



**FOOD SYSTEMS  
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE**

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Ken Swartzel

Program Director, William Neal Reynolds Professor  
Emeritus, NC State University.





## THE FOOD SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

During a food and society conference sponsored by W.K. Kellogg Foundation, a group of agricultural leaders realized that while food is critical to society, top level leaders lacked appreciation for the contributions of the food system to the development of the nation and national security. Additionally, agricultural leaders also recognized that in order to address the imminent cultural changes facing land-grant universities (LGU), strong leaders who understood the food system would be necessary to help maintain and advance the LGU mission. As a result, they felt there was an expectation that universities should play a more critical role in the promotion of the food system by creating strong leaders to advocate for food related issues.

“The task force noticed there were not many leaders with knowledge or even appreciation for agriculture, food production and

processing,” said Dr. Ken Swartzel, Program Director, William Neal Reynolds Professor, Emeritus, NC State University “They realized there was a need to essentially create the next generation of leaders to ensure the best future for the bio-based system, for which they used “food system” as the umbrella term. This program was designed to equip individuals with resources to make them influential - it was not designed to guarantee they will move up the ladder but the program will, without a doubt, allow them to be more successful and influential when tackling important issues related to food and bio-based systems.”

At the time, the design team defined “food systems” as a broad and holistic perspective of food and fiber in society. They set forth to create a program that would combine the traditional agriculture perspective of food systems, yet take it a step further to understand the consumer, environmental

and health perspectives. In addition to the unique program focus, the team sought to address emerging cultural trends in colleges of agriculture by emphasizing the importance of including a wider array of university disciplines, using interdisciplinary teams and exploring unconventional partnership opportunities.

The Food Systems Leadership Institute (FSLI) was created to develop the next generation of leaders, equipping them with the knowledge needed to advance food systems research, education and outreach. In

order to achieve the overarching goal of the program, to advance and strengthen the food system, institutional change and leadership development were seen as essential components. A new generation of leaders was sought to have an appreciation of the food system. The design team, comprised of food systems leaders, leadership development professionals and experienced university and industry chief executive officers, identified competencies necessary to be an effective leader then laid out a plan to teach these competencies to potential leaders at the university, industry and government sectors.

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**The design team defined the traits required to be an exceptional leader and developed a program accordingly. FSLI fellows were to be trained in instrumental leadership skills and characteristics including:**



Consistently articulate a broad, integrated food systems perspective focused on health, humans, environments, communities, and economies.



Skillfully bring together multiple constituencies to focus on major food system challenges, issues, and opportunities.



Influence and commit to organization’s values, goals, and strategic directions.



Advocate for change within organization consistent with the food system vision.



Serve broader and more diverse constituencies.

In order to ensure that these characteristics are fully developed, an intense program was designed that combined experiential learning with mentoring, and an individual leadership project. Upon completing the program, participants who possess the requisite leadership traits and who have mastered the core competencies would be able to provide authentic, strategic and transformational leadership.

“The program gives fellows a unique opportunity to engage with their peers and share ideas about the future. Perhaps one of the most valuable pieces of the FSLI program is the networking and interaction cohort members have with executive level leaders,” said Dr. Swartzel. “There isn’t a price you can put on the value of the connections fellows make in the program. Existing leaders will listen to FSLI fellows because the program has earned a significant reputation in the food systems community; completing the program gives fellows credibility, and the ability to open doors and impact the future.”

It took the design team two years and then the formal created institute one year of planning and implementation to bring FSLI to fruition. FSLI was created as a program under the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Today the program is going strong with over 200 FSLI fellows. The investment FSLI fellows make in their future and the future of food systems has been recognized across the US and beyond. FSLI fellows have taken control of their career paths, moving on to become college deans, provosts, university presidents and chancellors, as well as influential executive leaders in industry, government and the non-profit sectors. Their leadership within organizations has contributed to the shift in multidisciplinary approaches and lead to innovative solutions that address complex issues across the food system.

## FELLOWS OF THE FOOD SCIENCE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

As of June 2015, the Food Systems Leadership Institute has trained over 200 fellows from 41 different states across the U.S. as well as other locations across the globe.”



