

**Department of Horticulture
2013-2014 Implementation Plan Report**

Note - Only those recommendations necessitating action are listed here

Recommendation #1 – Communication seems to be difficult from a number of standpoints. People feel out of the loop, and non-faculty (staff, students, etc.) want to be part of the conversation, or at least informed. Listservs, regular faculty meetings, social events, and graduate student staff liaisons at faculty meetings could all be helpful. There is a level of camaraderie that exists on the Horticulture Research Farm (HRF) that appears lacking elsewhere in the department. In addition to internal communications, some focus on external marketing and a stronger web presence for the department and sustainable agriculture program and farm is important.

Assessment method: The number of staff and students that appear at faculty meetings will be monitored, as well as the number of individual separate meetings.

Results: There is little attendance at faculty meetings from staff and/or students. The Chair began one-on-one meetings with faculty and staff to discuss communication issues.

Analysis of results and reflection: One-on-one meetings between the Chair and staff/students have been much more productive and will be expanded.

Ongoing improvement actions: The Chair will spend more time devoted to individual meetings with staff and students.

Recommendation #2 – The department needs to develop a long-term vision and strategic plan that is more specific to its needs and goals. This should be done with meaningful input from staff and students. The focus on sustainability seems broadly accepted, though it was also clear that more definition needs to be put around that concept so the department has some consensus on positions, prioritizing resource needs, and coordinating research and extension effort.

Assessment method: The development of a concise strategic plan with agreement by all faculty/staff/students will be developed through a departmental retreat.

Results: The departmental retreat was delayed due to the current uncertainty about the new budget model.

Analysis of results and reflection: The faculty feel it is wise not to enter into defined future goals and objectives without a clear vision of available resources.

Ongoing improvement actions: The departmental retreat was delayed, but is on the agenda for this fall. The department will continue to work toward the development of a long-term vision and strategic plan.

Recommendation #5 – Consider developing a strategy that integrates academic, extension, and research programs in sustainable agriculture with a focus on the Horticulture Research Farm (HRF). This has potential for fundraising and would bring clearer focus to the vision, mission, and goals for the farm and program.

Assessment method: The development of a concise strategic plan that integrates academic, extension, and research programs in sustainable agriculture with a focus on the Horticulture Research Farm will be developed through a departmental retreat.

Results: The departmental retreat was delayed due to the current uncertainty about the new budget model.

Analysis of results and reflection: The faculty feel it is wise at the present not to enter into defined future goals and objectives without a clear vision of available resources under the new budget model.

Ongoing improvement actions: The departmental retreat was delayed, but is on the agenda for fall 2014.

Recommendation #7 – The department needs to develop a cohesive graduate education experience. Students expressed a need for informational seminars and the desire to know more about what other faculty are doing and how the work of their labs relate to the work of the department as a whole. Specific recommendations include the following:

- ***Develop formal teaching or extension experiences, depending on students' interests, as an integral part of the education of graduate students in the Horticulture Department.***
- ***Develop a competitive pool of funding for graduate students to attend scientific meetings. This funding would benefit students and allow the department to have a greater presence at conferences.***
- ***Work to create more professional and social interaction through organized departmental activities for faculty and students as well as encouraging students to organize as a group.***

- ***Develop a seminar or short classes that focus on grant writing activities, cross-training on equipment and techniques, and other subjects that would assist graduate students in their career preparation.***

Assessment method: The number of seminars devoted to graduate level education will be monitored, as well as the availability of funds specific for graduate student development.

Results: Students have responded positively about the extra opportunities to learn about professional responsibilities and funding opportunities for their professional development.

Analysis of results and reflection: This has been a positive move forward for the department in terms of graduate education.

Ongoing improvement actions: We will continue developing more opportunities for our graduate students.

Recommendation #9 – Leverage existing tobacco settlement funds towards identifying and securing sustainable long-term funding for essential extension related programs.

