

Southern University and A & M College System
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA



STRATEGIC PLAN
2003-2008

LEODREY WILLIAMS, Chancellor

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Chancellor's Perspectives

The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center (SUAREC) is proud to present its Strategic Plan for 2003-2008. This plan is reflective of an intensive planning process which involved deliberations and input from all segments of the Center. Administrators, faculty and staff from the research and extension components of the Center were invited to participate in the planning and development of this document. The strategic planning process was driven by the need to bridge the gap between extension and research so that SUAREC can more adequately meet the needs of its diverse clientele. The process was initiated at a retreat at an off campus site, August 5-7, 2003.

The Strategic Plan is intended to guide the future direction of the research and extension programs. The plan is an embodiment of certain core values that are considered vital to our success as a Center. It consists of programmatic goals, situational statements, objectives and action strategies. These will serve as the broad framework for the conceptualization and implementation of projects over time. It is our hope that this plan will serve as the blue print for a brighter tomorrow for Louisiana's food and agricultural industry as we strive to link citizens to opportunities for success.

It must be emphasized that the 2003 Strategic Plan will be a "living document" with the flexibility to change over time based on societal needs. We hope that all readers can benefit from this document and we invite our stakeholders to furnish their input on an ongoing basis. Please be assured that SUAREC is committed to serving its clientele in a manner that is useful in addressing their scientific, technological, social, economic and cultural needs.

Leodrey Williams
Chancellor, SUAREC

INTRODUCTION

Southern University and A & M College (SU) opened its doors to the public in 1881 with 12 students. The University was recognized as a land grant institution in 1890. Since its inception, the University has served as a beacon of hope to those who attended, or were touched by its programs. This is especially true for underprivileged citizens with limited economic and social resources.

Research and extension programs in agriculture and the family and consumer sciences have always been integral parts of the university's mission. Until recently, the extension and research programs were maintained as separate units. In July, 2001, the **SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER (SUAREC)**, commonly referred to as the Ag Center, officially opened and now includes the Cooperative Extension Program as well as the agricultural and family and consumer sciences research program. (Most researchers in SUAREC continue to serve in academic capacities in the College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences). SUAREC serves as the fifth campus in the Southern University System (SUS). SUAREC and the SU Law Center are located in Baton Rouge along with the main SU campus. SUS also maintains campuses in New Orleans and Shreveport.

As a land grant institution, it is imperative that the programs reflect strategic areas outlined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The goals identified in the USDA's FY 2002 – 2007 Strategic plan are as follows:

- Enhance economic opportunities for agricultural producers;
- Support increased economic opportunities and improved quality of life in rural America;
- Enhance protection and safety of the nation's agriculture and food supply;
- Improve the nation's nutrition and health; and
- Protect and enhance the nation's natural resource base and environment.

SUAREC has six base program areas, all of which fit well with the USDA goals listed above. Originally, extension and research personnel each outlined separate program areas for their respective units. However, these were synthesized into the six base program areas listed below:

- Sustainable Agricultural Systems
- Urban Forestry and Natural Resource Management
- Nutrition and Health
- Economics and Community Development
- Family and Human Development
- Youth Development

SUAREC has three primary goals:

- To strengthen the productivity, profitability and competitiveness of Louisiana's agriculture, forestry and fisheries while enhancing the environment and wise use of the natural resources.
- To build leaders and good citizens through youth development.
- To implement nutrition, health, family and community development programs to enhance the quality of life of Louisiana's citizens.

MISSION STATEMENT

To conduct basic and applied research and disseminate information to the citizens of Louisiana in a manner that is useful in addressing their scientific, technological, social, economic and cultural needs.

VISION STATEMENT

To be recognized and valued as a premier provider for practical new discoveries, outreach education and technical assistance in food, agricultural and human sciences that enhance the quality of life of the diverse urban and rural citizenry of Louisiana.

