

**Department of Forestry Program Review Implementation Plan
2014-2015 Annual Report**

Undergraduate Program Recommendations:

1. Although recruitment into the Forestry program is primarily the responsibility of the college, recruitment at the departmental level is fairly passive. The department could be more proactive in its recruiting efforts, including minority recruitment. Currently, the department's major effort toward recruitment appears to be through extension activities throughout the state.

Assessment Method: Increased enrollment figures.

Results: At the request of the incoming new Chair, the College administration provided funds for an Academic Coordinator position. We have hired a person into this position in 2013 and she began her recruiting efforts. She also concentrates on other student services such as retention, student life within the department, access to scholarships and programs within the College and University, placement of students into internships and employment, and finally, alumni relations. The Academic Coordinator serves as a contact for visiting students, ensures a strategic and proactive effort takes place toward identifying prospective students, and provides materials to faculty and staff who are in contact with prospective students.

Analysis of results and reflection: During the first two years of the Academic Coordinator's (AC) hiring, enrollment numbers increased 30-40% over the department's 10-yr average. Over the last two years, the AC and the Chair have focused on retention issues and establishment of a variety of programs to enhance student competitiveness for internships and employment. For example, over 75% of juniors had career-relevant internships during 2014. The 2015 graduating class had over 90% employment in a field related to their major. The department established the FireCats, a student wildland firefighting crew in cooperation with the Kentucky Division of Forestry, and many of the students participating in this program have gone on, not only to internships in fire around the country, but also into permanent positions within Kentucky Division of Forestry. We have expanded professional development and communication training opportunities for students. These programs have been very successful.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: In the coming years, we will make a concerted effort on recruiting and boosting enrollment. We have embarked on a curriculum revision that should expand student opportunities to explore forestry-related fields and gain experience and expertise in those disciplines (e.g., wildlife, business, communications) that will make them better and more well-rounded professionals. We have also expanded courses and advertising to attract more non-majors into our courses.

2. Students expressed disappointment that the Forestry department is obscure within the university, and there may be more opportunities for campus-wide engagement than the faculty is currently exploiting.

Assessment Method: Increased visibility of the Forestry Department.

Results: Additional steps are being taken to further “advertise” and inform our students of our larger mission and role, not only throughout the university, but also across the state. These measures include, but are not limited to, a departmental newsletter, displays throughout the building of faculty and staff activities, and video/photographic exhibits of our efforts throughout the state. The Department also has supported more engagement by students into activities and programs across campus. The Forestry Club has expanded cooperation with other groups, offices, and organizations on campus. They took the lead in making UK a Tree Campus USA. Our faculty have been members of the Ag Faculty Council and Faculty Senate for the last 5 years.

Analysis of results and reflection: These efforts will also serve to better inform our stakeholders and university colleagues, visitors to the building, and alumni, about the breadth and scope of work in which our faculty and staff are involved. We have increased our visibility across campus and throughout the College.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: One of our faculty members is the Chair of the College interdisciplinary NRES program. The same faculty member is one of the co-leaders of a new honors residence program addressing environmental sustainability. Our faculty is engaged in several different departments as adjunct faculty, participates on numerous college and university committees, and maintains active involvement in many college extracurricular activities. It should be noted that students’ conclusion on the issue of our faculty not being engaged across campus may reflect the students’ lack of awareness of the many involvements we do have across campus. We are attempting to better inform our students of the many ways we engage using various forms of social media, as well as getting our students engaged in a variety of campus-wide extracurricular activities.

3. There is no formal alumni program, and both students and faculty expressed a desire to develop closer relationships with their alumni.

Assessment Method: The update/upkeep of an alumni database and development of a department newsletter.

Results: We have installed a new student exit interview process, where all graduating students visit with the Department Chair in order to, among other things, build and develop the relationship between the department and our graduates. We have begun an active campaign of informing our alumni through a variety of media that we value their role as member of the Department’s extended family. We have completed an update of our alumni list and have begun publishing a departmental

newsletter as a means to re-establish close working relationships with our alumni and to serve as a starting point for engaging them with our students in a more formal way. We host an “alumni recognition” event in the fall that reaches a large group of former graduates. We also host a fall picnic for faculty, staff, students, and alumni and have held a similar and larger event for the Spring Semester to acknowledge students, friends, and partners who deserve recognition. We will continue to seek and develop ways to maintain and improve relations with our alumni both through formal and informal means. We have also established an Alumni Scholarship Committee which has, over the last 1.5 years, raised over \$13,000, which is more than halfway toward our goal to develop an alumni scholarship.

