

History of Crop and Soil Sciences University of Georgia

Chartered in 1785, the University of Georgia began operating in 1801. In the early 19th century Georgia agriculture faced a period of rapid change, as cotton supplanted tobacco as the major cash crop. Advances in chemistry and biology led to scientific principles being used to benefit Georgia agriculture. Among the first advocates of this approach was Dr. William Terrell of Hancock County. Dr. Terrell obtained state funding to establish a series of agriculture lectures at Franklin College to cover chemistry, geology, soil analysis and improvement. The Terrell Professorship was the first chair established at the University, in 1854. The first Terrell Professor was noted agricultural scientist Dr. Daniel Lee, who studied both soils and regional farming methods during his stay at the university. During his tenure, state publications and organizations joined in advocating further agriculture studies at the University of Georgia. In response, the Trustees authorized the College of Agriculture in 1859. Due to the Civil War the Terrell lectures ceased in January 1863; shortly afterward Franklin College closed and did not offer classes again until January 1866. The Terrell Professorship was revived in 1867 and continues today. On July 2, 1862, the U.S. Congress passed the Morrill Act, providing for the creation of a college of agriculture and mechanic arts in each state. The first elected governor following Georgia's readmission to the union issued an executive order on March 30, 1872, awarding the funds from the federal grant to the Trustees. The Georgia State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts opened in Athens on May 1, 1872. University professors taught Agriculture and Horticulture on land northwest of the main campus while conducting research on fertilizers and variety trials for cotton, corn and small grain. The College's enrollment was low; one M.A. and eleven Bachelors degrees were awarded between 1876 and 1890.

The Hatch Act of 1887 initiated and funded each state's establishment of an agricultural experiment station to conduct scientific research in connection with each of the colleges established under the Morrill act. The Experiment Station was initially established in Athens, but was officially moved to Griffin in 1888. In 1907 the board of trustees chose Dr. Andrew M. Soule as President of the newly reorganized College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts. The first department established within the college was the Agronomy Department in 1908 headed by J. R. Fain.

The Extension Service began in 1910. The role of extension was greatly expanded when, in 1914, Congress established the Cooperative Extension Service (the Smith-Lever Act). Agronomy Department faculty participated in lectures and demonstrations throughout the state from 1908 to 1917 as educational trains called "College on Wheels" traveled Georgia bringing news of new equipment, seeds, products and farming practices.

Conner Hall opened in 1909 and became home to most of the departments in the Agricultural College including Agronomy. The Agronomy Department would remain housed in Conner Hall until 1972, when it moved into the new Miller Plant Sciences Building. The Agronomy field work was located along South Lumpkin Street in 1908. The land was used to develop strains of cotton, corn and other farm crops, study the relation of fertilizers to crop production, and experiment with crop rotation and other cultivation practices.

The Agronomy Department continued its growth throughout the 20's and 30's, contributing to the improvement of the agricultural economy. To provide additional research resources and information for farmers in the Coastal Plain Region, the state legislature established a second experiment station near Tifton in 1918. The station was separate from the

College and had governor-appointed trustees, but both teaching and extension faculty made use of the facility. The Georgia Experiment Station at Griffin and the Coastal Plain Station at Tifton disseminated information through a vigorous Extension program. These efforts helped strengthen and diversify the state's agriculture. In the 1920's funding "short-falls" resulted in a series of compromises, resulted in salary re-allocations of state and federal money which effectively separated Extension from the College.

In 1931, the Georgia General Assembly reorganized higher education into a University System, under a State Board of Regents and a Chancellor. Each educational division fell under its jurisdiction, including the College of Agriculture, the experiment stations, and the extension service. Soon a resolution from the regents redefined the College's mission as solely teaching—providing an education to produce practical farmers. In 1932 the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts dropped Mechanic Arts from its name and began revising its curriculum toward practical agriculture. Enrollment dipped during the Depression, then rose steadily until World War II. During the war, Agronomy land became a military training ground and then was taken over by the Athletic Department at war's end. During this period, the Agronomy Department faculty was reduced to two. They continued teaching and conducting research at the Agronomy Farm in Athens and at the Whitehall Farm. During World War II, the Agronomy faculty (now four) used field work not only to provide their students with hands-on experience in the latest farming techniques but also to raise operating funds through the sale of crops. Their work included crop variety trials, crop rotations, and fertilizer and soil erosion studies.

The College's emphasis on teaching practical agriculture began to be revised as new developments reshaped its state and national objectives. Beginning in the mid-30s, the federal government created a number of new agricultural programs such as the Soil Conservation Service, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Farmers Home Administration, among many others. The demand was for professionally trained agricultural specialists to move into these new agencies. As new jobs opened up for graduates, enrollment soared as war veterans, financed by the G.I. Bill, pursued careers in agriculture. During this period the Department grew in scope, performing teaching, research and extension. In 1938, W.O. Collins became the Head of the Agronomy Department until 1953, when Dr. T.H. Rogers succeeded him. The department created the University Soil Testing Service in 1945. The Agronomy faculty numbered eight by 1950.

The College of Agriculture underwent a major reorganization in the early 50s, as the Board of Regents acted on previous recommendations to bring the administrative operation of the college in line with that of other states. Previously, the experiment stations, extension service and teaching programs were each administered separately. The Regents appointed a college Dean to oversee all three functions. The new structure created a Division of Agronomy within the College of Agriculture. The Division of Agronomy consisted of five departments (Athens, Griffin, Tifton, College Station and Extension) with a Head of each department and the Head located at Athens also serving as Division Chair. At this time all teaching was conducted at Athens so this Head had research and teaching responsibilities. The Heads at Tifton (Coastal Plains Experiment Station) and Griffin (Georgia Experiment Station) were responsible for research with the Head of Extension having multi-locational responsibilities. A third Experiment Station, College Station, was created to give Athens faculty research facilities and was administered by the fifth Department Head; however, by 1973 this responsibility was assumed by the University. The Division of Agronomy was headed by a Chair, whose role was to

facilitate collaboration between the departments and to provide programmatic direction. The Division Chair coordinated programs with the College Dean and the newly appointed Directors representing Resident Instruction, Experiment Stations and the Extension Service. Following the reorganization, the Dean's title became Dean and Coordinator. Budgetary responsibilities were assigned to the Directors not with the Dean. Similar to the Dean's role at the College level, the Division Chairs had no budget authority, but were responsible for coordinating functions between the departments and encouraging collaboration. Budget authority was flowed from the Directors to the Department Heads.

The first Chairman of the new Agronomy Division in the College of Agriculture was Dr. G.W. Burton, a USDA plant geneticist at Tifton. Dr. Burton remained division chairman through 1964. Beginning in the 1950s the College of Agriculture recognized the need to expand its mission to provide training suited for professional agronomists with an emphasis on basic research and applied aspect of agriculture. Increasingly, students came from non-traditional farming backgrounds. Many were now able to transfer from other educational institutions without losing credit due to the recent adoption of a core curriculum by University System Colleges. State and federal support of the College of Agriculture increased steadily in this time period, from \$2,293,484 in 1950-51 to \$53,234,768 in 1983-84. Enrollment in the College rose in the same manner, and the Agronomy Division grew as well from five graduate students in 1950 to 53 in 1984. Undergraduate numbers were particularly high in the 1970s. In 1960 the Agronomy Division began offering a Ph.D. degree in Agronomy. In the early 1950's, along with the reorganization of the College, the Blairsville research station was reclassified as a branch station, and three new branch stations in Midville, Calhoun, and Plains were established. Later, the Eatonton station became a branch station as well. Reidsville, Alapaha and Attapulgus host field stations. These branch and field stations are responsible to either the Georgia Station or the Coastal Plain Station, since the research functions of the College Station were assumed by the Agronomy Division. Since 1953, the department has maintained an Athens research farm and greenhouse complex.

In 1985, the Departments of Agronomy were heavily involved in production agriculture research and extension, with strong programs in teaching. Through 1996 there continued to be four departments of Agronomy, each with its own Department Head. Several commodity and subject matter committees existed in the Department and they served to facilitate coordination of research and extension activities between the four departments. Dr. Bill Flatt led the College during this time. He carried the title of Dean and Coordinator, and he coordinated all three functions of Teaching, Research, and Extension, similar to the Division Chair at the Department level. The Associate Deans of Research and Extension both carried the title of Director for their respective responsibilities, and therefore they had full control of the budgets for their respective responsibilities. In a restructuring of the college upper administration during 1996, the Dean and Coordinator of the College was given full budgetary authority over all functions of the college and the new title Dean and Director. Dr. Gale Buchanan was named as the new Dean and Director. There were respective Associate Deans named for each of the functions to assist the Dean and Director.

During the early 90s, the four Departments of Agronomy were each respectively renamed the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences, still coordinated through the Division of Crop and Soil Sciences. During this time, there was increasing emphasis on environmental programs, including the development of three new undergraduate majors in the Department at Athens, including one with primarily environmental emphasis. Those majors were: 1. Environmental Soil

Science, 2. Crop Science, and 3. Turfgrass Management. To encourage environmental research, two faculty were hired in 1989-1990 with joint appointments between the Department and the Institute of Ecology. During the early 90s, two faculty at the Savannah River Ecology Lab were also given partial appointments in the Department at Athens, provided by the Vice President for Research. During this time period, the College also changed its name from the "College of Agriculture" to the "College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences". Late in 1992, the College restructured all departments, including Crop and Soil Sciences, creating a single department from the original four. The Department Head at Athens was appointed to head the single large department, with the previous department heads of the other units remaining as unit leaders to assist the department head. This structure has been maintained and in 1997 reaffirmed with a new title of REI (Research, Extension, Instruction) Coordinator given to the unit leaders who assisted the Department Head. This administrative structure continues to the present time.

In 2003, the college engaged in a strategic planning process that included possible organizational restructuring. The restructuring focused on the administrative "linkages" between the three campuses. In early 2004, the college implemented one of the reorganization options by reassigning the former departmental administrative staff located at Tifton and Griffin to the Assistant Deans at each location. In addition, the college also implemented an "assessment" program. Simultaneously, the state budget allocation to UGA was cut in response to a slowing economy. Consequently, each unit was responsible for transferring funds for both the assessment and a budget cut to the college. From fiscal year 2003-2007 each unit's budget was reduced approximately 30%. Beginning in fiscal year 2006 each unit was only responsible for an assessment "payment." The assessment was comprised on an annual and permanent payment. The annual assessment was re-allocated back to the department each year as part of the base allocation. The permanent assessment was not returned to the unit. This program required each unit within the college to re-allocate an annually specified amount of funds back to the college. Part of the assessment would be used to fund college operations and part was to be used for "re-direction (eg., new programs)." Upon "payment," each unit would have the flexibility to manage remaining resources at the discretion of the unit administrator.

In an effort to reinvigorate the department's undergraduate enrollment, in 2003, the Agri-Sciences and Environmental Systems major in Tifton and the Plant Science Area of Emphasis in Applied Biotechnology major in Athens majors were offered. In 2005, the Water and Soil Resources and Environmental Chemistry majors were first offered in Athens and the Environmental Resource Science major in Griffin were first offered. In 2006, the Department began to re-fill vacant positions and received the first college Georgia Power Professorship in Soil Chemistry.