

## **Bridging Excellence:**

### **Developing and Implementing A "True" Joint Appointment Plan at SC State University**

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#### **Introduction and Background (The Problem)**

In July 2021, South Carolina State University (SC State) marked a historic milestone with the re-establishment of the College of Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences (CAFCS). This restoration occurred fifty-five years after the university lost its flagship School of Agriculture, signaling a transformative era for the institution. The closure undercut the University's ability to strengthen academic offerings in the state's largest industry and employer – agriculture. By itself, CAFCS does not offer a sufficient number of degrees and programs to serve the needs of South Carolina. CAFCS also inherited a lack of adequate academic and research laboratories.

As an 1890 Land-Grant institution, SC State is tasked with a unique tripartite mission: the seamless integration of research, teaching, and extension (RET). To fully realize this mandate and sustain its momentum as a Carnegie Research-2 (R2) institution, the university must design, develop, and implement a comprehensive "True Integration Plan." Central to this strategy is the development of a Joint Appointment Policy (JAP) that bridges the Division of Public Service and Agriculture (PSA) with the academic departments of the CAFCS.

#### **Development of The Plan (Policy)**

For nearly two years, the project conducted campus-wide consultations and listening tours involving strategic stakeholders – administrators, faculty, research scientists, staff, and industry partners. A formal Joint Appointment Plan was developed and adopted on June 1, 2025. The establishment of The Plan is not merely an administrative exercise; it is a critical necessity for institutional effectiveness and growth.

Historically, academic teaching and field extension have often operated in silos. By creating a policy that allows faculty and scientists to hold roles across both the academic and public service divisions, SC State can better align its operational plans with its overarching strategic vision. The project focused on developing and implementing a comprehensive plan that would leverage and synergize funding methods, making it more competitive for interdisciplinary federal grants that require a demonstrated link between laboratory discovery and community outreach.

### **Implementation**

On November 1, 2025, the university officially hired its first Joint Appointment faculty with a fifty percent teaching assignment with CAFCS and a fifty percent research and extension assignment with PSA. The Plan marked the transition toward a fully integrated RET model and a disciplined approval process involving the Faculty Handbook Policy Committee, the Faculty Senate, and the Board of Trustees.

The Plan identifies specific programs for joint qualification and determines precise release times for teaching, research, and extension. Through the Centers of Excellence for Applied Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Agriculture; Food Safety and Health; and Plant Breeding, Genetics, and Genomics, as well as the optimized use of statewide facilities, the university is poised to lead. Ultimately, the Joint Appointment Policy will serve as the foundation upon which South Carolina State University builds its future, ensuring that its legacy of teaching, research, and extension continues to empower and innovate for generations to come.

To ensure the success of The Plan, PSA and the CAFCS focused on four thematic areas. First, it addresses the financial complexities of joint positions, ensuring strict compliance with time and effort commitment policies while identifying sustainable funding sources between colleges and programs. Second, it operationalizes a strategic plan that honors the long-held principles of the land-grant mission by integrating physical assets across the state. Third, it established expectations and criteria for recruiting and hiring top-tier talent. Forth, the university must establish a robust performance assessment mechanism. This mechanism must recognize that the impact of a joint appointee is measured not only by classroom evaluations but also by research discoveries and the delivery of applied extension education to the citizens of South Carolina.

### **FSLI Program Impact**

My participation in the FSLI program has tremendously enhanced my existing leadership skills and fundamentally transformed how I lead and manage my team. Specifically, FSLI helped me enhance my ability to listen better, understand and navigate institutional culture, and learn more about myself. The *How Do You Measure Your Life* and *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* books strengthened my consensus-building skills and helped me effect meaningful change. Program activities and the mentorship opportunities helped me apply learned strategies to develop and execute shared vision, navigate various situations, and manage change in ever-changing higher education landscape.