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Graduate School

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March 2, 2016

Dr. Mathieu Ngouajio
National Program Leader, NIFA OREI
STOP 2240; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-2240

RE: Support Letter for a project proposal from Oregon State University "Development of Online Graduate Certificate in Organic Agriculture" submitted to NIFA OREI program

Dear Dr. Ngouajio,

The Graduate School at Oregon State University (OSU) is excited to offer full support of the project proposal "Development of Online Graduate Certificate in Organic Agriculture" submitted for consideration to the Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) of NIFA. Our administrative unit recognizes the need for training of university students and professionals in the science and art of Organic Agriculture.

OSU's Extended campus (Ecampus) is ranked in the top 10 of online undergraduate programs and the Graduate School is working to leverage their expertise to grow graduate programs. We are interested in growing programs that have interest from the faculty. We also look for a positive market analysis from our Ecampus partners. Preliminary market research from Ecampus shows there are no online master's degree program or graduate certificates in Organic Agriculture in the U.S.; creating a prime opportunity to respond to the increasing market demand for trained professionals in this area.

It is our understanding that the goal of this project is to address this educational gap by developing and implementing an online certificate in Organic Agriculture for graduate students, professionals and post-baccalaureate students across the nation. Online certificates are a great way to test the market for degree programs and to provide faculty an opportunity to adjust offerings before scaling an entire degree program. After the online graduate certificate in Organic Agriculture is implemented, we envision the PI will take on building the full online degree in Organic Agriculture. This online graduate certificate will be the first one in the nation and also in Canada and the European Union!

We are excited about the interdisciplinary nature of this project, which involves faculty from multiple academic units at OSU. OSU is ranked among the top 10 universities in the world in Agriculture and Forestry. Our faculty has over a decade of experience in serving the organic community and industry in the state. We are confident that the team of OSU faculty will develop and implement a graduate certificate in Organic Agriculture within a two year timeframe. The graduate certificate is expected to have a significant positive impact on the organic community through the education and training of highly qualified personnel.

Sincerely,

Jennifer L. Dennis, Ph.D.
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Professor of Horticulture
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