

2006 Report on the Recommendations from the 2000 College of Agriculture Review

- 1. We recommend that the College Strategic Plan be updated and publicized to faculty, staff, students and clientele.**

“The Land Grant Vision”, a new College strategic plan for 2003-2006, has been written and widely distributed. It is accessible on the College administrative web site. The format, scheduling and much of the content of this strategic plan was driven by the University strategic plan

- 2. We recommend that salaries for faculty and staff be increased to a competitive level with those of the University of Kentucky Lexington Campus and benchmark institutions.**

Overall, faculty and staff compensation remains controlled at the University level. The University Business Plan establishes benchmark-competitive faculty salaries as essential, and the 06-07 budget demonstrated a significant commitment to this objective. Plans with regard to staff compensation remain less clear at this time. Prior to 2005-2006, very restrictive state budgets worsened our ability to compete with salaries at the benchmarks.

More recently, the College has used the tools available at our level more aggressively. This includes supporting fully competitive starting salaries, aggressive retention strategies, reclassification of staff, and supplemental adjustments when allowed by budgetary status and University policy.

We are not aware of systematic inequities between our College and other colleges outside of Medicine, but will analyze this issue in the upcoming self-study. Much remains to be done at all levels to reach benchmark averages.

- 3. We recommend that the current faculty evaluation system and PDP system for staff be critically evaluated, modified, and adequately explained to the personnel involved.**

The staff evaluation system has evolved somewhat since the 2000 review but evaluation of classified staff remains under the direction of University Human Resources.

Evaluation systems for faculty and unclassified staff have been very substantially changed since the 2000 review. In all cases, moving toward a simpler 1-5 evaluation format. The system is based on the assumption that a large majority of college employees are “meeting high standards” of performance, and that detail is most helpful for formative evaluation.

- 4. We recommend that ample training be provided for faculty and staff to ensure they are efficient and effective in using office productivity software, email and other computer-based activities in their computer-based programs and required for their day-to-day activities.**

The 2004 College Information Technology Review and other processes probably addressed this recommendation in an adequate manner with regard to pre-SAP/IRIS systems. Although many departments upgraded or reorganized IT and

business support functions, and the College Business and Budget Office was completely restructured and re-staffed, we continue to be severely challenged by the implementation of the new administrative software systems.

5. We recommend that the College consider development of a “mentoring program” for new faculty and staff.

In consultation with department chairs the College administration has continued to leave the development of individual mentoring programs to the departments. The very different cultures among departments have led to a variety of approaches to this issue, some developing specific and explicit mentoring programs, other apparently preferring to continue with more informal practices.

6. We recommend that renewed and continued emphasis be placed on interpersonal communication of College issues, strategies and plans.

Earlier the College administration provided regular written communication through the “Ag Futures” series, the College Magazine and multiple other formats. These efforts have substantially diminished during the Dean’s term as provost. However, other administrative offices, notably the Associate Deans for Research, Extension and Academic Programs have all developed several formats for communication with faculty, staff and external stakeholder groups. The increased use of email and explosion of web-based information since 2000 may, in fact, have resulted in too much information dissemination and not enough communication. The self-study should include an analysis of effective and time-efficient means of communication.

7. We recommend that the Commonwealth and the University give funding for capital construction projects the highest possible priority.

Up to 2006, tight state budgets and other University priorities have limited opportunities for College-related capital projects. The College has been allowed to advocate for state-funding of only the Livestock Disease Diagnostic Center and the Dairy relocation project, and has had some, but not complete success with both.

Non-state funding has been secured or is being sought for the following capital projects since 2000: Gluck expansion (gift funding), the Plant Science research building (sale of property), the ARS lab (USDA), Good Barn foyer and Culton Suite (gift funding), Woodford County Feed Mill (USDA), South Farm improvements (grants and property sale) and an Equine Education facility (fund raising underway).

8. We recommend that the College work to further develop private sources of funding.

The Advancement Office has been reorganized and re-staffed. The market value of the College endowment has increased to ~\$80M in 2006. At least 8 new endowed Chairs and Professorships have been added since 2000, enabling the College to capture a significant share of the “Bucks for Brains” fund. The College Campaign goal of \$100M will be reached by the end of 2006. The

College of Agriculture and the College of Medicine will be the first two campus units to reach campaign goals.

