



SETTING BOLD PRIORITIES: FUTURE PROGRAMS FOR ADVANCING UTIA

A Survey of Faculty, Staff, and
Key Stakeholders

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Setting Bold Priorities: Future Programs for Advancing UTIA

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview/Purpose – In spring 2015, a committee was established by the deans of the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture (UTIA) to define priorities for future programs in UTIA and provide recommendations for determining a process to fill high-priority faculty vacancies as they occur over time. The committee, referred to as the UTIA Priorities Committee, represented UTIA food, agricultural, natural resources, and human sciences programs in teaching, research, and extension. This work represents an aggregation of responses to the *Setting Bold Priorities survey*, conducted in spring 2015 by the UTIA Priorities Committee. The survey questions pertained to planning criteria that should be used to select priorities; trends, events, and developments affecting Tennesseans; ways to foster greater collaboration among UTIA and partners; and priorities that would be the best investment of UTIA resources.

Methodology – An appreciative inquiry approach was employed and a survey created to focus on successful relationships, systems, and activities. The survey was conducted online in April, 2015. Among the 191 surveys received, 90 were from faculty, 90 were from staff, and 11 represented key stakeholders. Researchers mined the data, reading and re-reading responses to create categories. Essentially, an open coding approach was employed as faculty and staff responses were separately analyzed.

Findings/Conclusions – Given the small number of key stakeholders, their responses were not coded. All of the key stakeholder responses were compared to the faculty and staff summaries. While many of the key stakeholders' responses seemed to echo the faculty and staff, stakeholders tended to describe ways UTIA could impact public information and communications about agriculture.

A *State of Tennessee Focus* was noted as an important criterion for selecting priorities for future UTIA programs. In addition, faculty expressed that planning criteria should either have a global emphasis or provide global recognition for UTIA. Faculty and staff indicated that *economic issues*, *environmental issues*, and *poor health status* were the major trends, events, and developments impacting Tennesseans. Of particular importance were family economics and consumer issues such as financial security. Both faculty and staff described urbanization and a decrease in farms and producers as major issues.

Faculty and staff indicated a value for UTIA's teaching/training efforts across multiple programs. They expressed a value for UTIA's reputation for relevant and high-quality programs that provide practical solutions. Faculty valued UTIA connections to current events, and staff valued UTIA's research-based, unbiased information. Both faculty and staff described the need for regular communication that would link departments and produce greater interdepartmental, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary programs. Respondents offered numerous ideas to increase communication and collaboration within UTIA departments and mission areas. To a lesser extent, both faculty and staff offered ideas for partnerships with institutions and groups outside UTIA.

Recommendations – The major, overarching recommendation is to set priorities using the planning framework that emerged from the study. Briefly stated, the framework includes:

- *Criteria*: focuses on the State of Tennessee; fills a significant gap based on future needs; builds on current UTIA strengths or a unique resource; addresses a grand societal challenge; position UTIA to be more competitive for extramural funds; has the greatest long-term positive impact on UTIA; and enhances external partnerships
- *Collaboration*: improved communications, interdepartmental, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary
- *Values*: teaching excellence, reputation, global impact, research excellence, unbiased information, relevant to current issues, outreach excellence, and program effectiveness
- *Key Investments*: new programs, audiences, UTIA workforce compensation and development, new hires, resources, and communications
- *Outcomes*: economic, environmental, and health

3 INTRODUCTION

In spring 2015, a committee was established by the deans of the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture (UTIA) to define priorities for future programs in UTIA and provide recommendations for determining a process to fill high-priority faculty vacancies as they occur over time. The committee, referred to as the UTIA Priorities Committee, represented UTIA food, agricultural, natural resources, and human sciences programs in teaching, research, and extension. This group established a project timeline which included engagement of faculty, staff, and key stakeholders through surveys, open forums, and group discussions.

A survey was created to capture perspectives of UTIA faculty, staff, and key stakeholders. The questions pertained to planning criteria that should be used to select priorities; trends, events, and developments affecting Tennesseans; ways to foster greater collaboration among UTIA and partners; and priorities that would be the best investment of UTIA resources.

4 PURPOSE

The purpose was to describe perceptions of UTIA faculty, staff and key stakeholders that would inform the process of setting UTIA program priorities. Specific research questions were:

- What planning criteria are most important for considering UTIA program priorities?
- What is valued about the programs of UTIA?
- What trends, events, and developments are impacting Tennesseans?
- What are some ways to foster greater collaboration among UTIA and partners?
- What are the best investments of UTIA resources?

5 METHODS

Survey experts (n=9) were selected from nine universities: University of Arkansas, Cornell University, University of Florida, University of Kentucky, Louisiana State University, University of Maryland, North Carolina A&T State University, North Carolina State University, and Virginia Tech. Experts were asked to consider the survey and objectives and to provide feedback about improving the survey and aligning it with the objectives. The major recommendation was to use an appreciative-inquiry approach. Using suggestions from the expert panel, the questions were re-worded to reflect an appreciative inquiry approach. As an illustration, the “What are deficiencies or gaps in UTIA expertise?” was replaced by “What do you value about the programs of UTIA?”

Appreciative inquiry is used to help participants envision a positive future as it focuses on relationships, systems, and activities that work (Bowling & Brahm, 2002). Appreciative inquiry has been used in community development (Bowling & Brahm, 2002), educational, and corporate settings (Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, 2011). At its basic level, an appreciative inquiry uses a four-part model to define, discover, dream, and deliver. The approach focus on the positive aspects of an organization, community, or

situation (define) and seeks to describe major themes (discover), plan a preferred future (dream), and provide solutions that achieve the preferred future (deliver); see Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly, 2011.

