Take aways from the conference:

- “I feel confident enough to begin asking questions, which is a valuable first step."
- “I plan to become more involved in leadership roles in our co-op. I’d like to be involved in our Legislative Committee.
- “I will continue to learn more about the co-op and start getting involved. As an employee I want to continue to help farms and co-ops be successful.
- “Diversity of voices—others should attend to think outside of the day-to-day.”
- “Network with peers. Encouragement from knowledgeable leaders.”
- “The scenario showed that different decisions tend to be mostly gray, not black and white.”
- “Exposure to different thoughts and ideas. The perspective of others was valuable.”
- “A better understanding of how co-ops work; their role and how everything effects the whole supply chain.”
- “The scenario was real-life based on what some of the people who were on boards said. It helped having presenters and directors participate in the discussions. I think it challenged small groups to think further.”
President’s Report

On behalf of the North East Cooperative Council Board of Directors I would like to welcome you to the 68th Annual Meeting and Leaders Forum. I always look forward to this meeting as it offers all of us the opportunity to reconnect with friends and colleagues and the opportunity to develop new relationships. The theme for this year’s meeting is “Leading the Cooperative Economy”. We have a great lineup of speakers and are confident the sessions will be informative and engaging and provide insight that we can take back to our own cooperatives and operations. We are also very grateful to be holding this meeting in conjunction with CoBank’s Annual Northeast Customer meetings. The group of speakers and topics that CoBank brings to the meeting receives high marks from the meetings participants. Our relationship with CoBank is very important to us.

The 2017 Future Cooperative Leadership conference was held July 11-13 in Mt. Morris, New York. Dairy Farmers of America (DFA) was the host cooperative. Future leaders learned about a variety of topics including the roles and responsibilities of cooperative board members and cooperative ownership. The group also visited some area operations including Craigs Station Creamery which sits adjacent to Noblehurst Farms as well as R.L. Jeffres and Sons farm. The conference received very high ratings from those who attended.

This past year was the third year for our Cooperative Internship Recognition Award (CIRA). The award recognizes successful internship completions with NECC member cooperatives. These internship opportunities are available to students enrolled in colleges located in the North East. The program continues to gain steam and the NECC is proud to recognize three outstanding students at this year’s meeting. The Cooperative Leadership Fund provides a $1000 cash award to each student honored.

We will be renewing the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and Cornell University in operating the Cooperative Enterprise Program (CEP). The CEP provides educational and research activities on cooperatives through a director of the program who also serves as the Executive Secretary of the NECC. The relationship that the council and its member cooperatives shares with the University is invaluable.

In closing, I would like to thank our member cooperatives and associate members for their continued loyalty and support of the council. I also want to recognize Bobbie Severson and Todd Schmidt at Cornell for all they do on behalf of NECC. The council looks forward to continuing to deliver relevant programming and benefits to our members.

Rob Smith
President
Annual meetings provide a means to reflect on the past and consider the future. Like a cooperative, the NECC is a member-based organization that strives to meet the needs of its members. The NECC and the Cooperative Enterprise Program at Cornell University is a collaboration. NECC members have expressed concerns about who will lead their organizations in the future and how to attract talented employees. The collaboration is gaining traction as a conduit between member cooperatives and Northeast colleges and universities. Over 100 students have attended the Leaders Forum over the past three years. Several students have sought out and secured employment with our member organizations. Other students complete internships with these same organizations. NECC members have sent information on employment and internship opportunities. These positions are forwarded to a list of academics at selected SUNY colleges and land grant universities in the NECC service area. Students have contacted faculty about interning with our members and job shadowing experiences. Awareness is growing.

The NECC convened the 37th Future Cooperative Leaders Conference this past summer. Participants left the conference with a desire to become more involved and seek out leadership opportunities. Importantly, they gained confidence to step into leadership roles. They are naturally inquisitive and wanted to learn more about the responsibilities of the board of directors. They assumed the role of a board member and worked through a case study. As a result, they built a greater appreciation for the difficulties and magnitude of decisions made by the directors and managers in the interests of the cooperative and its members. They gained appreciation for the diversity of member interests and equity investments and how these differences impact voting decisions. The conference is a means to gauge the attitudes of young members and employees. The group listed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the Northeast farm and food system. Discussion quickly evolved to the need for a qualified labor force (trades, mechanics, truck drivers, etc.), concern over the ability of their businesses to pay taxes to support social programs, and how best to respond to consumer concerns. Interestingly, little time was spent on discussion about immigration and environmental regulations.

