



STRATEGIC ISSUES III
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Redefine the College of Agriculture

The College of Agriculture at the University of Wyoming is recognized as the proactive leader in education and scholarship to cultivate healthy, sustainable systems for Wyoming's agriculture, environment and natural resources, and rural communities. Our vision is to serve people by applying the land-grant principles of learning, engagement, and discovery.

Issues and focus areas outlined herein are linked to issues of concern to the public and fundamental needs identified through public and internal visioning sessions and input from the College of Agriculture advisory board. The issues and areas of distinction are designed to align with university-wide issues identified in "Moving Forward III."¹ Each department and program will develop its academic plan. All departments and programs should carefully consider this College of Agriculture Strategic Issues III and the university's Moving Forward III to ensure that their own academic plans align with the general and specific issues outlined in those documents. According to the timeline presented in Moving Forward III,¹ departments and units are asked to send draft plans to the dean of the College of Agriculture no later than June 23, 2003. A suggested format for department and unit plans for the College of Agriculture is available.²

Significant issues identified in public visioning sessions include the importance of (a) land use, environmental issues, and improved public understanding of agriculture, private property, and federal land issues; (b) forage-based livestock systems and healthy livestock and wildlife; (c) the family farm/

ranch (youth development and young people in agriculture); (d) vibrant small communities, community leadership, and information bases for decision-making; (e) profitability of agriculture and economic diversity including niches and value-added products; (f) agriculture, multiple use, and the Endangered Species Act; (g) water quality and availability; (h) reclamation of disturbed lands and waters; and (i) involvement of local citizens and agriculture in community and state decision-making processes.

Fundamental needs for this college have also been identified and include (i) developing a culture of lifelong learning and leadership in our students, (ii) providing sound basic and applied research as a foundation for our other endeavors, (iii) identification of unbiased, research-based solutions to problems, (iv) reaching out and engaging Wyoming's people, (v) providing for faculty success, and (vi) addressing significant issues facing agriculture, renewable natural resources, and rural communities.

Learning

Learning represents a partnership between student and teacher. In addition to gaining an education in the academic discipline, each student will develop skills for lifelong learning, effective communication, and accessing information and an appreciation for the multidisciplinary aspects of their field. Courses and curricula will be evaluated for relevance and outcome based on defined objectives. Attention to curricula, commitment to strong pedagogy, and an appreciation for teaching as a form of scholarship in

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our fields will promote quality undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Degree programs and individual courses emphasize active student learning and students will be provided real-life experiences through opportunities to participate in internships, professional service work, and research projects. The college will continue to explore creative solutions to providing access and affordability for our students.

Engagement

Everyone in the College of Agriculture will be involved in engagement. There are activities that engage the people of Wyoming in education, research, or other communications with the university. The college will communicate with both internal and external stakeholders on a regular basis. Outreach and engagement in the college are broadly defined and include clinical and other services, distance education, and the “just-in-time” learning that is emphasized in extension. The Cooperative Extension Service, operated by the College of Agriculture, will engage other UW colleges in fulfilling its mission. Cooperative extension offices and the college’s research and extension centers will be primary access portals for learning, problem solving, reliable information, and university engagement for Wyoming’s people.

Discovery

The College of Agriculture will build on its reputation as the source of reliable, research-based and scientifically unbiased information. Graduate programs and research will be critically examined and aligned with key areas of distinction including

broader campus interdisciplinary groups. Other, mission-critical undergraduate and client service programs will also be supported. Areas of distinction will be defined and continuously revised based on input from stakeholders for both applied and basic fields of interest. The college’s research and extension assets will be modernized and used by faculty to conduct applied research and by stakeholders to view cutting-edge research and obtain research-based information. Academic faculty, academic professionals, and some professional staff will be involved in research activities and will take advantage of opportunities to obtain extramural support for their efforts.