The survey had seven questions, and it is shown in Appendix A. The survey was created using *Qualtrics Research Suite* (Qualtrics, 2015), and it was sent via email on April 13, 2015 with a reminder on April 27, 2015; see Appendix B for correspondence. The survey was sent to all UTIA faculty and staff, and key stakeholders were those serving on the overall UTIA Chancellor’s Advisory Council, a group of Tennessee citizens representative of food, forages, crops and animal agriculture, natural resources, and clinical and veterinary sciences.

Among the 191 surveys received, 90 were from faculty, 90 were from staff, and 11 represented key stakeholders. Researchers mined the data, reading and re-reading transcripts to create categories and to “tag the data” (Creswell, 1998). Essentially, an open coding approach was employed as faculty and staff responses were separately analyzed. The categories obtained from the different employee groups were described (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 1998). All of the individual responses and encodings are shown in a separate document (Naylor & Donaldson, 2015). For each research question the number of respondents, number of comments, and percentage of comments in each category are stated; see Figure 1 for response frequency.

Given the small number of key stakeholders, their responses were not coded. All of the key stakeholder responses were compared to the faculty and staff summaries. While many of the key stakeholders’ responses seemed to echo the faculty and staff, stakeholders tended to describe ways UTIA could impact public information and communications about agriculture (see section 12).

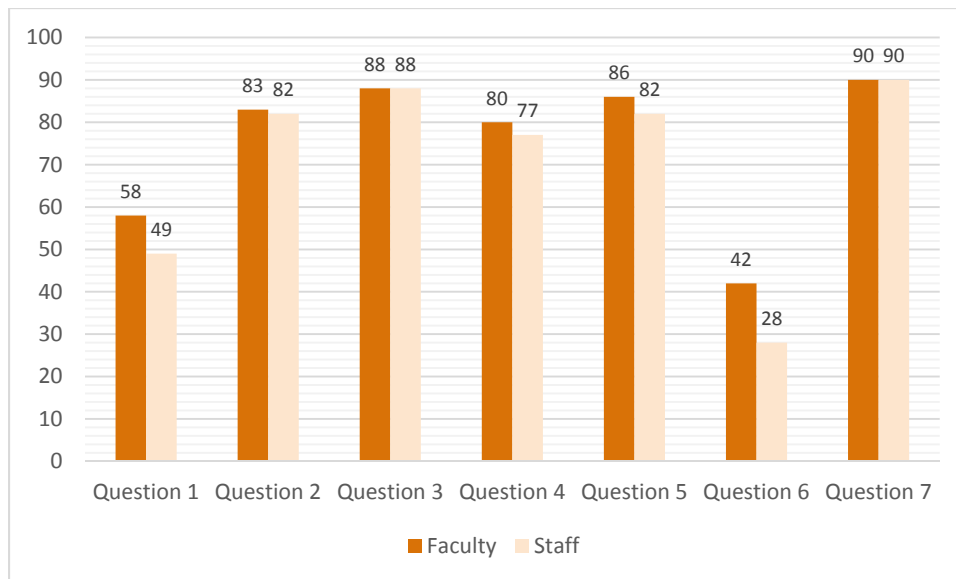


Figure 1. *Number of Responses for Survey Items by Faculty and Staff*

6 WHAT CRITERIA SHOULD BE USED IN SELECTING PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS?

Respondents were asked to consider the following six criteria to be used in selecting priorities for future programs:

1. Fills a significant gap based on future needs;
2. Builds on current UTIA strengths or a unique resource;
3. Addresses a grand societal challenge;
4. Positions UTIA to be more competitive for extramural funds;
5. Has the greatest long-term positive impact on UTIA; and
6. Enhances external partnerships.

A link was provided for *A Science Roadmap for Food and Agriculture* as a reference to the term “grand societal challenge” (Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, 2010). Respondents had a single textbox to type their response. The following discussion summarizes the major themes.

6.1 FACULTY/CRITERIA

Of the 90 faculty responding to the survey, 58 (64.4%) provided a response to this question. In coding, 67 different comments were noted. Analysis of the written comments revealed these key themes relative to criteria to be used in selecting priorities for future programs:

- *Survey Comments/Ideas for the Priority-Setting Process* – 13 of 67 comments (19.4%) provided perspectives on the survey itself and/or the process for selecting priorities. Example comments included:
 - “This question and survey are too nebulous without having more information and understanding context. Clientele come in many different forms (farmers, consumers, taxpayers, etc.)”
 - “While I don’t have additional criteria to suggest, I do think the first three listed are sufficient and numbers 4 through 6 are not appropriate (or appropriately defined) criteria for selecting priorities.”
- *State of Tennessee Focus* – Several respondents (8 comments; 12%) felt that an important consideration was that priorities should focus on benefits and opportunities for the state of Tennessee, including a focus on the Governor’s strategic initiative for agriculture.
 - “Meets some of the priorities in the Governor’s Rural Challenge.”
 - “As a state land-grant institution, has the greatest long-term positive impact on the people of the State of Tennessee.”
 - “Grand societal challenges are important, but as the premiere State agricultural research, teaching, and extension institution for Tennessee, we need to always consider the needs of our ‘local’ stakeholders.”
- *Global Issues* – Several respondents (7 comments; 10%) expressed that the priorities should either have a global emphasis and/or position UTIA on a global scale. Representative comments included:
 - “Focuses on internationalizing the UTIA experience.”
 - “International reputation.”
 - “To position UTIA as a leader in challenging existing agricultural paradigms by setting new and innovative regional, national, and global trajectories within the agricultural and natural resource sciences.”