CORE VALUES

As a major component of an 1890 Land Grant University, SUAREC was built upon and continues to maintain a set of core values. These values exemplify the land grant mission of service to its clientele through teaching, research and outreach in the areas of food, agricultural and human sciences. Our shared core values should be clearly reflected in the philosophy and work of SUAREC's faculty and staff, and include:

Accountability. As a service-providing institution, we must be accountable to the public and our clients to insure that their needs are being addressed.

Collaboration and Collective Effort. We must synergize our efforts to make sure our materials, human resources and time are utilized for the good of those whom we serve.

Commitment. Improving the quality of life of our citizenry is a full-time endeavor that requires the full commitment of the SUAREC staff. Because of the myriad of problems facing all segments of our society (youth, elderly, poor and disenfranchised), we must take our work seriously and devote the time and effort needed on a consistent basis.

Courage. In order to bring about change and improvement in the quality of life for our citizens, it is often necessary to step boldly with them. However, this courage should be grounded in the collective will of the constituents.

Respect for Diversity. The people of Louisiana (and the nation and world) reflect a wide range of racial, religious and ethnic backgrounds. This diversity is also reflected within SUAREC, the Southern University System, and in the citizenry that we serve. In order to help solve the problems that our citizens face, we must hear the voice of everyone involved regardless of ethnicity or gender.

Equity. Many of the problems that citizens of the state, nation and world are facing are due to an inequitable distribution of land, wealth, resources and education. As an 1890 land grant university, Southern University has always strived to serve those who were put at a disadvantage, either socially, economically or educationally. We strive to do the greatest good for the greatest number.

Empowerment. The ultimate objective of SUAREC programs and initiatives is to facilitate the empowerment of citizens in local communities. This empowerment should lead to a greater voice in decision-making concerning issues that affect their lives.

Excellence. We strive for excellence in all that we do. We expect this of ourselves, and of others with whom we work. This includes the quality of our research programs, our interaction with the clientele, and our initiatives with youth, and community and leadership development.

Innovation. To accomplish the SUAREC vision requires a high degree of innovation and risk-taking. We cannot be locked into old ways of doing things if those ways are no longer relevant.

Integrity. Integrity is the cornerstone of trust. We need to be honest and straightforward with our counterparts and with our clientele, without entertaining hidden and personal agendas. We must strive to insure that our deeds are reflective of our words.

Investment in People. SUAREC is fully committed to public service and the empowerment of its clientele.

Leadership. Within SUAREC, we must be willing to assert leadership when appropriate, and assist others in leadership positions when necessary.

Mentoring and Nurturing. Mentoring and nurturing are crucial in preparing our youth for meaningful, productive lives. Many communities face critical shortages of mentors, particularly for young African-American males. However, mentoring is not restricted to the young. Mentoring programs are also important in developing community leadership. Additionally, veterans or older SUAREC members should help mentor and nurture new staff members.

Technology. One of the tenets of our land grant mission is to conduct relevant research and to disseminate appropriate technology to the citizenry. SUAREC views

appropriate technology as technology that is economically, environmentally and socially sustainable and user friendly.

Personal and Professional Growth. We recognize the importance of both personal and professional growth. SUAREC personnel are encouraged to pursue activities that promote growth in these areas.

Global Perspective. Understandably, the overwhelming majority of our initiatives and programs fall within the boundaries of Louisiana. However, we recognize that citizens of Louisiana are also world citizens, and are impacted by events of a regional, national, and global nature. We are encouraged to “think globally but act locally.”

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Administrators, faculty and staff (see participants list) of SUAREC met for a two-day retreat to conduct an internal assessment using the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis as the primary tool. Two facilitators, external to SUAREC, assisted with this process. Participants conducted the SWOT analysis in breakout sessions. Participants were not necessarily assigned to the breakout session for their respective disciplines.

