

April 10, 2003

To: All College of Agriculture Personnel

From: Scott Smith

Subject: AgFutures Update #5

Diversity Task Force Report Released: The College of Agriculture Diversity Review and Planning Task Force, chaired by Mary Marchant, has very recently submitted its final report. I want to express my deepest appreciation for the outstanding work this Task Force has done. The report is well-written, clearly organized and readable. The report includes an intensive review and analysis of our current status, and in this regard will serve as a highly valuable reference document. The Task Force's recommendations are thoughtful and progressive. This component will provide a roadmap for future advancement in this area.

The full report can be found at the Dean's Office web site (<http://dobson.ca.uky.edu/admin/>). Also posted is a 5-page summary document. Hard copies will be provided to chairs, unit directors and administrators. I strongly urge all college personnel to consult this important document and become familiar with at least the summaries.

The report includes many recommendations; some are simple and no-cost changes in our processes and policies. Others will require significant investment of resources, in the form of either funds or time. The Task Force recommends increasing staff, creating an institutional support unit (reporting directly to the Dean), and appointing a new standing advisory committee for diversity related efforts. Other recommendations target improved communications/outreach and full accountability on diversity issues.

Overall, the report is as ambitious as I had hoped it would be, meaning that implementation will be neither simple nor immediate. Over the next couple of months I and the college administration will continue to study and discuss the report. During that time, I invite further input from anyone in the College, particularly comments about action steps and implementation priorities.

This Task Force has tackled a complex and challenging issue for us, but an issue that is critical to the future of the College. We will aggressively pursue their ideas and recommendations. I want to assure you of my full commitment to the "Guiding Principles" articulated in their report, and I quote from this section:

- "First and foremost in this is the acknowledgement that discrimination exists and there is an ongoing need for greater acceptance and appreciation.

To do this, it is critical to

- foster an environment that leads to an increased understanding of the value of differences;
- seek unequivocally the elimination of discrimination on any basis be it race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, or any other difference;
- be accountable for both our successes and failures and
- ensure that diversity is both a fundamental and visible part of everything we do.”

School of Natural Resources Proposed: On numerous occasions over the last two years, I have raised the possibility of some internal restructuring of the College of Agriculture in natural resource sciences. The objectives of this action would include, but not be limited to, developing greater focus and visibility for our programs in the environmental sciences. I remain convinced that natural resource related environmental science is an area of opportunity that neither the College nor the university has sufficiently pursued.

Subsequent to discussions with the Departments of Forestry and of Landscape Architecture, I have provided the Provost with preliminary notification that the College of Agriculture intends to create a new School of Natural Resources through the partnership of the Departments of Forestry and Landscape Architecture. To better inform you all of the justification and the defining concepts for this action, I am sharing portions of my letter to the Provost, as follows.

“I have recently met, and continue to communicate, with the Faculties of the Department of Forestry and of Landscape Architecture. These departments have multiple challenges in common:

1. Both are experiencing extreme depletion of faculty ranks. Landscape Architecture has 2 of 6 faculty lines vacant. Over the last 2 to 3 years, almost half of the Forestry faculty have retired or resigned. Three tenure-track lines funded by the Robinson Forest Initiative have been eliminated; 6 more funded or partially funded lines remain vacant; the Brown Professorship is open.
2. Both have been hard hit by current budget constraints. Notably, the search to fill one of the vacant LA lines has been frozen just before the interview stage, and a promising national search for a new Forestry chair has been frozen.
3. While both departments maintain excellent instructional programs and excel in some areas of extension/outreach, both face challenges in advancing to higher stature in research and graduate education.
4. Both departments continue to strive to build the academic strength necessary to sustain their own terminal degree program.

These Faculties also share an interest in the analysis, management, and planning/design of natural resource-based environmental systems. They now agree that their partnership

as two sections or divisions within a new School of Natural Resources in the College of Agriculture can provide a conceptual framework for addressing the challenges above. This new organizational entity would:

1. Provide leadership and a visible focal point for the College of Agriculture's emerging commitment to the sciences of environmental systems,
2. Sustain successful undergraduate education in LA and Forestry, and provide leadership for the interdepartmental Natural Resource Conservation and Management program,
3. Build upon current research and outreach strengths in such areas as:
 - conservation and wildlife biology
 - forest ecology
 - environmental systems management
 - landscape/community scale analysis, planning and design,
4. Develop and begin to implement a plan for offering appropriate terminal degrees in their fields, recognizing that to do so successfully will require that they:
5. Seek synergistic alliances with other units and groups of scientists, possibly including the Tracy Farmer Center for the Environment, other soil/water faculty in the College of Agriculture, and biological ecologists in Biology and elsewhere.

The agreement of these two Faculties and the College administration to pursue this concept offers an exciting, innovative framework for advancement.”

A notable element of this plan is the intent to develop a doctoral degree program in natural resources/environmental sciences. We recognize that this doctoral program is much more likely to be successful if it includes the participation of other environmental scientists beyond the two departments. This should be of considerable interest to soil/water scientists in AGR and BAE and/or to biological ecologists in both Ag and A&S. The plan for a new School in no way implies an intent to mandate future reorganization involving those faculty, but it does open the door to developing much closer partnerships in graduate education.

This plan also resolves the question, raised by the President's "Futures Report", about the administrative home of LA. LA will remain in the College of Agriculture.

College Advisory Council Created: The College of Agriculture will soon form a unified and comprehensive advisory board, to be titled the University of Kentucky Council for Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching or UK-CARET. We have long participated in the national CARET advisory-advocacy organization, which is administered by the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. Like a few other states, we will now link this to a state level group.

The creation of UK-CARET was planned in coordination with Cooperative Extension's Re-Envisioning process. Re-Envisioning also has introduced significant changes to the extension council system.

UK-CARET members will include our two national CARET delegates, two representatives of the Agriculture Alumni Association, up to 10 members at large designated by the Dean, and at least 6 representatives of the State Extension Council. The State Extension Council recently voted to disband their Legislative and Advocacy Committee to help unify College advisory-advocacy functions in the new Council. The L&A Committee has long served as our primary in-state advocacy organization.

The new structure is expected to have at least two benefits. It will address the three-part Land Grant mission of the College in a more unified fashion. Also, it should promote participation from sectors that might not commonly be represented in the extension council system, for example, research/technology organizations or food/natural resource linked enterprises.

Potential UK-CARET members are now being contacted and will be identified in the near future.

Unified School Recommended for HES: On April 10 Provost Nietzel met with the College of Human Environmental Sciences. He intends to recommend to the Board of Trustees and the Senate that all three remaining departments be included in a School to be administered within the College of Agriculture.

Earlier, HES had forwarded two proposals to the Provost. One would have sent Family Studies to the College of Education and the other two departments to Agriculture. The other proposed creation of a School of Family and Consumer Sciences in Agriculture. All three departments were to be included in that School. Polling of HES Faculty and employees failed to produce anything close to a consensus for one proposal over the other. There was a one vote margin on the Faculty in favor of the first proposal; among all employees there was a few vote margin favoring the second. External constituents appeared to strongly favor the second.

If the Provost's recommendation moves forward without further opposition, formal approval at the June BOT meeting should be possible. I will provide updated information as it becomes available.