- *Student Success* – Several respondents (7 comments; 10%) wrote about the need to enhance academic programs for both undergraduates and graduates. Representative comments included:
 - “Programs with growing student numbers, job growth, or high demand for graduates.”
 - “Undergraduate and graduate student interest, program numbers, and employment opportunities.”

6.2 STAFF/CRITERIA

Of the 90 staff responding to the survey, 49 (54.4%) provided a response to this question. In coding, 51 different comments were noted. Analysis of the written comments revealed these key themes:

- *State of Tennessee Focus* – 11 of 51 comments (21.5%) discussed the need to align program priorities with the needs of the state. Example comments included:
 - “Potentially has the greatest long-term positive impact on the state of Tennessee.”
 - “Focusing on and selecting programs which will improve the lives of Tennesseans.”
- *Communications* – Several responses (6 comments; 11.7%) discussed that program priorities ought to be communicated with the general public. Illustrations included:
 - “Better use of social media to reach today’s audience.”
 - “Use relevant means of communication to all audiences throughout Tennessee.”
- *Other comments* were varied and included these examples:
 - “Establish UTIA as a center for research.”
 - “It should be flexible enough to accommodate unforeseen challenges such as the discovery of a new crop/forestry/animal pest.”

7 WHAT DO YOU VALUE ABOUT THE PROGRAMS OF UTIA?

Respondents were asked, “What do you value about the programs of UTIA?” They were provided with three text boxes to supply up to three answers.

7.1 FACULTY/VALUE

Of the 90 faculty respondents, 83 (92%) provided 248 responses to this question; in coding, 267 comments were noted. Analysis of the comments revealed these major themes:

- *Relevance to Current Issues* – 32 of the 248 comments (12.9%) stated they value UTIA programs for being “relevant” and “focused on real world needs of our clientele.” Representative comments included:
 - “Focus on real problems.”
 - “Responsiveness to societal issues and current events.”
- *Teaching/Training* – 28 of the 248 comments (11.2%) stated they value UTIA programs for teaching/training excellence, including “The continuous emphasis on teaching” as one faculty member described. Other representative comments included:
 - “We provide an outstanding, experiential-based educational experience for our students.”
 - “Trainers are enthusiastic about the programs.”
- *Effectiveness/Practicality* – 27 of the 248 comments (10.8%) discussed the practicality and effectiveness of UTIA programs.

- “Practical.”
- “Solutions offered are practical and hands on. If the user needs additional help, they can seek it where they live.”
- “They impact TN, the US and the world with high quality research.”
- *Supportive Environment for Faculty* – 26 of 248 (10.4%) comments described UTIA as a supportive environment for faculty, and respondents mentioned peers, students, administrators, and administrative personnel as contributing to a positive workplace. As one respondent expressed, “UTIA personnel are easy to work with.”
- *Quality of the Programs* – 22 of 248 (8.8%) comments shared that they value UTIA’s high-quality programs.

Other minor themes included opportunities for collaboration, fact-based research, and a focus on stakeholders.

7.2 STAFF/VALUE

Slightly more than nine in ten of staff (n=82; 91%) shared what they value about the programs of UTIA. In coding, 215 different comments were noted. Analysis of the comments revealed these major themes:

- *Research-Based, Unbiased Information* – 43 of the 215 comments (20%) stated they value UTIA programs for being “research-based” and “unbiased”. Representative comments included:
 - “Research-based solutions.”
 - “Unbiased-research-based information.”
- *Outreach/Local Accessibility/Extension* – 42 of the 215 comments (19.5%) mentioned aspects of outreach, local accessibility, and Extension. Representative comments included:
 - “I am proud of our relationships within Extension. A county-based Extension program gives UTIA the benefit of being connected to individuals, agencies and businesses all across the state.”
 - “Open to all.”
 - “Community outreach and involvement.”
 - “They are in the community.”
- *Reputation* – 42 of the 215 comments (19.5%) stated they value UTIA’s reputation. Common words and phrases used to describe UTIA’s reputation included *quality, relevant programs, respected, useful, and cutting edge*.
- *Individual Programs* – 17 of the 215 comments (7.9%) stated individual UTIA programs that they value, including financial education, family and consumer sciences, and health and nutrition programs.
- *Education* – Nine respondents mentioned that they value the education provided by UTIA including “the opportunity to help develop the future of Agriculture by working with students.”

8 WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT TRENDS, EVENTS, AND DEVELOPMENTS THAT ARE IMPACTING THE CITIZENS OF TENNESSEE?

Respondents were asked “In your view, what are the most important trends, events, and developments that are impacting the citizens of Tennessee?” and given three text boxes to share up to three issues.

