

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Strategic Plan

The “College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Strategic Plan” task force has had two meetings since the last report (May 4, 10) to prepare in advance for our virtual town halls. These two town halls were held for three and a half hours each (May 17, 21), attendance was open to all faculty, staff and students for the entire event. In total, 86 registered for the first event and 90 registered for the second. Over the three and a half hours attendance peaked for both events around 52 participants but fluctuated with seven topics (the six TAMU strategic goals plus considerations unique to COALS). The majority of participants were faculty and staff, only a few participants were known to be graduate students with only one known to be undergraduate students. A slide deck was sent to all participants with the task forces charge, links to past (COALS) and current strategic plans (TAMU, TAMUS, AgriLife), and the seven sections and discussion questions, each led by a different member of the task force. Links to the Mission and Vision were also available for crowd sourced editing. There were very few periods of silence during these town halls, with most topic discussions cut short due to time. Chat was used liberally to capture ideas and comments, especially those we did not have time to discuss vocally and those uninterested to speak. The task force has not yet formally met to discuss the outcomes of these town halls, or combined notes from the various sections, but the amount of information was voluminous. Some common topics that generated large responses stood out including the importance of a familial aspect to employees workplace (departments, but not always at the college level) and a sense of belonging; the need for improved communication (with these two town halls and other task forces being seen as positive steps); the need for stronger faculty governance; concerns about “belonging” to COALS and confusion on the difference between COALS and AgriLife; as well as needs for increased international emphasis needed for the COALS strategic plan. Based on informal conversations, the task force recognizes that additional attempts to reach undergraduate students should be made. In the coming weeks we will discuss what stood out to us in the discussion, and begin drafting the COALS strategic plan from our SOAR analysis and input gathered. It is expected that we will make this available for additional feedback before the end of summer.

Report 3 – May 26

Promotion Guidance for College Academic Professional Track

The task force is completing the final deliverables; the consensus guiding document and the recommendations document. In May, Qualtrics input was gathered from 76 respondents composed of APT faculty, Department Heads, Department P&T Chairs, the AgriLife P&T Committee, and Department Associate Heads. The task force members divided instrument sections to more efficiently analyze the data and report results to the overall task force between May 12th and 25th.

We have a start on the drafts of our deliverables. Our current plan is to finalize and review the consensus document between May 26th and June 2nd. The task force will then finalize the recommendations document between June 3rd and June 10th. Our team will report our draft findings with a gathering of COALS APT faculty facilitated by Dr. Wu on June 9th. We will solicit additional input during this session and modify our documents accordingly.

The task force plans to provide our deliverables to Dr. Stover the week of June 14.

Our next task force meeting is **June 2nd** from 1 – 2pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Strong". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".

Robert Strong

College Policies for Graduate Education

The “College Policies for Graduate Education” task force has had two additional meetings since our last report (May 4, 11) in advance of two town halls for the COALS community. The two town halls were held May 13 and 14 for two hours on “What Works Well in Texas A&M Graduate Education” with 49 and 42 registered participants and between 35 to 45 attending at any time throughout each event. All registrants were sent an email beforehand with our charge, discussion topics and committee makeup. Attendees were largely faculty with a few staff and graduate students. Five primary topics of discussion were initiated each with a different task force discussion lead and note taker. The discussion often had to be cut short and there was little silence, suggesting a strong interest in these topics. Chat was used liberally, and substantial input and additional discussion was had and captured. Overwhelmingly, the discussion was positive with many people indicating that they found it very helpful having these discussions and it would be beneficial if there was space to continue to hold these discussions in the future. In the coming weeks the task force will regroup to discuss the events and input that was received, combine notes and consider next steps. Still a few major themes emerged, with possibly the most unanticipated being non-traditional students. Non-traditional students, underrepresented students as well as international students all need to be more carefully considered in graduate training policy; policy must not be built only around traditional students. Among the overall discussions one of the main concerns heard from faculty was a reluctance of PIs to commit to graduate students because of funding; this uncertainty appears to be a major barrier to COALS attracting and retaining the best graduate students going forward. Additionally the task force heard comments that would be more expected; a large proportion of our discussion centered around training and supporting graduate students for careers outside academia; another topic was increasing the competency of soft skills in graduate training and how different departments are starting to think about this. We plan to use the input received to revisit our Departmental questionnaire to make the questions more targeted and impactful. We hope to get this Departmental questionnaire out in the near future.

