

UT Institute of Agriculture
State of the Institute Address
Joseph A. DiPietro
Friday, October 17, 2008

Thank you Dr. Pantelone for your service this year. On behalf of the faculty and staff, I'd like to present you with this plaque of appreciation as an acknowledgement of a job well done. We're sorry that Dr. Zivanovic couldn't be here today, we look forward to working with her as Chair.



Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "We must aim *above* the mark to hit the mark."

That simple but very thoughtful quote says it best for us here at the Institute.

In the past year, we had no choice but to aim high... and there were **even** times when our mark moved on us.

But we never lost sight of our mark, and for that I am grateful to each of you - for the work you do every day to serve the people of Tennessee.

The Institute of Agriculture is a proud and dynamic organization - with some of the top educators, researchers and staff working with us - and it is a privilege to serve as your Vice-President.

It has been a good year- exciting and productive - but also a year of change and challenge.

We welcomed three new leaders as Deans within the Institute, and we'll talk more about each one later.

We continue to build on a strong relationship with the University of Tennessee system, working to come up with the solutions to move our state forward.

The Institute continues its collaborative work in the areas of biofuels, and Tuesday we had the groundbreaking for our pilot biorefinery in Monroe County.

Along the way, there have been many challenges.

Most notably, we felt the brunt of an economy that is unstable and unpredictable at times, and faced budget reductions.

But I am most proud of how we adapted and pulled together. It means a great deal to me.

No one knows exactly what 2009 holds for us. Given circumstances, we must be realistic that the 3.53 percent in-year budget reduction will become a permanent reduction in our base appropriation for next year.

These are unusual and difficult times, and there may be additional reductions in state appropriations. Despite all this, I am committed to doing my very best to secure resources to help you do your jobs well.

I encourage you to be creative, entrepreneurial and think outside the box.

UT EXTENSION

Though we're thinking ahead to the opportunities and challenges of 2009, it is important to reflect on the year past, and I'd like to begin by talking about some of our outreach efforts in Extension.

Extension is perhaps at its best when we must drop everything, roll up our sleeves, and go to work to help our communities.

This has been a year where the personal commitment of our Extension faculty and staff to the communities and the people they serve has been more evident than ever. From the production challenges posed to farmers faced by drought and natural disasters, to the associated financial challenges that Mother Nature and our economy pose, Extension has been on the spot serving Tennesseans.

Devastating tornados that ripped through Tennessee earlier this year took lives and caused millions of dollars in damage.

Tornados smashed dorms at Union University in Jackson.

This same storm system also destroyed the home of Madison County agent Bill Wyatt.

But his family was safe, and that's what's important.

Sadly that was not the case in Macon County, where a number of people died in tornados.

While there's no comparison to the loss of life, the storms also caused extensive damage to agriculture.

Ken Roark's family has been farming here for two centuries, spanning five generations.

They lost a dozen barns, equipment, a silo, and miles of fencing.

They also had to sell their cattle, and now face the task of rebuilding.

(Ken Roark, Macon County Producer)

“We lost pretty much everything.”

We had equipment in a shed that’s now gone, some barns that are now gone, and up in the garage that’s now gone.”

“When you go from being used to selling 200 calves that you raise every year to nothing or 20, it creates a problem as far as finances go.”

UT Extension is doing everything imaginable to help farming families like the Roarks.

That includes rounding up stray livestock, gathering donations of hay and feed, food safety, and of course, clean-up.

Macon County Extension Director Steve Walker says the pain of this tornado will be felt many years, but agriculture will be back.

Steve Walker - UT Extension, Macon County

“There’s 175 farms impacted from this storm. Some of them with different degrees of damage. We’ve had 350 barns damaged.”

“Most of the farmers I visit with are very optimistic. That’s their way of life and they’re survivors, and it’s a great challenge to them.”

We mentioned the economy a few minutes ago, and farming can be a tough way to earn a living in these times.