Analysis of results and reflection: Tremendous strides have been made and notable accomplishments recorded toward engaging our alumni.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: We will continue to develop alumni relations in the successful ways we have over the last four plus years.

4. Revision of the strategic plan to include addition of language that explicitly mentions the interdisciplinary efforts the department is hoping to achieve, as well as ethical behavior components. It is also recommended that the department review the metrics presented in the strategic plan, include quantitative metrics where they do not yet exist, and provide additional measurable metrics for financial support and fundraising strategies.

Assessment Method: Specific steps have been taken to improve interdisciplinary efforts in the Department and capitalize on recent advances in terms of curricula revision and strategic plan development. The Department recognizes that fundraising efforts need to be made both in terms of extramural research funding and endowments.

Results: We have developed an Undergraduate Program Committee (UPC) to create a venue for proactively and strategically thinking about how we are teaching our students and what adjustments can be made. Through this committee we have completed a curriculum revision and are currently awaiting results of that review. We have also established an Outreach Committee to specifically inform and to proactively share the accomplishments and activities of the Department to the outside world. The UPC developed a professionalism document that was signed by all faculty members and reviewed and is signed by all students each year. The document outlines the professional, ethical, and academic expectations of students in the Forestry program. The Research Committee has begun to devote specific time and efforts toward identifying the Department’s strength areas, developing strategies for capitalizing on those strengths in the context of 1) communicating and collaborating internally, 2) identifying and pursuing funding sources, and 3) developing partnerships with peer departments and institutions to pursue funding in strength and strength-related areas. We are, essentially, taking a proactive role in pursuing extramural funding as related to our core faculty expertise. The

Department Chair is also developing relationships with alumni, stakeholders, and other clientele in an effort to pursue development opportunities.

Analysis of results and reflection: Significant strides have been made to improve the professionalism of our undergraduate student body and to reach out to our related programs. Our development efforts have yielded significant growth in our endowments. The university will no longer require strategic plans to be produced at the department level. However, Forestry has determined it will utilize the Program Review process for setting strategic objectives and tracking progress annually through the implementation plan.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: We continue to work toward improving our interdisciplinary cooperation and development efforts.

5. Create an organized, external advisory committee. An external committee might be an effective step toward greater departmental stature and influence. It is in the department's new strategic plan to create a standing Advisory Committee.

Assessment Method: The creation of an external advisory committee.

Results: We organized an external advisory group in the fall of 2013 comprised of approximately 20 individuals from a diversity of industries, organizations, agencies, and partners who have strategic interest in the success of the Forestry Department at UK. The Advisory Group met again in spring of 2015 with similar productive results.

Analysis of results and reflection: Excellent input continues to be received about ongoing growth and programmatic development within all three mission areas. Advisory group members were particularly impressed with the development of Economic Analyses of the Forest Industry in Kentucky, growth in the undergraduate program, the research significance and impact of our faculty and graduate students, and the impressive educational programming conducted by just a few extension faculty and staff. The quality of our undergraduate student body has also made an impression upon members of our Advisory Group. Improvement opportunities included new facilities, a revised curriculum to allow flexibility to expand coursework into burgeoning related areas, more emphasis on urban forest issues, and a greater recognition by the UK administration of the importance of forestry, wildlife, and natural resource pursuits.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: We will continue to meet with advisory group members individually and as a group annually. We postponed the annual fall meeting due to a variety of conflicting events and for a preference toward incorporating the meeting into the Spring 480 presentations and banquet.

6. Continued and increased participation by the faculty in sabbatical opportunities.

Assessment Method: Track the number of sabbaticals taken annually by the Department of Forestry faculty members.

Results: Dr. Chris Barton took sabbatical leave during the 2012-2013 Academic Year.

Analysis of results and reflection: No additional sabbaticals have been requested by faculty. This is partially explained by the bimodal nature of the faculty – approximately one-half are junior faculty and one-half are senior faculty who have expressed little interest in sabbaticals.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: The Chair will continue to monitor the annual sabbatical leave requests.

7. The Department of Forestry should be more proactive in its recruiting efforts, including minority recruitment. Cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity should be a priority for the department.

Assessment Method: Increased enrollment of cultural, ethnic, and gender diverse students.

Results: 96% of the students who enrolled in Forestry between 2006 and 2014 were “white or Caucasian”. We have actively recruited students from all walks of life and have participated in many events annually for the past five years aimed at minority recruitment. We have worked closely with the CAFE Office of Diversity for the last 5 years to identify additional opportunities to recruit diverse students.

Analysis of results and reflection: Virtually all 1862 land-grant Forestry programs struggle with the same issues of lack of diversity in their undergraduate populations. Graduate student diversity is not a problem.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: We have scaled back our efforts to participate in every event that offers potential minority recruitment opportunities and have determined to be more strategic in our efforts over the coming years.

