

Overarching Departmental Issues

Department Initiatives

The Department of Agronomy celebrated 100 years of excellence November, 2007. We focused our attention on past accomplishments and those faculty and staff who were instrumental in shaping the department and influencing its direction.

The first 100 years has established an outstanding foundation which the department will build upon. Our ability to predict and respond to the needs of society over the next decade and our support for these efforts will be instrumental in enhancing the relevancy of our programs and establishing our department as one of the nation's premier comprehensive agronomic departments over the next century.

The following are issues we plan to address as a department in addition to many of those already mentioned in previous sections of this document.

Issues

Staffing issues

The following is an overview of faculty changes that have occurred since the 2002 departmental review. Since 2002, we have filled 7 faculty positions in the crop sciences and 7 in the earth system sciences. These 14 faculty positions along with 5 USDA/ARS hires during that same time period were listed on page 2 in the section on Advancements and Accomplishments.

In addition to our faculty hires, the following faculty have retired since 2002.

Donald Franzmeier	2003 (Pedology)
Ellsworth Christmas	2004 (SB Extension)
Chris Johannsen	2004 (Remote Sensing)
William McFee	2005 (Soils Teaching)
James Vorst	2005 (Crops Teaching) Partial Retirement
Niels Nielsen	2006 (USDA)

The following represents positions we have identified as necessary to complement our faculty efforts to address the grand challenges and to assume national leadership in the crop and earth system sciences. All positions except environmental soil microbiology replace faculty who have left or retired resulting in serious gaps in expertise. We will continue to place emphasis in the crop and earth system sciences and maintain a comprehensive department of agronomy as we view this to be a strength in our ability to address issues as systems.

Environmental soil physics	Maize physiology/agroecology
Environmental soil microbiology	Soybean breeding
Soybean physiology/agroecology	Land use planning

Faculty/Staff Issues

In addition to pursuing future faculty hires, we need to increase our efforts to recognize faculty and staff for outstanding work and contributions to the departmental and university missions. Considerable focus and resources have been dedicated in recent years to recruit faculty and support their startup efforts. Premier departments recognize that faculty and staff are the lifeblood of the organization and invest the time to recognize their efforts through awards, rewards, support, and enhanced professional development opportunities. The Department of Agronomy at Purdue will increase efforts to recognize faculty and staff in multiple ways, both internally and externally.

Budget Issues

Grand Challenges: The department and college will need to focus support on the efforts of our faculty and staff to address the grand challenges through research and education. This will require financial stimuli as well as additional space and equipment.

An annual RFP system will be developed internally to stimulate collaborative initiatives among faculty around grand challenge initiatives. Internal dollars will be made available to use as leverage for external funding and to support innovative, novel, and collaborative approaches to the grand challenges.

Internal funding capabilities: Internal funding resources are limited as nearly 86% of the departmental appropriated dollars support salaries and wages. Thus an aggressive plan will be developed to identify and seek private giving to supplement financial support for faculty programs.

Development: Particular effort will be placed in seeking private support for graduate assistantships, space renovation, and discretionary funds. In addition, support for endowed chairs and professorships will be sought. These efforts will be partnered with the Office of Development.

Department Visibility

The Department of Agronomy has an outstanding cadre of highly dedicated faculty and staff who are very focused on making a positive impact through their research and education. Many of the faculty have earned highly respected national and international reputations for their expertise and their ability to deliver. Increased efforts will be made to ensure that multiple key stakeholders are educated about the expertise that occurs in the department and how that expertise can be used to address issues of local, national and international importance. This will require a stronger presence in Indianapolis, Washington D.C. and with key international organizations such as NGO's, the CGIAR's, and USAID. In addition, we must create new partnerships, both within and outside the university with diverse and nontraditional stakeholder groups such as the medical and pharmaceutical industries, and producers of locally grown/locally sold products.

A new web site for the department was designed and implemented since the last review. However, the College has recently designed a web site structure that all departments will be expected to use and that will replace our current format. We will use this new format to our advantage to design new images of the department that convey powerful and exciting messages about our teaching, research, and extension programs to attract people and resources to Agronomy at Purdue.

Seek and Enhance Collaborative Efforts

Many of the problems faced by society are too complex to be solved by single disciplines. In addition, in order to prepare our students and stakeholders for the unexpected, they must be shown how to relate agronomic principles to the larger agricultural system. Agronomy takes on greater relevancy when its concepts are placed in the context of broader systems. Stakeholders are demanding a more complete understanding of the impact from agronomic decisions on environmental, economic, social, and behavioral factors. Thus, to remain relevant and competitive, multidisciplinary research and educational programs will need to be facilitated by the college administration and strategic linkages encouraged across colleges and institutions. Collaborative linkages will be facilitated through a variety of initiatives such as annual poster presentations, the departmental seminar series, coordination of departmental visits by industry representatives and governmental entities, continued encouragement of faculty sabbaticals and studies in a second discipline, and increased faculty and staff outreach to increase visibility of their respective programs. Groups of faculty will be supported by institutional dollars to participate in strategic meetings throughout the U.S. to increase opportunities to impact research and education agendas and to inform the broader departmental community of new initiatives that impact strategic direction.

Diversity of Faculty, Staff, and Students

Diversity strengthens our disciplines and leads to creative approaches to problem solving. Thus, diversity must be a University and College priority and it is a departmental initiative. We have been able to diversify our faculty through extensive hiring in recent years. We have increased the number of women faculty and faculty from underrepresented minority groups. Through a combination of resource allocation, participation in minority and gender workshops, interaction with a historically black college and involvement with the national minority organization, MANRRS, we have enhanced minority understanding by our faculty and staff and increased the population of our minority graduate students. We will continue to use these opportunities to diversify our faculty and students with additional emphasis on our undergraduate students. A departmental committee of faculty, staff, and students focused on diversity has developed a strategy for interacting with regional high schools with large minority populations in Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, and Chicago to educate students about opportunities in Agronomy and to coordinate departmental visits.