



College Tackles Tough Budget Issues

The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences starts 2003 with a rough road ahead financially. Following the 10 percent reduction in university funding, the college put a freeze on all hiring.

By the time the final round of early retirements occurs, there will be more than 100 vacancies, more than 18 percent of the college's total workforce.

Uncertainties about the state's financial situation have led the college to be very cautious in refilling the vacancies. After meeting the needed reductions, the college will be left with funding to fill less than half of the vacancies. The college's workforce will shrink to less than it was in the early 1990s.

"We will not be the same as we were only two years ago and must do the best we can to retain our mission and do quality work with a smaller workforce," said CALS Dean Larry Branen.

"We have already begun the process of redesigning our programs and as we refill the vacant positions, we will carefully review them to assure they meet priority criteria."

Those priorities focus on natural resources and the environment; competitive agriculture; community development; youth and families; and health, food safety, and food quality. An essential test is that programs must be relevant to the needs of Idaho.

The financial losses will translate into reduced services for agricultural producers. For example, during the past year, two Extension entomologists with long records of service to growers retired. That means limited services for potato and cereal growers and no UI entomologists

with time designated specifically for sugarcorn, dry bean, alfalfa, forages, corn, and livestock.

The college also lost plant pathologists who provided extension expertise and soon will lose positions doing barley

on collaboration among regional educators, research and Extension centers and researchers.

Youth programs will remain locally based. The restructuring will rely on 4-H coordinators to maintain programs at the county level. Their efforts will help county educators refocus on expertise that will serve several counties.

The college's teaching programs will also be restructured. Eight majors now available to students will change. In both animal and plant science departments, students will be able to choose one major, but will choose options to focus their degrees.

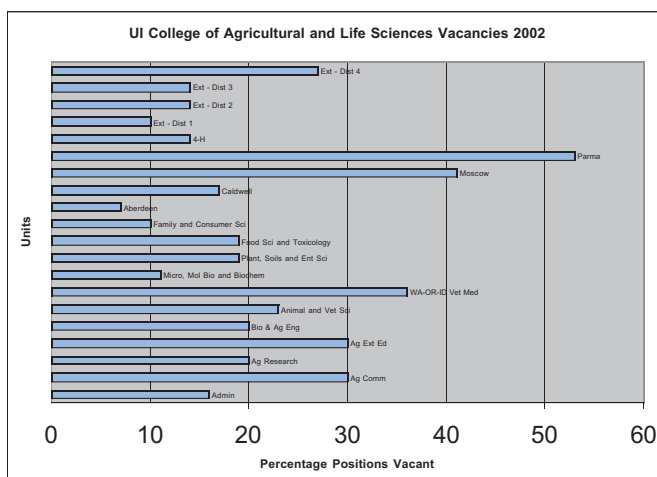
Classes that historically drew few students will be eliminated, offered less frequently or combined with others. Priority for hiring will be focused on departments where student demand is heavy and vacancies threaten to

reduce faculty numbers to below a "critical mass."

Research will be restructured as well. The college will maintain a balance of applied and basic research focused on Idaho's needs. The statewide network of research and Extension centers will be reviewed.

In the Treasure Valley the college will combine efforts at Parma and Caldwell to create a Southwest Idaho Research and Extension Center.

With the closure of the Caldwell feedlot, the popular Steer-A-Year program will be moved to the Moscow campus. Like several other changes, this will bring both benefits and losses. One of the greatest benefits will be the ability to give students practical experience in managing this important program, which supports excellent scholarships.



research and Extension. Other vacancies, 21 at last count, heavily impact our animal programs. We anticipate being able to fill only one of the positions. A consequence was the closure of the Caldwell cattle feedlot.

Much of the budget planning has focused on reorganizing Extension to align the smaller workforce with financial realities and trying to bridge gaps created by vacancies.

The college will try to maintain the presence of Extension in nearly every county so our educators and specialists will be available to identify and help solve problems.

Our county faculty members will focus on developing expertise in subjects so they can serve a region, sharing their skills with several counties. Extension will rely more

