

MEMORANDUM

April 2, 2002

To: Chairs and Administrators
College of Agriculture

From: M. Scott Smith

Subject: College of Ag "Futures"

The purpose of this lengthy correspondence is to summarize the remarkable array of initiatives for organizational change either underway or being contemplated in the College of Agriculture and, more importantly, to solicit input from all of you. Our College is responding to the multiple forces for institutional and organizational change in a very positive, innovative manner. Within the University these forces are most visibly, but not exclusively, identified with President Todd's vision for the advancement of UK and with the recently filed report of the Futures Task Force. At an even more fundamental level, the people of our College continue to respond creatively and optimistically to external changes within the communities and among the constituents we serve.

I recognize that organizational/structural evolution is often much less important than changes in functions and delivered programs. However, some of the organizational matters being discussed may be controversial and could affect the way your units function. These issues will be addressed carefully with full participation of all involved parties, but at this stage I believe it is important that you all be aware of the concepts being considered and have an opportunity to advise the administration as we proceed. You should feel free to discuss any of these issues openly within your own unit. Rather than distribute this memo to all college personnel, I will leave it to you to facilitate debate and input as most appropriate for your unit. However, if you do open up these issues I ask that you make it clear that the College administration is not contemplating unilateral mandated restructuring, but will aggressively support positive initiatives for change.

I welcome your comment on any or all of the points below.

A New Department of Community and Leadership Development Among all the issues listed here, this is the only one close to a probable conclusion. The proposal to unite faculty groups in rural sociology, agricultural education, agricultural communications and some faculty in extension programs has received a favorable recommendation from the Senate Council and will be taken up by the Senate on April 8. If approved by the Senate, I expect favorable reaction from the University administration. The department would administer the ALEC undergrad program and the MS in Ag Education and proposes to begin restructuring the MS in Agriculture to offer an appropriate and accessible professional degree program for agents and others working in the broad areas of community and leadership development.

The College of Human Environmental Sciences The Futures Task Force final report preserves a recommendation to eliminate HES as a College, but has modified the draft report significantly. The College, less Interior Design which is projected to join the proposed School of Design, would likely remain intact as a school or department within an existing college. Agriculture has been mentioned prominently as one candidate to house this unit. Relevant questions for us to consider include:

- A substantial increase in undergrad enrollment.
- Integration of existing HES research/instruction programs with Family and Consumer Sciences extension.
- Relationships of social science programs in HES with existing social science units in Ag.
- Coordination of food science, nutrition and dietetics programs now in the two colleges.
- Building strength in research and doctoral programs that are relevant to the mission of the College of Agriculture.

You might regard any one of these points as either an asset or a substantial challenge. As I have written before, no recommendation of the Futures Task Force should be considered a conclusive indication of the final result, but I expect to be involved in careful consideration of this possible change in the near future. Therefore, I would welcome any views you may have on this possibility.

The Department of Landscape Architecture The Futures Task Force recommends combination of Architecture, Interior Design and Landscape Architecture to form a School of Design, to be administered as a college. I suspect the University will seriously pursue this recommendation. The LA Faculty's vision for their own advancement might lead them either towards an affiliation with this design-oriented unit or to an emphasis on natural resource planning and design. If for no other reason, the current absence of adequate facilities for a completely unified school will require consideration of transitional and alternative plans. Among the multiple options suggested is the possibility of a Natural Resource Planning and Design Center housed administratively within another College of Agriculture academic unit. As stated above, the Futures recommendation does not necessarily define the ultimate decision in this case.

A Department of Natural Resources? The recent review of the Department of Forestry recommends consideration of a change in name to the "Department of Natural Resources" or the "Department of Natural Resources and Forestry". I would, in fact, support a discussion of this recommendation. Discussion probably should occur in a somewhat broader context, that is, the future vision of both the Department and the entire College for our programs in environmental sciences and renewable natural resources. I am convinced that natural resources/environmental sciences can provide a crosscutting yet unifying academic foundation for building strength in all aspects of our mission. In the future, this could become comparable with and complementary to the academic foundations we have already built in plant/animal biology. We will be meeting with the Forestry Faculty in the near future to consider this and other recommendations in the review.

The "Super-College" of Social Sciences The Futures Task Force contains a very general recommendation that Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology leave the College of Agriculture to join a social science college that would be split out from Arts and Sciences. The Faculty and the administration of A&S already have documented their strong opposition to the proposed division of their college. Preliminary indications are that our faculty in these two groups also would be opposed by a large majority. My current judgment is that this proposed change would be very much contrary to the interests of our college, the affected faculty, and the people we serve. If, as now appears to be the case, a small minority of participating faculty and administrators favor this restructuring, it seems unlikely that it would be implemented as written. I would like to know if my assessment of our Faculty's views on this are accurate.

The Department of Animal and Food Sciences The Faculty of Animal Sciences has voted, by a substantial majority, to change their name to the Department of Animal and Food Sciences. As I interpret the vote, this is not intended to represent a major reorganization of the entire department, rather to enhance the visibility of, and the emphasis on, their Food Science Section. I am definitely optimistic about this change. However, this issue is analogous to the natural resource changes

mentioned above, that is, it needs to be evaluated in a broader context. Food science programs fall within the scope of several other departments. If we are to take full advantages of the tremendous opportunity in this area, we will need to ask how we can advance across a comprehensive range of food science/technology-related topics.

Tobacco and Health Research Institute The Legislature has passed and the Governor has signed a bill that will change the name of THRI to the Kentucky Tobacco Research and Development Center. This will also modify the mission of KTRDC to focus on plant biotechnology, phasing out the historical emphasis on tobacco-related health research. Funding for KTRDC will continue to be overseen by a UK-independent board (KTRB). I expect that linkage with the College of Agriculture, which has become considerably stronger over the last five years, will continue to advance.

Restructuring Plant and Soil Sciences Space assignments in the new plant science building, predetermined some time ago, will result in a physical split of both the Agronomy and the Horticulture departments. This is undoubtedly one factor behind the increasing discussion of possible restructuring of plant science departments. One of the suggestions I have received is that a School of Plant and Soil Sciences be created, with semi-autonomous “Faculties” or Centers operating under a unified academic umbrella. Consideration of changes in this area is at a very preliminary and tentative stage, but I would certainly welcome your thoughts.

Re-envisioning Extension This process, led by Larry Turner, is well under way. In this important initiative, all faculty and staff are being kept well informed and input is being collected in a systematic manner, therefore I only mention it here to document the full scope of organizational changes in the College.

Changing the College’s Name In light of the sweeping spirit of change indicated by all of the material above, it is not surprising that the question of the College’s name would arise again. As you know, there are relatively few remaining “College of Agriculture”s in the US. Is it time for us to re-consider our label? Are there better titles to describe what we do and who we are, both to the people of Kentucky and to the rest of the University? My own opinion is that “College of Agriculture and Natural Resources” or “College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences” would have some advantages as a descriptive, meaningful label that is more inclusive of the broader range of our mission now and, presumably even more so, over the coming decade. Should we take up this question again?