

*Texas A&M University*

# **College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Strategic Plan**

**2022-2027**

This Texas A&M University (TAMU) College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (COALS) Strategic Plan was developed through a deliberative process and stakeholder engagement. Faculty, staff, and students were among stakeholders directly engaged in this process with the goal of positively impacting the broader group of COALS stakeholders including employers and citizens of Texas. This plan was designed to be aspirational and to align with the existing Texas A&M strategic plan, using Key Performance Indicators from the Texas A&M plan.

## **Mission**

*The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences impacts our students and society both locally and globally through a modern land-grant mission; generating new frontiers of knowledge through research, discovery, and innovation integrated with exceptional opportunities in education and service to address pressing needs of a changing world.*

## **Vision**

*Positive impacts of The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (COALS) teaching, research and service in agriculture and biological sciences will be seen, felt, and heard around the state of Texas, the Nation, and the World.*

*Ample opportunities and efforts will be provided to members of the COALS community, leading higher education and society into a more impactful future.*

*COALS students, faculty and staff members will be among the most highly desired and recruited discoverers, thinkers, teachers, and problem solvers; their immense success, opportunities, satisfaction, and holistic support will continue to retain them in the COALS community.*

*The COALS community will continually improve and adapt to meet new societal challenges and provide relevant knowledge and expertise to our stakeholders.*

# Objective 1: ENHANCE Transformational Education and Student Success

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences will continue to build upon our history of undergraduate student success while expanding educational support and opportunities throughout our student's journeys at Texas A&M University and beyond. Impacting the current and future successes of our students, a holistic, student-centered strategy across all dimensions of the student experience, from admission to campus operations, to graduation and beyond, is needed. Our education is designed to measurably improve individuals and society through persistence rates, time to graduate, completion rates, and post-graduation success.

## *Develop Pathways for Successful Admission*

Enhance partnerships with college counselors at high schools and student-focused personnel across other organizations to ease the transition to higher education.

Cultivate a student population to reflect the population demographics of the state of Texas by recruiting and increasing endowed giving to support all outstanding students.

Expand admission agreements with community colleges and two-year institutions, particularly in regions of the state that are currently underserved in our college.

Work with admissions to ensure student success through the admission process.

## *Increase Student Retention*

Enhance the first-year experience program to promote a sense of belonging beyond the first year.

Connect underserved groups and first-generation students with a faculty or peer mentor to support and mentor them throughout their first year and beyond.

Support student engagement through extracurricular activities and well-being activities that increase retention and sense of belonging, especially for underserved and first-generation students.

Facilitate discovery of opportunities for students unsure of their next steps by determining where they can go with what they have already achieved.

Empower academic advising and other staff to make sure every student is supported.

## *Increase Graduation Rates*

Enhance academic and personal engagement with students to provide support that tracks from the first year to graduation.

Facilitate course redesign in large classrooms to promote adaptive learning and personalized education.

Evaluate degrees and classes in high demand and consider degree redesign to expand in the future and better meet student needs.

Build on successes of existing programs to engage students more efficiently and effectively throughout their educational journey.

Close the gap and reduce disparities, especially in graduation rates.

## *Prepare Students for Lifelong success*

Evaluate and revise programs and curriculum, as deemed appropriate by faculty, to improve outcomes such as job placement and employment.

Enhance technological and cultural competency along with other skills for the jobs of tomorrow.

Engage employers and stakeholders to provide feedback on programs.

## **Objective 2: ELEVATE Graduate and Professional Education**

With education and research at the core of COALS mission, it is imperative to elevate graduate and professional education. In serving graduate students' needs, we prepare them to succeed in a changing environment, society, and world. Recruiting high achieving students from different backgrounds and experiences and creating pathways for success of both traditional and non-traditional students solidifies commitments to provide educational opportunities while adding depth and strength to the community of scholars. We affirm graduate students of all types are critical to the success of the COALS modern land-grant mission and acknowledge their invaluable contribution to our teaching and research enterprises. COALS produces graduates prepared to serve, build, and participate in state and federal agencies, educational, research, industrial, government and non-profit communities of excellence.

