

The history of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Alumni Association at Cornell University

On February 25, 1909, Dean Liberty Hyde Bailey presided over a meeting of current and former students gathered to discuss the needs for the then-named College of Agriculture. This group proposed a formal organization with the name "Student Association of New York State College of Agriculture" to address issues related to the college and its alumni. The organization had two sections: undergraduates and former students. In 1917, the name was changed to the Alumni Association and in 1960, when the college was renamed the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS), the name was changed to reflect the college's name.

The first constitution of the alumni association was adopted in 1910 and its aims and purposes were to promote fellowship among all students, past and presents; to advance the interests of the college in all ways; and to further the interests of country life. Alumni association projects focused on issues related to farm production, rural schools, fairs, roads, and other pertinent needs.

Throughout its history, the association has been interested in helping to interpret the college to its public. Some of the ideas upon which the association embarked included securing information on agricultural matters for members, representing the college to local communities and state officials, and promoting occupational discussions and reading circle.

Today, the association's goals and programs have shifted with the changing needs of a diverse alumni population, but the objectives remain similar. In June 2009, the CALS Alumni Association voted to eliminate dues and all alumni of the college, nearly 50,000, became members of the association.

The current mission statement and objectives listed in the by-laws read:

The CALS Alumni Association exists to promote fellowship and leadership among alumni and students and to advance the teaching, research, and extension functions of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The association seeks to accomplish this by:

1. Providing a network for alumni to be active in the affairs of the college
2. Assisting with recruitment, retention, and placement of well-qualified students and alumni
3. Representing the interests of the college to the general public
4. Keeping alumni informed of research, technology, and new development
5. Providing an accurate reflection of community concerns to college leadership
6. Providing opportunities for social interaction and the celebration of college memories for alumni

In more recent years, the CALS Alumni Association has focused on these initiatives:

- Promoting the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences academic priorities
- Building awareness among young alumni and students
- Engaging and developing volunteer leaders
- Recognizing excellence in alumni, young alumni, students, industry leaders, volunteers, and friends
- Supporting the dean's fundraising priorities by providing funding for internships, participating in the CALS Annual Fund, and highlighting key programs at events