8.1 FACULTY/IMPACT

Of the 90 faculty responding to the survey, 88 (98%) answered this question. A total of 264 comments were shared. Analysis of the written comments revealed these key themes:

- *Economic Issues* – 61 of the 264 comments (23%) referenced economic issues; 40 comments discussed varied economic issues while 21 discussed family economics and consumer issues specifically. Representative comments included:
 - “The inability of working poor people to achieve financial stability, much less security.”
 - “People not able to retire due to financial responsibilities.”
 - “Obesity related chronic diseases that are increasingly adding to health care costs...increased costs have the potential of diverting funds from other programs.”
 - “Increasing cost of life with increasing population and demands.”
 - “Market competitiveness.”
 - “Protecting the overall state economy and profitability of small businesses.”
- *Environmental Issues* – 49 of 264 (18.5%) discussed environmental issues; 25 comments discussed biological and ecological issues while 24 comments discussed sustainability and environmental activism. Representative comments included:
 - “Declining environment health.”
 - “Water resource issues.”
 - “Zoonotic disease.”
 - “Ecology.”
 - “Invasive species.”
 - “Growing interest in sustainability – a second green revolution.”
 - “Lack of embracing poly culture farming practices, pasture-based cattle, and other sustainable farming practices.”
- *Human Health* – Several responses (25; 9%) discussed the poor health status of Tennesseans; representative comments included:
 - “High rates of tobacco use, obesity, diabetes, physical inactivity, and chronic conditions.”
 - “Health issues; obesity, chronic conditions, physical inactivity. (TN ranks 49th in country for physical inactivity.)”
- *Education* – Several responses (23; 8.7%) discussed various needs related to education including these comments:
 - “Slow but steady decline in state support for higher education.”
 - “Education, in general, may not be adequately addressing the needs of the young people of Tennessee.”
- *Urbanization* – Several responses (23; 8.7%) discussed “growing urbanization, as well as a continued fragmentation of our land base.”
- *Decrease in Farms, Food Producers, and Production Knowledge* – Several responses (23) discussed various needs related a decrease in farms, food producers, and a lack of production knowledge among the general public. Representative comments included:
 - “Fewer food producers and fewer people in the Ag sector overall.”
 - “Ag awareness in suburban and urban areas.”

8.2 STAFF/IMPACT

Of the 90 faculty responding to the survey, 88 (98%) provided 234 responses to this question. Analysis of the written comments revealed these key themes:

- *Economic Issues* – Among the 234 responses, 40 discussed economic issues (17%). Of these 40 responses, 25 responses discussed family economics and consumer issues specifically. Representative comments included:
 - “Increased cost of food.”
 - “Financial challenges.”
 - “Unstable economy.”
 - “Competing in a global economy.”
- *Human Health* – Several respondents (34; 14.5%) discussed human health needs. Representative comments included:
 - “Increasing obesity rates among youth and adults.”
 - “Chronic diseases.”
- *Technology in Daily Life* – One in ten responses (25; 10.6%) discussed the increasing role of technology in daily life especially social media and smart phones. Representative comments included:
 - “Technology and how we interact with it.”
 - “The influence of social media.”
 - “Use of smart phones as the primary means of research and communication.”
 - “The amount of misinformation that is available via the internet is a large concern.”

Among many other issues noted, increasing urbanization and the decreasing number of farms and farmers were noted. Respondents also described that the general public has a negative perception of agriculture. In addition, respondents described the decreasing quality of the environment and natural resources.

9 WHAT ARE SOME WAYS WE CAN COLLABORATE IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE WHAT WE ALL SEEM TO DESIRE?

Respondents were asked “What are some ways we can collaborate in order to achieve what we all seem to desire?” and given three text boxes to share up to three comments.

9.1 FACULTY/COLLABORATE

Of the 90 faculty responding to the survey, 80 (88.8%) provided responses to this question. In coding, 230 different comments were noted. Analysis of the written comments revealed these key themes:

- *Interdepartmental Projects* – 102 of 230 comments (44%) mentioned interdepartmental projects. Respondents addressed the need to incentive collaboration and the need to remove institutional restrictions that hinder collaboration. Comments included:
 - “Provide funding for collaboration in core research areas.”
 - “Sponsor UTIA wide presentations of our research.”
 - “Build an interdisciplinary team across the Institute to lead the way to strengthen local and regional food systems. Tennessee needs this leadership badly as we are way behind other states. We need leadership from departments such as Ag

- Economics either from a new faculty position or reassigning existing faculty. This needs to be a priority.”
- “Once faculty establish their own research programs it is difficult for them to find time to collaborate on larger, interdisciplinary projects. Bring in 3 or 4 faculty as a group with the expectation that they will work together and collaborate on relevant projects from day 1 may be beneficial.”
 - “Our current evaluation process seems to put more emphasis on the individual than collaborative success. Many of our evaluation processes are counterproductive to working in teams.”
- *External Connections, Partnerships, and Events* – 29 of 230 comments (12.6%) mentioned external connections, partnerships, and events. Comments included the need for “...a more formal method of continuously including external stakeholders in program development” and “community forums and workshops.”
 - *Improved Communications* – 18 of 230 comments (7.8%) mentioned the need for improved communications both within UTIA and about UTIA including this response: “Improved communication about the achievements of the UTIA and of its mission and of its employees.”
 - *Extension/Research/Teaching Integration* – 17 of 230 (7%) mentioned the need to integrate Extension, research, and teaching. Comments included:
 - “More collaboration among the four units of UTIA, i.e., less building of silos and more emphasis on overall on overall needs and outcomes rather single unit achievements.”
 - “Increased collaboration between teaching, research, and extension programs.”

9.2 STAFF/COLLABORATE

Of the 90 staff responding to the survey, 77 (85.5%) provided 174 comments to this question. Analysis of the written comments revealed these key themes:

- *Regular Communications Linking Departments* – Among the 174 comments, 27 (15.5%) mentioned the need to foster communications among all departments as described by these comments:
 - “Open communication forums between all the groups of UTIA.”
 - “Have regular brainstorming meetings that allow each department/unit to share what is being worked on and encourages discussion on how to collaborate on established or new projects.”
 - Also, two respondents mentioned the need to provide a spring UTIA-wide event similar to Ag Day in the fall to promote collaboration.
- *Interdisciplinary, Multidisciplinary, and New Programs* – 20 of 174 (11.4%) comments mentioned the need to build interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and new programs:
 - “A more multidisciplinary approach to grant funding.”
 - “Cross Disciplinary Focused Programming (i.e., Farm to Table; Healthy Foods)
 - “Collaborative effort by academia, research and extension to develop needs based programs.”
- *Collaborate with Other Agencies and institutions* – 13 of 174 (7.4%) comments discussed how UTIA should pursue collaborations with other agencies and institutions such as:
 - “Specific memorandums/agreements defining roles of each agency in the agriculture community.”
 - “Develop relationships and educate policy makers on issues affecting agriculture.”

