

PROGRESS TOWARD RECOMMENDATIONS BY UNIVERSITY REVIEW TEAM

Filed: January 17, 2001

Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs

INTRODUCTION:

The University Review Team recommended that the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences should continue to exist. It serves a vital need within the University and the state of Georgia. The department has the chance to become a clear leader nationally and internationally if it can extend the areas of excellence that it has.

The following comments are in response to recommendations made by the review team and transmitted to the department by Robert Bailey, Chair of Program Review Committee:

Concerning Faculty and Department Operations:

1. The faculty should undertake a long-range planning process to better define the department's mission and goals.
The department completed the operational and strategic plans (copies attached).
2. The above planning process should include priorities for filling future faculty vacancies that are developed and supported by the existing faculty. The faculty should also support a statement defining the role and authority of the REI positions (campus coordinator).
The Department of Crop and Soil Sciences is very large involving Faculty at 4 campuses (Athens, Griffin, Tifton, and Statesboro). We have faculty positions that involve numerous disciplines under Crop Science and Soil Science and include assignments in the three functions (research, extension, and instruction). With this many decisions, it is impossible to obtain agreement from all faculty when filling vacated and new positions. I developed a 5-yr operational plan as a preliminary to the strategic planning sessions. This operational plan was discussed with the total department. I utilize the operational plan as a guide for faculty needs. The strategic position needs are discussed with the group of faculty in the discipline/function/location in which the position is located. The faculty committee utilized for candidate selection is selected from the discipline/function group. Position location is discussed with the faculty with final decision resident with the department head.

The REI positions located at the Athens, Griffin, and Tifton campuses are appointed by the Department Head after seeking input by the faculty and staff at the respective location. The REI positions are responsible to the

Department Head. Their functions are primarily to handle the concerns of the staff and the business operations at that location. All faculty matters and concerns are managed by the Department Head. The department by-laws are being updated by a faculty committee. These by-laws will include a specific description of the duties for all REIs (see Department Structure).

3. The department should revise its faculty evaluation and resource allocation system to more adequately recognize the creative research and teaching contributions of its faculty.
The faculty evaluation format has been developed for a mission-oriented department that includes instruction, research, and extension. The present system was developed to evaluate faculty with split appointments as well as straight appointments on a comparable basis (form attached). The review team suggested that “grants in” and “papers out” be more heavily weighted (25X) than the 2X weighting at the time of the reviews. I have increased the 2X to 4X since the review report. Since I have been the department head, I have continued to hire extension specialists who understand the mission type of research and as a result much of the applied research will be conducted by faculty with Extension appointments. This will allow the faculty with research appointments to pursue grants for the more basic research in support of the applied research. However, many of our present faculty with research appointments were hired to conduct applied research. I feel comfortable with the present system considering that our mission orientation is not totally grants and publications driven. However, the faculty in the department are aware of the importance of grants and publication and I am sure that my department ranks high, in the college, in dollars and publications per research EFT.
4. The College should allow the department to fill staff vacancies in a timely manner.
As of last fall, Dr. Cherry has begun to release vacated staff positions to the department heads for filling.
5. The department should consider converting a technician position into a computer and media support position.
The support departments, ECT and OIT, should furnish the computer and media support for the department. Our department, presently, needs to fill 3 staff positions in support of the research function and we can not afford to convert a research staff position to support functions.

Concerning Staff

1. The department should request that the Associate Vice President for Human

Resources undertake a classification review of the department's staff positions. This review should include a plan to ameliorate pay compression and inversion. Furthermore, a review of the department's merit pay procedures should be included in the study.

The department faculty and staff have continually insisted that such a review occur. However, the review should be for all staff in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. I understand that a review of the University classification system is presently being conducted. I have been in the University System for 31 years and have continued to seek a correction for the cumbersome classification system and the lack of a promotion system for the classified personnel. The Staff Advisory Committees have submitted many requests to the college and University for a review of the system. However, these inquiries and complaints have not resulted in action at these administrative levels until recently. I have worked with the staff over the past two years in an attempt to resolve the handling of the merit pay raises. I have used several systems suggested by the staff and feel that we do the best that can be done under the present classification/promotion system.

2. The department should recognize that staff morale problems noted by the review team and seek avenues to correct this situation. Possible actions could include a staff advisory committee, a rewards and recognition program to recognize staff achievements, and increased opportunities for staff from all three campuses to interact with each other.

