


April 29, 2026

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: Dr. Radenka Maric 

RE: Naming Recommendation for the Toplands Meat Science Teaching and Research Laboratory

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Trustees authorize the naming of the laboratory space located in the Ratcliffe Hicks building on the Storrs campus as the "Toplands Meat Science Teaching and Research Laboratory."

BACKGROUND:

The Meat Science Teaching and Research Laboratory is expected to be a 2,850 square foot laboratory space in the Ratcliffe Hicks building located on Storrs campus, designed for teaching, research, and extension. Recently, both students and industry have demonstrated an increased demand for a local meat science program, and this new lab will meet demand for the meat science program, future butchers hoping to study in New England, and help a thriving local industry facing an oncoming wave of retirements.

Growing up on Toplands Farm, Dudley Diebold is a lifelong 4-H supporter and advocate of the local agricultural community. In 2024, Dudley Diebold expressed interest in advancing the region's farm-to-table market by supporting the development of a university meats laboratory—an essential resource for teaching, research, and workforce training that helps support high-quality, locally raised products reaching New England tables. Gifts from Dudley Diebold and the Diebold Foundation will be used to rebuild the only university meats lab in New England.

The Diebolds' deep commitment to strengthening local farms has inspired both their personal philanthropy and their family foundation's giving to this newly renovated meats lab.

The Diebold Foundation has pledged gift amount consistent with the amount recommended under the *University's Named Gift Guidelines*.

On April 22, 2026, the Institutional Advancement Committee recommended approval to the full Board.