One poor growing season, and a family can face financial disaster.

Extension’s MANAGE program helps farmers with sound financial advice, and encourages them to seek counseling when needed.

Extension’s family and consumer sciences programs had a very successful year.

The Tennessee Saves program continues to show remarkable growth - reaching more than half a million people annually.

Tennessee Shapes Up empowers people to make diet and physical activity choices to achieve or maintain a healthy weight.

We are working to reduce the rate of obesity in our state through several programs.

FCS teaches several programs to school children, including “stranger danger” and programs to reach out to Tennessee’s rapidly growing Latino population. Agents work with parents and children to improve their English language skills so the kids will do better in school.

Tennessee continues to have one of the largest 4-H enrollments nationally, with 332,000 youth participating.

4-H focuses on the importance of service learning, and across the state kids giving back to their communities.

4-H’ers collected coats for the cold, items for food banks, and DVDs and CDs for soldiers serving our country.

4-H also offers environmental learning through Camp Explore - part of SET, or Science, Engineering and Technology.

(Sarah Daugherty)

“Yeah, I love science. It’s like my favorite subject in school. What do you like about it? I like that we get to do a bunch of experiments and get to try it out - instead of sitting there listening to a teacher drone on and on everyday.”

That was Sarah Daugherty, who seems very mature for her age.

We’ve had a change in leadership with 4-H.

This past July, Alice Ann Moore retired after 31 years of service as an agent, District Director and State Director of 4-H.

Alice Ann is still working on a part-time basis for the rest of the year as we make administrative changes.

You could easily say there is no single person statewide who loves 4-H quite like Alice Ann Moore.

She has touched the lives of thousands of people in her years with us.

Alice Ann, we are grateful to you for your excellence in leadership and your commitment to the children of Tennessee.

Thank you for all you have done.

Alice Ann is leaving things in good hands with Steve Sutton in the interim director's role.

Steve is in his 35th year of service with us.

While we're saying goodbye and thank you, Charlie Goan will soon leave us after a noteworthy career with UT that spans 37 years of outstanding service.

Charlie has served in many different roles over the years, with the past two-and-a-half years as Extension's Interim Dean.

Charlie - we thank you for your years of service. You helped make my transition seamless, and for that I am so grateful.

I wish both you and Alice Ann a Happy Retirement!



AGRESEARCH:

Like Extension, AgResearch has an important impact on people and communities, but that impact is sometimes not as immediately tangible.

For example, Americans get 50 percent of our electricity from coal - but getting to coal underground sometimes means trees must be cut down.

Recent advances in mine reclamation efforts are now making it possible to restore forests, and UT AgResearch Drs. Jennifer Franklin and David Buckley head a group from Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries working to grow new trees on former coal mining sites.

They have planted thousands of hardwood trees on four sites in Campbell and Anderson counties, and now oak, hickory and black walnut have been growing for about two years.

Graduate students are also involved in the project, planting chestnut seedlings on old mining sites. Chestnuts were plentiful in this area about half a century ago, but disease wiped many out.

(Dr. David Buckley)

“The way we’re extending this research is really looking more closely at the species of ground cover that we’re planting, maybe different micro-environmental factors that you have across these sites - temperature, moisture, root growth, what happens below ground. Those are all pieces of the puzzle that still need to be worked out.”

As many of you know, that was Dr. David Buckley.

The desire to improve visibility and understanding of our research programs led leadership to brand a new identity for the Experiment Station. The Experiment Station and its 10 research centers are now being branded under the new name UT AgResearch. Though this change is recent, it is being embraced and seems to help our clientele and the media more readily understand what our research arm does.

Highlights for AgResearch came this year in the form of a major announcement about the collaboration between UT and DuPont Danisco Cellulosic Ethanol LLC (DDCE). This past year we formed Genera Energy, a limited liability company through the UT Research Foundation, to construct and manage the biorefinery. This collaboration has put the Biofuels Initiative on the fast track. Demonstration of switchgrass-to-ethanol, farm-to-fuel conversion could begin as early as late 2009.

I just wanted to give you a brief glimpse from Tuesday’s exciting groundbreaking and how others see us and our efforts on this project. Here is what DDCE President Joe Skurla had to say:

Skurla Clip

As you can see, others feel we're well on the way to helping Tennessee become a leader in the production of cellulosic ethanol that will be a boon to our local economies and that may contribute substantially to the state and nation's energy security. Many faculty members, Extension agents and specialists are to be commended for their vision and efforts to make the Initiative's ideals come alive.

A group of 10 faculty members spent this summer looking at a proposed Bioenergy plan for the institute to develop a strong bioenergy educational program to put us in a leadership role in this important area both nationally and internationally.

Milan No-Till day celebrated its 25th anniversary and still draws a very large crowd. This year more than 3,000 participants representing industry, producers, government and others attended. As you know, visitors from around the world come to Milan on the fourth Thursday in July to learn the latest about no-tillage crop production techniques, which annually save Tennessee topsoil from eroding. Many of our field days this year have seen record attendance, and I am still amazed by that. Congratulations to the Center directors, and thank you for your hard work.

The dairy at the ETREC has been moved and will be replaced with a unit in Blount County. No positions were lost, cattle were moved to other Centers across the state, and genetic lines for research will be maintained. The new location will allow us to expand the focus of our dairy research to include new efforts aimed at measuring the effects of livestock operations on the environment, particularly on water quality. This fall the plans will be complete, and we hope to begin construction in early 2009. Planning for the new Cherokee Campus, a research park type campus, is underway and the Institute will benefit from opportunities it provides.

The sound leadership in AgResearch has come from Tom Klindt over his nearly seven-years of total time as interim dean. I am grateful for his service, but especially during a transitional period in the Vice President's Office. He has provided key leadership in securing Sun Grant funding and for the Biofuels Initiative.

Among his future plans is a transition to the role of Comptroller for Genera Energy on a part-time basis and continued efforts to advance research programs.

Tom, thank you for your service and commitment to the Institute and to the University.



Vet Med

Important research impacting both animal and humane health is underway in The UT College of Veterinary Medicine.

CVM is a dynamic center of learning, service, and research where scientific understanding is advanced on issues of importance to animal and human health.

The college prepares students for careers in veterinary medicine and related biomedical sciences. This year we have an enrollment of 295 students and have more than 100 graduate students, residents and interns. Students learn by doing, and each year, UT clinicians and students handle over 36,000 cases.

The CVM has expanded its enrollment this fall. One of the most sought-after programs in the country, the Vet School can now accommodate more students, as they have increased class size this year by 15 students and plan to do the same for the next three years.

Research breakthroughs in the college are impressive.

- A research team led by Dr. Xuemin Xu (Shoeman Shoe) discovered mechanisms of the formation of beta-amyloid peptide, which is believed to trigger Alzheimer's disease in humans.
- CVM virologist, Dr. David Brian, aided the U.S. Centers for Disease Control in identifying the SARs virus as a coronavirus.
- Findings by Dr. Mei-Zhen Cui (pronounced: Shwee) and

her team suggested that the major risk factors of high levels of LDL promote atherosclerotic (ATH-ERO-SCLE-ROT-IC) lesions, which contribute to increasing cardiovascular disease.

Outreach is also an important part of the mission of the College of Veterinary Medicine. Community programs such as HABIT and HALT work together to strengthen the animal-human bond. CAIT (KATE) works to reduce the number of animals abandoned or sent to shelters in Tennessee, and promotes responsible companion animal ownership.

One of the Vet School’s premier programs, Physical Rehabilitation, is the only University-based program in the world where veterinarians can be certified in this discipline. Here’s a clip from Dr. Marti Drum about the program.