- “Talk with other entities when an issue emerges.”

Staff respondents shared a disparate group of ideas about collaboration; in fact, 110 responses (63%) were coded as other, including “Using media to address areas of need” and “Keeping the land grant mission first and foremost in everything that we do.”

10 WHAT ARE THE BEST INVESTMENTS OF UTIA TIME AND MONEY?

Respondents were asked “What are the best investments of UTIA time and money?” and given three text boxes to share up to three comments.

10.1 FACULTY/INVESTMENTS

Of the 90 faculty responding to the survey, 86 (95.5%) provided 229 responses to this question. The responses were coded as 240 comments. The key themes and a discussion of those themes follow.

- *Programs and Audiences* – 52 of 240 faculty comments (21.6%) described various education and training needs, including education for undergraduate and graduate students, youth, and the general public.
 - “Producing tomorrow’s leaders: highly trained graduate and undergraduate students.”
 - “Outreach, especially directed at programs addressing the importance of agriculture in the K-12 schools.”
 - “More emphasis on training volunteers to help with the education mission.”
- *More Resources and Support* – 44 of 240 faculty comments (18.3%) described the need for more resources and support. The comments represent great variety including:
 - “Develop more centralized or ‘hub’ labs. Modern analytical equipment has become too expensive. We can no longer afford to equip each lab with the latest equipment.”
 - “Support young and developing programs.”
 - “Faculty support.”
 - “Investing the promising, ongoing, and competitive programs to be further competitive in extramural funding of research activities and finding of new knowledge to be more competitive.”
- *Hire More High Quality Faculty and Staff* – 29 of 240 faculty comments (12%) described the need for more high quality faculty and staff.
 - “More employees.”
 - “Continue to secure funding to allow faculty and personnel hires to complement existing faculty and staff to facilitate action in major priority area(s).”
 - “Hire high quality faculty.”
- *Marketing and Increasing Public Awareness* – 20 of 240 faculty comments (8.3%) described needed investments in marketing, recruiting, and increasing public awareness.
 - “Communication and marketing of programs to clientele.”
 - “Promote the importance of agriculture to those that are disconnected from it.”
 - “Our alumni are fond of UTIA because of the education and personal attention they received here—use this fondness to keep them involved in our programs, as

mentors to our students, advisors to our departments, and donors to our programs.”

Other key themes described the need for better pay (especially for support staff and graduate assistants); broadened research (“formation of research centers on topics that have state and regional impact”); and environmental issues (“become a national leader in environmental conservation and advocacy: let’s try to leave our offspring a habitable planet”).

Faculty responses were highly diverse. Other responses included human health (“reduce chronic diseases obesity, diabetes, etc.”); economics (“Tennessee as a global market place for export of products”); and new agricultural paradigms (“an understanding and demonstrated research/expertise of new agricultural paradigms – aeroponics, aquaponics, urban agriculture”).

10.2 STAFF/INVESTMENTS

Of the 90 staff responding to the survey, 82 (91%) provided responses to this question. Analysis of the responses showed 249 comments. The key themes and a discussion of those themes follow.

- *Research, Teaching, and Extension Programs and Audiences* – 48% of comments (121 of 249) described specific programs or audiences as the best investment of UTIA time and money. The comments represent great variety in programs and audiences, including:
 - *Programs and Audiences* – 135 of 249 comments (54%) described programs and/or audiences; comments included:
 - “Our farmers.”
 - “Education on personal financial management.”
 - “Focus on the needs of citizens living in more urban communities and on mini-farms, i.e. home horticulture, small animal (pets), hobby livestock management, and safe housing.”
 - *Youth* – 21 of 249 comments (8.4%) described 4-H, youth development and youth audiences:
 - “Invest in Youth and top notch 4-H programing.”
 - “Reaching school age with our researched based answers.”
 - “Extension 4-H Youth Development Programs, Camps.”
 - *Human Health* – 14 of 249 comments (6%) described 4-H, youth development and youth audiences:
 - “Education on health and wellness.”
 - “Nutrition.”
 - *Research* – 9 of 249 comments (4%) described research programs:
 - “To find more funding to allow better research.”
 - “Research (clinical trials, etc.)”
 - *Students/Teaching/Internships* – 6 of 249 comments (2.4%) described programs to serve undergraduate and graduate students, teaching methods, and internships:
 - “Internships, to bring in new ideas and enhance student's time at UT while helping further UTIA.”
 - “Student education & hands-on experiences.”
- *UTIA Workforce Compensation and Development* – Of the 249 comments, 52 (21%) described various ideas for workforce compensation and development with 18 specific to the Extension workforce.

- “Investments in personnel. We are still losing too many good people to other careers because of salary/workload. Because of this, some divisions are constantly rebuilding rather than enhancing.”
- “Invest in employees through recognition, raises, and resources.”
- “Staff positions.”
- “Faculty positions.”
- “More agents and specialists hired in the counties.”

