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March 10, 2011

Dr. Jermelina Tupas
USDA- National Institute of Food and Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Mail Stop 2215
Washington, DC

Dear Dr. Tupas:

I am writing on behalf of the USDA Food and Agriculture Education Information System (FAEIS) Peer Panel in support of FAEIS. At our November 2010 meeting in Dallas, the panel voted unanimous endorsement for continued funding of FAEIS by the USDA. The FAEIS Peer Panel is comprised of representatives from the American Association of State Colleges of Agriculture and Renewable Resources (AASCARR), the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC), the Association of Public Land Grant Universities (APLU), the Board on Human Sciences (BHS), the Council of Administrators of Family and Consumer Sciences (CAFSC), the Deans of Agriculture at 1890 Land Grant Colleges and Universities, the First American Land Grant Consortium (FALCON), the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), the National Association of Forest Resource Programs (NAFRP), and the Society of American Foresters (SAF). These professional organizations comprehensively represent agriculture and renewable resources in higher education within the United States.

FAEIS provides services to agricultural and renewable resource academic fields that are not available from any other source, including the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Data collected annually by FAEIS comes directly from academic program administrators which allow greater resolution within academic fields, as well as more accurate and consistent reporting within disciplines. The FAEIS team has verified that their reports give a better grouping of majors within agricultural and renewable resource fields than assessments from an institution's Institutional Research office. They are also much finer in resolution and more accurate than IPEDS reports, as well as considerably timelier than IPEDS.

Additionally, the FAEIS team provides a user-friendly web interface with data summary as well as a customizable report program (Report Builder) that makes these important data available to any individual or organization with an interest in agricultural and renewable resource higher education programs. The FAEIS team also provides prompt and courteous first-person assistance via phone and email to help with data entry as well as with report creation – an attribute that contributes significantly to the accuracy, validity, and usability of these data. The FAEIS team is personally familiar with the institutions they track and the administrators from those institutions which further enhance the quality of information provided.

The extent and caliber of data available through FAEIS has continued to increase over the past two decades. The continuity and refinement implemented by the FAEIS team further enhances the value of the database. Working with the Peer Panel and USDA, FAEIS continues to expand, refine, and enhance its data collection and utility. No database rivals what is offered through FAEIS and it provides an invaluable and exclusive resource for academic programs, researchers, and legislators.

The Peer Panel strongly supports FAEIS and encourages USDA to continue its funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rob Kinucan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Rob Kinucan, Professor and Dean
School of Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences
Sul Ross State University