Perceived Strengths

- Highly qualified and experienced faculty
- Extensive formal and informal training for faculty
- State-of-the-art technology center
- Extensive branding campaign
- A 375-acre research station
- Potential to establish another experiment station
- Existing partnerships

Threats / Challenges

Collectively, the challenges identified during this process were very general in detail and cut across all program areas, and are thusly presented below:

- Lack of public’s awareness of the Ag Center as an entity
- Relevance of existing research and publications
- Ineffective communication, both internally and externally
- Varied and diverse responsibilities of faculty
- Limited financial resources

Opportunities

- Increased financial resources
- More relevant services/programs for our clientele
- Recognized as leaders in agricultural research and public service
- Enhanced ability to collaborate on a multi-state basis.

Program Area: Sustainable Agricultural Systems (SAS)

Goal 1: Improve agricultural sustainability and profitability

Objective To develop research and extension activities designed to improve animal and plant productivity and or profitability.

Situation

Sustainable animal and plant productivity and profitability are of paramount importance to the agricultural sector of Louisiana. A wide variation exists in agricultural productivity and profitability. The average farm size in Louisiana is 306 acres. Farms vary in size from large commercial operations to small-scale operations. The latter are faced with the greatest challenge to generate sufficient income. Of the 27,000 farms in the state in 1992, slightly more than 60 percent reported sales below \$20,000 annually. Economic opportunities exist for small agricultural producers who adopt or incorporate alternative livestock and crop enterprises and management systems such as goats, rabbits, vegetables, fruits, herbs, and management intensive grazing in their agricultural enterprises. Home gardeners are an example of agricultural stakeholders who would benefit from various aspects of sustainable agriculture. SUAREC is committed to providing relevant research and extension information for our stakeholders.

Action Strategies

1. Hire additional experienced personnel capable of responding to clientele needs.
2. Continue to expand building projects, modernize facilities and acquire adequate land for research/extension programs.
3. Continue to conduct research and outreach activities geared to traditional and non-traditional agricultural stakeholders.
4. Continue to create and enhance marketing opportunities in traditional and alternative outlets, such as farmer's markets, community supported agriculture (CSA), and other outlets.
5. Continue collaborating with Louisiana State University (LSU) Ag Center, other

universities/colleges, external agencies, and campuses within the Southern University System.

Goal 2: Promote good environmental stewardship.

Objective: To seek ways to utilize our natural resources in an environmentally safe manner.

Situation

Promoting good environmental stewardship is a wise use of our natural resources. Our clientele are often unaware of the dangers of poor stewardship and of the methods that constitute good stewardship. A SAS program that deals with organic farming, judicious use of pesticide, waste utilization, composting, etc, would be valuable in assisting these stakeholders. Research dealing with the utilization of local and regional abundant, renewable resources should be helpful in promoting good, environmental stewardship.

Action Strategies

1. Conduct research and develop informational brochures, flyers, pamphlets and handbooks specifically targeting environmental stewardship and the small producer.
2. Conduct field days, demonstrations and tours related to sustainable farming practices.
3. Work with youth in communities to develop sustainable and environmental friendly practices early in life.

Goal 3: Promote stable, prosperous farms, families and communities.

Objective To seek ways to involve youth and community stakeholders in appropriate SUAREC research and outreach programs.

Situation

The average age of an active participant in the farming community in the state of Louisiana is 55. The current trend is such that youth are not being involved or are not interested in being involved in production agriculture. If farm families and agricultural based communities are to survive, more youth must realize the benefits of rural life and become engaged in maintaining their communities. Additionally, appropriate information and resources must be available for their use in the decision making processes.

Action Strategies

1. Continue developing communication materials to promote, inform and connect stakeholders, research, and extension personnel.

2. Enhance the dissemination of information and facilitate feedback to address clientele needs.
3. Increase research scientists' participation in various community group functions.
4. Continue to recognize noteworthy stakeholders for their involvement and promotion of the SUAREC mission.
5. Develop agricultural related educational experiences for youth.
6. Create additional ways to help address the needs of non-traditional stakeholders (urban, suburban and ethnic groups).