9. We recommend that additional resources are needed to continue, improve, and expand communications programs of the College.

Communications technology was a core element of the 2004 Information Technology Review and several measures were taken to bolster communications technology support on and off-campus. This process led to the formation of the “IT Team” and the CALE (Creative Applications in Learning Environments) initiatives.

Since many questions remain about both traditional and new communications systems, we expect that communications support and infrastructure will be included as a focus area in the self-study and review.

10. We recommend that Agricultural Communications Specialists be placed at the University of Kentucky Research and Education Center in Princeton.

A Communications Specialist is now located at Princeton. This is considered a very successful arrangement and should continue.

11. We recommend that the College develop a centralized mechanism for coordinating all computer communications and Web-based information.

Refer to the 2004 IT Review for an intensive evaluation of this complex issue.

The recommendation as stated is probably not feasible, nor is it supported by all elements of the College. See recommendation 9 also.

Enhancement of the College web presence remains a current priority of Ag Communications and the administration.

12. We recommend that the College of Agriculture pursue a plan to increase undergraduate and graduate enrollment by 20 percent during the next review period.

Undergrad enrollment increased by about 800 students during this period. The sum of enrollment in former Ag and former HES programs, all now in Ag, increased from 1,591 in 2000 to 1,985 in 2005. This is an increase of 25%. Under current faculty levels and facility demands, further significant enrollment gains would not be a positive occurrence.

13. We recommend that the College initiate a systematic program of upgrading classrooms and laboratory facilities.

Lacking a recurring budget for maintenance and renovation, such upgrades will continue to be conducted on an as-needed-when-possible basis. However, the administration at both the College and University level have recently taken a more systematic approach to establishing renovation priorities, and a more aggressive approach to funding those priorities. In the past year, significant renovations have occurred in three classrooms in use by the College. These are Barnhart 227 and Erikson 202 and 203.

14. We recommend that the College of Agriculture consider the report of the GEN 100/200 Review Committee and respond as appropriate to their conclusions regarding the training of faculty, course content and course size, etc.

15. We recommend that the College of Agriculture find a means to compensate departments for the time spent by faculty in the GEN 100 and GEN 200 courses.

The College administration believes that individual faculty should be incentivized and recognized for contributions to GEN teaching, but that departments should not be compensated for a shared, college-wide academic responsibility. Currently, faculty who teach GEN 100 receive an extra 3% credit towards their teaching DOE for involvement. Other incentives may be necessary to maintain the program. Note that GEN 200 is no longer taught.

16. We recommend that a review process for capstone classes be conducted across the College to assess how well individual courses meet the needs of their programs as well as whether there is continuity among programs.

To date, there has been no systematic review of capstone classes. There is a wide range of activities in the capstone courses in the college, making uniform assessment difficult. This should, however, remain a goal for the College.

17. We recommend that the College of Agriculture assess availability of required courses and consider whether it is realistic to admit students into programs if timely enrollment in required courses is frequently difficult.

This is one of numerous issues that the University as a whole struggles to address as enrollment grows rapidly. The College administration believes that limited access to required courses is rare within the College. There are a few cases where class availability is a problem, most notably in the HMT 120 class where enrollment caps may limit the number of students who can move to 200+ level courses in a timely fashion. This recommendation implies that we should actively limit enrollment beyond that which occurs at the University level. With the exception of the Landscape Architecture program, our philosophy has been to accept any student who is admitted by UK.

18. We recommend that the College of Agriculture continue to evaluate its instructional programs and courses for an appropriate balance between traditional production agriculture and basic biological science.

New program development and curriculum review in current majors is driven by Faculty initiative and interests in the College of Agriculture. The College administration believes that current menu of majors and courses is appropriately diverse and balanced.

19. We recommend that efforts be continued to reward teaching and advising activities in the faculty evaluation process.

Faculty teaching and advising are valued, and are used in the evaluation of faculty for promotion and tenure as well as for performance evaluations and merit pay consideration. Following the implementation of the 5 point scale structure, there

have been numerous cases where faculty were rated in the top tier for performance based primarily on their excellence in the classroom and with students.