- |                      |             |                |                |
|----------------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|
| Alabama              | Indiana     | Montana        | South Carolina |
| Arizona              | Iowa        | Nebraska       | South Dakota   |
| Arkansas             | Kansas      | New Hampshire  | Tennessee      |
| California           | Kentucky    | New Jersey     | Texas          |
| Colorado             | Louisiana   | New York       | Vermont        |
| Delaware             | Maine       | North Carolina | Virginia       |
| District of Columbia | Maryland    | North Dakota   | Washington     |
| Florida              | Michigan    | Ohio           | Wisconsin      |
| Georgia              | Minnesota   | Oklahoma       | Wyoming        |
| Hawaii               | Mississippi | Oregon         |                |
| Illinois             | Missouri    | Pennsylvania   |                |



Singapore



Guam

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### DESIGN TEAM MEMBERS:

**CAROLYN BROOKS**  
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**STAN JOHNSON**

**STEPHEN JONES**  
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**VIG LECHTENBERG**  
**BOBBY MOSER**

**PENNY RALSTON**  
**MARK RITCHIE**  
**JAMES ZUICHES**



## THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS



The University of Illinois has participated in the FSLI program almost every year since its inception. Leadership development is no doubt a beneficial personal investment and in many cases just as valuable for the employer. The College of

Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) at University of Illinois encourages faculty to seek leadership development, and particularly to attend the FSLI program. ACES believes that those who attend FSLI not only use the skills they learn to advance their personal goals, but they are also driving a culture of collaboration leading to innovations across campus.

It takes a special kind of leader, often one that has had additional leadership training,

to identify strengths across disciplines and pursue creative multidisciplinary solutions. University of Illinois places a strong value on interdisciplinary approaches to critical societal issues. FSLI has a unique way of teaching individuals how to break down barriers, share disciplines and identify complimentary skills in one another. The academic and research disciplines in ACES range from life sciences to engineering to social sciences with emphasis on, as its name implies, agriculture, consumer, and environmental issues. ACES discovered that using a multidisciplinary approach to problem solving has proven more efficient and effective as a way to achieve success.

ACES is eager to invest in leaders that show potential as productive team members; individuals who are willing and able to collaborate across disciplines to advance science, education and well-

being. The FSLI program is one of the key programs that ACES encourages faculty to attend because it is a small and intense food systems leadership program. The FSLI cohorts make significant advancement in their personal professional development while mapping out a cohesive plan that also supports the goals of the college.

“I am grateful for the leadership of the associate deans and department heads in ACES, several of whom have completed the FSLI program,” said Dr. Robert Hauser, Dean of ACES. “Any success I have had in my current role has been due in large part to the exceptional people that surround me. A big reason ACES FSLI fellows are so great at what they do, and why I value their input, can be tied to the characteristics they develop in the program. I have noticed FSLI fellows have a broader perspective on leadership techniques and insights.”

The competencies developed during FSLI help ACES leadership, such as

department heads, recognize and explore interdisciplinary opportunities. Some of the lessons taught throughout the program equip leaders to understand optimal team function, incentivize growth and development, address conflict/ barriers and support one another. ACES has observed an increase in effectiveness of their colleagues who use the techniques they learned through FSLI to guide their organization.

ACES faculty that complete the FSLI program seem to have a newfound sense of direction and the college has reaped the benefits since 2005. There have been many innovative projects implemented at ACES as a result of the FSLI program fellows that have led to additional funding opportunities, collaboration across departments and efficient use of resources. ACES plans to continue supporting FSLI and encouraging faculty to attend this unique program.

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**PERSPECTIVE FROM: DR. MARY LEUCI**



Dr. Mary Leuci always had an interest in international work, specifically in Africa. Around the same time Dr. Leuci decided to join FSLI she was discussing ideas with the Vice Provost of the University of Missouri (MU) about expanding partnership opportunities with the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in Cape Town, South Africa. Dr. Leuci felt that with the additional training and support from leadership in FSLI, she would have the resources to create a meaningful partnership with UWC.

Since 1986, MU has engaged in an academic exchange with UWC. The program was recognized as a model program and provided significant opportunities for teaching, research, and service. Faculty with Extension appointments were involved in the

exchange since its inception; however, until Dr. Leuci's project, MU Extension had not worked on a concerted effort to focus on exploration of community-based engagement with UWC.

FSLI taught Dr. Leuci how to work globally with higher education institutions and non-profits, as well as how to build strong business relationships. Dr. Leuci enjoyed the networking opportunities and maintains contact with many of her cohort members. Several of the seminars focused on how to relate to others in an organizational context and how to apply the topics presented to a larger system. The seminars resonated with her professional development goals, fueling her desire to develop an impactful FSLI project.