This is the 68th Cooperative Leaders Forum. Doing business in the Northeast is unique in the products that are grown, the weather we embrace, and the regulatory and political environment in which we operate. It is good when cooperative leaders come together to strengthen their skill set and learn from one another. Thank you for support of the NECC and the collaboration with the Cornell Cooperative Enterprise Program and best wishes for continuing future success as you strive to meet the needs of your members and your customers.

With thanks and appreciation,

Executive Secretary
Congratulations to the NECC for another great year in increasing the understanding and power of the cooperative business model! The Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management (DYSON), along with its two supporting colleges (the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Cornell SC Johnson College of Business) truly appreciate our collaborative and growing relationships. In particular, the relationship between the NECC and the Cornell Cooperative Program (CEP) makes both of our organizations stronger, providing increased access to cooperative industry information, improved connections with college students, improved understanding of contemporary cooperative issues, and enhanced communication channels for transmitting research-informed educational products and services. DYSON and CEP greatly appreciate the continuing financial support the NECC provides to cooperative education, extension, and research at Cornell. Without your support, the cooperative presence at Cornell would surely be more limited, reducing access to Cornell’s leading research and extension capabilities, and exposure to our truly amazing students. I am excited about our future work together! Along with Roberta (Bobbie) Severson, we are expanding the CEP at Cornell through increased industry interactions, innovative and timely research projects, and student involvement inside the classroom and out.

Enrollment in Cornell’s undergraduate course in Cooperative Business Management (AEM 2230) has continued to grow, spanning a variety of student interests. It is truly inspiring as an educator to have such an amazing group of students each year interested in learning more about the cooperative business model and where it may fit in their future career plans. The Spring 2018 semester has 30 students spanning 18 (yes 18) different majors! Several of them attended the College Conference on Cooperatives in Minneapolis earlier this month and many are in attendance at the 2018 NECC Annual Leaders Forum and CoBank Northeast Customer Meeting. Special thanks go out to the 2018 guest speakers this semester devoting their valuable time to enriching the class environment, including: Joe Marrafino (Democracy at Work Institute), Mark Schneider (New York State Rural Electric Cooperative Association), Mike Patterson (Upstate Niagara Cooperative), and Rich Stamm (Ocean Spray). If you’re interested in coming to class in the future, please let me know!

This year, we have greatly expanded experiential/engaged learning opportunities for students growing from 3 projects with 1 cooperative last year to 6 projects with 6 cooperatives this year! While the projects are a lot of work to manage, students find them the favorite part of the course since they are directly working with cooperatives addressing real-life issues they are currently facing. The goal is for students to apply principles learned in class and for the cooperative to better evaluate the issues they are facing; i.e., a WIN-WIN situation. This year’s participating cooperatives and the topics of the projects include:

- Eden Valley Growers: Governance, By Laws, and Equity Management
- GreenStar Cooperative Market: Member Engagement and Leadership
- National Grape/Welch’s: Member Participation and Leadership Development
- Ocean Spray: Governance, Knowledge, and Engagement
- Upstate New York Growers & Packers: Member Requirements and Communication
- Upstate Niagara Cooperative: Cooperative Equity Management
We have included a copy of the project summaries in this year’s conference packet to let you know the types of projects we are working on. It is an exciting way for me to see students applying what they learn, and for students to ‘get their hands dirty’ on real issues. The important part is to start planning EARLY to find projects that enhance the learning objectives, are feasible to complete over a 2-3 month period, and, in the end, truly benefit the participating cooperatives. If your cooperative is interested in working with students in next year’s class please let me know! We will start our planning efforts early in the fall.

On another teaching note, I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to the NECC for your financial support of the International Agribusiness Study Trip (AEM/FDSC 3290). Last year, the NECC Board approved funding from your Cooperative Leadership Fund to support this valuable international learning experience. Over Spring Break 2017, I, along with my co-instructors, took 20 undergraduate students from a variety of majors in CALS to experience and evaluate agricultural, agribusiness, and food systems in Chile. As part of the study trip, we met with senior management from Ocean Spray and member-owners from Chile, as part of their CranChile operations. Notably, we also met with the U.S. Ambassador to Chile and actually stayed at the same hotel as the Chilean President. Students actually met the President of Chile during the breakfast buffet! The next study trip is scheduled for Spain during Spring Break 2019 and cooperatives will certainly be on the agenda!

