More on Morrill

I enjoyed the latest issue of California Agriculture with emphasis on the Morrill Act (“The Morrill Act at 150: How a land-grant law launched the University of California,” April-June 2012). I have spent my entire college training and professional career at land-grant universities, but I knew only the basics of the important legislative acts affecting them. So with extra time after retirement, I began to learn more about the background of these important laws.

I’m sure that most of my colleagues don’t know that there are 107 land-grant institutions in the United States, that a 1994 act added more than two dozen Native American institutions to the total, that MIT is a land-grant university, or that even that Rep. Morrill almost certainly was not the author of the Morrill Act of 1862, although he did yeoman’s service in getting it passed.

I have written up my findings (see http://ucanr.org/u.cfm?id=46) and shared them with various people on my campus. I am not a historian and this is not an authoritative scholarly work, but I believe it is accurate. I believe the Morrill Act of 1862 was one of the most influential events in the history of education in the world.

Arnold P. Appleby
Professor Emeritus Crop Science
Oregon State University, Corvallis

UC President Mark G. Yudof presented an excellent overview (“For 150 years, UC science and agriculture transform California,” April-June 2012). He concluded that without the Morrill Act, UC might not have evolved into world’s greatest public university system, which led California agriculture to a $37.5 billion industry. President Yudof credited Justin Smith Morrill, who proposed the federal land-grant system, which was endorsed by President Lincoln, who signed the Morrill Land-Grant College Act of July 2, 1862.

Your readers will be enlightened to learn that Rep. Morrill left school at the age of 15! He attended common schools in Vermont: Thetford Academy and Randolf Academy. He never went to college, since his father could not afford to send him for further education. However, his school foundation enabled him to lead the people of Vermont in the U.S. Congress for 12 years, from 1885 to 1897. Later he became a U.S. senator for over 30 years. He died in 1898 while in office. The University of Pennsylvania gave him an honorary degree for his work as a congressman.

Dilipsinh M. Gaekwar
Mendham, N.J.

Morrill Act inspires

I appreciated the article in the current publication that reviews the history of land-grant colleges, beginning with President Lincoln (“UC’s land-grant mission fuels nation’s growth, prosperity,” by Rose Hayden-Smith, April-June 2012). I cannot imagine where the United States would be without well-funded agricultural research and technology from lab to field. UC has been a major leader, and it’s interesting to know how it has influenced agriculture around the world and the topics that are crucial for food production and healthy natural resources. Thank you, California Agriculture and the editorial staff, for sharing.

Karen Sweet
Rancher and Steering Committee Member
California Rangeland Conservation Coalition

I am here in Pakistan on a project to help Pakistan and Afghanistan develop an extension service. I brought a number of the current issue to share with colleagues and our trainees. I thought it was excellent, especially the specific details of Lincoln and the South’s secession aiding passage of the Morrill Act.

Louise Ferguson
Cooperative Extension Specialist
Department of Plant Sciences, UC Davis

UC Riverside history clarified

The UC Riverside College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences dean’s office just received the magnificent April-June 2012 issue. I hasten to send congratulations to all who had a hand in it. I especially enjoyed Rose Hayden-Smith’s review of the effects of the Morrill Land-Grant College Act, a piece of legislation whose importance to American higher education is matched (perhaps) only by the GI Bill.

I must draw your attention to a mistake in your timeline — a rather serious one from our point of view. On page 47 you write, “The [Citrus Experiment Station] became UC Riverside in 1959.” Actually, UC Riverside was founded in 1954.

This error may have come about by a too-rapid reading of the UC Riverside website. The history presented at www.ucr.edu/about/history.html states, “In 1948, the University of California