

## **Faculty & Staff Meeting 12.20.21**

### **Dean Chaubey's Follow-Up to Questions**

#### **1. What new initiatives does the College plan to initiate in 2022 to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and engagement to compete for major research awards from NIH, USDA, and NSF?**

A large majority of CAHNR faculty are successful in receiving small and medium-sized grants. However, submission and success rate in securing large grants, especially multi-disciplinary applications have been somewhat limited. In an effort to encourage our faculty and bolster the submission of large federal grants, the Dean's office has implemented the following steps. We are in discussion with a few faculty members who were identified by Department Heads to lead these efforts. We encourage CAHNR faculty to discuss potential ideas with Dr. Kumar Venkitanarayanan, Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Education.

- A. Seeking nomination of one or two faculty from each department who have the potential to write, lead, co-ordinate and complete submission of large, multi-investigator proposals ( $\geq$  \$1.5 million direct costs).
- B. Meeting of CAHNR Administrative council individually with each nominated faculty to affirm the support mechanisms in place for assisting with proposal submission.
- C. Providing reduced teaching load/course release for a specified period in consultation with the Department Head.
- D. Providing seed funds (up to \$15K) for generating preliminary data and facilitating team building, including travel and proposal team meeting.
- E. Recognizing the faculty effort/role as a PI or Co-PI of successful and unsuccessful large grant submissions in PTR review.
- F. Providing proposal review/editing service from Hanover Research.
- G. Exploring the possibility of appointing a grant specialist fully dedicated for CAHNR to assist faculty with organizing proposal team meetings, working with investigators and collecting/preparing proposal documents (including budget) and facilitating submission to SPS-faculty services.

#### **2. Which incentives does the College plan to implement in 2022 to support interdisciplinary supervision of graduate students and program convergence?**

The college is deeply interested in promoting interdisciplinary graduate programs and research. We welcome new proposals for interdisciplinary graduate programs in CAHNR. Currently we have dedicated funds for supporting interdisciplinary research in the competitive Capacity grant program by supporting graduate assistantships and research supplies. Additionally the annual

major equipment competition was launched primarily for enhancing the research capabilities of faculty and providing research training for interdisciplinary collaboration.

**3. What is the plan to deal with the large number of faculty and staff planning retirement this summer? Will we be allowed to plan for searches as soon as we know these individuals are retiring? Will they be able to be replaced on a 1 for 1 basis as this has not always been the case in the past.**

I fully recognize that CAHNR may have a relatively large number of faculty and staff retirements in the coming months. I discuss these retirements regularly with the department heads in my monthly meetings. We also discuss strategies to address the programmatic needs so that the core functions of the departments are not negatively impacted. In most of the cases, staff positions are approved relatively quickly and sometimes as soon as the retirement/departure becomes official.

Every open staff position presents an opportunity to evaluate the job functions and make adjustments as needed to meet current and future needs of the department. We encourage department heads to think strategically about the job description for every new staff position to effectively meet those needs.

Faculty positions are proposed, reviewed and approved using a different annual cycle. Usually, department heads submit the faculty hiring needs in February/March to coincide with the department budget hearings with the Dean's Office. These discussions are further refined during the spring semester. Dean's Office submits the hiring requests to the Provost in summer. Once the approval from the Provost is obtained, we send communications to the department heads to start the faculty hiring process.

Every faculty retirement/departure presents an opportunity to evaluate the job description, allocation of teaching, research, and extension appointments, and even the possibility of joint appointments involving two CAHNR departments. We encourage every department head to strategically think about the growth areas in the department, how each faculty position requested addresses CAHNR and department strategic vision as well as needs identified by the CAHNR Strategic Vision Implementation Teams. Each of these factors is considered in making decisions for faculty hires.

**4. How will CAHNR ensure a smooth transition with all the highly valued staff leaving UConn in the following months? What is the plan for timely rehire and effective transition of job duties, considering how important the staff is in ensuring the College's functionality?**

We fully recognize the role of staff in ensuring College's functionality. Dean's Office works closely with the Department Heads to discuss staff retirements/departures. In every case involving a critical staff function, we have been able to approve the search as soon as the retirement/departure becomes official. Moreover, some of the searches have been approved with an intent to bring the new staff member before the current staff formally retires so that we can ensure a smooth transition and minimum interruption to the program.