

As land-grant institutions, Montana State University and the state's seven tribal colleges have a unique history and mission.

Land-grant universities such as MSU came into being under the federal Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. Over the years, land-grant status implied several types of federal support. The first Morrill Act provided grants in the form of federal lands to each state for the establishment of a public institution to fulfill the acts' provisions.

During the first half of the 19th century, the structure of colleges and universities were greatly influenced by European universities, which had educated many of America's leading professors. But these European universities were organized to serve a society not predominantly democratic. University education was for the male leisure classes, government leaders, and members of the clergy, legal and medical professions.

At first, American institutions, functioning in somewhat the same fashion, offered chiefly the classical and professional curricula. Although the importance of science was gaining recognition, scientific education was not widely available. But by the middle of the 19th century, the general and scientific press were making widespread demands for more agricultural and technical education. Agricultural societies in many states insisted that colleges be available where students could study agriculture.

Passage of the first Morrill Act in 1862 reflected this growing demand for agricultural and technical education. While a number of institutions had begun to expand upon the traditional classical curriculum, higher education was still widely unavailable to many agricultural and industrial workers. The Morrill Act was intended to provide a broad segment of the population with a practical education that had direct relevance to their daily lives. It also provided for military training, an important consideration to President Abraham Lincoln, who signed the act in the midst of the Civil War.

Justin Smith Morrill, a representative and later a senator from Vermont, sponsored the land-grant legislation that bears his name and is generally credited as having secured its passage. Prior to Morrill's support for land-grant legislation, Jonathan Baldwin Turner, a Yale-educated farmer, newspaper editor and college professor, made education for the working class his cause in the mid-19th century. His "Plan for a State University for the Industrial Classes" advanced ideas that are now fundamental to the land-grant system, such as experimental research in agriculture.

An important federal addition to the land-grant mission was the agricultural experiment station program created by the Hatch Act of 1887. Today, the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station operates under MSU with the majority of its programs in Bozeman. Seven MAES centers across the state conduct research relevant to the challenges of Montana's agricultural and natural resource communities.

In 1914, the Smith-Lever Act created a Cooperative Extension Service associated with each U.S. land-grant institution to assist with educational outreach efforts throughout the states. MSU Extension serves all of Montana's 56 counties and five of the state's Native American Reservations providing an enormous range of services in areas that include: agricultural and

natural resources, consumer education, nutrition and healthy lifestyles, community resource development and youth development programs for tens of thousands of Montana children through 4-H.

Since their establishment, land-grant colleges and universities have grown to represent a unique system of widely accessible higher education. There is now at least one land-grant institution in every state and territory of the United States, as well as the District of Columbia.

Today, America's land-grant universities continue to fulfill their democratic mandate for openness, accessibility and service to the people. Many of these institutions have joined the ranks of the nation's most distinguished public research universities. Through the land-grant university heritage, millions of students are able to study every academic discipline and explore fields of inquiry far beyond the scope envisioned in the original land-grant mission.

*--excerpted and modified from "The Land-Grant Tradition," a publication of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities.*