

Preliminary Meeting
On the formation of a School of Natural Resources
October 11, 2013

PRESENT: Grady Price Blount (CoSEA dean), Chris Ellason, Erin Fortenberry, Chip Fox (CoSEA associate dean), Derald Harp, Jim Heitholt (Agriculture Department chair), Jeff Kopachena, Jose Lopez, Jackie Wahrmund, Lindsey Walton, Robert Williams.

Results from assessment and Program Review activities during the 2012-2013 academic year make it clear that Agriculture and related natural resource degrees are one of the most potent areas for expansion of academic program to serve the Northeast Texas area. As a result, Provost Benavides kicked off the Fall 2013 semester by directing the CoSEA dean to investigate formation of a school dedicated to these areas.

This suggestion was circulated among the faculty of Agriculture, Agricultural Education, Agribusiness, Environmental Science and Wildlife Management for preliminary comment and discussion. A preliminary meeting of the faculty was held in AGET 155 on October 11, 2013.

Jim Heitholt handed out a one page summary with these talking points:

- Name change and focus areas
- Increased impact of agricultural and natural resource program areas
- Academic synergies with College of Business and Entrepreneurship, Engineering, Environmental Science, Food Science, Wildlife & Conservation Science, and health-related disciplines.
- Agency partnerships with Agrilife, Agrilife Extension, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and USDA.
- Major Fiscal Needs:
 - ✓ Faculty in critical shortage areas such as Agribusiness, Animal Science, Environmental Law & Policy, Food Science, Geographic Information Science (GIS), Geosciences (including Soil Science), Remediation, and Wildlife Management.
 - ✓ Secure funding for graduate assistantships to support academic activities.
 - ✓ Develop curricula for outreach and on-line clients.

Grady Price Blount summarized the administrative outlook for the new school with these major points:

- Minimize administrative overhead (deans, chairs, administrative assistants).
- Honor our college mission by producing innovative programs tuned to the 21st century global economy.

- Recognize contributions from soon-to-be-restored Geoscience program which should be included in this plan.
- Create a one page white paper describing the strategic goals and opportunities for the new school.
- Promoted inclusive title of School of Natural Resources

There was significant discussion about fiscal needs and the requirement to tie those needs to a coherent strategic plan for the new school. There was also much discussion about the name of the proposed unit. Grady commented that there is much intellectual baggage associated with traditional descriptions such as “Ag” which does not accurately reflect the academic rigor of the discipline nor demonstrate the broad interdisciplinary ties between the topics being considered. In the end there seemed to be a consensus for a broad and inclusive title.

Jeff Kopachena made several comments about the nature of 21st century urbanized society and the role of agriculture, wildlife management, and ecosystem dynamics. Several faculty members made comments about the TAMUC niche in urbanized agriculture and the role of charismatic megafauna in attracting and retaining students with poorly defined but passionate ties to the land. Jim Heitholt agreed to write a preliminary draft white paper for further consideration.