8. The department should address salary deficiencies at the professorial level.

Assessment Method: Using internal salary information and national salary data, the salary levels will be tracked to see if the forestry department has funded faculty salaries at all levels, particularly full professor, to at least 90% of benchmark institutions by 2014.

Results: The 2013-2014 mean faculty salaries increased to an average of \$75,933 for Assistant Professors (3.7% below southern NAUFRP institutions), decreased slightly to \$90,043 for Associate Professors (3.4% above southern NAUFRP

institutions), and increased slightly to \$106,686 for Full Professors (4.2% below southern NAUFRP institutions).

Analysis of results and reflection: The 2014-2015 mean faculty salaries increased for most levels.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: We will continue to identify faculty salary disparities as compared to peer institutions and strive to meet regional averages. Excessive disparities are discussed with the College administration.

9. Improve Forestry Department facilities in the TP Cooper Building or move Forestry to a new building.

Assessment Method: Evaluate facilities annually.

Results: The Forestry Department lost two buildings (The Insectary, The Tobacco Research Lab) which housed the herbarium and the wildlife research lab to condemnation. These facilities were moved to Dimock, which reduced the size of our facilities, but improved the quality. We developed a building prospectus with the Department of Entomology, Landscape Architecture, and related interdisciplinary programs and initiatives to construct a new building in the neighborhood of the rest of the College's building. There would be obvious benefits to a new facility in terms of faculty access to high quality research space and equipment, recruiting, and demonstration of a university commitment to environmental programs.

Analysis of results and reflection: Little progress has been made, largely due to a UK-wide focus on dorm building and a perceived dearth of administrative advocacy for new facilities. However, we recently learned that the proposal for a new facility as described above has been placed on the UK Capital Improvement list and was forwarded to the Governor's office for review.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: We will continue to push for new facilities for the programs listed above. We are developing a Forest Health Research and Education Center (FHREC) with the Southern Research Station (USDA Forest Service) and Kentucky Division of Forestry; the former has agreed to provide some funding toward a new facility as it relates to the cooperative effort to develop the FHREC on UK's campus. We will continue to push for new facilities and attempt to identify large donors who could catalyze efforts to construct a new building.

Graduate and Extension Programs Recommendations:

10. Increase the number and diversity of graduate students in the Department of Forestry.

Assessment Method: We currently track the number and demographics of graduate students in our MS program and for Ph.D. students advised by our faculty in other programs (i.e., Biology Department, IPSS, Animal and Food Sciences, Plant and Soil Sciences).

Results: Forestry continues to hire a number of international graduate students and women. Opportunities to hire diverse students from other sectors continue to be limited.

Analysis of results and reflection: Anecdotally, we have seen an increase in the number of women and international students coming to Forestry. However, we need to evaluate this against data coming from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: We continue to recruit high-quality graduate students from a diversity of backgrounds. Perhaps the most effective means we have for increasing the number and diversity of students is to increase the number of assistantships offered. We are also optimistic that our newer faculty will continue to recruit a diversity of students into our program.

11. Increase the number and amount of hard-money graduate assistantships in the Department of Forestry.

Assessment Method: Using forestry department internal records, the number of departmental assistantships will be tracked to see if the forestry department doubles the number of departmental assistantships by 2014.

Results: For the 2014-2015 academic year, four (4) departmental assistantships were awarded.

Analysis of results and reflection: We should begin to see this number maintained, if not increased, as several of our endowments recover from being under water and generate limited income for supporting graduate research.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: We will continue to seek cost-saving measures to increase the number of assistantships we can offer. We will continue to seek additional donations to bolster our graduate program.

12. Increase graduate teaching capacity in the Department of Forestry through direct increases in FTEs devoted to this purpose and through Adjunct faculty appointments.

Assessment Method: Count the number, quality, and diversity of faculty and adjunct faculty in the Department of Forestry.

Results: Over the last several years, several Adjunct Faculty were appointed within the department. Dr. Claudia Cotton (USFS Soil Scientist) has assisted with

Landscape Assessment since 2012. Drs. Monte McGregor, John Brunjes, Dana Baxley, and Matt Thomas, all from Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, were accepted as Adjunct Faculty in 2013. The department hopes to involve these individuals in teaching classes in the near future, but in the meantime they are cooperating on various research endeavors. We have also hired Dr. Bert Abbott, Research Geneticist, to assist with the development of the Forest Health Research and Education Center at UK. Dr. Abbott has already reached out to undergraduate students to provide research opportunities and we anticipate his increased involvement in the graduate program in the coming year. Dr. Abbott continues to contribute to graduate research opportunities for students.