Program Area: Community and Economic Development

Goal 1: Foster entrepreneurial networks that promote innovative and healthy business endeavors in targeted communities in the state of Louisiana.

Objective To increase the networks and connections among faith-based entities with other regional, state and global enterprises.

Situation

Community and economic development programs should encourage efforts that will increase the opportunities for organizations both public and private to significantly impact targeted communities in the state of Louisiana. One of the key factors impacting urban and rural communities is the need to have an adequate knowledge and skill based economy to meet the needs of our society. Information and technology impact all types of industries from retail and wholesale to manufacturing and service firms. It is changing the speed of business, the skills of workers, and the expectations of consumers. Linking community and economic development strategies to these trends will be critical.

Action Strategies

1. Develop a "Network Support Plan" to encourage the establishment of networks.
2. Develop a "How To" resource manual to enhance and build strong working relationships with businesses.
3. Investigate the potential for an incubator or innovation center that fosters technology, transfers and connects regional economic partners, businesses, and higher education and venture capitalists.

Goal 2: Capture the opportunities of the new, knowledge-based economy by providing a strong, continuous network between community based organizations and education.

Objective To identify the appropriate role of SUAREC in addressing outreach education and its support to community based organizations.

Action Strategies

1. Work with existing organizations to strengthen links between businesses, community based organizations and outreach education.
2. Conduct a literature review to ascertain education theories that support business development and expansion.
3. Continue to secure external funds to expand outreach educational programs as related to economic and community development.

Goal 3: Support the high quality of life and growing diversity of targeted communities in the state of Louisiana.

Objective: To recognize and actively engage the growing cultural diversity in the state of Louisiana.

Action Strategy

1. Ensure community and economic development efforts are inclusive of all minorities in the state of Louisiana.

Goal 4: Promote active partnerships between businesses, community based organizations, public agencies and elected leadership.

Objective To develop long-term and active working relationships among business organizations, community groups, public agencies and elected leadership.

Action Strategy

1. Convene roundtable discussions to target specific and general issues impacting target communities.

Program Area: Family and Human Development

Goal: Respond to the needs of diverse families and family structures by developing educational experiences that stimulate active learning, critical thinking and problem solving.

Objectives:

1. To utilize capacities of the Land Grant Institution to respond to needs of diverse families in urban and rural communities.
2. To expand partnerships with communities and organizations to share resources and respond to needs and expectations by honoring the contributions of each partner.
3. To establish and participate in multi-state and multi-institutional efforts to create a critical mass of expertise related to priority issues.
4. To develop strategies for building revenue streams from foundations and corporations through sponsorships, grants and contracts.
5. To provide well-designed educational approaches that stimulate active learning, critical thinking and problem solving.
6. To implement outcome-based program planning and evaluation.
7. To enhance access to educational services that support local, state, national, and global constituencies and market Family and Consumer Sciences excellence and expertise.

Situation

The family of today is like never before. Whereas traditionally, the family consisted of a mother, father and children, today's families may consist of two parents of the same sex, headed by a single parent of either sex or headed by a grandparent. No matter how the family is structured, the basic need for information and resources to advance the well-being of the family exists. Moreover, information must be available to address the new and diverse family and address age old rites of passage such as parenting, childcare, economic stability, aging, consumer education, change and managing stress.

Action Strategies

1. Develop a resource database to easily identify resources that can be used to meet client needs immediately.
2. Organize focus groups, community days, and open houses for communities and local organizations to increase awareness and develop new partnerships.
3. Provide an environment for faculty to disseminate knowledge in diverse and meaningful ways.