20. We recommend that the College of Agriculture identify a conference area for student recruitment activities.

N-8 Ag North has been remodeled to address this and other space needs for Academic Programs. Remodeling of Erikson space for Academic Programs is underway.

21. We recommend that the College of Agriculture recruiters inform the appropriate local Extension personnel (agents, area program directors) whenever they plan a recruiting visit.

This was an excellent suggestion. Jason Headrick, in the Office of Academic Programs, is making in-roads with extension personnel, and will continue to do so. We continue to look for opportunities to utilize Extension and Alumni in outreach and recruitment efforts.

22. We recommend that the College of Agriculture consider a centralized mechanism for coordinating web-based information related to recruitment and undergraduate programming.

Recent enhancement of the Academic Programs web site will go a long way to addressing this recommendation. Over the next year, further enhancements will make it even easier for potential and current students to learn about our programs and contact us.

23. We recommend that the College of Agriculture place greater emphasis on development efforts aimed at increasing the amount of scholarships available to students.

The “Golden Leaf” program in 2005-6 increased scholarship endowments by approximately \$2M. Scholarship offers have increased from about \$300,000 in 2003 to over \$530,000 in 2006.

24. We recommend that the College of Agriculture should be at the forefront in helping the people of Kentucky understand the reasons for the selective admissions program at the University of Kentucky.

This policy is undoubtedly better understood and accepted in 2006 than in 2000. The College Strategic Plan, “The Land Grant Vision” reaffirms the commitment to promoting educational access for all, and articulates strategies to promote such access. A new “holistic” admissions policy, developed by the Provost’s enrollment management group in 05-06, moves the University to a selective admissions strategy that is more flexible and inclusive.

25. We recommend that the College of Agriculture address the under-representation of certain geographical areas of the state by enhancing recruiting

efforts in these areas. Additional resources will be required to accomplish this goal.

Current recruiting strategies continue to emphasize the statewide mission of the College of Agriculture. We strive to involve agents and alumni from around Kentucky in student recruiting. Ambassadors visit schools in those counties where undergraduate enrollment is low, and recruiting is aimed at hitting areas, e.g., western KY, underrepresented in our College.

- 26. We recommend that the College of Agriculture carefully analyze the characteristics of students who are admitted but choose not to attend UK, and determine whether these students constitute a group that should be more actively recruited, possibly through enhanced scholarship availability.**

This has not been done. There have been discussions of the use of scholarships for recruitment purposes, however, this has not been instituted in a systematic fashion. Targeted use of scholarships by regional institutions in western KY does represent a competitive challenge. However, in the absence of other good, objective information, ACT and HS GPA information is our measure for most scholarship awards.

- 27. We recommend that the College work to increase the pool of funds available for graduate student stipends and tuition waivers. We also recommend that graduate student stipends be increased to at least the mean of stipends at benchmark institutions, while increasing graduate student numbers.**

The tuition waivers present a great challenge to the College. The only real way to increase the amount available is by outside funding from mostly competitive sources (USDA Agricultural Research Service ;ARS and USDA special grants do not pay tuition waivers). Supporting graduate students remains a problem for the College.

- 28. We recommend that the College identify and implement long-term funding mechanisms to support applied research programs.**

One of the biggest advances in applied research funding was the acquisition of the federal laboratory, the USDA ARS Forage-Animal Production Unit. Through a specific cooperative agreement, College researchers receive over \$1 M per year for grazing animal and forage research that would likely not be competitively funded.

USDA Special Grants, Ag Development Board funds, the Physical Activity initiative and commodity group-linked funding have all significantly augmented support for applied research since 2000.

- 29. We recommend that laboratory, office, and support facilities be developed for the College of Agriculture that are commensurate with the University's stated goal of reaching "top 20" status.**

While some progress is being made, see recommendation #7, this remains a significant challenge. We expect facilities to be a focus of the self-study and review.