(Dr. Marti Drum)

“The advantage of the underwater treadmill for physical rehabilitation is the buoyancy that it can offer dogs. So dogs that are extremely overweight like Harley, or dogs that have had a surgery such as knee surgery or back surgery - it can really reduce the amount of weight they bear on their joints.”

CVM’s Center for Agriculture and Food Security and Preparedness (CAFSP) has a key role in helping to ensure the safety of the nation's food supply and helping promote effective response to a disaster involving animals. Of **only** 11 grants the Department of Homeland Security awarded, the veterinary college received two of them totaling nearly \$5 million.

While there are many good things we can talk about throughout the Institute, we can't ignore our challenges. In the Veterinary College, our biggest challenge will be to address the Large Animal facilities' deficiencies sighted in a recent accreditation review. While this is a large challenge that has to be dealt with quickly, we are fortunate that we have the University System's support, stake holder support and significant legislative support for this need.

But, while it is a challenge, we celebrated the opening of the John and Ann Tickle Small Animal hospital, which opened in April. When the college was built more than 30 years ago, it was never anticipated the facility would need to accommodate the number of animals we currently treat each year. **Nor** a total DVM enrollment of nearly 400 students. Since 1978, the patient caseload has increased by more than 70 percent. This expansion was desperately needed.



CASNR

While all of our programs have an impact on people, CASNR has found a way to impact students and others outside the classroom.

When orange goes green, classroom learning is transformed into practical experience and compassion. Plant Sciences majors are part of a group called "Green T", horticulture and landscaping majors who give their time to help others.

Tonya Herrera's husband Sgt. David Herrera was a Fort Campbell

soldier who died in a humvee attack in Bagdad.

Now raising two daughters in her hometown, Mrs. Herrera doesn't have the life she once envisioned - but appreciates the work of Green T.

(Tonya Herrera)

"It's really been a grateful experience for us. We've been kind of blown away by the generosity we've seen from the community and from this group Green T."

(Whitney Parks)

"Basically it's good for us college students to do because sometimes we focus on ourselves and kind of lose track of what's important. So I think this is a good opportunity to do something good."

(Zeke Cooper)

"What we did couldn't even begin to repay for what he did, and the service he gave." "This man laid down his life for our country. The least we can do is come out here and plant some plants and make his wife's yard look better." "We want her to know we're grateful for what her husband did for us - and that there's people in this community who care about soldiers and the sacrifices they give for all of us."

That was Whitney Parks and Zeke Cooper who are CASNR students.

Not only is CASNR preparing students for real-life, they're preparing them for life into the future with new concentrations in bioenergy and a new landscape architecture major. The bioenergy concentration is for students interested in pursuing careers in the rapidly expanding biofuels and bioenergy fields.

We welcomed the inaugural class of landscape architecture graduate students this year. This new major is a joint collaboration between CASNR and the College of Architecture and Design. The master's degree program in landscape architecture is the only program of its kind in the state. It has been long-awaited, and we are glad to see it come to fruition.

But CASNR is not without challenges. A continued focus on growing enrollment is one of the College's greatest challenges, and these new concentrations and a new major will help. But so will a full-time recruiter, which we now have in place. This year we had an increase of 75 students coming into the college for a total of 925. We are still off from our 1995 enrollment, but I'm happy to that we've steadily grown enrollment over the last five years.

Part of the challenge is shoring up deficiencies in the University's admissions processes which can present obstacles for students entering CASNR. Dean Beyl and her team are working closely with UT Admissions folks in making the process as seamless as possible and getting CASNR on the radar screen in their recruitment efforts.



Faculty Accomplishments:

If students make up the lifeblood of UTIA, then the faculty are the heart. Without a highly dedicated faculty who prepare young people to find the solutions of tomorrow, our Institute would have little reason to exist. The work you do here touches lives every day. Your contributions will continue to live on through your students and your research solutions.