Report 3 – May 26

Youth Development in AgriLife Task Force

The task force completing the data collection instrument in May and the Inventory of youth development programs across AgriLife. The Qualtrics instrument is ready to distribute to:

1. 4-H Specialists
2. Academic and Professional Track Faculty
3. Extension Specialists
4. Program Coordinators
5. Rural Student Success Initiative Personnel
6. Tenure Track Faculty

The task force has hopes of distributing the instrument by June 2nd and analyzing data after the 10 days the Qualtrics link is open. Optimistically, the task force hopes to complete the Options Report, based on the collected data, by the end of June. Both deliverables, the Inventory and Options Report, will then be shared with Dr. Stover.

The next task force meeting will be the first week of June.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Strong". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Robert Strong

COALS Individualized Major in the College

Since the last report, the Task Force met twice (May 4 and 11) to further discuss and prepare for meetings with Department Heads and/or Associate Heads. Two meetings (May 18 and 24) took place with representatives from nearly every Department, each lasting more than one and a half hours with excellent discussion. In these meetings, the task force presented a rough-draft case, asked some clarifying questions, and had an open discussion. The Task Force's perspectives on opportunities, charge, background, case studies, basics of degree, and potential administration were presented. There was good participation and interest with many outstanding questions and comments raised.

Particularly poignant questions and comments are included here. (1) A question was raised of what evidence exists that an individualized major is needed and what indications do we have that this is how we solve missing out on the best students? There appeared to be two components: (a) top students who applied and did not attend TAMU, and (b) top students who never applied. Dr. Coates cited available data on top students who did not choose to attend TAMUS which suggested that funding was often identified for why outstanding students made their decision to go elsewhere. If this is true (there was some debate on the semantics and if students were forthcoming on this question), large amounts of scholarship funding would be needed to attract students for an individualized major to work. To better address the overall question of evidence, we have set up a meeting with recruiters and advisors for June 7, and Dr. Rister has offered to talk to local area high school guidance counselors to better understand need for an individualized major. (2) University Studies was largely viewed as a failure and burden by many participants. It was somewhat difficult for the Task Force to articulate how a COALS Individualized Major would be different from University Studies, or why it would work better. This is definitely an issue we need to discuss further. (3) Many classes require prerequisites. If students are taking classes in three or more departments, how will the prerequisites fit into a 120 hour degree? One suggestion was that we could waive prerequisites, an idea which many departments very vocally opposed. It does appear that there are many classes without (many) prerequisites. (4) Multiple times, questions of maturity and if incoming freshman would be competent enough to pull together, justify, and complete a degree plan to be successful were raised. The Task Force had discussed the idea that a freshman year, first-semester cohort class could prepare students for developing a learning plan with learning objectives, but still concerns exist. (5) How does this major differ from Honors? The idea was discussed that revising our Honors Programs might better help meet the charge we were given, as opposed to forming a new major. (6) Advising and Faculty burdens were identified as major concerns. One or more full time advisors would be required, which is expensive. Faculty are already overwhelmed and can feel overburdened. (7) Exit strategy -- even the best incoming students won't all make it. How do we deal with those students that need to readjust and the burdens to departments such processes could cause. This topic was something the task force had previously considered, and these discussions reemphasized it is important.

Participants were also asked what was exciting about this idea and a few key ideas emerged. First, attracting the best and brightest students was seen as a positive. Second, identifying new areas for departments to make "mainstream" programs was seen as a positive by some. Third, using this as a way to generate more flexibility in curriculum, which has become too "rigid" was seen as a positive. Overall, there were far more concerns than excitement about this program among the discussion participants.

**PROGRESS REPORT
MAY 26, 2021**

TASK FORCE 6: TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE RESEARCH STRATEGIC PLAN

MEMBERS:

Rick Vierling, Brent Auvermann, David Stelly, David Baltensperger, Debra Cummings, Rebecca Seguin-Fowler, Clare Gill, Cliff Lamb, Roel Lopez, Carl Muntean, Marco Palma, Elizabeth Parker, Elsa Murano, David Ragsdale, David Stelly, Max Sturdivant, Rosemary Walzem, Josh Wand, Angela Bailey, Juan Landivar (Chair).

Activities planned for May 2021 :

- 1. Final revisions of the options for each question for both, the internal and external surveys.***
- 2. Develop survey instrument for both, Internal and External Survey. Complete by May 28th***
- 3. Develop Text describing scope of revised roadmap for AgriLife Research (vision, mission, and base-strategies), Complete by May 10th***
- 4. Develop text on Texas Economy and competitive advantages of AgriLife. Complete by May 10th***
- 5. Develop scheme and work plan for implementing an Adaptive Strategic Planning: Complete by May 21st***
- 6. Communicate activities of Task force 6 to the chairs of other Task Forces.**

Activities accomplished in May 2021.