### ***Recruit the Best Talent Regionally, Nationally and Globally***

Modernize recruitment approaches and platforms for a new generation of digitally and technologically fluent students.

Highlight our faculty, programs, and community to become THE destination for prospective graduate students in agricultural and life sciences.

### ***Engage Graduate Students in Research and Service***

Provide opportunities for students to address critical issues within society and their respective fields.

Strengthen research opportunities by building interdisciplinary research and service communities in high impact areas.

### ***Support Graduate Student Growth and Success***

Provide growth opportunities that honor the Land-Grant Mission of education, research, and extension in agriculture, the environment, and life sciences.

Ensure personalized advisory services and professional development that support and prepare our students for their journey beyond graduation through their professional lives.

Demonstrate strong commitments to graduate students through fair and equitable opportunities for financial support with full consideration for workplace safety.

### ***Encourage Multidisciplinary Learning and Engagement***

Prepare students to participate fully in today's professional and research enterprises.

Leverage opportunities for scholarly growth by partnering with AgriLife agencies' faculty and staff resources to build academic and service experiences.

Encourage and support students to work beyond disciplinary expertise and subject matter competence in interdisciplinary learning opportunities.

### ***Elevate the Graduate Student Experience***

Enhance graduate student opportunities, activities, and encouragement to develop personal and professional leadership skills.

Foster, strengthen and reward service and activities that reflect the core values of Texas A&M University.

Cultivate an environment that will support student mental and physical wellbeing to succeed beyond graduation.

## **Objective 3: Strengthen and Harness our Research Enterprise**

Research is central to COALS as a critical step in addressing contemporary and future challenges to meet our mission and vision. Partnerships with AgriLife faculty and facilities are essential for COALS to succeed in its modern land-grant mission, while also recognizing that individuals within COALS require research partnerships outside of AgriLife for success. Our research stakeholders go beyond Texas to the world scientific community. Together we will develop innovative and disruptive technology and become the beacon to guide agriculture and life science research worldwide through COALS's formidable networks and dedicated faculty, staff, and students.

### ***Aspiring for Research Excellence***

Define and meet stakeholder needs through our land-grant mission while aspiring for excellence in research, environmental responsibility, and sustainability.

Promote research mentorship, recruitment, and retention by fostering a rigorous and supportive research enterprise.

Integrate and enhance our rich diversity of disciplines to strengthen collaboration among groups.

Reach international audiences and capitalize on our international community members' knowledge.

Remain ethical, transparent, and moral in our research beyond reproach.

### ***Provide Clear and Effective Communication for Collaboration***

Proactively lead in promptly and efficiently addressing changes or complex needs of our stakeholders.

Encourage continuous and effective communication venues to increase our engagement and dissemination of our priorities.

Increase multidisciplinary research projects through interdepartmental and intercollegiate collaborations, including social sciences, humanities, and engineering, to improve the dissemination and networking of our mission.

Foster exchange of graduate students among departments and colleges to capture and propagate brilliant ideas within the university.

Promote social events to increase networking and participation among faculty, staff and students that facilitate project collaboration, continuing education, and peer support.