On the research front, we have completed work on our economic impact study of agricultural and rural electric cooperatives in New York State. My excellent research student will present some of the results at this year’s NECC Leaders Forum and forthcoming publications will be distributed widely. Thanks to all the cooperatives that took the time to complete our intense financial survey. The analysis not only considers the direct, indirect, and induced effects for this important industry to NYS, it also assesses the supplemental contributions to the NYS economy due precisely to the cooperative business model (distribution of net returns to local owners), and compares the results with total agricultural impacts in the state. Indeed, the agricultural cooperative industry in NYS contributes over $8 billion in output and supports nearly 26,000 jobs. Patronage refunds alone contribute an additional $80 million to the economy.

Research work has also been completed assessing the feasibility of rural broadband cooperatives in NYS supporting future extensions of this work in engaging communities and residents considering these technological improvements. In collaboration with Andy Novakovic and Wayne Knoblauch (both in DYSON), Bobbie and I are also initiating a newly funded Hatch/Smith Lever grant to better understand the economic impacts of alternative premium structures by cooperatives and milk handlers in New York State. With sharp declines in farm milk prices, renewed interest in better understanding the pricing dynamics and the nature of premiums within the dairy industry is growing. In this project, we will develop two-sided market experiments to better understand premium dynamics, overlaid with alternative treatments to consider the value placed on cooperative membership through member control rights and distribution of profits.

Finally, as always, we include below a brief description of some of this past year’s educational and research accomplishments. Numerous developments are on the horizon in 2018, and I look forward to seeing how we can work together cooperatively!

Thanks!

Todd M. Schmit, PhD
Cornell University Faculty Liaison to the NECC
Agricultural Cooperative Leadership Education: The 2017 NECC Future Cooperative Leaders Conference was held July 55-13 in Mount Morris, NY and hosted by Dairy Farmers of America. The biennial conference is geared towards cooperative members and employees who will lead cooperatives in the future. Bobbie and the NECC developed an exciting program with increased focus on strategic decision making and member participation.

Emerging Cooperatives and Farmer-owned Enterprises: Bobbie continues to work with emerging organizations, communities, and agencies considering the cooperative business model. In the last year, these have included working with groups surrounding rural broadband services, Adirondack Harvest, nut marketing, and medicinal Chinese herb growers. Continuing interest centers on the development of cooperatively structured food hubs (aggregation, marketing, and distribution organizations that preserve source identification of local/regionally produced foods).

Agricultural Markets and Community Economic Development Program Work Team (PWT): Todd serves as faculty co-chair of the PWT. The goal of the PWT is to develop a coordinated effort aimed at strengthening communities and regions through agriculture and food systems-based development. Efforts include research, outreach, public discussion and education, and professional development, all aimed at increasing awareness and opportunities related to the role vibrant agriculture and food systems can play in achieving broader development goals. In Fall 2017, the PWT organized a Strategic Marketing Conference centered on Agritourism.

Cooperative Business Management (AEM 2230): We are well into our Spring 2018 class, with a great mix of students from a variety of disciplines. The course provides an evaluation of the fundamental principles, structure, finance, management and governance associated with the cooperative organization, with a focus on agricultural cooperatives. Analyses of the cooperative business organization within the modern economy are emphasized through a mix of lectures, guest speakers, cooperative business case study discussions, and engaged learning projects with cooperative businesses.

International Agribusiness Study Trip (AEM/FDSC 3290): Cornell’s Agribusiness Fellows Program provides undergraduate students the opportunity to travel abroad to observe and interact one-on-one with agribusiness leaders in different countries. The course gives students direct exposure to the managerial practices essential to the success of agriculture, agribusiness, and food companies competing in the global marketplace. The 2019 field study will focus on agricultural and food systems in Spain, with special attention to leading cooperatives in the country.

National Cooperative Research Committee. Schmit and Severson are members of a national committee of University and industry participants titled NCERA-210. The NCERA-210 committee is a regional research project focusing on cooperatives. A primary objective of the committee is to promote and coordinate research and educational activities focusing on cooperatively owned businesses. For more information, see ncera.aae.wisc.edu. Schmit and Severson attended the meeting last November just prior to the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s 2017 Farmer Cooperatives Conference.

