

**State of IFAS 2016**

**Address to the IFAS Faculty Assembly**

**G001 McCarty Hall D**

**Gainesville, Florida**

**Sept. 23, 2016**

Thanks very much, Keith, for the invitation to update the IFAS Faculty Assembly on the State of IFAS.

It is always a pleasure for me to address this group, whether it is in our monthly meetings or like today for the annual State of IFAS presentation, because I strongly believe that faculty are the backbone of what we do here at IFAS. I know that I cannot be successful unless our faculty are successful. And I recognize that you here in the Faculty Assembly are leaders in helping IFAS achieve its potential.

I'm also pleased to be here giving a State of IFAS address because the state of IFAS is so strong. This is my seventh annual update to you, and the state of IFAS is the strongest it has ever been during my time here.

Let's start with funding. By successfully making the case in Tallahassee for how much good an investment in IFAS does for 20 million Floridians, we've received millions of dollars in funding for new faculty hires.

We're putting those millions into expanding our expertise in such areas such as water, integrated pest management, environmental resilience, sea-level rise, family and community health and wellness, tropical fruit breeding, forestry, and sustainable fisheries.

I am excited about all the areas that these positions will be addressing. I am especially pleased with the hiring of five new regional specialized water agents, one of whom is Jim Fletcher, who recently led this Assembly.

Overall, we've hired 40 faculty with this increased state funding – new positions, not replacement hires – and we're searching for about a dozen more.

Among our new faculty is World Food Prize winner Pedro Sanchez in our Soil and Water Science Department and one of the point people in our continuing outreach efforts to Cuba.

I mentioned the hiring of five regional Extension water agents who are based at RECs and will work directly with the five Florida water management districts. Water continues to be one of the most important issues facing our state and IFAS.

In this past legislative session, we were provided funding to develop a pilot for a data clearinghouse on water, helping to coordinate information among the water management districts and other state agencies.

This effort is being led by Pierce Jones, who directs the IFAS program in Resource-Efficient Communities, and Michael Dukes, who directs the IFAS Center for Landscape Conservation and Ecology.

For next session, we have support from DEP and FDACS for an IFAS request for \$2.6 million that would allow us to create the next phase of statewide BMPs for water management. UF/IFAS would partner with other agencies to accomplish the goals set out in the comprehensive water policy bill passed in the 2016 legislative session. We plan to position IFAS as the state leader in water research, education and management.

We've also joined with the Emerging Pathogens Institute in proposing funding for resources to address the Zika threat. Our part of the funding package would go toward improvements at the Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory in Vero Beach, including their BSL 2 and 3 laboratories that are essential for research and surveillance on mosquito-transmitted viruses such as Zika, dengue, and chikungunya.

However, these opportunities to expand our faculty raise a long-standing concern of mine that we're not diverse enough in our faculty or our students.

You may have seen my recent op-ed in the Gainesville Sun on student diversity. A recent report from the Black Student Affairs Task Force revealed that nearly a third of the university's African-American students feel they don't belong at UF. And 37 percent report they were treated differently in the classroom because of their race.

I'm currently considering ways we can change this, and I hope that this Assembly would be a valuable source of input in seeking responses.

This concern spills over into faculty hires as well. I think that we are improving in gender diversity in IFAS, but we need to do better when it comes to ethnic and racial diversity, so I'm exploring the concept of an "inclusion advocate" for IFAS. Although I believe we make our best efforts to recruit a faculty that is diverse in race, ethnicity, gender, and expertise, I think we'd benefit from having a leader with a vision of how to pursue this goal more systematically.

I welcome your thoughts on this in coming months.

Let me go back to the Legislature and its support for IFAS. Last session went so well that we got things we didn't even ask for. It was the state's beekeepers who finally got the governor to sign off on the funding for a new bee lab after two vetoes. It's in the design phase now and will be built next to the Department of Entomology and Nematology's Steinmetz Hall.

We were also successful in restoring our invasive species lab at our Ft. Pierce REC, which we had to keep on life support for a year after it was nearly vetoed out of existence last year. The lab's restoration is especially great news for our stakeholders, considering that the estimated cost of managing invasive plants in Florida is \$100 million a year.

More good news comes from Jackie Burns, Dean for IFAS research, where we again set a record for funding, with \$140 million in grants and sponsored research to IFAS faculty. When you compare the recently completed fiscal year to two years ago, our research awards have surged by 37 percent!

The university as a whole also set a record in the past fiscal year with \$724 million in research funding. What the university's news release didn't say was that the IFAS surge in grants and contracts accounts for about 83 percent of the university's gains from FY 2015 to FY 2016.

One of the biggest challenges that remains is the state of our infrastructure. We're doing our best to have our facilities keep pace with the hiring of our new co-workers. We've done some especially notable lab expansions in Homestead, Immokalee, and Balm, but associate VP Jeanna Mastrodicasa and Kevin Heinicka's facilities team have been busy everywhere from on campus to our REC at Jay and everywhere else in the state.

In fact, I'm serving on a national task force through APLU that is looking for new ways to address the challenge at all land-grant universities facing deferred maintenance needs at our aging facilities. To be a world-class institution, we need world-class facilities, and President Fuchs is interested in this issue as well.

The Nature Coast Biological Station in Cedar Key got battered by Hurricane Hermine, but work continues on building it into a research hub to expand our research and outreach in shellfish aquaculture, as well as conserve the natural resources of some of the nation's most pristine coastline.

