

Administrative Review - Stephen Herbert - Personal Statement

(This document was developed for a review of my administrative activity.)

Associate Dean, Agricultural Research and Outreach, College of Natural Sciences, 2009-Present

In March 2009, I was appointed the **Director, Massachusetts Center for Agriculture**, and **Associate Director, Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station**. The Center for Agriculture had been previously formed but had been there mostly in name only. My mandate from the Dean was to raise the level of activity and awareness of agriculture both on the UMass Campus and in the Commonwealth and region. This was significant since the historic “agriculture college” was in 2009 being merged with the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and a focus on agriculture needed to be maintained.

The Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station manages agricultural research funded by Federal funds and adds support to agricultural projects funded by competitive grants. Agriculture here is interpreted broadly to include basic research in plants, animals, food and the natural environment, and at the other end of the spectrum, applied research in crops, animals, food, nutrition and natural resources. At this time the Center for Agriculture also assumed management responsibility for the research and instructional farms which had previously been managed by departments. When UMass Extension returned to the College in 2009 from the previous affiliation with University Outreach, the reporting line was through the Center for Agriculture. This new association of UMass Extension with the Center for Agriculture was purposeful, with a desire for greater integration of agricultural research and outreach.

In September 2009, I was appointed **Associate Dean** and **Director, Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station**. The move of UMass Extension back into the College enabled more integration with research, and for greater administrative alignment I was also appointed **Director of UMass Extension** in May 2011.

While this review concerns my current and past leadership as Associate Dean and Director of the Center for Agriculture, many of the accomplishments detailed below have in a large part only been possible because of efforts of many; by Center leadership, financial and personnel offices, farm managers and support staff, the Stockbridge School of Agriculture, CNS Development office, faculty, extension educators and staff in many departments and programs, and support from the Dean and Associate Deans in the College of Natural Sciences.

GUIDING OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR THE CENTER FOR AGRICULTURE

The following principles have helped shape the activities under my direction and are incorporated into the current Reorganization Plan for the Center for Agriculture:

Innovation - doing things differently and doing different things - in research and educational programming.

Effective Integration - research and extension activities and functions.

Financial Resources - flexibility to invest in new opportunities and clarity that activity is driven by readily discernible public needs.

Local Presence - valued in Massachusetts communities, academic departments and university.

Faculty Engagement - increased leadership of faculty with research and extension and in bringing financial sustainability.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES AND SELECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE 2009

Center for Agriculture: The Center is a complex organization with a purpose to bring a focus and impactful activity to agriculture, food and the environment in the College, at the University and in the Commonwealth. In many ways this has been achieved and enhanced during the last four+ years. The Center for Agriculture is now poised to adopt the new name of the Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment. This name is more inclusive of the programs in agriculture, nutrition and food science, and in climate change, water and other environment factors related to agriculture, forestry and landscapes.

Realignment of Leadership: In 2011, the positions of Center for Agriculture Director, Experiment Station Director and Extension Director were consolidated. Other administrative positions were modified to provide support and to contribute to Center leadership. In October 2012 a reorganization plan was completed for the Center, including the Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station, and UMass Extension. These have included directors for

- i. Public Liaison (to respond to questions from the general public, to reach out to relevant public agencies, to provide regional representation and to create and implement the promotion of impacts),
- ii. Faculty and Staff Support: (to manage off-campus facilities, to provide IT and web support, to coordinate entrepreneurial support services, to innovate for efficiency and effectiveness, and to create other support services as needed), and
- iii. Extension Outreach: (to manage and support the educators who are providing extension outreach in the field, to cultivate program development and innovation, to support integration of extension outreach capacity with Extension faculty and other faculty, and to cultivate linkages to departments and external stakeholder groups.

Transition to these roles began in early 2013 and progressed so that public perceptions have improved about the value and responsiveness of the Center for Agriculture and UMass Extension.

Integrated Reporting: Beginning in 2009, the federally mandated reports of research and extension project activities were integrated, a desire of USDA not previously accomplished. The Center was an early adopter of this even before UMass Extension and the Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station were integrated within the Center for Agriculture.

Targeted Research and Extension Projects: A “special call” competitive selection process for focused research projects was continued in 2009 with 3 projects funded in two departments. In 2010, childhood nutrition and obesity was targeted with three projects, and in 2011, two projects in the Dept. of Biology received funding. In 2012, building on the integration of research and extension in the Center, six “integrated-research-and-extension” projects were funded in six departments. Projects typically receive funding beyond department allocations for three years.