The entire group met twice during the month of May. In Addition, subgroups met as needed to complete assignments.

- 1. Final revisions of the options for each question for both, the internal and external surveys.***

Completed Internal and external survey questioners. This subcommittee (Marco Palma, Luis Ribera, Carl Muntean, David Stelly, Richard Vierling and Max Sturdivant) met four times during the month of May. Revised internal survey is listed in **appendix 1** and external survey in **appendix 2**.

- 2. Develop survey instrument for both, Internal and External Survey.***

This activity was not completed. It is expected to be completed by June 11th.

3. *Develop Text describing scope of revised roadmap for AgriLife Research (vision, mission, and base-strategies).*

Produced first draft. Final version will be completed by June 16th.

4. *Develop text on Texas Economy and competitive advantages of AgriLife.*

Completed, final document will be ready on June 11th

5. *Develop scheme and work plan for implementing an Adaptive Strategic Planning: Complete by May 21st*

Completed, this subcommittee (Josh Wand, Rosemary Walzem, Brent Auvermann, Cliff Lamb) met three times during the month of May. Revised version of Adaptive Strategic Plan is listed in **appendix 3**.

6. *Communicate activities of Task force 6 to the chairs of other Task Forces.*

Participated in Town Hall meetings organized by Seth Murray. Shared internal and external surveys with Task Force Chairs.

Activities planned for June 2021 :

1. *Develop survey instrument for both, Internal and External Survey. Complete by June 11th*

2. *Develop Text describing scope of revised roadmap for AgriLife Research (vision, mission, core values and research narrative/expected outcomes for the four priorities), Complete by June 18th*

3. *Develop text on Texas Economy and competitive advantages of AgriLife. Complete by June 11th*

4. *Communicate activities of Task force 6 to the chairs of other Task Forces.*

The chair thanks the valuable contributions of Ms. Stephanie Klock, Cathy Cardwell (Texas A&M AgriLife-Corpus Christi) and Ms. Angela Bailey in the preparation, distribution of documents and organizing meetings for this group.

Appendix 1.

Internal Survey

Texas A&M AgriLife Research

The guidelines below are in no way meant to be all inclusive, please feel free to expand the questions as you prepare your SWOT. Be specific and focus on tangible items but some attributes may be intangible. Critical and honest evaluation is always the most insightful.

Strengths of AgriLife Research:

Strengths describe the positive attributes internal to your organization. **They are within your control and offer a competitive advantage.**

- **What advantages does AgriLife Research have?**
 - Multidisciplinary faculty and research teams
 - Capabilities to conduct research in diverse environments
 - Strong basic and applied research departments, centers, and institutes
 - Recognized leaders in life sciences research
 - Research and Extension centers strategically located throughout the state
 - Big data bases on agriculture systems
 - Research outcomes that directly benefit stakeholders
 - Strong cooperation/feedback from stakeholders
 - Other, please specify

- **What do we do better than anyone else?**
 - Land use, conservation tillage
 - Food and Nutrition
 - Sustainability, cropping systems
 - Water efficiency, conservation
 - Insect-vectored diseases
 - Disease identification and prevention in plant and animals
 - Bioenergy
 - Cultivar development
 - New crop introduction
 - Pest and invasive plant control
 - Livestock and plant genetics
 - International partnerships
 - Other, please specify

- **What do you do well?**
 - Mentoring junior faculty
 - Mentoring graduate and undergraduate students.
 - Collaborative research programs within area of expertise
 - Multidisciplinary research teams
 - Team player, promote teamwork.
 - Publish work in high impact journals
 - Other, please specify

- What internal resources do you have?
 - *Positive personal attributes*
 - Recognized as an expert in my field
 - Integrator of information
 - Breadth, depth and variety of experience
 - Ability and willingness to develop a transdisciplinary network of research and grant teams
 - Relationships with industry and private companies
 - Technical skills to complement my work (computer skills, statistics)
 - Proactive, nimble, and adaptive to changing needs
 - Other, please specify

 - *Tangible assets*
 - *Successful grant program*
 - Excellent work infrastructure
 - Develop basic research that addresses the priorities of agriculture and life sciences
 - Innovator that develops patentable technology.
 - Integrate systems and technology into models or applications.
 - Conduct applied research and engage with producers and/or the private sector
 - Other, please specify.