All of these learning experiences shaped Dr. Leuci's project, making her goal of expanding and creating a mutually

beneficial partnership with UWC a reality. Dr. Leuci identified a key overarching opportunity which involved participatory approaches to research and engagement. The effort was community-driven and focused on collaborative learning and engagement of community residents and faculty, as well as development of the community. MU Extension faculty brought a process and long history of community engagement and practices that yield results. UWC 's experience with townships and disadvantaged communities provided an opportunity to innovate and determine practices that work in limited resource communities—which could be of benefit to South African and Missouri communities.

extension liaison with the Center for International Programs in the College. She is also a co-founder and serves as the convener for the National Community Resource and Economic Development Indicators Extension Workgroup. "I believe my FSLI experience influenced my leadership efforts to expand international extension program opportunities. As a result of those efforts, I received the 2013 National Epsilon Sigma Phi International Service Award and the 2014 University of Missouri-Columbia International Engagement Award for Outstanding Faculty Contribution," she said.

For those considering the FSLI program Dr. Leuci says you should not underestimate

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As a result of Dr. Leuci's FSLI project, a mutually beneficial partnership between MU Extension and UWC was established and continues to flourish. To date, MU and UWC have collaboratively developed and offered five webinars bridging research and practice. Students, faculty and community members have participated in these programs, resulting in mutual learning, enhanced community engagement by both universities, new scholarship, and seeded additional partnerships—especially a collaborative global community leadership program now in the pilot stage.

Dr. Leuci said attending FSLI "opened doors for me." She was able to advance her career and is now the informal

the intensity nor the reward. "Walk in with high expectations of yourself, the program and the participants. Commit to the program – it's about what you invest. This is to prepare you for executive development. It's an investment that's going to pay back."





### PERSPECTIVE FROM: DAN SCHMITZ



FSLI is relevant to leaders in every facet of the food system chain. Dan Schmitz, Director of Analytical Research and Development at Abbott, completed the FSLI program that his boss, who was also in cohort 1 and now on the FSLI Commission,

recommended he attend. Their company, a pharmaceuticals and medical products manufacturer that focuses on nutritionals, devices and diagnostics, has managed to send one person to nearly every cohort since the program began back in 2005.

Speaking on behalf of Abbott, Mr. Schmitz said, "Our company benefits from FSLI in many ways. The knowledge and leadership skills our employees gain through the program is incredible. We are committed to investing in the growth of our employees so why not help them develop leadership

skills while increasing their knowledge of food systems. So many leadership programs out there are very general; this one not only enriches the leadership skills but offers the added benefit of networking with executives in various areas of the industry."

Mr. Schmitz had been through several career development programs but still FSLI intrigued him. Because FSLI was centered on food systems, he saw an opportunity to gather with like-minded cohorts from different backgrounds – he figured "this is about as relevant as training gets."

The FSLI program provided Mr. Schmitz with support and training that enabled him to launch a successful program in Haiti that was primarily centered on helping malnourished children. The project was born out of a global citizen project at Abbott that called upon the nonprofit company, Partners in Health, to create a partnership that could

answer the call for safe, nutrient rich food to fight malnourishment. The factory sourced local ingredients and hired local people to help not only address hunger needs, but enrich the economy.

The project took collaboration and research; it wasn't easy, but the benefits to the Haitian community were well worth the effort. There was a challenge that needed a solution – a solution which a nutrition company could solve but not without careful planning and strategy. The malnutrition strife needed a food systems solution;

to his peers regularly. "FSLI has exceptional leadership – the facilitators and coaches are extraordinary. The leaders brought in to speak to us were highly acclaimed; they provided a perspective from that level of leadership that really taught me a great deal. There was great coaching and great role models throughout the entire program."

Many children in Haiti now have access to free safe nourishing food thanks to Mr. Schmitz and his FSLI project. As a result of this project, Mr. Schmitz was named one

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Mr. Schmitz said the connections he made and the resources available to him through FSLI were instrumental in overcoming obstacles and identifying the best approach to solving this challenge. "I got to work with cohorts across various parts of the food systems – this was largely the reason we were successful. It was a combined effort of industry, academia and government. We needed all the parts in order to get the facility up and running."