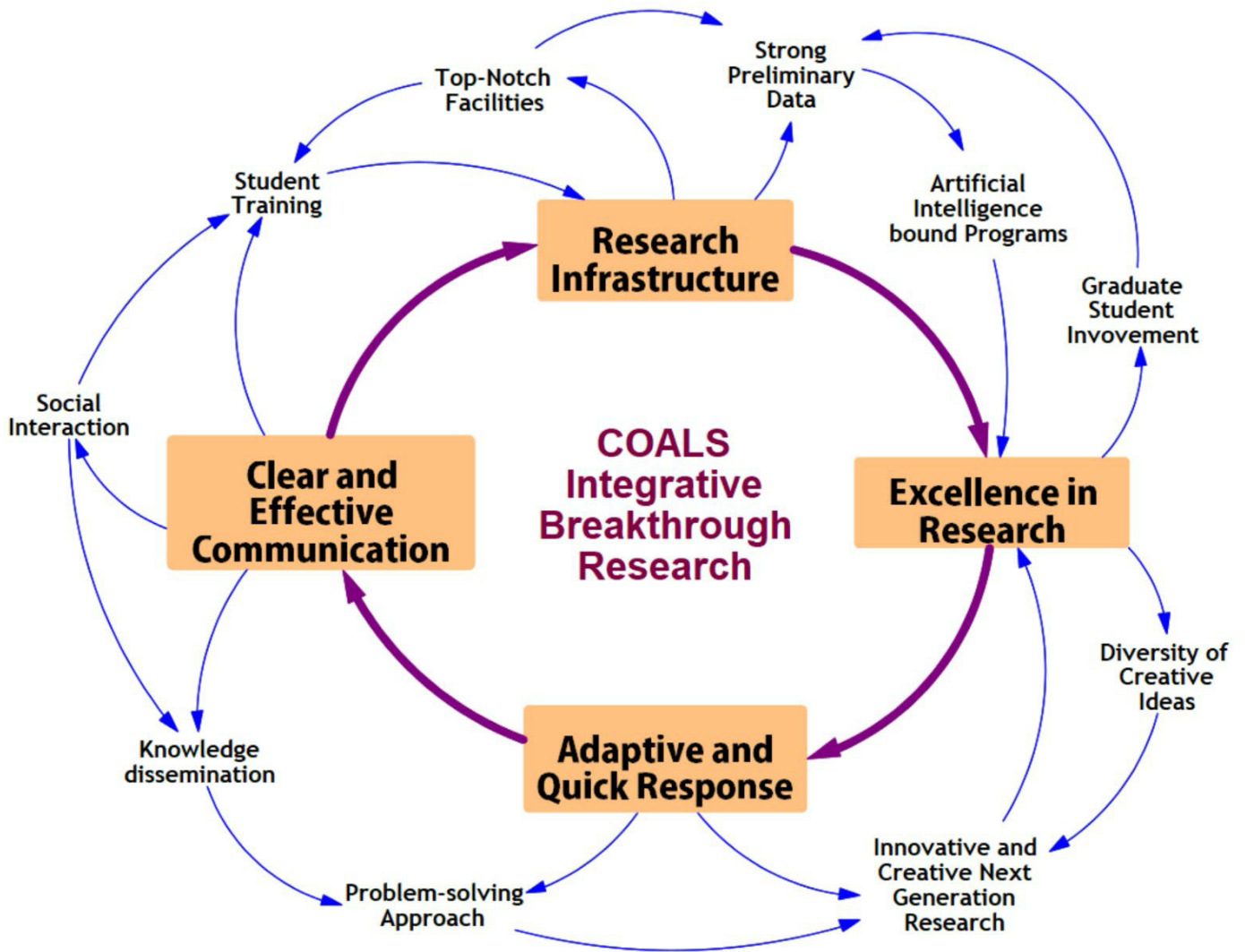
### ***Continually Enhance Research Infrastructure***

Catalyze and support investments in modern facilities while improving our existing research infrastructure.

Enhance computational capacity, including personnel, and improve accessibility to existing scientists and students.

Provide fair and equitable activities for preliminary data collection, grant writing, proposal development, and shared services facilities.

Increase support for graduate students and research staff to incentivize grant writing skills and research involvement.



## **Objective 4: GROW and Support Our World-Class Faculty and Staff**

COALS has a world-class faculty, interdependent on each other's excellence, as well as the students and staff in their programs, their departments, COALS, and the University at large to achieve its mission. These faculty positively impact Aggieland, Texas, the Nation, and the World. Essential to the cultivation of exceptional faculty of universities are recruitment, retention, and training. Thus, programs to improve and evaluate each of these dimensions are essential to growing our world-class faculty for COALS to maintain its competitive edge and to implement its land-grant Mission as effectively and impactfully as possible.

### ***Recruit World-Class Faculty and Staff***

Increase the number of tenure track faculty and academic professional track faculty, recognizing and building on existing strengths and needs.

Make COALS the place among peers that faculty and staff seek to be employed.

Recruit faculty and staff that represent the demographics of the state of Texas and our student body.

### ***Develop and Train World-Class Faculty and Staff***

Partner with AgriLife to develop a world-class faculty and staff mentorship / development program having excellent faculty and staff mentor other faculty, staff, and students.

Provide incentives and opportunities for excellence.

Encourage team building and collaboration within COALS.

Provide support and guidance for clear promotion and/or tenure advancement for faculty.

Provide support and guidance for promotion with clear career ladders for staff.

Provide faculty development to enhance mentoring and teaching of graduate and undergraduate students.

### ***Retain World-Class Faculty and Staff***

Continue to look for flexibility and opportunities for faculty and staff to maintain work-life balance.

Invest in necessary infrastructure and support of faculty, staff and departmental missions.

Recognize the excellence and impact of effective COALS faculty and staff, providing services and programs that enhance the probability of retention.

Support non-tenure track faculty and staff, including service providers, with clear procedures and opportunities for advancement.

Maximize faculty and staff time contributing to core land-grant missions of research, teaching and service.

### ***Evaluate success in faculty and staff engagement***

Evaluate the successes and limitations of COALS in recruiting, retaining, and training faculty and staff using morale and job satisfaction as key metrics for improvement.

Support shared governance by COALS faculty and COALS staff.

## **Objective 5: BE A BEST PLACE to Live, Work, and Learn**

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences is a preeminent land-grant in teaching, research, service, and extension but only remains so because of our talented and engaged workforce of faculty, staff and students and their sense of mission. Our outstanding workforce and our students have opportunities to live, work and learn at many other peer universities as well as outside of a university system. It is imperative that COALS continues to be a best place for serving our workforce, students, clientele, and community holistically in their lives, careers and intellectual growth. COALS strives to be a best place to live, work and learn among peer institutions.

### ***See and Be Seen as the Best***

Improve the visibility of COALS, as a team and community, both inside and outside of COALS.

Evaluate morale and employment satisfaction as a key metric across program and personnel reviews.

### ***Enhance and Develop Thriving Cultures and Communities Within COALS***

Continually improve the cultures of community and belonging in COALS between faculty, staff and students both within and across departments.

Increase and publicize activities for new members of the COALS community, including opportunities to include their families.

### ***Inclusivity for Each Member of the COALS Community***

Improve infrastructure and work environments, making them safer, more inclusive and more accessible.

Normalize and encourage seeking help with mental health services and providing information on where to obtain help.

Be the lead in ADA compliance, universal design, and accessibility principles.

Provide staff with clear advancement opportunities, ways to share concerns and have discussions outside the chain of supervision, and competitive compensation.

### ***Be Family Friendly***

Ensure COALS activities can support and prioritize family and well-being.

Utilize family-friendly work practices such as flexibility in working hours and locations, including remote work, as a means of recruiting and retaining excellent faculty, staff and students.

### ***Communicate Effectively Internally and Externally***

Ensure continuous communication within the COALS community on all relevant topics and in all directions.

Maintain an active, open and respectful dialogue between leadership, faculty, staff and students within the COALS community.

Enhance the local community, leveraging our expertise to encourage tourism such as farm to market experiences, Howdy Farm and The Gardens.



## **Objective 6: ENGAGE Texas and the World to Enhance Our Impact**

The impacts of COALS must be known and experienced beyond COALS. The support for our institution comes from diverse stakeholders and mechanisms for anticipating and addressing their emerging needs, a necessary component to meet our modern land-grant mission. Equally important is continued engagement from faculty, students, staff, and extension professionals with our diverse stakeholders beyond meeting only their immediate needs. Engagements must occur not only with citizens of Texas but also across the nation and world for COALS to achieve its aspirational goals. COALS will endeavor to position itself in the global community, synergizing value placement in the agricultural community, life sciences, natural resources and beyond to impact people everywhere.

### ***Work Beyond Borders***

Help Texans and TAMU, expand regional, national, and international impacts of our faculty, staff, and students.

Expand international research activities including student involvement. Host more international programs and encourage international engagements.

Award productive international activities and celebrate achievements.