- What other internal resources add value or offer a competitive advantage?
Please list additional internal resources if necessary.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses are aspects of that detract from the value you offer or place you at a competitive disadvantage. **You need to enhance these areas to compete with your best competitor.**

- **What could AgriLife-Research improve?**
 - Mentoring Junior faculty in program management
 - Mentoring Junior faculty in grantsmanship
 - Mentoring/Motivating lagging Associate Professors
 - Improve laboratory facilities

- Reduce administrative or regulatory chores of faculty.
 - Reduce regulatory oversights.
 - Poor coordination between Research and Extension Centers
 - Increase visibility with current and incoming students.
 - Improve communication, linkage, and collaboration among faculty
 - Invest in renovations for aging infrastructure
 - Other, please specify.
- **What should AgriLife-Research avoid doing?**
 - Allow Research and Extension to silo.
 - Allow research centers to silo
 - Increase regulatory burdens to faculty.
 - Losing sight of their core competencies
 - Disconnect with stakeholders
 - Retain unproductive faculty and staff
 - Other, please specify.
- **What is AgriLife Research not doing that we should?**
 - Facilitate Research/extension split appointments.
 - Create programs to recruit top graduate students.
 - Focus on the placement of graduate students.
 - Promote program and faculty in web pages
 - Improve dissemination of successful programs
 - Improve communication with stakeholders
 - Maintain a centralized database of faculty areas of expertise and excellence
 - Other, please specify.
- **What factors within your control detract from your ability to obtain or maintain a competitive edge?**
 - Funding and retaining top graduate students and postdocs.
 - Investment funds to purchase laboratory equipment.
 - Lack of focus in research priorities
 - Lack of management plans for research
 - Lack of management plans for grant opportunities
 - Lack of communication and networking to identify grant opportunities
 - Other, please specify.
- **What areas need improvement to accomplish your objectives or compete with our peer institutions?**
 - Attract and retain competitive graduate students and postdocs.
 - Retain and motivate highly productive junior faculty.
 - Competitive seed funding to support high-impact projects with long-term sustainability
 - Encourage multidisciplinary teams to compete for large funding opportunities

- Support for the development of new technologies and patents
- Strong mentorship programs for junior faculty and emerging scholars
- Professional development opportunities for project and grant management
- Clear communication across all levels of the Agency
- Other, please specify.

Opportunities:

Opportunities are external attractive factors that represent **reasons your business is likely to prosper**. A useful approach when looking at opportunities is to look at your strengths and ask yourself whether these open any opportunities. Look at your weaknesses and ask yourself whether you could open opportunities by eliminating them.

- **Which are likely to affect your success opportunities for research and grants ? Please designate a negative or positive influence on your opportunities.**
 - Pandemics
 - Climate change
 - Catastrophic weather events (ex. tornados, hurricanes, freeze, drought)
 - The socioeconomic impacts of carbon credit markets
 - Demographic shifts
 - Social issues, political division, class divisions
 - Labor and immigration
 - The evolution of energy, renewables and the economy
 - Food safety
 - Other, please specify.

- **What new technologies/research areas will make an impact on AgriLife’s research priorities?**
 - Gene editing
 - Big data management
 - Remote sensing
 - Artificial intelligence
 - Soil health
 - Carbon sequestration credits
 - Human nutrition
 - Other, please specify.

- **What changes in government policy related to your field could provide the biggest opportunities?**
 - Availability of new funds for research (federal and state)
 - Farm Bill
 - Immigration and labor
 - Broadband connectivity in the agricultural supply chain
 - International trade agreements and global competitiveness

- Government investment in infrastructure and technology to enhance competitiveness
- Other, please specify.
- **Changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle changes, and so on.**
 - Changing demographics
 - Consumer preferences
 - Diversity in hiring and promotions.
 - Increase in chronic disease propensity, especially among vulnerable populations.
 - Increase emphasis on nutrition and diet quality.
 - Other, please specify.
- **What opportunities exist that you can benefit from?**
 - Flexible working location
 - Collaboration with data science experts
 - Access to seed funds to enhance the competitiveness of large multidisciplinary projects
 - University funding programs (T3, X-grants, other)
 - Multidisciplinary opportunities across a wide range of expertise within the system and outside collaborators
 - Professional development opportunities to advance your career
 - Integration of research and extension to enhance the impact of programs
 - Other, please specify.
- **Is the perception of AgriLife-Research with the public positive?**
 - Very positive
 - Somewhat positive
 - Neutral
 - Somewhat negative
 - Very negative
 - AgriLife is unknown in the public.
- **Is the perception of AgriLife-Research with peers positive?**
 - Very positive
 - Somewhat positive
 - Neutral
 - Somewhat negative
 - Very negative
 - AgriLife is unknown among peers.
- **Has there been recent ag market growth or have there been other changes in the ag market that creates opportunities?**
 - No
 - Too little, not enough