The Institute of Global Food Systems has a dazzling new data wall that will allow researchers to both analyze and display information. Soon, Jim Anderson, who directs that program, will be holding an open house and I urge all to visit their offices and see firsthand how IFAS is attacking the challenge the world faces in feeding nearly 10 billion people in the next 35 years.

The impact of IFAS around the world continues to grow as we recently outcompeted 40 other land-grant universities to win a \$49 million USAID grant to develop livestock capacity in four African countries and two countries in Southeast Asia.

This has been accomplished under the leadership of Dr. Gbola Adesogan in our Animal Sciences Department. This international work is on top of work we continue to do in Africa, the Caribbean, South America, and Asia.

Next week President Fuchs and I head to the Extension Professional Associations of Florida conference to address Extension agents and to learn more about the important work they're continue to do throughout the State of Florida.

Extension Dean Nick Place is continually striving for relevance and impact from across the UF campus to all 20 million Floridians. We've made great strides in getting other parts of UF on board with the Extension model.

We helped the College of Engineering, for example, launch the Innovation Station in Sarasota this past spring. This Sarasota UF Innovation Station will have a staff of at least three Gators who focus on industry, workforce development and educational partnerships.

We moved the Hernando County Extension office to the Brooksville-Tampa Bay Regional Airport, where the County Extension Director, Stacy Strickland, is working on establishing connections with the growing tech sector located in the surrounding industrial park.

But Extension is NOT moving away from ag, as some have commented. Quite the contrary.

Our records indicate that we have more ag agents than we did 10 years ago, and that ag agents make up a greater portion of our overall Extension workforce than they did a decade ago. So the facts don't support that allegation.

In the past two years we have delivered -- with matching money from other agencies -- \$1 million to the Suwannee Valley Agricultural Extension Center in Live Oak. That's allowed for an expanded conference room, more staff, lab renovations, tractor leases, irrigation equipment and a new agronomic crops position.

And we're not done in Suwannee. We've got a legislative budget request for nearly \$2 million more that would upgrade the Extension Center to accommodate more research needs that are being driven by the regions' farmers.

The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences under the leadership of Dean Elaine Turner has a record-high enrollment this fall -- 5,811 at most recent count. That's an increase of more than

400 students over last fall. We also have a record in graduate enrollment at 1,517. Much of the graduate growth came from the online MS in Microbiology and Cell Science, which had 32 students last year but has surged to 170 students this fall.

Other teaching news includes the launch of a global agroecology certificate this year. It gives students the chance to learn first-hand about global cropping systems by helping faculty with research at our international partner institutions.

Those institutions include:

- Cranfield University in the United Kingdom;
- Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco in Brazil;
- ISARA-Lyon in France;
- Western Sydney University in Australia;
- And the University of the Virgin Islands.

We continue to make progress not just on the Field & Fork Food Pantry but on the overall campus food program, with revived community and teaching gardens that will produce fresh vegetables for students hungry for nutritious calories and hands-on work for students hungry for practical skills and real-world experience.

This fall we plan to move our first students into a new apartment at our Beef Teaching Unit. Again, our success with getting state funding is helping us overhaul and modernize the entire unit, and this fall will be the first time in years we'll have bedrooms at the unit for students to live in while they work and learn on site within the unit.

And Dean Turner hopes to develop a lower-division college-wide course this year on current issues in agriculture, natural resources, and related sciences.

Although the College of Veterinary Medicine has its own Faculty Assembly, I want to give it mention here because the college is under IFAS Administration.

In fact, 40 years ago the College was created from what had been the Department of Veterinary Sciences in the College of Agriculture. And this year the Vet School has been holding a yearlong celebration of this anniversary.

Today the College has one of the leading veterinary teaching hospitals in the nation. The building that houses the teaching hospital is only five years old, but Vet Med has already outgrown it and there are additions and renovations planned for the coming year.

Under the strong leadership of Dean Jim Lloyd, Vet Med research exploded in the past year, going from \$10.8 million in research awards in FY 2015 to \$19.5 million in the year that ended in June. The Vet School also received approval from its Faculty Assembly for a new Department of Comparative, Diagnostic and Population Medicine, the College's fifth department. It's about veterinary medicine that works across species, including humans.

That's also the concept behind the new Center for Excellence in One Health Research, a preeminence initiative IFAS has launched in cooperation with the College of Veterinary Medicine. We recently brought on our first director, Ilaria Capua, a world authority on avian viruses. She joined us this summer but had to fly back to Italy this month to officially resign from her seat in Parliament there.

There have been a lot of administrative changes in the past year – we have new directors at a number of county Extension offices, and Brenda Rogers and Anita Neal as new DEDs. Apopka, Citra, FMEL, Indian River and the Hastings Agricultural Extension Center all have new leaders, as does the Departments of Agricultural Education and Communication.

With Dr. Tim White's recent retirement from SFRC, and after a national search, we have identified three finalists for a new SFRC leader. All three are natural resource unit heads at land-grant universities. We also have a search underway for a chair of Environmental Horticulture.

And, after a very long career in IFAS administration, Dr. Chris Waddill, the director of our Tropical REC, has announced her retirement effective next month, and we will be conducting a

search for that position. I greatly appreciate the efforts of faculty who serve on search committees to help us find the right people for these key positions.

So, as I said when I began, it is a great time to be at IFAS, and I'm excited to see the momentum we've generated in the past two or three years translated into even more achievements in research, teaching, and Extension in the coming year. Yes, challenges remain, but together we will continue to make progress and improve the quality of life for Florida citizens, as well as take our knowledge to the world.

Thanks for the opportunity to address you today. I'll take any questions you may have.