Analysis of results and reflection: These steps seem to be propelling us in the right direction for graduate instruction.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: In addition to the steps described above, we have also made several revisions to faculty DOEs to create more opportunity for graduate instruction. First and foremost, limiting junior faculty teaching time to undergraduate courses of a certain level will permit more room for teaching a graduate course. Also, Dr. Dave Wagner has released a portion of his DOE previously dedicated to teaching an undergraduate course toward development of an additional graduate course.

13. Creation of a Ph.D. program in Forestry.

Assessment Method: Determine if a Forestry Ph.D. program has been developed in the department.

Results: The creation of the IPSS (Integrated Plant and Soil Sciences) Ph.D. program has reduced the urgency/need for a specific Ph.D. in Forestry. Several of our faculty are graduate faculty members in this program and can advise Ph.D. students under its umbrella.

Analysis of results and reflection: The department Research Committee recently forwarded a recommendation to the Forestry faculty that we pursue a Ph.D. program. A meeting with the Graduate School suggests this may be more attainable than previously thought.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: The department will begin to prepare a petition to pursue a Ph.D. program in Forestry and Natural Resources. Forestry faculty currently advise approximately 12 Ph.D. students, suggesting the demand is there for such a program. Further, there is no other entity in Kentucky that currently offers a Ph.D. in forestry or natural resources and UK Forestry is the obvious choice to fill this demand. One significant improvement that may contribute to increasing the number of Ph.D. students advised by Forestry faculty would be additional hard-money resources to incentivize faculty recruitment of Ph.D. students. Currently our supply of assistantships is considerably less than the demand by potential students.

While we have been very successful in acquiring extramural funding to support both MS and Ph.D. students, additional hard-money incentives could leverage opportunities and result in increased Ph.D. student numbers. The department also needs to identify opportunities to recruit international students who may come to UK with their own financial support.

14. Increase hard-money Extension FTEs.

Assessment Method: Counting the number of Extension personnel.

Results: The number of Extension faculty decreased with the retirement, and concurrent loss of the position due to budget cuts, of Deborah Hill, Non-timber Forest Products Specialist in 2012. Also, Carroll Fackler, Extension Associate for the Primary Forest Products Industry, retired in June 2014.

Analysis of results and reflection: We don't expect to hire a recurring, tenure-track position to replace Dr. Deborah Hill. We have recently replaced Carroll Fackler with Mr. Chad Niman who started with the department summer 2015.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: The department conducted a strategic planning exercise in 2013 to identify the priority personnel needs in each mission area. It was determined that one of the critical needs for Forestry Extension was a Forest Health Specialist (to include a research appointment). Resources are currently not available to hire a tenure-track full-time Forest Health Extension Specialist, but we have acquired funds from the USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station to hire an Extension Forest Health Post-Doctoral scientist for two years to begin developing educational programs targeting forest health. A scientist to fill this position is currently being sought. We are currently developing a position description to fill the Primary Forest Products Extension Associate position. We are also currently conducting a search to replace Dr. Tom Barnes, who passed away unexpectedly in late 2014. This search should be completed by the end of October 2015.

15. Increase Extension grantsmanship.

Assessment Method: Track the number and dollars coming to Forestry Extension personnel.

Results: Forestry Extension faculty and staff are active in grantsmanship. Many of their programs would not be possible without the assistance of outside financial resources.

Analysis of results and reflection: Extension continues to do an excellent job of funding many of their programs and activities using extramural funding.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: UK Forestry will endeavor to better track the funding that comes specifically to UK Forestry Extension. This is often challenged

by the fact that many of our efforts are integrated, meaning it is difficult to separate what is Extension versus applied research versus joint efforts.

16. Conduct forest landowners' needs assessment.

Assessment Method: The department conducted a forest industry needs assessment as a pre-cursor to the landowner needs assessment.

Results: The industry needs assessment identified several major areas in which the industry feels the need for more information. Common themes among those surveyed included the need for additional information regarding marketing products, both domestically and overseas, employee training, and burdensome government regulations.

Analysis of results and reflection: While we currently don't have the personnel capacity to address these areas comprehensively, we can begin to organize conversations and periodic workshops to address some of these issues. In addition, as new personnel are hired to replace retiring staff and faculty, we can identify individuals who may have the capacity to offer some educational programming in these areas.

Ongoing Improvement Actions: At this time we don't have concrete plans to conduct a forest landowners' needs assessment. However, we will evaluate our current workload and ongoing relationships with partners to determine the degree to which this should become a priority.