- Somewhat, need more.
 - Adequate
 - Please explain your choice.
- **Is the commercialization of technology a big driver in your quest for building a research program and/or securing research funding?**
 - Yes, definitely
 - Somewhat, yes
 - A positive influence if it happens
 - Absolutely not
 - Please explain your choice
- **Has starting a company around technology that you have developed ever crossed your mind?**
 - Yes
 - No
- What new areas of research are most likely to transform the food system?
 - Please use the space below to provide your answer. Multiple areas are encouraged.

Threats:

Threats include external factors beyond your control that could place your strategy at risk. **You have no control over these**, but you may benefit by having contingency plans to address them if they should occur.

- **List any threats that can seriously impact AgriLife-Research?**
 - Low number of grants funded.
 - Access to suitable facilities and equipment.
 - Lack of coordination and communication among different units
 - Lack of multidisciplinary team building opportunities
 - Communication and coordination with administrators
 - Service assignments within your unit
 - Lack of coordination between research and extension
 - Partnering with Industry or technology companies
 - Budget cuts
 - Over-regulation and administrative burdens
 - Interdepartmental competition for resources
 - Other, please specify.
- **What are peer intuitions doing better than AgriLife-Research?**
 - Networking
 - Partnerships with private companies
 - Attracting and retaining faculty

- Attracting and retaining graduate students and postdocs
 - Investing in infrastructure
 - Reducing bureaucratic and administrative burdens
 - Other, please specify.
- **Are standards for AgriLife Research or services changing?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - Somewhat
- **Is changing technology threatening your position?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - Somewhat
- **Do you have cash-flow problems?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - Somewhat
- **What situations might threaten AgriLife-Research branding efforts?**
 - Fragmentation of units within AgriLife
 - Poor/outdated webpages
 - Poor communication of successful research outcomes to the general public
 - Lack of engagement with stakeholders
 - Other, please specify.

Please add any additional comments you want to provide in the box below.

Appendix 2.

External Survey

Texas A&M AgriLife Research

The below guidelines are in no way meant to be all inclusive, please feel free to expand the questions asked as you prepare your SWOT. Be specific and focus on tangible items but some attributes may be intangible. Critical and honest evaluation is always the most insightful.

Strengths:

Strengths describe the positive attributes of Texas Agriculture. Describe the strengths of Texas Agriculture and your operation/business?

- **What strengths contribute to the success of Texas Agriculture?**
 - Geographical location of the State
 - Demand for US grown agricultural and food products
 - Locally grown product demand
 - Marketing programs in the State
 - Product differentiation/branding
 - Government assistance programs
 - Health and nutrition
 - Industry promotion efforts
 - Applied research by AgriLife Research
 - Education and Outreach programs
 - Technological advances applied to agriculture
 - Business friendly environment
 - Other, please specify

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses are things that detract from Texas Agriculture value or place at a competitive disadvantage. **Describe the weaknesses of Texas Agriculture and your operation/business.**

- **What are Texas Agriculture Weaknesses?**
 - Government regulations
 - Lack of industry unity and organization
 - Insufficient government support
 - Lack of technical assistance

- Lack of applied research for short-term problems
- Lack of applied research for long-term investment
- Lack of capital
- Insufficient labor availability
- Other, please specify

Opportunities:

Opportunities are external factors that represent **reasons your business is likely to prosper.**

- **What opportunities are most likely to positively impact Texas Agriculture and your operation/business?**
 - Precision agriculture
 - Sustainability focused efforts
 - Carbon capture and related incentives
 - Soil conservation
 - Water conservation
 - Insurance protection
 - Linking agriculture to human health and nutrition
 - International trade opportunities
 - Food safety management
 - Farm Bill and Government Policies related to agriculture.
 - A better understanding of sociodemographic patterns, population profiles, lifestyle changes and consumer preferences
 - Increase emphasis on nutrition and diet quality.
 - Proactive approach to telling the story/framing the narrative about all segments of the food system.
 - The evolution of energy, renewables, and the economy
 - Demographic shifts
 - Other, please specify.