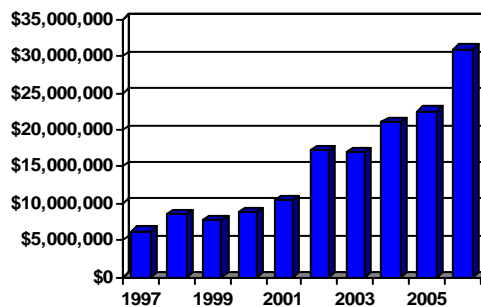
30. We recommend that the College address salary compression among existing faculty.

University budget guidelines and fund availability have provided few opportunities to address this recommendation. However, the College will structure the 2007 mid-year 1.5% faculty salary allocation to begin relieving compression.

31. We recommend that the College endeavor to increase total R&D funding and funding per faculty member to levels comparable to those of the benchmark universities.

The College's external awards have increased substantially since 2000, to more than \$30M in FY 2006. Although changes in funding per faculty member have not been tracked (and are highly variable due to discipline, ranging from zero to \$144,000 for different departments) the number of faculty has not changed substantially during these reporting periods.

External Grant Funding for College of Agriculture



32. We recommend that the College reaffirm the value of multi-disciplinary research and that greater emphasis be placed on rewarding participation in effective multi-disciplinary research efforts.

Evidence for the College's support for multidisciplinary efforts includes aggressively promoting such efforts in promotion and tenure recommendation letters from the administration, recognizing collaborative grant awards (now available for tracking from the Office of Sponsored Projects Administration), and enhanced support for multidisciplinary grants. As indirect evidence for more multi-investigator grants, it should be noted that proposal numbers increased very little during the years since 2003 that grant awards more than doubled.

33. We recommend that the College encourage and support faculty in exploiting every opportunity for participation in grant review boards.

The College has funded opportunities for faculty to attend grant workshops; one benefit of attendance is to meet program directors. Also the research office has

facilitated an inventory of faculty to be sent to USDA for the National Research Initiative reviewer pool. We have not tracked changes over time, but we receive approximately three letters/month from panel managers recognizing faculty participation in grant reviews.

34. We recommend that the College take firm action in facilitating the submission of research proposals by faculty to competitive grant programs.

The research office analyzed the grant portfolio in 2001 and found that 25% of total funds were derived from federally competitive sources, 25% from federal special appropriations (non-competitive) and the remainder from state, industry, and other sources. In the last strategic planning process the college set a goal to increase the percentage of federally competitive funds. In FY 2005 (2006 not finalized), this percentage was increased to over 30%. This increase is particularly noteworthy when one considers that the amount of federally competitive grants are usually quite a bit lower than special grants from federal sources. Another way that the College has increased the percentage of federally competitive funds is through hiring new faculty who come from a culture where federal competitive grants are expected, and therefore these faculty are successful at UK.

The College Research Office has significantly increased staff support since 2000 to enhance support for faculty development and submission of all grant proposals.

35. We recommend that University and College Administrators make legislators aware of the funding shortfall if UK is to compete successfully with the benchmark institutions.

This concern led directly to the development and marketing of The Top 20 Business Plan by the University administration, including the Interim Provost, in 2005-6. This Plan and subsequent communications efforts by the University led to a very significant positive redirection of university funding strategies in the 2006 legislative session.

College of Agriculture priorities and needs are now communicated to the legislature primarily by the deans and the Director of Advancement. Legislative successes from 2004-2006 include: partial funding of the LDDC and dairy relocation capital projects, two appropriations for the County Enhancement Initiative, and a recurring appropriation for a new Extension Wellness program.

36. We recommend that program area in-service training task forces of researchers, agents, specialists, area program directors, and the appropriate assistant directors be set up to develop an organized and comprehensive plan to provide timely subject matter trainings and annual updates for 4-H/youth, FCS, and agriculture agents.

A Committee on Agent Training and Support, comprised of agents, specialists and administration was appointed in 2000 and charged with reviewing the entire agent training system. They submitted a final report in January, 2002. Then in 2002 an implementation committee was formed to proceed with implementation of the recommendations. Many of the recommendation have now been

implemented. Examples are an incentive program for agents to secure professional development, re-structuring of the in-service training program, the reorganization of orientation and core training, the use of a web-based enrollment process for in-service, initiation of a mentoring program, improved support for 4-H, and the re-structuring of the Extension conference to include more training for agents. .