FSLI created a peer network for Mr. Schmitz, which he was able to use for his project – and beyond. The relationships and contacts he made are invaluable in his mind. The program exceeded his expectations. Mr. Schmitz recommends FSLI

of Fortune Magazine's 2014 "Heroes of the Fortune 500." Mr. Schmitz continues to use the lessons he learned in FSLI in his current role. He hopes to expand the facility in Haiti, making it more efficient and resourceful. There will likely be many challenges as the operation grows, but Mr. Schmitz has no doubt the leadership skills he gained will be instrumental in his future success.





### PERSPECTIVE FROM: DR. RICHARD LINTON



"I would not be in the position I am today without the leadership skills I learned through FSLI," said Dr. Richard Linton, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, NC State University. Dr. Linton first learned of the FSLI program

when he was a Director of the Center for Food Safety Engineering at Purdue University; he knew the program could help him achieve new heights in his career and thus he was determined to participate. Once accepted into the program, Dr. Linton eagerly mapped out an FSLI project with hopes of addressing regional challenges.

In 2010 land-grant universities across the United States found it increasingly difficult to meet the research and outreach needs of their stakeholder groups both regionally and nationally. Decreased funding, lack of

resources and a more complex agricultural structure all contributed to this problem. Dr. Linton's FSLI project established a model that would help integrate solutions to meet research and outreach needs across a tri state region in the Midwest.

Dr. Linton "expanded the university beyond state lines," meaning he managed to gain buy-in from leadership and key stakeholders to develop a system that capitalized on the strengths of each university to meet the needs of stakeholders across all regions. Dr. Linton's project focused on the development of a successful partnership and creation of a "Regional Center/Consortium of Excellence" that would demonstrate how regional partners and stakeholder groups could work together to maximize resources. This relationship was designed to help Purdue, as well as the other universities involved, be more competitive for multi university, multi disciplinary, and research/

outreach integrated projects. Another added benefit of this new model was that it provided stakeholders with one obvious expert in the region that could address their needs.

This unique model was successful, increasing funding and improving stakeholder relationships for Purdue. In fact, not only did this model work for Dr. Linton in the Midwest, but he also created a similar regional collaboration between the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at NC State and Virginia Tech soon after he was appointed Dean of CALS at NC State.

Aside from the obvious influence his former project had on the development of regional partnerships in his current role, Dr. Linton said the work he did in FSLI impacts his approach to business daily. One of the most important lessons he learned from FSLI mentors, presentations and networking activities was the importance of integrated communications. Linton strives to provide timely, clear communications to all of his stakeholder groups through various outlets. Also, FSLI taught Dr. Linton about the importance of stakeholder relationships. He makes a conscious effort to understand stakeholder relationships and opinions prior to making any important

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The FSLI program facilitated access to university leadership, corporate executives and other senior level business persons that truly propelled Dr. Linton's career forward. Addressing a national challenge for his FSLI project was a huge undertaking; however, the exceptional training and access to high level leadership enabled him to successfully implement his plan.

decisions for CALS.

"FSLI was life changing," said Dr. Linton. "It gave me confidence to pursue leadership opportunities in the workplace. FSLI is different than any other leadership program out there. It will draw you out of the box, out of your comfort level – if you challenge yourself you will have a great experience and see a direct impact on your ability to be an effective leader."





### PERSPECTIVE FROM: DR. OGHENEKOME U. ONOKPISEI



Like many participants, Dr. Oghenekome U. Onokpise was encouraged to try the program from a past cohort graduate. The former Dean of the College of Engineering Sciences, Technology and Agriculture, later named the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS), at Florida A&M (FAMU) completed the FSLI program a few years prior and strongly encouraged Dr. Onokpise to do the same. Dr. Onokpise's involvement with the program came at a pivotal moment in the history of the university and the college. At the time, the university was going through a change in leadership and restructuring, so the college decided to do the same. Once accepted into the FSLI program, Dr. Onokpise took on a leadership role that would serve the newly formed College of Agriculture and Food Sciences at FAMU and help meet the needs of students and stakeholders at the local, state and national levels.

Dr. Onokpise's project for FSLI was to departmentalize the college – something that previously didn't exist. Dr. Onokpise took a hard look at the numbers in the programs, where there were many students that needed a stronger program or where there was a strong program that needed more students. By creating departments, the college would be able to increase enrollment, identify more strategic uses for limited resources and foster an environment for greater collaboration between faculty members.

