State and around Iowa. In 1967, the organization donated \$7,000 to help found Living History Farms. In 1977, the Foundation purchased a Rhodes, Iowa, farm from Pioneer Hi-Bred that became the center for Iowa State's beef breeding research for more than 25 years. The Uthe farm in Boone County was purchased and is now owned by the Committee for Agricultural Development. In 1983, the organization helped purchase a farm near Crawfordsville that became Iowa State University's Southeast Iowa Research and Demonstration Farm. Support also was provided to establish research farms in southwest and northwest Iowa.

It became evident, as the 1980s wore on, that the mission of the Agricultural Foundation was out-of-date and in need of new direction. The Board of Trustees determined a broader approach was required to support Iowa agriculture. The Agricultural Foundation began to sell its land holdings and endow the assets to create a rich resource for scholarships, grants and other support for programs in agricultural education, research and outreach.

The board retained the vision of C.R. Musser of devoting its resources to helping families make a successful entry into agriculture and provide tools to ensure their long-term stability. The board established scholarships for agriculture students at Iowa State. (This was not altogether a new idea. As far back as 1946, the Foundation board had approved scholarships for Iowa State freshmen majoring in agriculture.) The board began to provide opportunities for ISU's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences to support the infrastructure vital to the future of Iowa agriculture.

In the late 1990s, the settlement of the estate of Marie Powers of Hamilton County resulted in \$1.26 million provided to the ISU Agricultural Foundation. This generous legacy — made possible by Marie Powers, a school teacher, and her husband, W. Kiley Powers, a well-known farmer, plant breeder and seed producer — continues to benefit ISU students every year. The legacy includes two endowed scholarship programs — the Kiley Powers Farm Scholarships, awarded annually by the Department of Agronomy, and the Kiley and Marie Powers Scholarships in the Plant Sciences, awarded annually by the ISU Agricultural Endowment. Both scholarships have supported hundreds of students since their establishment. Funds from the estate also helped to build an addition to Kildee Hall, one of the most well-used student buildings on campus. In 2018, the Agronomy Hall auditorium was named the W. Kiley and Marie Powers auditorium. The auditorium accommodates students in courses across the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the university.

In 2003, the Board of Trustees approved a name change to the ISU Agricultural Endowment. The change was made to ensure the distinction between its mission and that of the Iowa State University Foundation, which is the private, nonprofit corporation that secures and manages private gifts to benefit the entire university.

In 2005, a new program was started by the Ag Endowment—Science with Practice—a paid work study program for CALS students and faculty that has created highly meaningful experiences for many students. The program was the idea of Tom Polito, Greg Miller and Mark Honeyman. Mike Retallick became the first leader of the program. All were faculty in the Department of Agricultural Education and Studies.

Today. The Endowment no longer owns land, although it has supported local agricultural associations around the state in efforts to purchase land for research and demonstration of importance to their local needs. The Endowment does not actively raise new funds, but does accept bequests, gifts or donations that advance its mission.

Throughout the Endowment's history, it has worked to keep families on the farm and to ensure the ISU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences plays an important role in supporting the agriculture industry in Iowa.

The Iowa State University Agricultural Endowment is proud of its past and present role in assisting Iowa State University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and in advancing Iowa's most important industry — agriculture.

Today, 85 years since its establishment, the ISU Agricultural Endowment is a major contributor for student education, providing one-quarter of the scholarships awarded annually by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Mission / Organization

Vision: To be a magnet for attracting resources and creating opportunities that assist the Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences achieve its goals.

Mission: To help the Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences enhance its capacity to meet the needs of students and selected programs to benefit Iowa, the nation and the world:

- Provide resources for selected scholarships
- Provide assistance to selected educational programs and initiatives
- Encourage and accept gifts that grow the endowment

Most of the resources provided by the Iowa State University Agricultural Endowment target scholarships and educational programs. The Endowment's resources benefit students, farmers, and others in agriculture through:

- Scholarships to Iowa State students
- Support for student clubs, activities, and internships
- Grants for research and demonstration projects
- Support for College of Agriculture and Life Sciences' programs that advance agriculture in Iowa

The ISU Agricultural Endowment, a private, nonprofit corporation, is led by a Board of Trustees made up of eight persons involved in agricultural production and agribusiness and seven university faculty and administrators, including the university president and the dean of agriculture and life sciences. As an affiliate organization of the university, the Endowment provides an annual financial statement that the university submits to the Board of Regents, State of Iowa.

The ISU Agricultural Endowment Benefits Today

A total of \$105,000 in scholarships and grants were awarded to 59 students in 2021. Of this, \$13,500 were for emergency and completion grants provided to four students, to help overcome major challenges in their lives to achieve an agricultural degree. The board established the emergency and completion grant program in 2019.

Total assets for the endowment on June 30, 2021, was \$4,526,026, an increase of approximately \$870,000 from the previous year. Revenues for the year totaled \$1,019,967 and expenses were \$113,176. The endowment had a 20% increase in funds from the prior year, the largest yearly increase since 2000. For FY2023, the Board approved a budget with total disbursements of \$181,000 for scholarships and \$27,000 for each of three years to establish a new Innovation and Leadership Academy in the college. The academy will establish a framework to provide students with individualized advising and mentoring on the wide range of extra-curricular programs throughout the college available to them. The academy will help students develop a pathway for their interests and make college opportunities more accessible. The college sees the academy as an important tool for attracting new students and providing a "kickstart" for first-generation and transfer students to quickly opt into a broad set of innovation and leadership opportunities. Support from the Agricultural Endowment board will help establish a formal program, similar to how the board invested in the Science with Practice (SWP) program in 2005.