If I were to name the faculty and staff who have received awards this year, I would go way beyond my time limit. Nearly 20 received national-level awards, and there were *hundreds* of others at the state, regional and University-level. I consider each of you a valued colleague. Each of you is playing a vital role by advancing our scholarship and reputation through your research, teaching and outreach. Thank you for all of your efforts and dedication.



New Leadership Team:

While faculty and staff are vital to our success, a strong administrative team is essential to our organization moving in the right direction. This is my third State of the Institute address and while I am grateful to the leaders who have assisted me as Interim Deans, I am also pleased to say that with your help and input we have assembled an excellent team of gifted and talented administrators who will lead the Institute to even more phenomenal success. Many of you have already met them, so I'll just briefly tell you a few things you might **not** already know about the deans.

Photo of all on one slide

Dean of UT Extension, **Tim Cross**, holds a Ph.D. from Oregon State. He is familiar to many in agricultural circles across the state, and he, his wife and four children raise and show Hampshire and Shropshire sheep.

The new Dean for AgResearch, **Bill Brown** who got his Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska, comes from Gator country, but he did get his master's here. He's well on his way to being converted, but lately the Vols are not helping us out much with that.

Dr. Caula Beyl is beginning her second year as Dean of CASNR. Her Ph.D. is from Purdue. We always knew she was Superwoman, but with her new knees, we're now calling her the Bionic Woman.

Most recently we welcomed **Jim Thompson** as the new Dean for the College of Veterinary Medicine. Both his DVM and Ph.D. are from the University of Florida. He is an accomplished athlete and held Purdue's indoor pole vaulting record at 15 feet and 8 and three-quarters inches. We're expecting great heights from him here at Tennessee as well.

An additional administrative change that I wanted to make you aware of is that the management of the UT Gardens has now been placed under the leadership of **Sue Hamilton** as Interim Director, and the Gardens now report at the Vice President level. The Gardens have prospered under the generosity and involvement of Friends of the Garden, but the Gardens have grown to the point that we need to have full-time management and oversight of all operations, programs, coordination and fundraising.



Facilities update

When it comes to updates to our facilities, we have much to be proud of like the Plant Biotech Building. But, we still have much to accomplish. That includes renovations to be done on Brehm and McLeod, and our longer-term plans to update Ellington and McCord, once funding becomes available.

Construction on Brehm and McLeod will begin by mid January. When complete, the buildings will be on par with the Plant Biotechnology Building in terms of their quality and usability for scholarship.

Research is already underway in the first of three new greenhouses. Once completed, the three will total 48,000 square-feet of greenhouse space. That's more than we've ever had, and it's of a quality that's unmatched.

We're also designing 6,000 square-feet of state-of-the-art bioenergy laboratories that will be located on campus in the new Plant Sciences Research Support building.

We are preparing to let bids on a new headquarters for the Agricultural Research and Education Center at Milan. And we're in the process of designing a staff house at the Clyde Austin 4-H Center in Greeneville.

While we still have some acute facilities needs, like the Large Animal Hospital and others, I'm proud of our progress and our facility planning efforts.



Budget Challenges and Updates:

As I mentioned earlier, the state has asked for an in-year budget cut of 3.53 percent. For the Institute of Agriculture, that's a total of \$2.57 million (\$2,570.00). On the heels of FY 08-09 reductions in state appropriations to our base budget that amounted to a total of \$1.55 million or about 2 percent for UTIA, this in-year reduction was challenging. We've achieved the reductions mostly through leaving unfilled positions vacant, delaying filling positions, delaying projects and reducing operating expenditures.

This is an economically tough time for the nation and Tennessee, and we expect at least one more year of belt tightening.

With expenses for personnel rising, from gasoline to insurance, it makes it especially tough when the University cannot provide raises. This year a one-time bonus was given, and while that's no where near what's needed, I want you to know that Dr. Petersen and I are committed to improving compensation. That is at the very top of our priority list. Salary compression has been an ongoing problem and we will keep that at the forefront of our lobbying efforts too.