- 37. We recommend that a system curriculum be developed for agriculture, 4-H/youth, and family and consumer sciences fields of study to assist agents with securing master's degrees. We believe more encouragement should be given to reaching a realistic goal of 60 percent of agents receiving a master's degree.**

While much remains to be done to enhance access to excellent graduate training for agents, the "Career Ladder" now provides significant rewards, and at some levels, requirements for graduate education. Several projects are underway to increase suitable graduate level offerings. In order that graduate programs be more accessible to agents across the state, there is a need for more graduate courses to be offered by distance education. Currently, 50% of agents have a graduate degree, up from 40% a few years earlier.

- 38. We recommend that improvement be made to the orientation and core training of the Extension professional development systems.**

The orientation program was expanded to include new specialists and associates as well as agents and two days of program-area orientation was added for agents. Core training was condensed from four sessions over two years to three sessions over one year. This enables new agents to receive this basic training sooner. Orientation and core training are required elements for advancement in the career ladder.

- 39. We recommend that a task force of agents with varying years of experience and area program director representatives work with the Professional Development staff to develop a more intensive, more timely, more coordinated training program for new agents to make sure they receive the subject matter and "how to" information they need to begin to develop effective Extension programs.**

See answer to Q 36. Two task forces were formed.

- 40. We recommend that the staff development group, in cooperation with Department Chairs, develop a mandatory orientation and core training program for all new Extension specialists.**

New specialists and associates are now included in the orientation session for agents.

- 41. We recommend that advisory committees made up of Extension specialists, 4-H/youth development specialists, Area Program Directors, Extension agents, leaders, and youth, be established to develop and up date curriculum, project manuals, and programming for the 4-H/youth development programs.**

The 4-H program, through the input of agents, state staff, leaders and youth, has adopted six major core curriculum areas. They are animal science, communications and expressive arts, family and consumer science, health, and leadership, and natural resources. Support materials are being updated and organized around those core areas.

42. We recommend that a review of publication and printing guidelines to ensure Extension printed materials meet the needs of our ever-changing population and clientele base, and to bring all program areas to the same standard.

Printed materials have been reviewed and outdated materials have been deleted from the inventory. Efforts are underway to update existing publications and to develop new publications in areas of need. Printing of publication is “on demand” thus resulting in lower inventories. A limited number of hard copies are being produced and all new materials are being made available on the web. Materials are developed at the appropriate reading level and there is an increasing number being translated into Spanish.

43. We recommend that the committee reiterates the recommendation that salaries for Extension agents and specialists be increased to a competitive level with those of the benchmark institutions.

The County Enhancement Initiative has been one of the College’s top two legislative priorities since 2000, and its funding is a major achievement. This has significantly shrunk the gap in agent compensation relative to peer institutions.

44. We recommend that the current Extension evaluation systems be reviewed by all those involved to establish a fair and equitable system that would also meet the standards for public accountability.

Sweeping changes have been made in agent and specialist evaluation since 2000, notably the implementation of a 5-point scale and an emphasis on constructive, formative feedback. Evaluation of specialists and faculty by agents has been implemented. Systems for more open and constructive evaluation of administrators at all levels are in development.

45. We recommend that the FCS and 4-H specialist positions be expanded since our state’s population and needs have increased.

Budget constraints have made it impossible to address this objective except through extramural funds or reallocation. An incremental increase in FCS specialist and faculty support may be possible as a result of HES reorganization and the recent Physical Activity funding.

46. We recommend that the College consider adding more Extension/research associates to help with applied research and Extension demonstrations and activities.

The number of associate level positions has increased very significantly since 2000, supported almost entirely through the significant increase in extramural funding for applied research and extension programs.

47. We recommend that the College revisit the issue of granting full graduate faculty status to Extension specialists directing graduate research.

This no longer remains an issue, the Graduate School has been convinced to confer full Graduate Faculty status on several Extension series faculty who have appropriate experience in and make significant contributions to grad education.