

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AND APPLIED ECONOMICS

STRATEGIC PLAN (2006-2010)

MISSION STATEMENT

The Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics is committed to provide the highest standards of excellence in learning, research, and engagement on all aspects of the economics of regional, state, and global production, distribution, and consumption of food and fiber goods and services, and public and private use of natural resources.

VISION STATEMENT

The Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics will be recognized as the center of excellence for leadership in learning, discovery, and delivery of knowledge on economic aspects of all current and emerging issues related to regional, state, and global food, fiber, and natural resources.

The Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics will:

- be recognized as one of the most highly respected departments of agricultural and applied economics in the United States, attract the best students, and recruit the best faculty and staff;
- deepen our commitment as a research-intensive department and enhance opportunities for new faculty discoveries to complement learning and to better prepare students to compete in a knowledge-based society;
- prepare society-ready graduates with the ability to think analytically, learn independently and to be able to apply economic concepts effectively in their professional and personal decision making;
- strengthen our basic and applied disciplinary and multidisciplinary research through and with the active participation of graduate and undergraduate students; and
- participate and contribute to local, regional, and state social and economic growth and development efforts.

The Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics will target and seek inherent complementarities among all its activities so as to link successes in one domain as an instrument to leverage success across other domains.

GOALS, BENCHMARKS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Goal 1: People First. Recruit and retain a larger and diverse faculty, staff, and student body.

Benchmarks:

- Hire 3 additional faculty members. (2005 FTE: 14)
- Increase diversity by 10% in the department.
- Increase the number of staff by 2.
- Achieve salary parity for faculty and staff, benchmarked against appropriate skill sets and professional research areas.
- Increase the current number of faculty members by 2 and staff members by 1 who participate in professional development activities.
- Enroll 35 graduate students. (2005: 28)
- Enroll 300 undergraduate students (2005: 282)

Objectives:

Objective 1.1: Hire, promote, and retain excellent faculty and staff.

Strategies:

- Enhance funding opportunities to increase the number of faculty and staff by developing innovative programs which address needs not currently fulfilled by existing programs.
- Sustain compensation for existing faculty and staff consistent with their high productivity and our peer institutions by conducting periodic market reviews of salaries for commensurate productivity and performance of faculty and staff.

Objective 1.2: Provide professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

Strategies:

- Increase faculty development leaves, foreign work activities and staff development opportunities.
- Encourage faculty and staff to apply for currently available opportunities, especially those with scholars from other institutions which are advertised in regularly published professional media.
- Acquire additional faculty and staff to be able to take advantage of potential opportunities without compromising the integrity of current programs.
- Participate in international research efforts to interact with foreign scholars and highlight international research output and funding in annual faculty evaluations.

Objective 1.3: Diversify faculty, staff, and student body.

Strategies:

- Recruit graduate students, staff and faculty from non-traditional (non-agricultural), minorities, and female sources as well as traditional sources of candidates by increasing the number of recruiting visits and efforts by current faculty, staff and graduate students.
- Improve the professional research reputation of the department to be able to attract increased numbers of non-traditional, minorities and female faculty, staff and graduate students.
- Strategically amend or introduce course offerings in the department to reach out to and increase the visibility of the department across campus to enhance gender and racial/ethnic diversity of the student body.

Goal 2: Excellence in Education. Attain national recognition as a top Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics.

General Benchmarks:

- Achieve \$35,000 per year in departmental award of scholarships and raise the levels of scholarship stipends by 20%.
- Increase the number of students involved in study abroad and exchange programs with international institutions by at least two from the current level. (2005: 0)
- Increase student participation in internships by at least two from the current level. (2005: 13)
- Offer four distance learning courses. (2005 : 2)

Benchmarks in the Undergraduate Degree Program:

- 85% undergraduate student retention, of students with 2.0 GPA or higher.
- Reach a 40% rate of students receiving scholarships.
- Increase undergraduate research interactions with Honors College students.
- Increase the number of undergraduate students involved in research projects by at least two from the current level.
- Increase the number of undergraduate students who minor in AAEC by at least two from the current level.
- 80% of graduates with job offers will report an initial starting salary in excess of the national average of all *agricultural college* graduates.
- 75% of students will answer “yes” to the question: “Did your degree academically prepare you to pursue a graduate/professional program?”
- 75% of students in Senior Research Paper (AGSC 4300 and 4301) will be able to:
 - Express clearly in written communications
 - Use examples to illustrate issues

- Logically-support arguments
- Accurately use economic/business terminology
- Demonstrate appropriate use of economic/business analytical tools.
- 80% of students participating in the Exit Interview will “agree” with the question: Would you recommend the degree program to an entering college freshman?
- 80% of students participating in the AAEC 3100 survey will answer “yes” to the question: Would you recommend taking a specific departmental course?
- 80% of the students participating in the Exit Interview will “agree” that:
 - AAEC prepared him/her/for his/her selected career path
 - They believe that his/her educational dollar was well spent
 - AAEC faculty are effective in communicating economic concepts and illustrating the real-world value of such concepts.

Benchmarks in the Master of Agribusiness Degree Program:

- Develop a distance-based Master of Agribusiness degree program.
- Establish an Agribusiness Research Center.
- 15 students enrolled in the Master of Agribusiness program.

Benchmarks in the M.S. Thesis and Non-thesis Degree Program:

- 50% of students will make at least one professional presentation before graduation.
- 75% of thesis students will complete their research proposal one year after starting their program.
- 90% of both thesis and non-thesis students will successfully complete the final oral examination.

Benchmarks in the Ph.D. Degree Program:

- 75% of students will make one professional presentation prior to graduation.
- 80% will submit a peer-reviewed article within 12 months of graduation.
- 80% of those actively seeking employment will obtain a position within 9 months of graduation.

Professional Offering Benchmark:

- Develop a professional certification program in Water Policy and Planning for non-experts who interact with state and federal water engineers and planners.

Objectives:

Objective 2.1: Recruit and retain the best and brightest students.

Strategies:

- Increase the focus on math, science and computer skills in undergraduate recruiting of high school students.
- Continue graduate student recruiting through professional meetings, advertisements, and professional ties with universities that have not traditionally served as sources of graduate students.
- Increase research productivity in reputable peer-reviewed journals and professional reports to recruit graduate students.
- Increase research funding to attract and recruit graduate students.
- Amend or introduce higher level course offerings to attract non-traditional students from across campus and enhance graduate student recruitment.
- Increase undergraduate research, especially with Honors College students.
- Increase research activities and funding with faculty across CASNR and the entire campus to expose new students to our department.
- Reinforce student advisement and mentoring by faculty.
- Provide new Ph.D. student offerings in the department to doctoral students in key areas such as microeconomic theory and econometrics.

Objective 2.2: Enhance educational access to campus and off-campus students using appropriate educational delivery technology.

Strategies

- Upgrade/enhance multimedia hardware and software in classrooms as needed.
- Initiate development of selected subject-matter materials for distance delivery that lend themselves to that format (4 courses).
- Monitor and report development and application of distance delivery materials and other use of teaching technology.

Objective 2.3: Provide specialized educational access for individuals interested in refining their skills through professional development and continuing education.

Strategies:

- Provide short courses, conferences, and intersession courses as needs arise.
- Evaluate the development of a distance-based Masters of Agribusiness program for professionals (in collaboration with Rawls COBA or TAMU).
- Continue to explore the possibility of offering a 4-year degree program in professional golf management.

- Determine the feasibility of developing a Post-Professionals Certificate in water policy and planning in collaboration with Civil Engineering, possibly leading to a M.S. degree.

Objective 2.4: Enhance students' knowledge of and preparation to deal with global issues and environmental and other natural resource issues through increased involvement in internships and study abroad and exchange programs.