Major challenges for CAFS were low student enrollment and the relatively fragmented aspects of the land-grant mission in academics, research and Extension. One specific objective Dr. Onokpise set out to address was better integration of research and Extension activities into classroom pedagogy for the experiential and practical learning of the students.

As with most major organizational changes, there were strong supporters as well as those that opposed the proposal. For Dr. Onokpise, educating his peers on the benefits of a new college structure was not easy. Yet he found that the FSLI program gave him the resources to effectively communicate and understand his challenges while developing solutions to help reach his goals.

Through different training, lectures and conversations with cohort members during the FSLI program, Dr. Onokpise discovered more about himself than he was expecting. By reflecting on his own psychological preferences he was able to

President on how to make CAFS a leading college at the university and support the mission and vision of FAMU. The recommendations have been accepted for CAFS departmentalization.

Dr. Onokpise encourages his peers to attend the FSLI program. "This is a very good program; it requires a lot of effort," said Dr. Onokpise. "FSLI is the best program for the next generation of leaders – to be an effective leader you must have experience in global food systems."

When reflecting on what made this program special Dr. Onokpise remembers the leadership and administration team.

**“FSLI is the best program for the next generation of leaders – to be an effective leader you must have experience in global food systems.”**

better understand how others may perceive the world and make decisions as well. This new found ability to analyze an individuals' work style and communication preferences allowed him to be more effective at pitching his ideas, resulting in turning adversaries into advocates.

From Dr. Onokpise's perspective the departmentalization helps the college and its faculty/staff/students prepare for a 21st century food system. "By merging (different research areas) we allow the science of food to integrate with new technologies," said Dr. Onokpise. He expects that this type of approach will address global challenges and provide solutions to meet the needs of our growing population.

By the completion of his project Dr. Onokpise made recommendations to the new Dean of CAFS and FAMU Provost and

FSLI program leaders and administration have a deep passion for leadership development. Program participants can expect a higher level of professionalism and dedication than the average program. Everyone involved has a desire to see the participants lead the world to a better tomorrow.





## LOOKING AHEAD

There were many thought leaders involved in the curriculum development, refinement and implementation. Launching the program had its challenges, however, funding support from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and a determined design team, coupled with unsettling trends across the food system, made the creation of the FSLI program both urgent and unstoppable.

**“The FSLI program focus was unique;** it was not to be focused specifically on industrial agriculture, or agriculture as the way it had been defined in the past. Including the term “food system” in the title of the program was critical. Our hope was to develop key leaders who would see agriculture much more broadly in terms of the whole food system, and go beyond the focus of production alone.”

**Gail Imig**  
Former Program Director,  
W. K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION

**“We made a decision to fill the leadership pipeline with individuals who not only had the skills necessary to be effective in highly influential roles, but that understood the importance of the food system.** The FSLI program was created to give those in academia, government and industry the knowledge and resources necessary to be successful leaders that continuously advocate for food system throughout their career.”

**Bobby Moser**  
Vice President Dean, Emeritus, College of Food,  
Agriculture and Environmental Sciences,  
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Many of the individuals who watched FSLI flourish from a mere idea into a successful leadership program are excited to see the program grow. There have been significant changes in the leadership landscape - with one-third of FSLI fellows taking on new, influential leadership roles. There also continues to be a sense of urgency to address the growing agriculture, food and human health needs locally, nationally and globally. The FSLI program has an opportunity to build on its success and continue to be a dynamic driving force that creates well-rounded leaders for the future.

**“As the population continues to grow, we need to have adequate food and food security across the world--** future food systems leaders will be key to ensuring such needs are met. Economic improvements across nations are leading more people to desire broadly based food and nutrition as part of their regular eating habits. As the middle class increases, the nature of foods they want to eat will change based on their economic situation.”

**James Zuiches**  
Vice Chancellor, Emeritus,  
NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

**“We are thrilled that after 5 years of generous support from the Kellogg Foundation the program picked up enough strength to be sustainable.** The program continues to be relevant and dynamic which, in my opinion, has made it incredibly successful. There is constant turnover in leadership which emphasizes the importance of providing appropriate training for emerging leaders.”

**Mort Neufville**  
Executive Vice President, Emeritus,  
ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC AND LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITIES



