

OVERVIEW APPENDIX 1

Agronomy and Horticulture Shared Strategic Priorities 2019-2023

Mission

The Department of Agronomy and Horticulture continues to build its leadership in plant, soil, and landscape systems through innovation and technology that is science-based and results-driven, with an urgency to anticipate and embrace future challenges. We partner with our stakeholders to meet these challenges through creative research, learner-driven teaching, and extension that all support multi-function resilient landscapes and food production to enhance the quality of life for the citizens of Nebraska and the world.

Targeted Priorities 2019-2023

- Strengthen undergraduate student education and experiences with a bold, forward thinking, and flexible curriculum that prepares students to be knowledgeable problem solvers, skilled and respected practitioners, and adaptive professionals.
- Improve focus and rigor of graduate education, including a core assessment of key attributes we expect of our graduate students and the curriculum available for their education.
- Explore effective strategies to enhance stakeholder engagement through balanced approaches and improved synergy between extension specialists and extension .
 - Leverage faculty expertise to create and enhance institutional capacity building to support and lead extension and stakeholder engagement across UNL.
- Build capacity in (digital) agriculture research, education, and extension, in collaboration with other IANR units.
- Explore strategies to enhance an inclusive, collaborative and supportive professional environment for faculty, staff, and students .
- Develop effective plans to fill gaps in human capacity, manage financial and facility resources.
- Expand the scope of departmental and UNL programs in genotype by environment by management by sociology interactions.

Agronomy and Horticulture Goals

Priority #1. Strengthen undergraduate student education and experiences with a bold, forward thinking, and flexible curriculum that prepares students to be knowledgeable problem solvers, skilled and respected practitioners, and adaptive professionals.

- Develop common core experiences aligned with market needs now and those anticipated in the future.
- Develop undergraduate specializations aligned with market needs now and into the future (e.g. digital agriculture, urban agriculture).
- Develop clear guidelines and criteria for reporting teaching and learning improvements & accomplishments.
- Develop concrete experiences through integration of service learning in collaboration with extension and internal and external partners.
- Identify needs and gaps in courses, staff and resources, and integrate across the curriculum to avoid duplication.
- Develop and enact strategic recruitment plans designed to increase quality and diversity of students and enrollment by 30% in five years
- Create strategic plan for online undergraduate education program and assure resources available to make it happen.

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- Develop partnerships for inter-, multi-, cross-, and trans-disciplinary educational programs with BSE, SNR, Animal Science, HRTM, Entomology, ALEC, Landscape Architecture, CRPL, Early Childhood/Development, Extension, and other units.
- Cultivate a culture of sharing evidence-based approaches in teaching and learning through formal and informal means.
- Develop/create strategies to evaluate curriculum impact in a longitudinal manner that goes beyond graduation.

Priority #2 Improve the focus and rigor of graduate education, including a core assessment of key attributes we expect of our graduate students and the curriculum available for their education.

- Maximize our capacity in student mentoring and professional development.
 - Develop effective evaluation and accountability in mentoring and student development.
 - Establish expected key attributes and expectations of competencies to be gained by students.
- Develop and implement a common set of updated core education elements.
 - Identify needs and gaps in courses, experiences, staff and resources, and minimize overlaps in courses.
- Develop a set of disciplinary courses within each specialization.
 - Revise/modify and add courses/experiences of disciplinary specialization.
 - Cultivate a culture of sharing evidence-based approaches in teaching and learning through formal and informal means.
- Recruit and attract a diverse pool of exceptional students .

2020 Graduate Program Retreat

- Establish a graduate curriculum committee to review existing curriculum, approve new courses, identify training gaps and critical needs (hires or classes).
- Mentoring guidelines for both faculty and students to establish clear expectations, paths to success, and help build and strengthen professional networks.
- Develop orientation class/workshop.
- IDPs and direct annual reviews to report on progress towards career goals rather than grad studies milestones.
- Develop deliberate plan for student/faculty recruitment and retention. Under-represented minorities, excellent students, non-traditional recruiting targets.
- Identify ways to incentivize the above with cost share for successful grants.
- Encourage distance delivery of courses, seems to be very relevant now.

Priority #3. Support organizational development in Extension to leverage faculty expertise and engage with stakeholders across and Nebraska, the region, and beyond.

- Coordinate an Extension forum.
 - Identify extension coordinator and coordinating committee.
 - Plan A&H Extension Retreat to identify extension priorities and areas of leadership.

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- Develop and provide a set of shared evidence-based resources and guidelines on best practices in Extension programming, pedagogy and application to equip Extension faculty for ‘next generation Extension.’
- Connect educators and specialists with faculty without an Extension appointment to increase department capacity for outreach and facilitate new collaborations, applications, and communication of the most current research and best practices for Nebraska stakeholders.
- Provide regular workshops and seminars with explicit focus on creating opportunities for teaching and extension faculty to share ideas about transferring research-based information to students and other clientele.
- Develop clear strategies, resources, guidelines and criteria for documenting and reporting Extension accomplishments.

Priority #4 Build capacity in (digital) agriculture research, education, and extension, in collaboration with other IANR units.

- Identify core areas of research, teaching, extension contributions of our unit and gaps (or, opportunities) in digital ag.
- Develop extension and teaching tools to increase knowledge and competencies in digital agriculture.

Priority #5 Integrate capacities gained as undergraduates and graduate students to understand and apply them to farming and food systems and be well prepared for responsible action

- Recognize that there is often a smaller gap between ‘ignorance and knowledge’ than between ‘knowledge and action’, and results of teaching and research are most valuable when translated into responsible action.
- Integrate information and specific practices learned in disciplinary courses into meaningful recommendations relevant to whole systems design and planning.
- Provide strategies and tools for self-evaluation of system success with evolving criteria for measuring outcomes, with relation to changing climate, non-renewable resources, and concerns about equitable distribution of benefits in the food system.

Other Ongoing Unit Enhancement Plans

- Develop a process to enhance space use efficiency, improve research-teaching infrastructure, and availability of shared equipment (complete inventory of farm sites, equipment, and support; space usage).
- Develop easy to follow on boarding process for new faculty and staff.
- Improve information access to faculty, staff, and students through enhanced website structure and design (Administrative structure; Committees; Service Center; Faculty and Staff Pages).
- Support professional development activities of staff and faculty.