Strategies:

- Expose students to internships and foreign study prospects available through international programs.
- Introduce a senior-level course on environmental and economic sustainability for non-majors across campus.
- Increase research and teaching collaborations with foreign scholars and highlight these efforts in annual faculty evaluations.
- Increase international research funding about and in foreign lands and highlight these efforts in annual faculty evaluations.

Objective 2.5: Revisit and redesign, if necessary, minor requirements for undergraduates.

Strategy:

- Evaluate the instances where our minor requirements enhance other objectives for undergraduate education and professional outreach. Strategic queries include:
 - Does it enhance undergraduate and graduate recruiting?
 - Does it better prepare students for a knowledge-based industry?
 - Does it add new venues for non-traditional and minority students?
 - Are multiple pathways available to complete minor requirements that allow for additional courses if students express an interest?

Objective 2.6: Establish more scholarships and fellowships and raise stipends.

Strategy:

- Work in conjunction with development efforts in CASNR to increase the level and number of scholarship donations.

Objective 2.7: Increase involvement of undergraduate students in research.

Strategies:

- Identify research topics conducive to undergraduate research projects.
- Increase student research opportunities by establishing the Agribusiness Research Center.

- Increase research with faculty across campus as this often enhances undergraduate research in the early stages.
- Utilize CASNR Water Center to locate emerging topics or demonstration projects to facilitate undergraduate research and improve cross-disciplinary participation in undergraduate research.
- Highlight undergraduate research efforts in faculty annual achievement reports.

Goal 3: Excellence in Research. Strengthen fiscal stability and public accountability.

Benchmarks:

- Publish the equivalent of 30 top-ranked journal articles per year, encompassing disciplinary, multidisciplinary, and inter-institutional research activities.
- Publish 5 of the 30 above equivalent top-ranked journal articles with (or by) graduate students.
- Publish 5 of the 30 above equivalent top-ranked journal articles with collaborators from foreign institutions, other institutions or other on-campus departments.
- Participate in funded research with collaborators from foreign institutions, other institutions and other on-campus departments.
- \$1 million annual research funding. (2005: \$1.6M)
- Conduct research that contributes to the sustainable economic growth of the region.

Objectives:

Objective 3.1: Identify and build research programs on current and emerging issues.

Strategies:

- Strengthen each of the following research trusts:
 - Cotton Economics Research,
 - Risk Management and Crop Insurance,
 - North American Agricultural Trade,
 - Water Economics, and
 - Livestock economics, especially dairy.
- Develop internationally focused research activities across the research trusts highlighted above.
- Establish an Agribusiness Research Center.

Objective 3.2: Expand research further into the marketing channels to include producers, processors, and users of food, fiber, and environmental amenities.

Strategies:

- Identify a team core among the faculty and other departments (such as Rawls COBA) to take advantage of requests for proposals addressing consumer demand and industrial organization research issues.
- Identify a team core among the faculty and other departments (such as RWFm, Political Science/ Public Administration, and Law) to respond to requests for proposals addressing environmental economics issues.

Objective 3.3: Expand external research funding.

Strategies:

- Use teams to identify and respond more quickly to requests for research proposals in highly specialized areas.
- Highlight the completion of research proposals in annual faculty achievement reports, especially multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary proposals.
- Identify courses of action that complement these interdisciplinary research interests and which integrate and complement these funding efforts.
- Identify industrial (firms, livestock/dairy producers, farmers' groups), or local community partners (e.g. Experiment Station, Extension, Local Economic Development Association – LEDA) to enroll as research team participants who meet regularly enough to take advantage of research proposal requests from competitive sources.

Objective 3.4: Promote and support multidisciplinary and inter-institutional research.

Strategies:

- Reward and maintain a healthy component of disciplinary emphasis as “capital stock” through annual faculty evaluations.
- Expand inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional research to the extent resource expansion allows by increasing a high degree of complementarity among tasks (research, teaching, and outreach) department-wide.
- Seek requests for proposals that align core disciplinary emphases with efforts involving multi-disciplinary participation.