New Extension Faculty: In 2011 and 2012, five new extension faculty positions were filled in four departments, and four senior extension professionals transitioned to faculty status in three departments. Two further new extension faculty positions were added in 2013. The creation of these positions is to better position the Center to meet new areas of interest and to improve linkages with other faculty in research. Three extension professor positions are in departments that have had no extension personnel previously. Four of these new extension professors are women. These new extension faculty positions also complement other existing extension professor positions and have led to an effort to mentor especially the new extension faculty.

Water Resources Research Center: In July 2012, the UMass Amherst Water Resources Research Center became part of the Center for Agriculture. This was viewed as a positive move for the Water Resources Research Center and has led to a water interest group bringing greater integration of faculty and extension educators with an interest in water issues.

Physical Consolidation of Leadership Team: Extension administrative staff formerly located off-campus on University Drive in Amherst joined other Center administrative staff in Stockbridge Hall on campus. This increased the communication within the Center and led to the successful integration of support functions and activities of research and extension.

Centralization of Support Functions: Financial and personnel staff of the former Extension Business Office have been integrated into the CNS Administrative Services unit in Stockbridge. This move aligns financial and personnel functions with the integrated activities in support of Center research and extension.

Budget Oversight: Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station, and Extension Federal funds, State and other funds are in excess of \$9MM/year. Faculty and Extension Educators generate additional funding from grants and revenue from outreach education programs and activities, some of which is administered by the Center. Research and joint research and extension projects exist in 12 departments in four colleges. Formal joint research and extension projects and Center-funded research in two colleges and four departments are new after the creation of College of Natural Sciences and the realignment of UMass Extension within the Center.

4-H Youth Programs: Supported on-campus camps and program including Vet Camp, SOS (Summer of Science) and Dairy and Beef Camps that introduce youth to the UMass campus and

particularly disadvantaged inner city youth who attend from Springfield. Continued to build a strong relationship with the MA 4-H Foundation, and helped support fund raising efforts. Helped resolve staff and volunteer issues and conflicts.

Nutrition Education Program: Held proactive conversations with the nutrition leadership team concerning the necessity of broadening their funding base because of the uncertainty of federal funding particularly, SNAP-ED. Last fall with the delay and uncertainty with the SNAP-ED funding, provided encouragement and support to NEP leadership and staff during an extremely difficult time. Bridge funding was provided in the short term and supported NEP staff when pink slips were issued twice.

Management of Research and Education Farms: The management responsibility of farms in the Center resulted in confronting serious financial and personnel problems. These existed at two of the five farms and each has been resolved. Activities and financial stability continues at each of the farms under Center management. The infrastructure, equipment and safety have been improved at the research and instructional farms. An example is the replacement of perimeter fence at the Hadley Farm which had become a maintenance and safety issue.

LEADERSHIP REPRESENTATIONS

- Annual visits to Capitol Hill, Washington D.C., to visit Massachusetts House and Senate delegations have strengthened the legislative relationships with UMass Amherst and the Center for Agriculture. These visits are coordinated with CARET (Council for Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching) a national system wide group that provides support and linkage with the congressional delegation.
- Meetings with Massachusetts state legislators in formal and informal meetings have built support for the Center for Agriculture, the College of Natural Sciences and UMass Amherst.
- Active member in NERA (Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors), including Administrative Advisor for regional research projects.
- Active member in NEED (Northeast Extension Directors).
- Active member in National Experiment Station Directors & Administrative Heads meetings.
- Active member in National Extension Directors meetings.
- Active member in USDA and State Agency Food and Agriculture Council for Massachusetts.
- Active and legislatively required member of BOPO (Board of Public Overseers) for Extension, four meetings annually, with members stating appreciation for the changes brought since 2009. This board did not always enjoy this favorable relationship with UMass Extension.
- Represented College on Cranberry Oversight Board.
- Represented agriculture in the College, assisted faculty with grant submission and approval in GAM and paper submission, and reviewed tenure and promotion files.
- Member Massachusetts Food Policy Advisory Committee.
- Member Board of Directors Northeast Center for Rural Development.
- Member Board of Directors Massachusetts Agricultural Commissions.
- Agency Representative to the Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Committee.

- Chair Center for Agriculture Advisory Board.
- Interactions with several UMass Physical Plant and Facilities committees.
- Member Massachusetts Agricultural College Monument Committee.