Areas of Distinction

The college will focus on agriculture, renewable natural resources, rural communities, and applied life sciences pertinent to the state of Wyoming. Niches will be developed to exploit our comparative strengths including our location in Wyoming as a laboratory, faculty capabilities, and statewide needs. Through stakeholder engagement, areas of distinction will be designed with flexibility in order to allow niches to evolve on an ongoing basis based on needs, faculty strengths, and identified opportunities. These niches will facilitate recruitment at all levels and assure excellence in our research. Further, areas of distinction that develop must align with ENR, life sciences, critical areas of science and technology, bringing science and society together, and/or professions and issues crucial to the region’s education, health care, and community and economic development initiatives identified in Moving Forward III.¹ Efforts in these areas will leverage

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resources available through programs such as the Ruckelshaus Institute of Environment and Natural Resources, Center of Biomedical Research Excellence, Wyoming Wildlife-Livestock Disease Research Partnership, and Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research. Key areas of distinction for this college include:

- The tools and principles of basic and applied molecular sciences, stable isotopes, and geographic information systems will be developed and applied across all areas to improve education, service, and research programs.
- Discovery, learning, and engagement depth will be built with the goal of maintaining or achieving national prominence in the following fields:
 - ▶ Distinction in life sciences and critical areas of science and technology:
 - ◆ Reproductive biology, diseases common to wildlife and livestock, nutrition and dietetics, and biomaterials
 - ▶ Distinction in environment and natural resources:
 - ◆ Sustainable forage-based livestock and agronomic systems
 - ◆ Sustainable renewable resource management related to range, weeds, wildlife, water, reclamation, and economics of natural resources
 - ▶ Distinction in professions and issues critical to the region:
 - ◆ Healthy rural communities, decision making, development, and natural resource issues including open spaces
- In addition, excellence in teaching and engagement, including clinical services where appropriate, will be maintained in the following fields:
 - ▶ Native plant horticultural systems
 - ▶ Biomedical, veterinary, plant, and insect diagnostics
 - ▶ Rural community leadership, youth development, and economic diversification including diversified agriculture
 - ▶ Economic-based decision-making for agricultural and other small businesses
 - ▶ Land stewardship including education for small rural landowners
 - ▶ Promotion of health through food safety, general microbiology, rural family issues, and nutrition-related lifestyle issues
 - ▶ Communication of research-based information about agriculture and the land

Resources

All academic programs including graduate education programs will be evaluated and prioritized related to strengths and focus. Program support in the college will be based on performance related to our vision and areas of distinction. Scholarship will reflect the college's commitment to faculty success, the land-grant mission, and areas of distinction. Our culture will be aligned with engagement, learning, and discovery. The administrative structure of the college will emphasize efficiency, minimize overhead, and support areas of distinction. We will facilitate acquisition of resources from external sources. Faculty

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hiring and research and extension funding to departments will be assigned to assure that resources are aligned with the college's areas of distinction. Base funds will be leveraged by identifying and seeking additional resources needed to help accomplish our vision and area of distinction goals through major emphasis on development, extramural research funding, engagement of external human resources, university support, and statewide initiatives.

Specific Initiatives

The College of Agriculture will address the following specific issues:

Learning

Pursue avenues for incorporating lifelong learning and leadership/communication skills for all undergraduate students

- **Promote** and provide educational leadership for rural community economic development through the Cooperative Extension Service
- **Encourage** development of courses that embed USP requirements
- **Encourage** the discussion of connections between science and its societal impacts in introductory courses
- **Continue** to emphasize undergraduate research, professional service experience, and inquiry-based learning throughout the college

Review the agroecology undergraduate program to identify ways to enhance enrollments and to critically evaluate the effectiveness of the options, which

now include, forages, weed science, horticulture, and 'slash ENR'

Consolidate the undergraduate microbiology program

- **Engage** other colleges to determine interest in expanding their contributions in offering a quality general microbiology undergraduate degree

Continue to review the entire curriculum to be sure that assessment processes including goal-setting and career outcome determinations for classes and academic programs are accomplished

Track alumni to assess educational and career outcomes and to stay in contact for college development

Engagement (Outreach and Service)