On the **positive** side, we've grown our research funding by 20 percent while others have either maintained or decreased in this area. Totals near \$47 million in grants and awards and \$31 million in expenditures last year.

We are also fortunate that the institute has great support both at the system and legislative level. That support will be essential as we grapple with a solution to the various challenges we face.

We are also fortunate to have a thriving development program that continues to raise millions of dollars for the institute. Our development staff continues to exceed goals, but development is all our jobs. Currently, the institute has raised over \$71 million, that's **84 percent** of our \$85 million goal. Each Unit is progressing well toward its individual goal, and we still have three years left in the campaign. Private fundraising fills in the gaps, especially in tough times like these.

I know many of you are worried, not just for what the current economic climate means for your work life, but what it also means for your personal life. Please try not to get too discouraged. We have had trying times like this before in the nation and at the University, and we **will** pull through it. But, it will take all of us working together to assure maximum success despite budget challenges.



Report Card:

Last year, I asked you to complete a report card and rate how we're doing as an Institute. I have this year's results compared to last year's that I'd like to share. The full results are in your handout. We had fewer people complete the survey this year, but still 204 responded as opposed to last year's 408. We stayed the same or ranked better in every

category except External Research (C- from a B-), Adequacy of Space (C to C-), Federal Support (C to C-),. This year our overall GPA was a 2.61 compared with last year's 2.62. I think this shows that sometimes our perceptions don't match reality. As I said earlier, we increased external grants funding this year by **20** percent. And, **yes**, we always need more space, but I think you would agree from my earlier comments about facilities that we are, and have been, proactively addressing these needs in a responsible, measured way.

We've accomplished so much, even during challenging times, but we've got much to do.



Looking Forward:

- **Review, analyze and build on our most important programs.**
- Strive to **improve faculty and staff salaries.**
- Continue to **work with state leaders, industry and clientele to communicate and demonstrate our importance and role in improving the lives of Tennesseans.**
- **Grow enrollment** in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.
- **Improve the institute's image** by helping people understand who we are, what we do and the value we bring to the state.
- **Secure financial support for Large Animal facilities.**
- **Address the “culture of two units.”** East vs. West. The ability of this University to be most successful hinges on all of us working together as a team and sharing our strengths and talents.

Collaboration is imperative to maximizing our breakthroughs and success.



Conclusion:

When Dr. Petersen visited the institute a couple of weeks ago, he talked about “efficiency.”

From my perspective, we have no choice but to be as efficient as we can possibly be in our work, in determining our budgets, and in our future planning.

I know many of you are already very good at this.

You have dealt with shrinking funds for years, and have done a great job of continuing our excellence in teaching, research and outreach with the resources you have to work with - and you have met that challenge.

But I would also encourage you to seek creative ways where your work, your department or unit can be more efficient. And let us know about them.

We face a potentially tough year, and teamwork and collective thoughts serve best in those circumstances.

That being said, I cannot thank you enough for what you do. We have some of the best people in the world working at this Institute, and please know that the administration will do everything within its power to get you the resources you need to excel.

Even with rising costs and the absence of a state raise again this year, we are on track to exceed the Campus Chest goal of \$62,000. Gandhi said, “*We* must be the change we wish to see in the world,” and you have exemplified this with your generosity and compassion.

As I conclude,

Once again I feel like the magician's apprentice. You continue to amaze me with your talent and all we accomplish and the magic you do.

Your efforts make my job much easier.

Please know that my door remains open.

Lots of people like to say that, but I really mean it.

It does absolutely no good for my door to be open if no one walks through it.

If you have concerns, come and talk to me about them.

If you have ideas to improve things, I want to hear them.

Thank you for all you do.

Thank you for being you.

And Thank you for taking time to be here today, and I'll take questions now.