SIGNIFICANT CENTER FOR AGRICULTURE EVENTS

- Agricultural Summit: June 16, 2009 for faculty and extension educators, a discussion of how the organization of the Center for Agriculture might be structured in relationship to the Stockbridge School of Agriculture in the College of Natural Sciences.
- Food Summit: October 26, 2010 bringing together educators, farmers, and the community to discuss four-season food availability.
- Celebration of Agriculture: November 12, 2010 dinner featuring Massachusetts farm food for Center for Agriculture friends and invitees.
- Meeting on Organizational Change: March 16, 2012 interactive meeting for faculty and extension seeking input for change within the structure and function of the Center.
- Sesquicentennial Celebration of Agriculture: April 25, 2013 dinner featuring Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy (Director of USDA-NIFA) and Massachusetts locally sourced farm food.
- North American Biochar Symposium: October 13-16, 2013 UMass Amherst and U.S. Biochar Initiative.

INNOVATIONS AND INITIATIVES

Center-led and or supported public/private and UMass Amherst partnerships:

- Continued research and education initiatives promoting dual land use for solar photovoltaic deployment and built the first research project in the USA examining dual use of farmland and solar PV. Assisted industry partner in obtaining a \$1.1MM SBIR grant for installing solar PV and STEM education in high schools. Assistance has been provided to UMass Physical Plant in the development of a 2MW dual land use solar project.
- Sponsored renewable energy biomass (wood chips/pellets) portable pyrolysis unit to produce electricity in times of emergency.
- The evaluation of high water holding capacity growing media for green roofs, urban gardens, and vegetable, nursery and greenhouse crops holds great promise for increased food security.
- Provided vision and leadership for the UMass Agricultural Learning Center which has captured the imagination and wide support from private, public and university groups. This is an agricultural laboratory for undergraduate students and extension. The learning center involves 40+ acres of farmland adjacent to the campus for student learning through participation in the crop and farm management. A ground breaking was commissioned by the UMass Chancellor on April 25, 2013. The Agricultural Learning Center also involves preserving the 1894 Horse Barn and Blaisdell House which are planned to be moved to the ALC field. Over \$500,000 has been given or pledged for the building moves and field activities and the Chancellor has committed to match gifts for the initial barn move. Other gifts and grants for field activities are pending for more than \$350,000.

- Conceived the concept for a virtual tour of crop research farm and provided ongoing advice and guidance for development of the online interactive tour of research projects at South Deerfield farm for multiple platforms, by Dept. of Environmental Conservation faculty and students.
- Supported other UMass units in obtaining almost \$500,000 in foundation support funds.
- Supported the goal of greater food security for under-resourced communities and developed new initiatives in urban farming and gardening in response to an estimated 850,000 (13%) food-insecure people in Massachusetts.
- Established with extension educators and faculty the new Nutrient Management Best Practices section on Center site to meet the new provisions for nutrient management standards in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
- Encouraged Center staff in development of web resources, faculty/staff newsletter and innovative communication approaches such as OwlBook online learning environment, improved management of research/outreach projects and in the assessment, evaluation and impact of projects.
- Hosted UMass EcoReps, students and public for agricultural events at Agricultural Learning Center and UMass Crop Research Farm in Deerfield.
- Hosted annual Massachusetts Beekeepers Association meeting, Deerfield.
- Encouraged a pleasant workspace, an open office environment and supported Center staff to work to their full potential with minimal supervision.

ACADEMIC ACTIVITY

- Maintained active teaching in undergraduate Tropical Agriculture class (2x), undergraduate and graduate Climate, Energy, Biochar and Agriculture Seminar (3x) and graduate Seminar Methods class (2x).
- Gave extension talks and other non-credit instruction on diverse subjects with several different audiences each year.
- Major advisor for three Ph.D. students in agronomy.
- Maintained research productivity with 30 refereed journal articles published (2009-2013).
- Served as P.I. for seven active grants during initial years totaling in excess of \$550,000. Two grants/gifts totaling more than \$350,000 are pending.

In summary, I believe my time spent as Associate Dean, Director Center for Agriculture, Director UMass Extension, Director of Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station and supervisory manager of research and instructional farms has been successful. The stature and visibility of agriculture, food and the environmental programs is evident on and off campus. The Center for Agriculture is well known and viewed positively by most if not all constituent audiences. Agriculture at UMass Amherst is in a good position to carry on the positive aspects of the land grant legacy with strong research and extension programs in agriculture and the environment, in 4-H and nutrition. Keeping agriculture strong at UMass is vital for innovation and maintenance of local food security and the health of the environment in which we live.