Other key themes described information technology (“Continue to improve technology – our websites need to be mobile ready, Extension staff need quality tools”) and marketing (“ongoing marketing and branding effort”).

11 OTHER

The final survey question stated, “If there are any ideas, concepts, comments, or anything else you would like to share about UTIA’s positioning for the future, please write it below.”

11.1 FACULTY/OTHER

Of the 90 faculty responding to the survey, 42 (46%) provided responses to this question. Analysis of the responses showed 52 distinct comments. The key themes and a discussion of those themes follow.

- *Program Effectiveness* – 14 of 52 comments (26%) described the need to ensure that programs are effective.
 - “Top quality programs meeting state needs and resulting in positive impacts and outcomes will lead to national and international recognition and both state and national support.”
 - “We are always looking for the next best thing... trying to convince our sponsors that we’re on top of our game and leading the way in new field advancements. Which we are, but are the people we claim to be benefitting from our programs and advancements staying caught up? I’d venture to guess that if we turned around and looked at the trail of our followers (producers, growers, and clients) there would be a handful of over-achievers like ourselves closely following, running and keeping up. Yet a much larger amount of followers still jogging maybe even walking; chewing on information we provided years ago that are struggling to implement those changes on their operations or in their lives. I think we should take a step back, set up camp, and strengthen the foundation of our programs.”
- *Coordination/Collaboration of Teaching, Research, and Extension Efforts* – 14 of 52 comments (26%) described coordination/collaboration among teaching, research, and extension efforts.
 - “Please think about how the three mission areas can work together to accomplish our mission and come up with a simple, ambitious vision for what we hope to become as an institute.”
 - “All faculty positions should be appointed with at least two mission areas of teaching, research and extension. UTIA should provide incentives to establish more

- interdisciplinary centers of excellence to position teams to be highly competitive in large grants.”
- “UTIA need to compete with similar & even much better and stronger higher education institutions through expanding its collaborative, multidisciplinary and transboundary programs that attract more talented and high caliber professionals and scholars from all over the globe.
- *Support for Faculty* – Seven of 52 comments alluded to the need to increase support for faculty.
 - “I am concerned that there is a trend at UTIA to pigeonhole researchers into just one or two research topics based on the amounts gleaned in extramural funding. Academia should remain open to innovative thinking and exploration.”
 - “... while UTIA’s mission is to serve Tennesseans, the individual faculty member who aspires to significant support from national granting agencies needs to have recognition outside the state, but still be responsive to the needs of state constituents. This duality is increasingly important and hires should be made with the two components in mind.”
 - “Crucial to provide strong support for entry level faculty. Much is expected in a short period of time and the stress can be daunting.”

11.2 STAFF/OTHER

Of the 90 staff responding to the survey, 28 (31%) provided responses to this question. Analysis of the responses showed 34 distinct comments. The key themes and a discussion of those themes follow.

- *External Perspectives* – Among the 34 comments, 14 (41%) were coded as representing external perspectives, specifically UTIA audiences and the way the Institute engages them. These perspectives included marketing, future programs, and needs assessments as described by these comments:
 - “I really like the new marketing materials, logos, & Real.Life.Solutions. logo!”
 - “Survey the public about what we need to be doing.”
 - “Position needs to be based on what is demand for TN families, farmers and economy.”
 - “Focus on improving skills which make Tennesseans competitive in a world market.”
- *Internal Perspectives* – Among the 34 comments, 13 (38%) were coded as representing internal perspectives such as issues within UTIA or the University (i.e., salaries and job expectations). In the words of one respondent:
 - “We cannot be everything to everyone. We are in the people business, and we need to help clientele as much as possible. But we also have to be realistic. We need to entice good employees and figure out ways to keep them. If we are to work with people and families, we have to realize that the employees are also people and have families. We need to encourage more work/life balance so that morale will increase and we can become an employer of choice rather than necessity.”
- One respondent echoed both perspectives:
 - “The University of Tennessee is one of the most valuable entities to the future of Tennessee, and the Institute of Agriculture plays a pivotal role. We should lead collaboration efforts within the University to maximize resources, which ultimately serves Tennesseans better. If not, we run the risk of creating redundant services, and wasting time and money. It also becomes confusing to constituencies. Thank you for the input opportunity.”

- *Family and Consumer Sciences* – Six comments (17%) discussed the need for continuing and strengthening programming in the family and consumer sciences. Representative comments included:
 - “FCS (Family and Consumer Sciences) in Tennessee needs to be kept at the top of the list! FCS Agents are very well versed in EVERY aspect of family life and consistently make an IMPACT on so many people across our state every year.”
 - “Family Consumer Sciences continues to change people lives to make better choices in relation to parenting, food safety, and outreach to community programs.”

12 KEY STAKEHOLDERS

All 11 responses from stakeholders are shown in the encoding document (Naylor & Donaldson, 2015). While many of the key stakeholders’ responses seem to echo the faculty and staff, stakeholders tended to describe ways UTIA could impact public information and communications about agriculture. Illustrations of UTIA’s role as a major herald for Tennessee agriculture included:

- Regarding ways we can work together, one respondent noted, “We need to get the general public involved somehow and build enthusiasm about modern agriculture.”
- “Misinformation about agriculture”, “false information about our food supply”, and “continuing to prove and assure that GMO technology is safe” were noted by three different respondents as the most important issues impacting the citizens of Tennessee.
- One respondent described the need this way: “Tell the story! With so many means of communication today, competition for attention to issues is great. Agriculture is a perfect example of not competing well for consumer attention.”

13 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions have been organized by research question. This discussion highlights the most common themes from faculty, staff, and stakeholders.

What planning criteria are most important for considering UTIA program priorities?

A *State of Tennessee Focus* was noted as important criteria for selecting priorities for future UTIA programs. Faculty expressed that planning criteria should either have a global emphasis or provide global recognition for UTIA. Also, faculty expressed the need to enhance academic programs for both undergraduates and graduates should be a planning consideration.

What is valued about the programs of UTIA?

Faculty and staff indicated a value for UTIA’s teaching excellence across multiple programs. They also expressed a value for UTIA’s reputation for high-quality programs that provide practical solutions. Faculty expressed a value for UTIA’s relevance to current events and global impact. Staff valued UTIA’s research-based, unbiased information and outreach excellence.

What trends, events, and developments are impacting Tennesseans?

Among faculty and staff, a combined 101 responses identified economic issues as one of the most important trends, events, and developments impacting the people of Tennessee. Of those 101 responses, 65 described various family economics/consumer issues.

A combined 59 responses described trends, events, and developments related to the poor health of Tennesseans. The prevalence of obesity, chronic diseases, tobacco use, and physical inactivity were noted.

Both faculty and staff described urbanization and a decrease in farms and producers as major issues. Additionally, staff respondents tended to describe technology and how it was impacting daily life. Faculty respondents tended to place an emphasis on biological, ecological, and environmental issues, sustainability and environmental activism, and education.

What are some ways to foster greater collaboration among UTIA and partners?

Both faculty and staff described the need for regular communication that would link departments and produce greater interdepartmental, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary programs. Respondents offered numerous ideas to increase communication and collaboration within UTIA. Faculty discussed the need for interdepartmental projects and the need to integrate Extension, research, and teaching. To a lesser extent, both faculty and staff offered ideas for partnerships with institutions and groups outside UTIA.

What are the best investments of UTIA time and money?

Among faculty and staff, a combined 187 responses discussed investments in specific programs and audiences. A sample of named audiences included undergraduate and graduate students, farmers, youth, and volunteers. A sample of named programs included health, nutrition, personal financial management, and 4-H youth development.

A combined 81 responses from faculty and staff focused on UTIA workforce compensation and the need to employ more high quality faculty and staff. Another investment was marketing, recruitment, and public awareness. Stakeholders echoed this need by stating that UTIA should invest in ways to positively impact public information and communication about agriculture.

14 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that future programs be given priority consideration if they have a specific focus on the State of Tennessee and address major factors impacting Tennesseans identified in this study. Priority should be given to programs that address:

- Economic issues (especially those impacting families and consumers),
- Human health (especially obesity), and
- Environmental issues.

Future investments in specific programs should be selected based on the following general criteria:

- Program focuses on major needs of and opportunities for the State Tennessee, but have a global visibility, reach and impact
- Program is interdisciplinary, interdepartmental, and/or intercollegiate

- Program addresses multiple constituencies/audiences including K-20 students, urban/rural residents, private/public stakeholders, etc.
- Program builds on UTIA strengths and/or fills a significant gap
- Program should embody UTIA mission: Real – Life – Solutions

UTIA should also explore ways to foster regular communication that would link departments for greater interdepartmental, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary programs. The varied ideas offered by survey respondents should be explored for feasibility.

Future planning efforts should focus on how UTIA's multi-disciplinary efforts will impact Tennessee's major economic, health, and environmental issues. Furthermore, the planning effort should emphasize the collaborative strategies shared by many survey respondents. Plans should reflect UTIA's key values, specifically, *Teaching Excellence, Reputation, Global Impact, Research Excellence, Unbiased Information, Relevance to Current Issues, Outreach Excellence, and Program Effectiveness*. A planning framework was constructed from the major findings of this study which is presented in Figure 2.

