

Creation of the Auburn University Food Systems Initiative William Batchelor

Issue: For the past three years, Auburn has been discussing the need to develop a university wide initiative in food systems. Previous attempts to develop university wide initiatives have been hampered by structural issues. At Auburn, research centers must be assigned to a single college, which makes it difficult to recruit university wide participation. Research Institutes report to the Vice President for Research and many faculty do not see the benefit of participating. The Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station (AAES) consists of five colleges including the College of Agriculture, College of Science and Math, College of Human Science, College of Veterinary Medicine and the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences. These College Deans also serve as Associate Directors of the AAES. As the newly appointed Dean of Agriculture and Director of the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station (AAES), I worked with my team to formulate a new structure for this initiative. Working with the Vice President for Research, we created a structure within the AAES to house the Auburn University Food Systems Initiative (AUFSI). The AAES serves as multi-college organization, and has the flexibility to include researchers from any college at Auburn.

What has been done:

- Negotiations were held with the Vice President of Research to develop a structure for the AUFSI.
- Joint funding was established between the Office of Research, the AAES and the College of Agriculture.
- Dr. Pat Curtiss (FSLI Cohort #4) was hired as Director of the AUFSI.
- Working groups were established for many areas within the food system.
- Accounting and sponsored programs procedures are being developed to accommodate the needs of different colleges.
- Discussions are underway on procedures to form a faculty for the AUFSI.

Impacts/New Partnerships:

The AUFSI provides a new structure for conducting university wide research through partnerships with colleges across the university.

Outcome of Project (societal impact/ measure of increased quality of life)

The AUFSI has been in operation since February 2011. It has organized several faculty groups across the University and submitted several multi-college proposals.

How has your project been aided by your FSLI experience?

This project required the following skills covered in the FSLI training: leadership, organizational systems thinking, and negotiation.

Contact information:

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