I consider the discussion subject in the above item to be the basis for the major morale problem resident in my department. However, other underlying problems are recognized and steps are being taken to resolve the apparent problems. I meet, on a by-monthly schedule, with the staff at the three campuses. We discuss staff concerns and potential actions to correct those concerns. We have staff committees at the three campuses. Finally, they are not interested in the increased opportunities for interaction between the three campuses. Functions held at each campus had historically been poorly attended. However, we have increased interest in these functions by holding them at lunch during the week. Week end activities are not well attended. I have concluded, after three years, that the morale problems are multifaceted to include: the lack of a promotional system, problems with individual supervisors, a perception of inadequate merit raise and concerns for the work habits of other staff. In general, I feel that the concerns of the staff, in the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences, are no greater than staff in other departments.

3. The College should request that periodic training courses be provided by the Staff Development Department on the Griffin and Tifton campuses.
These campuses do have information and training courses offered by

various departments. These sessions are conducted for the total staff at the campus. Generally they are not well attended and I am working on that attendance.

Concerning Instruction

1. The department should develop a plan to improve both undergraduate recruitment efforts.

Undergraduate

The department has a recruiting committee chaired by Dr. William Vencill. Additionally, we have changed the curricula to attract more students into the department. The department will have a science and technology option in the Crop Science Major to attract students with a strong basic science background. The advising will assist these students to prepare for entry into graduate programs and into field of biotechnology. The curriculum requirements are approximate to the requirements for pre-medical students which will allow for attracting students who would like to track on a pre-medical curriculum with the option to deviate into biotechnology if they wish. The department has aligned the courses in the Environmental Soil Science major to allow for a double major in chemistry. I have met with Dr. Robert Scott, Head of Chemistry Department, and we agree this will offer students the ability to utilize a double major (Environmental Soil Science/Chemistry) to enter the work force in Environmental Chemistry. There is a great demand for students trained in Environmental Chemistry. Finally, our department will develop a Seed Science and Technology Certificate curriculum for students wishing to enter a seed technology career. This is an excellent career opportunity for students with the proper education.

Graduate

Our enrollment of graduate students, that require a thesis, is restricted by the availability of assistantships. We have no problem in filling the available assistantships. All faculty are encouraged to place graduate assistantships on grant proposals. Finally, the Board of Regents approved our request to offer a non-thesis masters degree in Crop and Soil Sciences last fall. This degree will be attractive to the potential students who have a desire to obtain a masters degree while continuing employment. We are in the process of developing 4 courses to be offered by the internet to supplement this offering.

Concerning Facilities

1. The College should install a G-SAMS system or internet conferencing system within the Miller Plant Sciences building to improve communication between campuses.

We agree that the College should install G-SAMS system and internet conferencing in the Miller Plant Sciences Building. However, space in this

building is at a premium and our department has very little room to accommodate these facilities.

2. The department should renovate the soils teaching lab. Furthermore, the department should consider converting an existing laboratory to make it suitable for teaching courses in crop biotechnology.

The department has renovated the soils teaching laboratory. We are expecting to utilize a laboratory to be vacated with the move of faculty members to the CAGT facility when it is completed for teaching crop biotechnology courses..

3. Laboratory and greenhouse space on the Athens campus may require expansion and/or renovation. Research laboratory space is reportedly overcrowded. Greenhouses for research are remotely located at Riverbend and require renovation. There are not greenhouses dedicated for instruction.

All points discussed in this item have been discussed with the college administration. We have developed a request, to college administration, to retain the limited space to be vacated with the move of several faculty members to the CAGT facility. Certainly, we agree that we can do very little expansion of instruction and research programs with our limited space. We are in the process of seeking funding for another greenhouse.

4. The department should explore the possibility of developing a relationship with the municipal or private owners of an existing golf course, enabling the department to use portions of the course for teaching or research.

We have good relationships with golf courses throughout the state and if their facilities are required for research and teaching purposes, I am sure that we could use them providing that it does not interfere with play. There in lies the problem. Very few golf courses can accommodate the type of research that we conduct without interfering with play. They do not like the accompanying discoloration to the grass resulting from certain types of research etc. I don't feel that the lack of a research and education golf course affects the quality of our research and instruction.