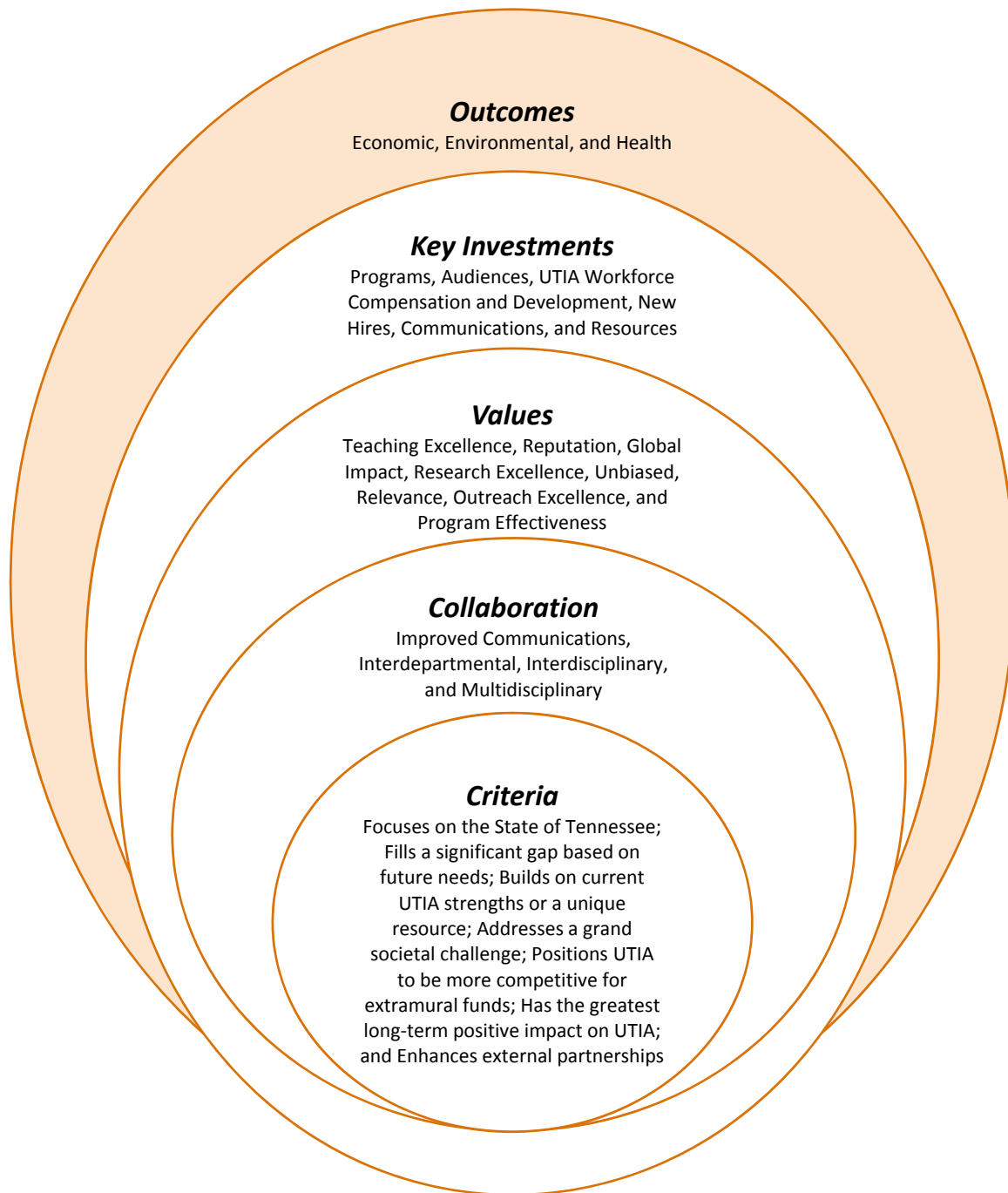


Figure 2. *UTIA Planning Framework for Selecting and Addressing Priorities*

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16 APPENDIX A: SETTING BOLD PRIORITIES SURVEY

A small planning team representing UTIA teaching, extension, and research programs has proposed the following criteria to be used in selecting priorities for future programs.

1. Fills a significant gap based on future needs;
2. Builds on current UTIA strengths or a unique resource;
3. Addresses a grand societal challenge*;
4. Positions UTIA to be more competitive for extramural funds;
5. Has the greatest long-term positive impact on UTIA; and
6. Enhances external partnerships.

*The term grand societal challenge refers to A Science Roadmap for Food and Agriculture

Q1. What other criteria, if any, should be used in selecting priorities for future programs?

Q2. What do you value about the programs of UTIA?

- A
- B
- C

Q3. Things are changing rapidly, both in the world and in Tennessee. In your view, what are the most important trends, events, and developments that are impacting the citizens of Tennessee?

- A
- B
- C

Q4. There are, no doubt, many ways we can work together in our efforts to achieve our goals. What are some ways you can envision coming together to collaborate in order to achieve what we all seem to desire?

- A
- B
- C

Q5. If you had three wishes for UTIA to enhance the future of our clientele and Tennessee, what would they be? In other words...what are the three best investments of UTIA time and money going forward?

- A
- B
- C

Q6. If there are any ideas, concepts, comments, or anything else you would like to share about UTIA's positioning for the future, please write it below:

Q7. Please indicate your role:

- ___ Advisory Group
- ___ UTIA Faculty
- ___ UTIA Staff

17 APPENDIX B: CORRESPONDENCE

17.1 INITIAL CONTACT

TO: UTIA All

Setting Bold Priorities: Future Programs for Advancing UTIA

April 13, 2015

Dear Friend,

The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture (UTIA) is seeking your input to define priorities for future programs in UTIA. A planning team representing food, forages, crops and animal agriculture, natural resources, and clinical and veterinary sciences teaching, research, and extension programs has been tasked with collecting and synthesizing input from stakeholders. The team is seeking opinions from experts like yourself through surveys, open forums, and group discussions.

Today, we are asking you to complete a brief survey regarding your thoughts about UTIA's priorities for future programs. **This information will be used by the planning team to engage the entire UTIA faculty through open forums and group discussions to develop programmatic priorities at both the Institute and Departmental levels for each of our mission areas.**

This will be a confidential survey. It will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Your responses will be grouped with those of other faculty, staff, and advisory group members. Please respond by May 1, 2015. Your response at this initial stage is very important because you will be helping lay the foundation for the future meetings and work.

Thank you for your participation. ***Please click the link below to take our survey:***
[Setting Bold Priorities Survey](#)

If you have questions, please contact the committee members at: utiapriorities@utk.edu

Thank you!

UTIA Priorities Committee

Parwinder Grewal, Chair
David Anderson
Joseph Donaldson
Connie Heiskell
Mike McEntee
Neal Schrick
Scott Senseman
Bobby Simpson

17.2 FOLLOW-UP

TO: UTIA All

Reminder

Setting Bold Priorities: Future Programs for Advancing UTIA

April 27, 2015

Dear Friend,

The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture (UTIA) is seeking your input to define priorities for future programs in UTIA. A planning team representing food, forages, crops and animal agriculture, natural resources, and clinical and veterinary sciences teaching, research, and extension programs has been tasked with collecting and synthesizing input from stakeholders. The team is seeking opinions from experts like yourself through surveys, open forums, and group discussions.

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Thank you!

UTIA Priorities Committee

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