Strategic Vision · 2020–2025

Cover and inside photos are an aerial shot of Horsebarn Hill with Storrs campus in the background.

Dear Faculty, Staff, and Valued Stakeholders,

I am pleased to share the strategic vision for the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources (CAHNR). While maintaining its roots at the core of the state's land-grant institution, the college has grown to include a diverse set of academic disciplines. This unique combination of disciplines within CAHNR provides opportunities for innovation that can help address today's emerging issues. This strategic vision produces a dynamic, forward-thinking, and focused description of a future that will position CAHNR to be a leader in addressing complex problems we face within our state and regionally, nationally, and internationally.

This strategic vision is a result of many months of hard work led by a committee of 25 CAHNR faculty and staff. The committee held 13 statewide listening sessions; conducted more than 200 individual interviews of key stakeholders; and collected data from funding agencies, a literature review, and peer and aspirational institutions. This process resulted in more than 10,000 data points. The committee analyzed and considered all the information collected throughout the process. The four strategic priorities that emerged from this process represent a consensus blueprint informed by the trends, strengths, areas for improvement, operational goals, and our core values.

Our strategic priorities include ensuring a vibrant agricultural industry and sustainable food supply; enhancing human and animal health; designing sustainable landscapes; and advancing adaptation and resilience in a changing climate. Our progress towards achieving these priorities will require continued engagement and commitment from faculty, staff, alumni, and key stakeholders. I welcome your ideas on how we can form synergistic partnerships and achieve excellence in our mission areas of teaching, research, and extension outreach. I invite you to let us know how CAHNR can continue to provide leadership in addressing challenges that are vital to us in the state, regionally, nationally, and globally.

Indrajeet Chaubey, Dean and Director
April, 2020

The College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources: The foundation of the University of Connecticut

The College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources evolved from the original Storrs Agricultural School, founded in 1881. Since 1893, we have served as Connecticut's land-grant institution. Its origins in agriculture and natural resources and the more recent incorporation of departments that focus on human health have contributed to a college unique in its composition and its broad range of disciplines. College faculty, staff, and students explore the interrelationships among food, natural resources, agricultural production and processing, and human and animal health, seeking to connect them in a manner that is economically viable and environmentally sustainable. In fulfillment of our land-grant mission, we are leading the way to a global sustainable future through scientific discovery and innovation, educating the workforce of tomorrow, and engaging with our local, national, and international communities to address the challenges of a world in constant and accelerating change.

We are:

- Eight academic departments offering Associate of Applied Science, BS, MS, Ph.D., and Doctorate of Physical Therapy degrees
- 164 faculty and 108 professional and classified staff
- 2,345 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students from a great diversity of socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic communities
- 10 research centers and institutes
- A Department of Extension with 11 Extension offices across the state providing programming in all Connecticut cities and towns
- Funding from state and federal agencies, extramural grants, private donors, and nonprofit organizations that supports a wide array of research programs in agriculture, environmental and economic sustainability, natural resources management, human health, animal health, nutrition, food, and healthy and resilient communities, administered by the Storrs Agricultural Experiment Station
- Extension programs in the areas of agriculture, the environment, family and community, food, gardening, health, and youth development
- Facilities that include:
  - 550 acres of farmland used for feed crops; agricultural animal units; livestock arenas; plant science research farm; commercial and research greenhouses; manure composting operation
  - Comprehensive environmental physiology and exercise testing lab; human performance laboratory
  - 2,100-acre forest; atmospheric resources facilities; water resources field station
  - Commercial kitchens and food processing plants; technology incubation space

The Strategic Visioning Process

In the fall of 2019, CAHNR launched a strategic visioning process to map the future for the next ten years. To initiate this effort, a committee of 25 faculty and staff members representing the college's departments and units was charged with developing a strategic vision for the future of CAHNR. The college engaged an outside facilitator to ensure a data-driven and inclusive approach.

The process was designed to generate a comprehensive, forward-looking, transformational vision of a future that will place CAHNR among the most preeminent colleges of its kind in the nation. In developing a collective vision, data and input were obtained from a diverse group of stakeholders, both internal to the University of Connecticut and the college and external, to ensure broad input, support, and ownership.

Input was collected during 15 listening sessions on campus and across the state. Ten listening sessions held at the University of Connecticut were attended by approximately 250 CAHNR faculty, staff, and students. Five sessions were held throughout Connecticut

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and were attended by approximately 85 stakeholders, including private citizens and those representing industry, non-profit organizations, and municipal and state government. Listening sessions were led by the external facilitator along with members of the strategic visioning committee. The sessions resulted in approximately 9,000 individual data points related to external trends and forces affecting the college and stakeholders, strengths and weaknesses of the college, and stakeholders' visions for an ideal CAHNR.

In addition, members of the strategic visioning committee collected input from approximately 200 individuals through phone and in-person interviews. Those interviewed included local, state, and regional stakeholders; students and alumni; representatives of funding agencies; members of internal University of Connecticut departments and units; University of Connecticut leadership; and members of peer and aspirant universities. The committee also received input via a web survey. In total, the committee considered input from more than 500 individuals and more than 10,000 individual data points in developing this strategic visioning document.

The committee members studied all collected data and identified common themes. The committee then developed initiatives and operational goals that will guide the college in realizing the vision during the next ten years.

Mission Statement and Core Values of the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources

We promote human, animal, and environmental sustainability for today and the future by addressing key challenges in agriculture, food, health, and the environment through scientific discovery, education, and community engagement.

The following core values guide the college in carrying out its mission and define a culture for ensuring success in implementing operational goals and strategic initiatives. The CAHNR executive council and the strategic visioning committee identified core values and behaviors associated with each value.

All CAHNR faculty, staff, students, and volunteers should aspire to act in ways consistent with the following values and behaviors:

- **Integrity**
  - State and live our values, guidelines, and policies.
  - Understand our biases and work free of conflicts of interest.
  - Honor our commitments.
  - Do what is right for the greater good.
  - Be transparent and trustworthy.

- **Collaboration, cooperation, and teamwork**
  - Seek and willingly engage in collaborative efforts.
  - Respect differences and be open to sharing ideas.
  - Freely share and give credit.
  - Work together to identify and resolve common challenges.
  - Encourage and value the involvement of all team members.

- **Quality and continuous improvement**
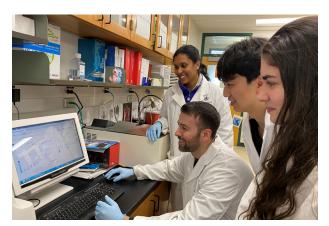 - Set clear expectations for ourselves and others.
  - Challenge ourselves to improve.
  - Hold ourselves accountable.
  - Value and acknowledge excellence and effort.
  - Pursue and implement best practices.

- **Inclusion, respect, and development of people**
  - Hear and seek to understand all voices.
  - Value diversity and inclusion in all we do.
  - Promote a sense of belonging by helping others connect.
  - Value and appreciate all ideas and thoughts.
  - Grow people.

- **Creativity, discovery, and innovation**
  - Constantly pursue new ideas and opportunities.
  - Pursue lower-risk as well as high-risk, high-reward opportunities.
  - Applaud our successes and learn from our failures.
  - Engage diverse thinkers.
  - Seek partners both within and outside the college.

Trends that Affect the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources and Stakeholders

The following ten trends represent major external forces that will influence the success of CAHNR in the next ten years. They are derived from information collected during listening sessions and interviews with stakeholders.

- Changing demographics, including a decline in the traditional college-age population, increasing racial/ethnic/socioeconomic diversity, and growing numbers of students with mental health issues
- The increasing cost of higher education and a concurrent decline in public perception of its economic value
- Rapid evolution of technology, including big data, informatics, genetics, and genomics, and corresponding changes in workforce needs
- The accelerating pace of global environmental change, including climate change, and increasing public awareness of the need for environmental stewardship
- Society's increasingly divergent viewpoints and perspectives on political, health, agricultural, and scientific issues
- Increasingly competitive funding for research, education, and extension initiatives at the state, regional, and national level
- Society's increasing use of, and reliance on, social media for sharing information (and misinformation) and providing the basis for decision-making
- Increasing public awareness of and focus on issues related to food, including production, nutrition and health, and food insecurity
- The changing face of agriculture, including the shift to large-scale corporate farms, changing demographics and needs of family farms, and increases in urban farming
- Growing public demand for non-traditional methods of education, including remote learning, non-degree certification programs (online and on campus), and a move toward short-form, non-credit offerings

Strengths of the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources

The following points describe the foundational strengths of CAHNR. They are derived from information collected during listening sessions and interviews with stakeholders.