Occupy the horizons of knowledge in agriculture and industry and serve various commodity groups.

### ***Broaden Educational Programs***

Expand opportunities for COALS education to occur outside TX and the US, including partnering with extension professionals.

Develop international educational programs and frameworks that fit into the competitive global market.

### ***Increase Visibility***

Elevate broader stakeholders' contributions to and from COALS.

Increase visibility globally and maximize unique strength in areas such as Spanish speaking regions with contribution from a large population of COALS' Spanish speaking constituents.

Promote COALS globally especially in communities that can leverage connections with our faculty, staff and students.

### ***Provide Equitable Opportunities for COALS Faculty, Staff and Students***

Partner with institutions worldwide to develop opportunities for everyone.

Expand virtual exchanges to ensure everyone in the COALS community, regardless of resources, can engage internationally.

## **Objective 7: RECOGNIZE COALS as Unique**

There are numerous components that make COALS unique among TAMU colleges. Among them COALS overall enjoys a close relationship with all agencies under AgriLife, positioning it to champion the land-grant mission of teaching, research, and extension. COALS strives to connect and integrate expertise across the agricultural, environmental and life sciences to serve this mission. COALS is also a premiere teaching and research home for members who work in areas outside of each AgriLife agency. COALS is guided by the core Aggie values of Respect, Excellence, Leadership, Loyalty, Integrity, and Selfless Service. It is characterized by an agricultural heritage that along with its land-grant mission, distinguishes it from other colleges at Texas A&M University and peer institutions. COALS will strive to promote and maintain the best qualities of this cultural heritage as it builds leaders of character, dedicated to serving humanity and the greater good.

### ***Champion the Land-Grant Mission to Students, Staff, Faculty and the Community***

Support AgriLife's mission "to enrich Texas with comprehensive agricultural and life sciences knowledge and services to restore connections among people, agriculture, food, science and the economy"; engaging with partners in the land-grant mission to meet stakeholder needs."

Foster an understanding of the land-grant mission and the value, opportunities, and unique needs this conveys.

Recognize faculty, staff, and students in all COALS disciplines for their individual contributions supporting the land-grant mission.

### ***Be an International Leader of the Land-Grant Mission***

Provide trusted leadership in agricultural, environmental, and life science research and education.

Affirm dedication to meeting the increasing challenges of producing environmentally and economically sustainable solutions to feeding the world and protecting the environment, with increased emphasis on improving health and community resilience.

Promote COALS transparency to be a source of trusted, verifiable and evidence-based scientific information.

### ***Improve Communication Externally and Internally***

The distinct partnership between COALS and AgriLife can complicate both internal and external communication regarding the mission and goals of each. Continued efforts should be made to communicate both shared and different missions, relationships, policies, and impacts of COALS and AgriLife.

Provide a sense of belonging to all members of the COALS community regardless of area of specialty or position.

### ***The Task Force***

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Strategic Plan Task Force developed a five-year strategic plan that aligns the College mission, vision, and priorities with those of the A&M System, Texas A&M University and AgriLife. The strategic plan developed is aspirational (as opposed to prescriptive) and consistent with scenario planning with an adaptive approach. The process included faculty, students, staff, and stakeholder input gathered through forums, surveys, and similar inclusive mechanisms. The Task Force briefed the college administration throughout the process and provided regular updates to the college and agency community of scholars. Prior to developing the final report, the College Strategic Plan Task Force met with the AgriLife Research Strategic Plan Task Force to harmonize relevant areas of the strategic plan.

### ***The Process Used***

The task force first considered and developed a roadmap for the strategic planning process. A SOAR (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results) analysis was conducted by the task force. Broad COALS stakeholder groups were identified and a subset, including all current faculty, staff, undergraduate students, and graduate students were invited to engage through two open and well attended forums. All input obtained from the above was used to develop a draft strategic plan, this was then shared with selected stakeholders, and those involved in the forums for feedback. Feedback was very helpful, mostly in agreement, and used to further improve this COALS Strategic Plan. The task force thanks all participants in this process and welcomes feedback.

### ***The Task Force Team***

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