- **What technologies/information are you most likely to implement into your operation?**
 - New tillage practices
 - Healthier varieties/foods
 - Higher yielding varieties
 - Artificial Intelligence
 - Machine Learning Technologies
 - Health outcomes as a determining factor for upstream management decisions
 - Unmanned monitoring systems (aerial or ground based)
 - New sensor technologies
 - Unmanned farming equipment
 - Consumer market trends
 - Government policies

- Economic analyses
- Historical knowledge/experience (what your predecessor did)
- Other, please specify.

Threats:

Threats include external factors beyond your control that could place your strategy at risk. What obstacles would impact Texas Agriculture and your operation/business?

- **What threats do you see for the agricultural sector in Texas?**
 - Water quality and availability
 - Environmental/climate changing conditions
 - Sustainability
 - Competition from imports
 - Cost of production/agricultural prices
 - Availability of skilled labor
 - Food safety
 - Bioterrorism
 - Government regulation
 - Industry fragmentation
 - Emerging plant and animal diseases
 - Other, please specify

- **Are there challenges created by an unfavorable trend or development that may lead to deteriorating funding?**

- **What about shifts in consumer behavior, the economy, or government regulations that could reduce research?**

- **Has a new product or technology been introduced that makes AgriLife Research, or services obsolete?**

- **Has there been recent market growth or have there been other changes in the market that create opportunity?**
 - No
 - Too little, not enough
 - Somewhat, need more.
 - Adequate
 - Please explain your choice.

- **What sector are you or your company involved (check all that apply)**
 - Livestock
 - Crops
 - Fruit and Vegetable

- Input suppliers
- Marketers
- Retailer
- Finance/Ag lending
- Consumers

- Are you familiar with Texas A&M AgriLife Research ?
 - Yes
 - No
- **If yes to question above, Is the perception of Texas A&M AgriLife-Research positive?**
 - Very positive
 - Somewhat positive
 - Neutral
 - Somewhat negative
 - Very negative
 - Texas A&M AgriLife is unknown in the public.
- **If yes to question above, how would you rate the following aspects of Texas A&M AgriLife Research?**
 - Dissemination of information to consumers
 - Dissemination of information to producers
 - Agency network and presence in the State
 - Effectiveness of addressing needs of Texas-based agriculture
 - Providing technological advances in agriculture
 - Proving technical expertise and timely applied research to benefit the agricultural sector in Texas
- **When you need technical assistance, who do you normally seek for help and support? (Mark all that apply)**
 - Texas A&M AgriLife (research or extension)
 - Consulting professionals
 - Farm bureau
 - Other producers
 - Producer association
 - Somebody else, please specify.

Appendix 3

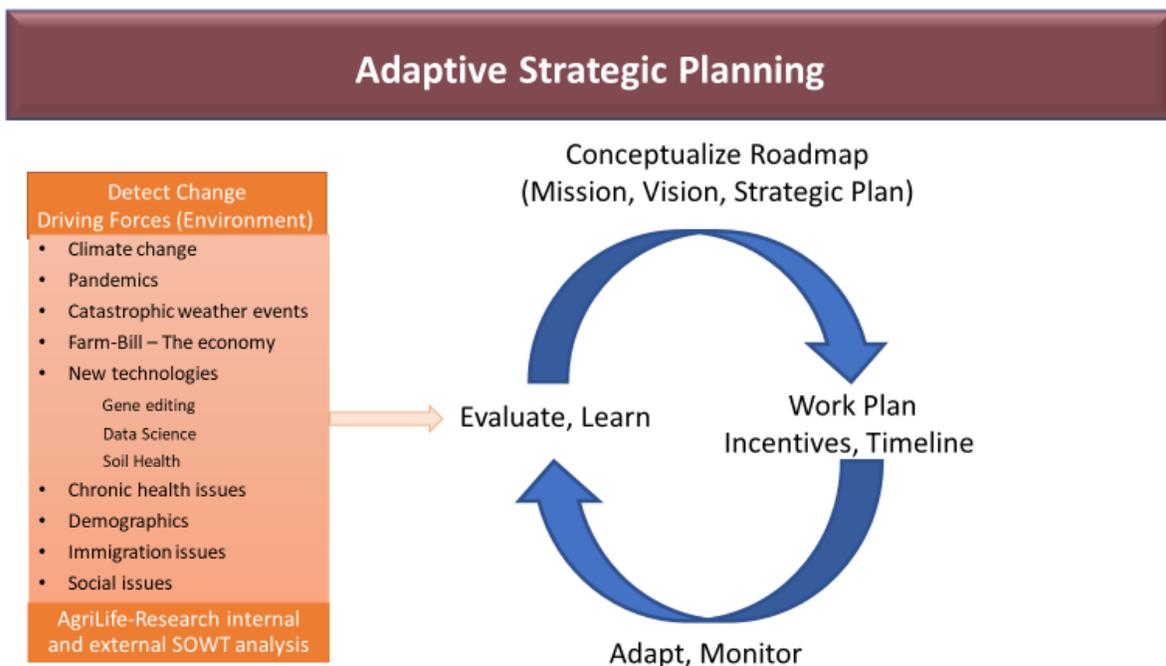
Adaptive Management Planning

Draft - Final revision to be completed on June 16th

Adaptive strategic planning is a process that embodies the core value of nimbleness in response to opportunity and enables innovation, creativity, scientific excellence and public service through inclusive leadership and teamwork.

Adaptive strategic planning can improve AgriLife's established research procedures and strategies. This can be accomplished by modifying traditional research management tactics and learning to adapt more intuitively, taking advantage of the input of an exceptional Agriculture faculty and staff.

Effective adaptive planning requires mechanisms that promote innovative ideas, evaluated in an iterative process leading to continuous improvements in action plans and delivered outcomes.



An adaptive strategic plan evaluates and responds to new relevant information with implications for AgriLife's research portfolio. Our proposed mechanism needs to:

- Invite innovative ideas and proposals for critical evaluation of potential outcome impact by transparent metrics of success.

- Develop action plans, define incentives, objectives, timetable for meritorious proposals.
- Adapt, monitor, and evaluate progress in gains made by AgriLife's research portfolio arising from strategic shifts in plan.
- Detect changes, learn, explore/survey the environment to identify and gauge driving forces, new technologies.

A defined process carried out by a small independent and critical group of thought leaders would be used to rapidly percolate meritorious ideas through evaluation and refinement for presentation to the decision makers.

Structural Recommendations:

- Form a Strategic Planning Committee (SPC).
- To be efficient and proactive, the SPC will be comprised of a Chairperson and a small number of thought leaders appointed by the Vice Chancellor acting as Director of AgriLife for terms not less than two years (for historical continuity) and not more than three years (to provide for continuous reinvigoration).
- The chief scientific officer will be the chair of the SPC and have their responsibility to recruit and manage the operation of the committee.
- The SPC will review the strategic plan developed by Task Force 6 and consider it as a base strategic plan for AgriLife-Research.
- The SPC would invite, encourage, and nurture ideas that are broad, involve significant components of AgriLife through internal and external stakeholder and have obvious strategic potential for AgriLife's research portfolio and societal impact.
- The SPC will provide resources to facilitate development of white paper concepts in a timely way. These resources could be used to gather interested parties, retain expert consultants, fund workshops and symposia, town halls, etc. Chairperson must be pro-active in soliciting ideas from these venues and events, CORD, Department heads, Institute Directors, etc.
- The SPC will entertain proposals involving complex/multidisciplinary research scopes beyond the remit of a single administrative unit. The SPC will focus on research-oriented activities and operational innovations.
- SPC will develop its own criteria for evaluating strategic significance of an idea; identifies relevant capabilities and deficiencies inherent in proposals. Criteria and assessment methods will be made transparent to all members of AgriLife.
- The SPC will provide AgriLife leadership with prioritized proposal white papers.

Promotion Guidance for AgriLife Research Faculty Task Force

Progress Report - May 2021

Task Force members conducted individually assigned activities via phone call and/or electronic communication and the full committee met via TEAMS on 1 May 2021. Summary of activities during the month of May and the current progress are highlighted below:

1. Four standardized sets of questions were formulated to survey each category of stakeholders (P&T Chairs, Department Heads, Center Directors, and Recently promoted and mid-term reviewed Texas A&M AgriLife Research faculty members).
2. Each Task Force member was assigned with about equal number of individuals in each category to survey and solicit feedback from these individuals. In total, we contacted 48 individuals for direct-contact survey.
3. We received responses from about 50% of the contacted individuals following the first contact. Follow-up contacts were made to maximize the response rate and we expect to get significantly more responses by the time we close our survey this weekend.
4. The Task Force full committee met on 1 May 2021 and discussed the current progress and the process to summarize and analyze the responses.
5. Each Task Force member is assigned to process survey information from one of the five categories of survey stakeholders: Center Directors (Ragsdale), Department Heads (Dever), P&T Chairs (Brewer), Recently promoted faculty (Tarpley), and Recently mid-term reviewed faculty (Harris). Processing of survey information involves compilation of survey data from each individual TF member, sanitizing, and developing a ½-page summary of survey response for each survey category.
6. Such summaries are expected to be completed by about third week of June.
7. A committee meeting will be scheduled to discuss these summaries soon after the summaries are produced.
8. These summaries will serve as the basis to develop the promotion guidance document for AgriLife Research faculty.
9. TF also discussed the possibility of using survey data and current departmental/college guidelines and developing a “standard operating procedure” as an addendum (supplementary document) to the promotion guidance document for AgriLife Research faculty.
10. Our expectation is to complete the assignment of this TF by mid-July.

**Progress Report
May 26, 2021**

The Thomas Ranch – AgriLife Strategic Plan Task Force 8



Members:

Susan Ballabina, Rick Vierling, Brent Auvermann, Dan Hale, Andy Herring, Joshua Johnson, Darlene Locke, Summer Odom, Justin Scheiner, Chris Skaggs, Allyson Tjoelker, Billy Zanolini, Juan Landivar (Chair).

Deliverables for the Task Force, May 2021:

The task force met once during the month of May. Dr. Susan Ballabina informed the group that no new information was available on the transference of the Thomas Ranch to Texas A&M University. Information on the assets or finances for the Ranch would not be available under a later date. All subcommittees (listed below) were asked to meet and continue exploring opportunities to implement at the Ranch.

1. Livestock/pasture research and production – Leader Dr. Brent Auvermann
2. Viticulture/Horticulture research and production – Leader Dr. Justin Scheiner
3. Urban agriculture research – Leader Dr. Dan Hale
4. Education and outreach – Leader Dr. Billy Zanolini
5. Timberland production and research – Leader Dr. Bill Oates (TFS)

Activities Planned for June 2021:

Activity team leaders will continue assembling their teams, organizing/brainstorming, producing a list of information needed to define the opportunities for the ranch.

Team leaders would consult with Rick Vierling for information he may need to develop a business plan for the ranch. Align programmatic activities and revenue streams listed above.

The chair thanks the valuable contribution of Ms. Stephanie Klock (Texas A&M AgriLife-Corpus Christi) and Ms. Christi Anderson in the preparation, distribution of documents and organizing meetings for this group.

International Research and Development in AgriLife (Task Force #9) Progress Report - May 2021

The International Research and Development in AgriLife Task Force conducted its subcommittee tasks through email communications, and the full committee met via TEAMS on 21 May 2021. The two subcommittee tasks accomplished were as follows:

- **Questionnaire and Survey Subcommittee** - This subcommittee developed a draft survey questionnaire to address the issues that were identified in our March report. Members of this subcommittee are **Juliana (Chair), Ky, Dan, Muthukumar, Heather, Vikas, Jim, and Megha**. The draft questionnaire was discussed at the full committee meeting on 21 May 2021. The subcommittee is currently finalizing the questionnaire based on the full committee discussion on 21 May. Once the questionnaire is finalized, a Qualtrics survey will be developed and sent to all faculty members in AgriLife.
- **Report Outline Committee** - This committee was charged with developing an overall outline of a prospective final report. Members of this committee are **Elizabeth (Chair), Elsa, Jeff, Russell, Tim, Kirk, and Megha**. The subcommittee has developed a comprehensive outline of the prospective final report that will fully address the charge and expectations of this Task Force. The report outline includes a) Background, b) Goals and objectives, c) Current situation (what is happening now), d) What others/current leaders in this area are doing (other major land grant institutions), e) What we have learned (survey and analysis), f) Development of goal-specific action plans, and g) Summary/conclusion. The next scheduled full committee meeting on June 11 will discuss this report outline.

A full committee meeting is scheduled for 11 June 2021 to discuss the survey questionnaire as well as the report outline. We expect to finalize the questionnaire during this meeting and get the Qualtrics survey prepared. It is also expected that the Qualtrics survey will go out to the faculty later this month.

We have also begun the process of reaching out to other land grant institutions with similar international agriculture programs as Texas A&M in order to gain additional insight into the scope and strength of international programs at other land grant institutions. As noted in the May report, it is anticipated that 2-3 additional months may be needed for a comprehensive survey, data analysis and report preparation.