Review the Strategic Initiatives of the Cooperative Extension Service to be sure they are in line with the areas of distinction and state issues

Hire extension educators with diverse backgrounds that reflect our areas of distinction

Work with county offices to serve as front-line offices of UW, ensuring that the residents of the state have every access to university information

- **Work with other colleges** to designate contacts and develop agreements with Cooperative Extension Service programs to assist with education and answering client questions in their fields
- **Create** or expand county offices to serve as learning centers for rural communities

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- **Develop and implement** an effective electronic technology system and learning information management approach to expand learning choices to support college outreach and “just-in-time” learning
- **Explore** with the Outreach School opportunities to enhance our partnership in serving the state

Reach out, communicate, and work with the citizens of Wyoming through multiple avenues including town meetings, regular advisory board meetings, and newsletter communications. Increasingly incorporate and advance the use of technology-based communications in engagement activities.

Reach out to increase coordination and cooperation between relevant college units and other entities in the state and region including:

- Research and extension centers and county extension programs to improve the efficiency of personnel and other resources
- NRCS
- Wyoming’s community colleges and other agricultural and natural resource colleges from regional universities
- Wyoming Department of Public Health, Wyoming Game and Fish, Wyoming Livestock Board, Wyoming Department of Agriculture, the USDA, and the leadership of other appropriate local, state, and federal agencies to enhance public and animal health

Discovery

Enhance and support a culture of attracting extramural grants throughout the college

- **Direct** the UW Agricultural Experiment Station to increasingly focus on promoting and fostering external grant activities throughout the college
- **Emphasize** grant writing that can help support team-oriented research in key areas of distinction

Explore consolidation of activities of the College of Agriculture in the Laramie area into a Laramie Research and Extension Center

Explore development of interdisciplinary graduate programs with appropriate units in the areas of natural resource economics, ecology or other aspects of renewable resources (e.g. ENR), sustainable agriculture, and the life sciences

Resources

Review all academic programs including undergraduate, graduate, certificate, research, and service programs for alignment with areas of distinction and performance as a basis for allocation of resources and priority for hiring. This will include

- Departmental support
- Central and departmental staff support matrix
- GA assignment matrix

Evaluate and change, if appropriate, the college’s administrative structure and leadership in order to help achieve our goals

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Link all CPM hiring requests to the college's focus areas

- **Key spotlights** on ENR (including agricultural) systems, related life sciences and interdisciplinary programs, and essential services
- **Design hiring** practices and patterns to meet goals for teaching and service excellence across all focus areas in a matrix that also strengthens research excellence and depth in core areas of distinction

Collaborate with Zoology, Botany, and other departments where appropriate to further develop research and learning related to the SENR and the life sciences

Establish and promote a system of program reviews that is consistent with UW administrative policy as well as regular CSREES reviews

Seek external and internal support to expand UW's Cooperative Extension Service/Agricultural Experiment Station by adding faculty specialists to provide needed expertise in water quality, weed sciences, livestock systems, and horticulture

Develop the budget flexibility and agility to respond effectively to emerging issues and opportunities in Wyoming through research and extension programs

Seek external and internal support to find more solid funding for diagnostic services offered to the state

Expand development efforts to help us achieve our goals

Develop the Sustainable Agricultural Research and Extension Center

Work with campus administration and interested faculty to design, gather funding, and build a student-oriented childcare center (in planning) and a life-sciences teaching center north of the Ag-C building.

Develop opportunities in renewable resource research and teaching (range, weeds, soils, water, and diseases of wildlife and livestock) in the greater Yellowstone area including participation in a collaborative center

Develop a marketing plan for the College of Agriculture that emphasizes this college's leadership positions in education and research about the environment and natural resources, life sciences, and sustainable agriculture in order to attract a wider group of undergraduate students

References

1 http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/AcadAffairs/Acad_Plan_Implementation/Acad_Plan_Implementation.htm

2 <http://www.uwyo.edu/agcollege/>

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The University of Wyoming is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.