Other Educational Outreach Efforts: Both Schmit and Severson presented results of their research and educational efforts at numerous academic and industry conferences.
Selected Recent Publications/Media Products


**Council Profile**

The Northeast Cooperative Council is a professional organization of cooperative-owned businesses and their advisors headquartered or doing business throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic United States. Member organizations represent a variety of cooperative businesses associated with the farm and food sector including: rural electric, supply, service, marketing, finance, purchasing and processing. Associate members include legal, accounting, consulting, and international development professionals working with cooperatives throughout the region. The Council operates for the benefit of member cooperatives and Associate members.

NECC was incorporated in New York State in 1949 as the New York State Council of Farmer Cooperatives. Through time the service area has expanded as the number of state cooperative councils decreased and cooperative businesses consolidated. In 1991, the name was changed to the Northeast Cooperative Council and in 1997 the Council instituted an Associate membership program open to professionals working with cooperatives. The Council is guided by a board of directors composed of representatives from member organizations. The board is a blend of producers and managers.

A key relationship for the Council is a partnership between NECC and the Cooperative Enterprise Program (CEP) at the Cornell University, Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management. The Council along with faculty and staff at the Department of Applied Economics and Management in the Dyson School endeavors to provide the highest quality educational programs to benefit cooperative businesses, members, management, and employees. The Council sponsors conferences and workshops for directors and senior management and programs for future cooperative leaders.

**Gross business volume, NE ag co-ops by state, 2016 ($1M)**

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<th>Item</th>
<th>CT</th>
<th>MA</th>
<th>ME</th>
<th>NH</th>
<th>NYS</th>
<th>PA</th>
<th>VT</th>
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<td>Fish</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruits &amp; Vegetables</td>
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<td>Grain &amp; Oilseeds</td>
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<td>Milk</td>
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<td>71.88</td>
<td>42.86</td>
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<td>Other marketing</td>
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<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>41.38</td>
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<td>0.50</td>
<td>82.41</td>
<td>169.53</td>
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<td>54.75</td>
<td>45.40</td>
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<td>Total farm supplies</td>
<td>26.17</td>
<td>40.82</td>
<td>38.48</td>
<td>6.89</td>
<td>279.53</td>
<td>375.52</td>
<td>48.07</td>
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<td>Total marketing &amp; supplies</td>
<td>415.52</td>
<td>486.59</td>
<td>211.47</td>
<td>57.00</td>
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<td>Service receipts &amp; other income</td>
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<td>6.82</td>
<td>0.21</td>
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<td>10.53</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>12.89</td>
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<td>Gross business volume</td>
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<td>6.68</td>
<td>211.51</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>141.39</td>
<td>268.08</td>
<td>9.48</td>
<td>644.42</td>
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<td>Net business volume</td>
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<td>206.37</td>
<td>55.11</td>
<td>3,247.15</td>
<td>1,856.03</td>
<td>576.97</td>
<td>6,632.53</td>
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Northeast Cooperative Council

AgChoice Farm Credit, ACA
Agri-Mark, Inc.
CoBank, ACB
Dairy Farmers of America
Dairy One
Farm Credit East, ACA
Genex Cooperative, Inc.
Land O’Lakes, Inc.
Lowville Farmers Cooperative, Inc.
National Grape Cooperative Association, Inc.
Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc.
O-AT-KA Milk Products Cooperative, Inc.
St. Albans Cooperative Creamery
Stamford Farmers Cooperative
New York State Rural Electric Association
Upstate Niagara Cooperative, Inc.
Yankee Farm Credit, ACA

Northeast Cooperative Council

Associate Members

Bond, Schoeneck and King, PLLC—Charles Sullivan
Cooperative Development Institute—Lynda Brushett
Dopkins and Co., LLP—Jay McWatters
FCC Services—Bill Wilson
Hale Group—Bob Ludwig
Harter, Secrest & Emery, LLP—Joe Casion
Herbein + Company, Inc.—Robert F. Firely
Scolaro, Shulman, Cohen, Fetter, & Burstein PC
—Jeffrey Fetter

The mission of the Northeast Cooperative Council is to stimulate the overall effectiveness of member organizations by increasing the understanding and power of the dynamic cooperative business model among directors, members, employees, advisors, future leaders, and educators through a working partnership of cooperative leaders and faculty at Cornell University as well as offer leadership to members in leveraging their own educational resources through collaboration; and to provide an ongoing forum fostering the exchange of ideas among cooperatives here and around the world.