- The college has a strong legacy and visibility as a land-grant institution, rooted in its longstanding mission of outstanding research, teaching, and service.
- The college is widely recognized for its strong research, extension, and outreach programs that engage communities and enhance the public good for Connecticut residents and beyond.
- The college is an established resource for education, knowledge, and information at the state, regional, national, and international levels in multiple areas of expertise.
- The college is known for offering community events at the Storrs campus and at Extension locations throughout the state and as a destination for many visitors to the Dairy Bar, Horsebarn Hill, and the UConn Forest.
- The college's leadership actively supports and advocates for its research, teaching, and extension programs.
- The diverse range of disciplines represented in the college offers great potential for innovative collaborations across departments and disciplines.
- The college is a collegial and supportive work environment for its committed, collaborative faculty and staff.
- The college has outstanding academic programs that strongly emphasize experiential learning.
- The college has a student-centered culture that includes strong advising and significant scholarship support, contributing to high retention and graduation rates.

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Vision and Strategic Initiatives

The College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources moves the state, country, and world towards a sustainable future through scientific discovery, innovation, education, and community engagement. Our accomplishments lead to safe, sustainable, and secure plant and animal production systems; healthier individuals and communities; greater protection and conservation of our environment and natural resources; balanced growth of the economy; and resilient local and global communities.

We are dedicated to tackling big challenges and creating a viable future for our world. We will do this by focusing on the following four strategic initiatives:

Ensuring a vibrant agricultural industry and sustainable food supply
- Advance innovative, sustainable approaches to agriculture that align with local resources and markets.
- Expand production and consumption of locally grown, safe, and nutritious foods.
- Promote and support agricultural practices that encourage a healthy lifestyle.
- Increase the contributions of agriculture to the Connecticut economy.
- Provide state-of-the-art research and technical support to meet industry challenges.

Enhancing health and well-being locally, nationally, and globally
- Promote health and prevent disease.
- Build connections at the nexus of human, animal, plant, and environmental health.
- Develop and apply digital health technology to optimize health.
- Foster health equity and food security, using a broad range of approaches, including community engagement.
- Maximize sport and physical performance and improve injury prevention, recovery, and rehabilitation.
- Develop and test personalized lifestyle interventions informed by basic science.

Designing sustainable landscapes across urban-rural interfaces
- Improve quality of the state's waters, including Long Island Sound.
- Develop environmentally aware citizens who participate in sustainable, healthy lifestyles.
- Optimize the sustainability of interconnected food, waste, housing, transport, and energy systems.
- Sustain and enhance ecosystem services.
- Promote informed community landscape development and management.
- Advance small-acreage, intensive agriculture to increase food production near consumers.

Advancing resilience and adaptation in a changing climate
- Engage and educate citizens in climate adaptation.
- Promote resilient and well-adapted coastal Connecticut communities and economies.
- Enhance the management, conservation, and protection of ecosystems.
- Promote human, plant, and animal health that is resilient to effects of climate change.
- Integrate research and outreach to ensure well-informed decision making.

Operational Goals

The strategic visioning team identified six operational goals that are critical to strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of the college. These six operational goals are interconnected and support the research, teaching, and outreach missions of the college.

The six operational goals are:

- Strengthen collaborations and partnerships by creating institutional structure, time, and resources to facilitate programs that tackle complex problems and urgent societal needs.
- Develop a brand and identity and communicate and market them effectively.
- Develop students for workforce readiness and postgraduate training by aligning programs with employment and graduate program needs.
- Lead the university in building environmentally sustainable infrastructure and in implementing, modeling, and teaching environmentally sustainable practices.
- Modernize and enhance facilities to optimize organizational effectiveness and build community.
- Recruit and retain sufficient and diverse employees and volunteers.

Strategic Visioning Committee

Ashley Helton, Associate Professor, Natural Resources & the Environment, co-chair

Justin Nash, Professor & Department Head, Allied Health Sciences, co-chair

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