Assessment method: The number of programs and amount of funding dependent on tobacco settlement funds will be monitored.

Results: The dependency on tobacco settlement funds has been reduced in the department through departmental and college-wide efforts.

Analysis of results and reflection: We have been successful in reducing our dependency on tobacco settlement funds by ~\$0.25 million.

Ongoing improvement actions: We will continue to exploit all possible means to reduce our dependency on tobacco settlement funds.

Recommendation #10 – Identify under-utilized office and laboratory space in the Plant Science building and lobby administration to move a significant portion (if not all) of the Horticulture Department.

Assessment method: The number of Horticulture faculty and staff located in the Plant Science building will be monitored.

Results: There has been an increase of one faculty member, one technician, three post-docs, and 4 graduate students from Horticulture in the Agricultural Science Center North into the Plant Science Building.

Analysis of results and reflection: Our efforts have been successful.

Ongoing improvement actions: We will continue to argue for occupancy in the Plant Science building.

Recommendation #12 – Catalyze the creation of new opportunities to provide modern office and laboratory space for all members in the department.

Assessment method: The number of Horticulture faculty and staff located in the Plant Science building will be monitored.

Results: One Horticulture faculty member, one technician, three post-docs, and 4 graduate students have been moved from the Agricultural Science Center North Building to the Plant Science Building.

Analysis of results and reflection: Our efforts to move faculty and staff to the Plant Science Building have been successful.

Ongoing improvement actions: The department will continue to argue for additional office and laboratory space in the Plant Science building.

Recommendation #13 & 14 – Find ways to provide stable recurring funding for extension associates and identify a funding source for the Crop Diversification & Biofuel Research & Education Center.

Assessment method: Create stable funding for extension associates and the Crop Diversification & Biofuel Research & Education Center and reduce department dependency on tobacco settlement funds.

Results: The crop diversification center is now a multi-state regional project with hard funding.

Analysis of results and reflection: We have been successful in creating hard funding and reducing our dependency on tobacco settlement funds by ~\$0.25 million.

Ongoing improvement actions: We will continue to exploit all possible means to reduce our dependency on tobacco settlement funds and create hard funding for extension associates.

Recommendation #15 – Continue efforts to transform the Horticulture Research Farm (HRF) into a nationally recognized center for sustainable horticulture.

Assessment method: Monitor the hiring of a new farm superintendent and development of a farm specific budget.

Results: A new farm superintendent has been hired.

Analysis of results and reflection: The Horticulture Department still needs to develop a budget model for the farm.

Ongoing improvement actions: We will continue to work to develop a budget specifically for the farm.

Recommendation #16 – Identify mechanisms to fill existing vacant faculty positions and, moreover, ways to increase the number of faculty lines in the department.

Assessment method: The number of new faculty positions will be monitored.

Results: Due to budget constraints, we have not been able to fill any faculty positions.

Analysis of results and reflection: Until there is a better understanding of the new budget model, filling positions is a moot point.

Ongoing improvement actions: The department will address this issue after the new budget model is fully implemented on July 1, 2015.

Recommendation #17 – Identify and implement a solution to the declining enrollment in the Horticulture and Plant Science undergraduate program.

Assessment method: The number of undergraduates enrolled in the Horticulture undergraduate program will be monitored.

Results: The number of undergraduates has increased from 2012-2013.

Analysis of results and reflection: The development and implementation of new courses in the department has contributed to our increased enrollment.

Ongoing improvement actions: We will continue to expand our course offerings and attract new students.

Recommendation #18 - Identify mechanisms to reward outstanding faculty and staff.

Assessment method: The number of awards to faculty and staff will be monitored.

Results: We have received one outstanding staff award, as well as a faculty award for outstanding grantsmanship.

Analysis of results and reflection: We will continue to monitor the number of awards received by our faculty and staff and will emphasize the importance of this as a measure of our department's recognition within the college.

Ongoing improvement actions: We will continue our existing improvement actions.