Officers

President:
Rob Smith
National Grape Cooperative Association
Westfield, NY

Vice President:
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Agri-Mark, Inc.
Lawrence, MA

Treasurer:
Anna Smith
Farm Credit East, ACA,
Batavia, NY

Executive Secretary
Roberta Severson
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY
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Will Baildon
CoBank, ACB

Bill Banker
Agri-Mark, Inc.

Suzy Lewis
Ocean Spray Cranberries

Will Baildon
CoBank, ACB

Jacques Parent
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Anna Smith
Farm Credit East, ACA

Rob Smith
National Grape Cooperative Association, Inc.

Cynthia Van Lieshout
Upstate Niagara Cooperative, Inc.

Eric Zuber
O-AT-KA Milk Products Cooperative Inc.

Cooperative Leadership Fund

The purpose of the Cooperative Leadership Fund is to create knowledge about the cooperative business model and to build cooperative leaders through:

♦ Offering quality educational opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to study and conduct research on cooperative businesses,

♦ Developing world-class outreach programs that deliver a high level of expertise to further the growth and performance of cooperative businesses, and

♦ Creating a superior learning environment that inspires the development of cooperative leaders.

Efforts supported by the fund include students from four universities attending the Northeast Cooperative Council Annual Meeting and Leaders Forum and college presentations about cooperative-structured businesses and the role they play in the farm and food sector. Activities such as these are supported through the Cooperative Development Institute, Shelburne Falls, MA in conjunction with the Northeast Cooperative Council.

The Cooperative Leadership Fund is a donor-advised fund through the Cornell University Foundation, which is managed as part of Cornell University’s endowment. Contributions are tax deductible.

The Northeast Cooperative Council invites you to make a contribution to the fund in honor of a cooperative leader.

Eric Zuber, Chairman
Suzy Lewis
Bill Banker
Rene Saenger
Tom Wakefield
Todd Schmit
NECC Committees & Members

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Gary Heckman
Suzy Lewis
Jacques Parent
Tim Slavin
Rob Smith
Charles Sullivan, Associate
Cynthia Van Lieshout
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Membership Committee
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Anna Smith
Rob Smith
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Andy Novakovic
Todd Schmit
Chris Watkins

Future Leaders Conference Committee
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Jen Huson, DFA Co-chair
Will Baildon
Suzy Lewis
Rene Saenger
Rob Smith
Tom Wakefield

Director and Officer Nominating Committee
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Rob Smith
Tom Wakefield
Cynthia Van Lieshout

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A recent report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (2016) indicates there are over 200 cooperatives doing business in New England, New York and Pennsylvania with gross sales volume of $7.28 billion and net business volume of $6.63 billion. In addition, the Farm Credit system has over $8.558 billion in loan volume in a similar geographical area. Agricultural cooperatives and Farm Credit Associations play an important role in the success of the farm and food sector in the northeastern United States.

The CEP is appreciative of the support provided by the Northeast Cooperative Council. Over the past year the CEP has developed programs at the request of the Northeast Cooperative Council, created and published the organization’s newsletter—Cooperative Notes, and provided the staffing support for the organization.

The Cooperative Enterprise Program in collaboration with the Northeast Cooperative Council has worked to build the importance of and strengthen agricultural cooperative businesses by:

- Organizing the 37th Future Cooperative Leaders conference attended by 40 persons
- Organizing the 68th NECC annual meeting and Cooperative Leaders Forum attended by 135 cooperative leaders, faculty, and students
- Initiating the search for Cooperative Internship Recognition Award recipients
- Representing the organization at member annual meetings and National Council of Farmer Cooperative annual conference and National Conference of State Cooperative Councils
- Coordinating professional development for Cornell University Cooperative Extension educators through their annual In-service programs. Focal topics this year included milk marketing, agriculture labor, risk management, Northern New York Food Hub development, risk management, and land use.
- Presenting at the NY FarmNet retreat on the role of a trusted advisor as supply chains evolve. Received position announcements from NECC member organizations that were then forwarded to teaching faculty and student placement offices at land grant universities throughout the northeast and select State University of New York colleges.
- Providing guidance to persons interested in starting a new cooperative.
- Assisting with Cornell University Cooperative Management class.

To learn more about how the Cornell University Cooperative Enterprise Program could benefit you or more about the Northeast Cooperative Council, please contact:

Roberta Severson  
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Warren Hall, Suite 451  
137 Reservoir Rd.  
Ithaca, New York 14853  
Phone: 607/255-1987  
Email: rmh27@cornell.edu

Visit the CEP website at:  
www.cooperatives.aem.cornell.edu