Objective 3.5: Expand dissemination of research results.

Strategies:

- Increase exposure through traditional outlets (journal articles, professional presentations, chapters, etc.).

- Increase exposure through non-traditional outlets (web sites, electronic publication, etc.).
- Increase exposure by working with foreign scholars, other institutions and other departments on campus.
- Increase exposure by working with industrial (firms, livestock/dairy, farmers' groups) and local community partners (e.g. Experiment Station, Extension, Local Economic Development Association – LEDA).
- Increase number of graduating Ph.D. students.

Objective 3.6: Identify and build research activities that contribute to sustainable economic growth and development in the region.

Strategies:

- Evaluate opportunities to contribute to economic growth and development through requests for proposals as they emerge.
- Monitor and report progress toward development of the Agribusiness Research Center, dependent on available resources.
- Maintain research and project teams among industrial and community organizations.
- Achieving objectives 3.2 to 3.5 would achieve much of this objective.

Goal 4. Partnerships. Build strategic partnerships and alliances.

Benchmarks:

- Establish 2 additional joint appointments with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station. (2005: 1)
- Establish at least 1 significant partnership with a community college or a post-secondary institution.
- Establish an accountability mechanism for faculty and staff productivity in outreach and university, public, and professional service.

Objectives:

Objective 4.1: Strengthen partnerships and collaborations with federal, state, and local government agencies, non-governmental organizations, industry, and trade associations to identify and meet community needs.

Strategy:

- Expand the types of groups with whom we interact and collaborate, including natural resource organizations, economic development groups, and international entities.

Objective 4.2: Establish educational partnerships and coordinate curricula with community colleges and other post-secondary institutions.

Strategies:

- Expand the number of transfer students from community colleges and other post-secondary institutions.
- Make attempts to formalize working relationships with these institutions.
- Develop formal ties with four-year colleges as a means to recruit graduate students.

Objective 4.3: Enhance research partnerships with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station - Lubbock.

Strategies:

- Strengthen the partnership with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station - Lubbock.
- Seek high degrees of complementarity of this partnership with the missions of the department.
- Identify alternative vehicles for collaboration on natural resource related issues via the CASNR Water Center.

Objective 4.4: Identify and build collaborative research activities across the College (CASNR) and the university.

Strategy:

- Establish an Agribusiness Research Center that would facilitate research within CASNR and other centers and institutes on campus, and which would contribute to agribusiness and local regional economic growth through providing technical and analytical assistance.

Objective 4.5: Develop procedures for extending workload credit and teaching/research productivity equivalency for outreach activities.

Strategies:

- Develop indicators of productivity for service activities.
- Evaluate these indicators for use in internal evaluation efforts.
- Identify outreach activities which would have the highest degree of complementarity with existing teaching and research missions.

Goal 5. Tradition and Pride. Establish a national image for the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics.

Benchmarks:

- Departmental endowment of \$1.5 million. (2005: \$1.6M)
- Two endowed professorships. (2005: 0)
- Increased number of award nominations for faculty, staff, and students
- Increased dissemination of information on accomplishments of faculty, staff, students, and programs.
- Assess the need to change the name of the department to “Department of Agribusiness and Applied Economics.”

Objectives:

Objective 5.1: Increase endowments.

Strategy:

- Actively work with CASNR development efforts to identify potential donors for scholarships, professorships, and endowments.

Objective 5.2: Strengthen pride and prestige of the Department.

Strategies:

- Embark on a program to promote our accomplishments within the campus community, the profession, and the citizenry at large.
- Actively seek more awards for faculty, staff, and students.
- Submit more information releases to the general public.
- Communicate achievements better within the academic community.

Objective 5.3: Provide citizen understanding of food, fiber, natural resources and environmental topics to enhance public perception of the Department and the College.

Strategy:

- Assess the need to change the name of the department to “Department of Agribusiness and Applied Economics” to better reflect the nature of our education and research priorities.