

## **MEMORANDUM**

September 23, 2004

**To: All College Personnel**

**From: Scott Smith**

**Subject: Ag Futures #8, Including:**  
Information Technology and Ag Communications Services  
Tracy Farmer Center for the Environment

### **Information Technology and Agricultural Communications Services**

Two issues pose challenges yet provide a significant opportunity for Agricultural Communications Services and for information technology management in general in the College. First, the long-term process of review and analysis of the College's IT status has been completed. These reviews and our own IT leadership have provided some outstanding ideas for advancement. Second, the College has made a very substantial commitment to the national e-Extension effort. As announced recently, this initiative targets the development of a comprehensive system for internet-based delivery of Cooperative Extension content and programming. The College's initial responses to these issues are described below.

1) Carla Craycraft, as announced previously, has accepted a 50% assignment to be a co-leader of the national e-Extension initiative. Carla will be stepping down as Director of Agricultural Communication Services (AGC) to focus her efforts on this exciting opportunity. I have asked her to continue as Assistant Dean for Communications. In that capacity, she will continue to advise the College administration on communications, public relations and marketing issues. I want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for Carla's 10 years of innovative and energetic leadership of AGC during a time of phenomenal change in technology and programs. Carla has been an exceptional manager of AGC, has assembled a very strong staff, and has brought our College national recognition in several areas of communication and information delivery.

2) Haven Miller has accepted my request to serve as Interim Director of AGC. The interim term is effective October 1 and will extend through the 2005 calendar year. At that time I will conduct an internal review and screening process for a permanent director appointment. Haven will be eligible for consideration in that appointment. I am sincerely grateful to Haven for accepting this important assignment.

3) In response to recommendations in the Information Technology reports and reviews, I am forming two new entities. The first of these is (tentatively titled) the **Innovation and Applications Development Lab**. Craig Wood, also holding a 50% e-Extension assignment, has agreed to serve as the Director of the Lab. It will be administratively housed within AGC, but accorded a relatively high degree of autonomy with regard to programming and projects. The charge to this group will be the development of new or enhanced educational and informational applications based on web and communications technologies. We are anticipating a creative and entrepreneurial group, yet one that works more closely with the College administration and all College units to establish priorities for new projects and initiatives.

The e-Extension initiative is expected to be only one element of an innovative portfolio of projects. The Lab will be asked to place a high priority on enhancement of the first tier of College web pages. They will provide design and technical support for development of individual unit, county and project-level web sites and web-based applications. In general, content maintenance responsibility will continue to reside at the unit level. Additional activities are expected to include active learning modules, innovative media applications, and collaborative learning projects involving extension, instruction and research education/outreach programming.

4) An important issue raised repeatedly during the IT review process was coordination of IT staff and resources among AGC, the departments and the administration. I will take steps to enhance communication and coordination of operations, but at this time will not formally centralize IT staff and resources. All IT staff will remain in their current unit and no changes will be made in their formal supervision.

Some internal reorganization will occur within AGC: Jamie Profitt will serve as section manager for Network and Desktop Services in AGC. Jamie will report to the Interim Director of AGC. This section will have responsibility for network support and maintenance services, county IT support, Helpdesk, security, technical training, and maintenance of most existing operational applications.

I am forming the **College IT Services Team**. Jamie Profitt will act as Team Leader. Scott Wells, Steve Garner and others also will provide senior leadership. Although formal reporting lines remain unchanged for all IT staff, department chairs and unit directors, including AGC and the College administration will be expected to support the full participation of their IT staff in this team effort. As this team is developing, Linus Walton will provide coaching on issues related to cross-unit cooperation and communication. In the near future a meeting will be scheduled with all College IT staff and their supervisors to begin building this team.

### **Tracy Farmer Center for the Environment**

This week the Board of Trustees formally approved the transfer of administrative responsibility for the Tracy Farmer Center for the Environment from the Vice President for Research to the College of Agriculture. David Atwood, an A&S faculty member, will continue as Interim Director of the Center. He will report to the College administration, with Associate Dean Nancy Cox having primary responsibility for day to day direction.

This is an important step in the development of our College's role in natural resource-related environmental sciences. Research and Extension personnel in our College have already established leadership roles in TFCE. Exceptional programs in environmental education and outreach have been built under the aegis of TFCE. With regard to research, we see our new relationship with TFCE as an outstanding opportunity to bring more cohesiveness and visibility to the many diverse environmental programs already flourishing in the College.

We remain committed to the multi-disciplinary nature of TFCE. We will actively encourage the continuing participation of faculty from several other colleges, and also hope that the involvement of our own College faculty will expand. Plans for the next stages of growth for TFCE are well underway.