

CALS BUSINESS SERVICES

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

College of Agriculture
& Life Sciences

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 15, 2017
To: All Colleagues, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
From: Jeffrey Ratje, Associate Dean, Finance and Administration
Re: Progress towards financial strategic goal

I have no illusions that business was central to the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, or even discussed by its framers, but I know that business can be a competitive advantage to achieve its aims for our College.

Dean Burgess has asked that I share an update on the achievement of our strategic goal: ***Be the most effective, efficient, responsive, flexible, and financially sustainable college on campus.***

Before describing the progress, let me first provide my most respectful gratitude to the 100+ business officers working across the College. They are on the front lines of this strategic goal and must live up to a high expectation of professionalism and service.

Effective

CALS has invested \$5.3 million in fiscal year 2017 to fund the largest faculty-hiring package in its recorded history— 35 faculty hires and their startup packages. This was possible due to the widespread efforts of CALS colleagues and leaders; a partnership between strong academic planning aligned with a coherent and sustainable financial vision.

Efficient

Grassroots efforts have streamlined processes and in turn reduced headaches of doing business in CALS. This effort, within the college-sphere of influence, has resulted in the removal of more than 20 individual approval or process steps in the personnel and finance areas. Trust and accountability have allowed the removal of these painful and unnecessary steps. Streamlining efforts are ongoing, and we welcome your suggestions for continued improvements.

Another highlight is the turnaround of the Federal Excess Property Program, a \$25 million competitive advantage for CALS. The USDA national coordinator called it a “model program” in March; a positive reversal from a year ago when the program was under threat of closure due to years of accumulation and disorganization. Over the last year, 150,000 pounds of scrap and more than 40 vehicles have been disposed, in addition to conducting a physical inventory of 650 individual items for the first time in more than a decade. My thanks to Madge Mock and the numerous Property Custodians for their hard work.



Responsive and Flexible

The Provost's Office gave the College four weeks last summer to develop a salary adjustment plan distributing \$2 million to 1,200 CALS employees. The University provided no financial support to CALS. The CALS plan integrated recommendations from shared governance groups, unit heads, and others; and unit leadership determined individual salary decisions. From a business standpoint, I proudly use this as an example of responsiveness and flexibility. Despite hiccups in conception and implementation, it demonstrates: 1) an endorsement of our local leadership, and 2) the quality and professionalism of our business employees in meeting ever-changing requirements in a very limited turn-around time.

Financial Sustainability

Challenges are usually unpredictable and sometimes outside of our College's direct control. Deferred maintenance is one such challenge that significantly affects our colleagues in at least four buildings. The Veterinary Sciences Building (building 90) is currently at the epicenter. Multiple college and unit leaders have exerted their considerable influence with University leadership for more than a year to raise awareness of the serious concerns expressed by occupants – health, research integrity, faculty recruitment, and employee morale. The University is transferring employees out of this building to temporary laboratory and workspaces identified by CALS leaders, and planning for multi-million dollar infrastructure improvements. This is an example of an emerging issue that requires a sustained response.

Recognition

The College has been recognized by the Provost and CFO for our leading role in financial sustainability on campus through unit quarterly all-funds budgets, college five-year budgeting, and zero-based budgets in the Arizona Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension. Programmatic decisions ultimately become financial decisions. The alignment between academics and finances is essential for effective implementation of strategic plans.

May 9 CALS Strategic Budget Retreat

Forty-one CALS leaders and participants attended the second annual budget retreat on May 9 in McClelland Park. This is the largest shared governance budget retreat in the University, an example of our joint commitment to transparency and an opportunity for appointed and elected representative leaders to discuss ideas and priorities; build trust and seize upon opportunities; and share views which will inform the dean's budget decisions. It is an authentic engagement in open and shared budgeting and planning. Please ask your unit leader or shared governance representative for information from the event.

Future

Being the most effective, efficient, responsive, flexible, and financially sustainable college on campus has been the daily definition of success in the business administration of your college. In such a complex and fluid organization, there will always be challenges and pain points. I attest to a commitment of excellence focused on uplifting and enabling the mission activities of Arizona's first college.