

REVIEW REPORT

**COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND
HUMAN SCIENCES**

NOVEMBER 1-3, 2004

Prepared by review team of:

**Margaret J. Weber, Chair
Carolyn Brooks
Donald Cawthon
Lorenza Lyons**

Submitted December 1, 2004

OVERVIEW

Prairie View A&M University is a land-grant institution dedicated to excellence in teaching, research, and extension/service. The University is committed to achieving relevance in each component of its mission by addressing issues and proposing solutions through programs and services designed to respond to the needs and aspirations of individuals, families, organizations, agencies, schools and communities. Having been designated as one of three “institutions of the first class” in the State of Texas, Prairie View A&M is committed to preparing undergraduate and graduate students in a variety of careers, including agriculture and the human sciences. The University has a rich history as a land-grant institution.

In keeping with the President’s commitment to ensure that all programs at the University maintain a certain level of quality, the President requested an external review be conducted to assess the strengths and challenges that exist in the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences.

The review team included four persons with significant experience in the field of Agriculture and Human Sciences. The team reviewed many documents before arriving on campus regarding programs in the College and devoted 2.5 days on site reviewing additional information. The team also conducted interviews with College administrators, faculty, staff, students and farm workers to collect information regarding strengths, challenges, and issues impacting the quality of programs in the College. The team toured research and teaching facilities in agriculture and human sciences, as well as the University’s farm.

This report is based on the results of the many documents that were reviewed, interviews conducted, and observations made during the site visit.

The University offers both undergraduate and graduate programs in many disciplines. It appears that the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences is the only College at the University where no major consideration has been given to improving the instructional curriculum and facilities during the last several years.

The University has received significant funding from the State of Texas to improve the quality of existing programs, to develop new programs, as well as to upgrade instructional facilities. However, there was no evidence that the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences had benefited from any of those funds. Consequently, there were many areas in the College that appeared to be deficient.

The remainder of this report will highlight the strengths and challenges that were found during the review process, as well as recommendations to address the challenges.

EXTENSION

Strengths

The Extension professionals and para-professionals are very committed to serving the disadvantaged and underserved populations in the state. They believe that they are very in tune with their constituents and offer important programs that make a difference in the lives of those that they serve. They are aware that their small group makes a small, but important impact to the citizenry, both adult and youth.

There is a positive rapport among the professionals and the staff. They understand the mission of the land grant university and are fully engaged in providing the programming as their component of the tripartite mission because of strong support and effective leadership by the extension administration.

The Extension unit has a strong planning process with a subsequent, effective implementation of the plans. There is knowledgeable and committed support for the strategic plans, which would indicate that the entire extension unit was engaged in the process and appreciate the results of the planning in their programming. Although PVAMU extension is understaffed for the numerous initiatives they engage in, outcome assessments reveal that they are making substantial impacts for their clientele.

Challenges

Connections with the research faculty could provide meaningful programming that stems from the research programs within the College.

Small group of professionals reach a large number of individuals and are committed to stretching their resources to serving the citizenry.

Recommendations

1. Joint appointments between CEP and CARC might provide important linkages between research and extension.

TEACHING

No matter how highly regarded CEP or CARC work to impress would-be supporters and advocates, declining CAHS academic programs will diminish the reputation of the university's land-grant accomplishments. Failure of the College's non-academic units to share resources and assist with essential needs of the College's academic programs is very unwise and counterproductive to raising the imminence of PVAMU's land grant status among its peers.

Strengths

Faculty and staff in CAHS proclaimed their commitment to students.

Faculty interviewed were very student-centered.

Challenges

Enrollment in the college is at a level of concern to faculty and to the university. The data concerning enrollment, graduation and retention rates, etc. were inconsistent among the variety of data gathering avenues and Institutional Research.

The academic faculty members feel demoralized and neglected and pointed to examples contributing to this as:

- Removal of department heads and replacement with program coordinators
- Allowance of degradation of the buildings which they inhabit (particularly the Agriculture building) to become the eyesore of the campus (see comments in Facilities section)
- Changing of the curriculum with very little input from faculty
- Merging of two departments that are too distinctive for common issues in spite of the fact that they are excellent pairings for separate departments in the same college
- Giving them cause to believe the campus plans to merge them with others into extinction because of declining enrollment. Yet, they felt other academic departments have less enrollment and less impressive graduation rates, but these units are being greatly enhanced with funding and capital investments.

The CAHS curricula and majors are not current for today's agricultural and human sciences disciplines.

CARC faculty and sometimes the CEP faculty provide research and job opportunities for students in other colleges rather than for their own majors.

Students indicated that the degree plans are in constant flux because of the need to have classes with sufficient enrollment. Therefore, low enrollment classes are usually not offered. Instead, students take courses that are not very pertinent to their majors and are out of sequence. Some concentrations have only one or two faculty members, thus the same faculty members teach the same material in different courses and students do not get exposure to different expertise and different teaching styles and qualities within the department. Curricula are not deemed of enough rigor, depth or breadth to prepare students to go on to graduate school or to be competitive in the job market.

Faculty indicated that some courses are taught by those with insufficient expertise.

Today's agricultural disciplines should include more core sciences such as inorganic and organic chemistry, calculus, molecular biology, etc. Also more students would be

attracted to plant sciences, environmental sciences, natural resource sciences/management such as forestry, fisheries, wildlife management, but CAHS would need additional faculty lines to offer these high-demand programs.

The pre-vet program is a strong recruiting program for traditional agriculture programs all over the country; yet the pre-vet program at PVAMU is housed in Arts and Sciences. Students who were interviewed indicated that after a brief stay in the pre-vet program in the other college they transferred to CAHS because of the animal science program and the associated hands-on experience.

The Human Science program has several options with a very small faculty. Students may have the same faculty member for all of their major courses, which limits their educational program. Classroom facilities are inadequate with termite damage in nutritional laboratories, leaking in some classrooms, and a nutrition lab that has limited usage. Nutrition as a major department has a very small number of students and only two faculty members.

Recommendations

1. Allow the College to house two departments, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Human Sciences and Nutrition. Initiate a national search for department heads of each unit.
2. Allow the department faculty time to thoroughly work on programming, curriculum strengthening, development of new majors and prioritization of resource needs. Include students in the curriculum development meetings.
3. Institute advisory boards of renown experts from universities, industry and government agencies to assist in academic prioritizations.
4. Return the pre-vet program to the CAHS.
5. Encourage CARC scientists to provide most if not all of its student research and employment opportunities to CAHS students so that they can receive the cutting edge learning that the other College's students already have because of recent university investments. This will also assist CAHS in recruiting top students to their academic programs.
6. Consider stronger summer course offerings as requested by students.
7. Aggressively seek new hires who are recent terminal degree recipients.
8. Offer teaching workshops for faculty.
9. Develop articulation agreements with Community Colleges and develop viable and innovative recruitment strategies.

10. Review strengthen of courses for content and overlap in all programmatic areas.
11. Consideration might be given to a college success center in the College that would help first generation college students with study information and navigating the higher education processes.

RESEARCH

Strengths

The Cooperative Agricultural Research Center (CARC) is staffed with qualified, potentially productive scientists with adequate credentials to become authorities in their respective fields of study. Scientists are focused on scholarly activities including grantsmanship, patent applications and scientific presentations. CARC office and laboratory facilities and research equipment appear state-of-the-art and well maintained (reference to the need for additional maintenance and repair funding was mentioned during the review process).

Challenges

CARC scientists, because of the predominantly basic nature of their research, do not relate well to producer clientele, nor the efforts of CEP specialists and staff. Because of the high ratio of basic to applied research, knowledge gained from CARC efforts are largely not applicable, nor transferable, to producers as end-users. This makes fulfillment of the landgrant mission more difficult.

Based on resumes provided and the apparent investment of the university in the research program, it appears that CARC faculty are underpublished in peer-reviewed journals and do not secure the level of competitive grant funds anticipated by the review team. Data provided indicate that capacity building grants provide the vast majority of operational funds to support research efforts and other federally-funded competitive grant programs are not secured.

Little collaboration exists between research programs and individual scientists within CARC, or with the Extension and teaching units. This lack of collaboration could impede successful competitive grantsmanship efforts due to the current emphasis placed on multidisciplinary/multi-institutional research initiatives by federal agencies and limits research findings from being incorporated into the instructional and extension programming.

Research faculty hire and provide laboratory and other training to students, which is a valuable contribution to the educational and mentoring processes. However, CARC faculty play a minor role in formal classroom education or graduate research projects.

Recommendations

1. As funding and faculty vacancies permit, hire research faculty with stronger linkages to agriculture, and expand the base of applied research that will produce products more directly applicable to end users.
2. Enhance collaboration between research scientists in CARC by identifying common themes and forming teams of scientists to research complex problems from a multidisciplinary approach.
3. Increase the number of joint appointments between research, teaching and extension faculty to enhance communication and collaboration between units.
4. Encourage and reward an increased number of peer-reviewed publications.
5. Encourage preparation and submission of multidisciplinary proposals to competitive grant programs (in addition to capacity building grant programs), and encourage collaboration between/among research, teaching and/or extension faculty.
6. Develop mechanisms through which research faculty can play more vital roles in chairing/co-chairing graduate student committees, and teaching undergraduate and graduate students.

FACILITIES

The quality of facilities in the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences varied tremendously among programs. The CARC and CEP faculty and staff reported adequate to excellent facilities while the teaching faculty and students reported inadequate facilities. The Agriculture building appears to be the most deplorable building at the University. It is almost an eyesore compared to the other academic buildings. The Human Science building has some major renovation needs for habitability.

Strengths

The Cooperative Extension Program facilities are excellent.

The majority of the Agricultural Research labs are adequate and the equipment appears to be modern and well maintained.

The USDA 1890 Facilities Program funds are available to construct and upgrade facilities, as well as to secure new equipment.

Grant funds are available to establish a new student computer lab in agriculture.

The equipment in the Creamery is being upgraded.

The basic facilities and equipment on the farm appear to be adequate.

Challenges

The teaching facilities in agriculture appear to be inadequate and neglected in many areas. The equipment in the meat laboratory is obsolete and the laboratory does not meet state inspection requirements.

The laboratories and classrooms in Human Sciences are leaking and termites were noted in one area.

There were no electronic classrooms or laboratories observed in the teaching area in Agriculture or Human Sciences. The majority of the technology being used to support the instructional program is antiquated.

The poultry facility is inoperable because of a waste treatment problem that has not been resolved.

The feed mill on the University's farm was reported as being obsolete. The mill is an important component of the Animal Science Program in teaching and research.

It appears that the length of time required for processing a request to repair, remodel, or construct a facility is adversely impacting programs and the quality of instructions in Agriculture. Several projects have been placed on hold for three or four years because of a lack of response to requests to repair buildings. The funding to establish a computer lab is in jeopardy because the roof has been leaking in the room for four years. Moreover, greenhouses that were constructed several years ago on the farm are still incomplete.

The Creamery has been off-line for equipment upgrades for at least three years.

It appears that the USDA 1890 Facilities funds budgeted to upgrade facilities and equipment for the teaching programs in the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences have not been utilized in a timely manner.

Recommendations

1. Review the procedures for prioritizing and processing requests to repair, remodel, or to construct new facilities to ensure a timely response.
2. Establish an immediate measure to address critical requests to repair facilities that were made more than 12 months ago. It is important that the repairs that have been lingering for the last three years be resolved immediately.
3. Develop a plan to renovate or to construct new teaching facilities for the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences. If a new building is constructed, considerations should be given to housing both programs (agriculture and human sciences) in the

same building. Laboratories could be shared (ie. computer laboratories, science laboratories to serve agriculture programs and nutritional science programs.

4. Acquire new equipment to upgrade classrooms and teaching labs with the latest technological capabilities.
5. A timetable should be established to expend funds from the USDA Facilities Program to upgrade teaching facilities in Agriculture and Human Sciences.

PERSONNEL

Strengths

Faculty and support staff in teaching, research and extension programs were considered by the review team to be dedicated individuals supportive of their respective activities and responsibilities associated with their landgrant mission. Staffing appeared appropriate in research and extension units and in-line with funding availability.

Teaching faculty was found to be motivated and enthused, and showed a great deal of concern for student learning. They were also concerned about the future of their college because of the perceived lack of support provided for their teaching programs.

Research faculty conducts potentially meaningful, cutting-edge research using basic scientific procedures and principles. Extension specialists and agents, although limited in number, appear to understand their clientele and are committed to delivering excellence in programming. Extension staff represent PVAMU well to external publics.

Farm management staff were motivated and excited, as well as concerned about the productive use of farm resources to support teaching, research and Extension activities.

Challenges

Although faculty and staff understand and support their respective missions in teaching, research and extension, inadequate linkages currently exist between these respective units. Unit compartmentalization, leading to a lack of communication and collaboration, is preventing CAHS from reaching its full potential.

Farm personnel primarily provide support for research scientists, perhaps to the exclusion of teaching programs. Farm staff feel they lack respect from research scientists, and are concerned that neither their knowledge or experience is considered or appreciated. A lack of respect seems to exist to varying degrees between (not necessarily within) all of the units (research, teaching, and extension).

Declining student enrollment has led to low numbers of teaching faculty, often forcing overloads and requiring some to teach outside their areas of expertise.

Extension administrative support staff appears to be providing some support for other college activities for which the Dean/Interim Dean has responsibility. This may be complicated by the fact that the former Dean still occupies the Dean's office.

Some faculty feel that performance evaluations and merit raises are not related.

Recommendations

1. Review, and consider revising, the organizational structure of the College to facilitate collaboration and program linkage among the units.
2. Fill the vacant Dean position as soon as possible with a strong collaborative leader identified through a national search process.
3. Ensure that faculty are teaching in a field in which they are credentialed.
4. Remove the former Dean from the Dean's Office immediately.

COMMUNICATION and PARTNERSHIP

In a College that is guided by the nation's land-grant universities' tripartite mission of teaching, research and service, effective communication among and between the units who are the providers of these functions is extremely important. Unique to the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences (CAHS) is the clear distinction of receiving federal funding for the food and agricultural sciences. To fulfill the requirements of receiving these annual appropriations requires the generation of partnerships, external and internal collaborations, multi-disciplinary efforts for the solution of complex problems, and dialog with stakeholders in order to offer relevant programming in instruction, research and extension.

Strengths

Numerous examples were provided by the Prairie View A&M Cooperative Extension Program (CEP) staff of well established partnerships with both their urban and their rural clientele because they have listened to them and established programming to address the needs voiced by them.

Within CEP, frequent and all-inclusive meetings are held to plan, reflect, evaluate, invigorate and inform each other. This excellent internal communication structure is a credit to the leadership and it is partially responsible for the high morale in CEP, the enthusiasm and pride they feel about their efforts and the effectiveness and creativity of their work.

CEP has forged linkages to other university entities, i.e. the College of Architecture and the College of Business, thus there is evidence of their partnering spirit.

Challenges

Surprisingly there have been no consistently required meetings of program coordinators with the dean, nor among the administrators in extension, research and teaching, nor in the College with students, nor among farm staff, either among themselves or with those identified in the farm facility organization chart. This does not imply that these individuals do not meet, but it was expressed that the meetings are dictated by need rather than by recognizing that frequent communication is essential to cooperating, sharing, strengthening through planning, and initiating camaraderie, respect and collegiality.

Communication includes marketing the College to both external and internal audiences. Very commendable accomplishments were described to the review team by all interviewed and yet the documentation of such excellence was not seen in print media, on the web, nor in reports submitted to or by the university. To garner respect and positive acknowledgement of the College, it is the responsibility of all to contribute to the showcasing of themselves and the College on a whole.

The connectivity of extension, research and teaching was expressed as disappointing by all units and they attributed this disconnect primarily to a lack of communication and lack of knowledge of what is going on and what the strengths, needs, successes, etc. are of each other. There are few true internal partnerships or integrated programming and that initiatives are compartmentalized instead of team efforts. Respect and pride is lacking for CAHS, however domain (CEP and CARC) respect and pride are strong.

Recommendations

1. CARC might benefit by initiating listening sessions similar to those established by extension and/or have the researchers attend established forums like the Texas Communities Futures Forum.
2. CARC and CEP Field Days should be planned and implemented by extension, research, farm staff and if possible, the academic faculty (if they are on 12 month appointments).
3. Annual or biannual "Town Meetings" could be held with students and all CAHS faculty to give students a chance to voice concerns, suggestions and ideas for the betterment of the college and for enhancing their educational experiences.
4. CAHS alumni could be engaged in serving and supporting their college.
5. Frequent meetings and opportunities for team building, morale enhancement, and discussing the operations and expectations for the college must be established. Examples of meetings that should be frequent or within established times are:
 - Department heads/coordinators with the dean

- Academic, CARC and CEP employees
 - Farm management with farm workers
 - Farm coordinators and farm workers with researchers, faculty and specialists
 - The management teams of academics, extension and research
 - *At a minimum, there must be monthly meetings of the academic departments
(Note: Researchers who teach are also department faculty members, therefore the academic meetings must include them)
6. In order to communicate to the PVAMU community and all other external audiences and potential supporters of CAHS's value and excellence, there should be a dedicated focus on developing public relations/marketing materials and consistent documentation of highlights, accomplishments and impacts. The efforts should be unified to conserve resources, and to maximize the garnering of funding, praise and acknowledgement of the true value of CAHS to the campus, the state and the nation.
 7. Communications within the college should be facilitated and required by the dean in an effort to build respect across boundaries, develop collegiality and team-spiritedness, develop or broaden partnerships, establish efficient and effective use of resources, strengthen each unit through sharing, formulate image building, and infuse more multi-disciplinary programming.
 8. The commendable examples of staff meetings and frequent extension meetings should continue.

LEADERSHIP

Strengths

There is a real commitment and dedication of students, teaching faculty, research and extension specialists and support personnel to Prairie View A&M University and the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences.

Challenges

There is a great cry for leadership from the internal constituents of the College that provides communication, develops and supports processes, and serves as a voice and advocate for the College with the central administration. Perceptions from constituents relate to the following:

Lacking data in many areas of the College gives the impression that there is not a methodology to decision making.

Respect for each other's peers and collaboration among and between the functional areas (extension, teaching, and leadership) are lacking. Faculty and staff are gracious but give little support to each other.

The planning that has been completed in all of the areas has not been implemented, so a cynicism exists among the faculty, research and extension specialists, and staff.

Students raise a lot of questions about course offerings, sequencing of courses, and the faculty's ability to support them with the existing teaching overloads.

There is the perception that processes and evaluations are inequitable within the College and the University.

Recommendations:

1. Provide support for interaction and relationship development between and among extension, teaching and research. Building understanding and respect across areas will support the College in unifying for a common purpose.
2. Considerable planning among each of the units is evident; however, the planning between the functional units (extension, teaching and research) could position the College to better serve its clientele (i.e. students, citizens, industry, perspective donors, etc). Leadership needs to implement the plans that have been developed to ensure goals are supported and milestones are met and celebrated.
3. With serious facility needs that impact research and teaching, leadership is critical to work with the administration to address priorities and reach solutions for repair and renovation in a timely manner.
4. Leadership at each of the levels within the College (Dean, Associate Deans, Department Heads [Coordinators]) is critical for success of the College in recruitment and retention of students, telling the story to citizen constituents, funding agencies, and prospective donors. The Dean should involve the Associate Deans in decision making and advocacy for the College. Department Heads (Coordinators) need to be knowledgeable of their programs, provide planning and goals for their academic programs that would move forward through the Deans to central administration.
5. Strong leadership will support collaboration among the units and across the units to support a common purpose to recruit students, build a strong research program, and continue to enhance the extension program.
6. Leadership should be knowledgeable of the data for their programs, number of FTE, number of students enrolled, credit hours generated, retention data and graduation information.