4. Foster the integration of research, teaching, and outreach to improve the quality of life of Louisiana citizens in rural and urban communities.
5. Increase participation in regional projects.
6. Expand work with communities to address critical family, social, health, environmental and economic issues.
7. Increase capacity for rapid response to constituent inquiries.
8. Increase transfer of research knowledge and best practices to professionals, decision makers and the public.
9. Use advisory committees and needs assessments to strengthen responsiveness to public constituencies.
10. Promote awareness of the outreach programs of SUAREC.

Goal 2: Promote scholarship in family and human development through discovery, application and dissemination of knowledge.

Objectives

1. To develop a focused research agenda for each family and human development area of specialization.
2. To develop and reward collaborative groups to encourage multidisciplinary scholarship.
3. To develop the infrastructure and facilitate acquisition of diverse resources to support scholarship.
4. To promote the integration of scholarship with instruction, outreach activities, and professional practices.
5. To improve the quality of research projects.
6. To assure that SUAREC research funding is used to enhance external grants and publications.
7. To enhance faculty expertise in writing and competitive external funding.
8. To foster a collegial community in which trust and respect facilitate productivity and rewards for excellence.

Situation

Issues related to the capacity of families and communities to meet human needs are paramount concerns in today's society, as are matters of economic viability and development in the industries and service sectors which address consumer needs. Research in family and consumer sciences is needed more today than ever as a guide to public policy decisions and in the assessment of intervention programs. The Family

and Consumer Sciences program has steadily increased its research productivity over the past five years, as reflected by publications in scholarly journals and presentations at professional meetings.

Action Strategies

1. Carefully review research programs to ensure they are in line with SUAREC mission and goals.
2. Involve stakeholder input in the development and implementation of research programs.
3. Increase communication between researchers and extension specialists to ensure relevancy of research programs to stakeholders.
4. Encourage and support editorships of professional and scholarly journals as well as appointments to serve as a juror for creative scholarship in the design arts.
5. Organize workshops on grant-writing.

Program Area: Nutrition and Health

Goal 1: Enhance the focus on increasing healthy eating and physical activity among Louisiana's citizens, especially the economically disadvantaged.

Objective To strengthen current nutrition and health education programs and activities to improve dietary and physical activity patterns of SUARECs target populations.

Situation

A scientific consensus on the relationship between diet and chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and some forms of cancer has emerged. To reduce chronic disease risk, it is recommended that Americans consume a healthy diet that can be achieved through an increased intake of fruits and vegetables, complex carbohydrates and fiber and a decreased intake of fatty foods. These recommendations also include limiting sugar, alcohol and salt intake and including moderate physical activity. As a result of national and local nutrition education campaigns and programs, substantial improvements have been made in the nation's health profile in the last 20 years. However, many groups have not benefited equally from the advancements in nutrition and health science. According to recent statistics, leading diet related causes of death in Louisiana in 1997 were heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes (Louisiana State Center for Health Statistics, 1997). Results from

the Louisiana Behavioral Risk Factors survey revealed that of the adult population: 33 percent are overweight, 35 percent get no leisure time or physical activity and only 18 percent consume the recommended five fruits and vegetables a day. Similar results are recorded for children. (Chronic Disease Control Program, 1997). There is a need for research that will assist in developing effective interventions that will improve the eating and physical activity behaviors of Louisiana residents.

Action Strategies

1. Incorporate research components in the evaluation of nutrition programs to monitor results and demonstrate program effectiveness.
2. Conduct an assessment of current nutrition education needs and practices of target populations served by SUAREC.
3. Increase use of tested social marketing interventions designed for healthy eating and physical activity.
4. Develop and initiate an obesity research project for diverse populations of all age groups in collaboration with SU Family and Consumer Sciences, Psychology and Nursing faculty.
5. Identify existing and develop new nutrition and health research and outreach partnerships.

Goal 2: Promote food security among SUAREC target populations.

Objective To support existing outreach networks and federal and private organizations that are working to increase food security among Louisiana residents.

Situation

Food security means that people have access, at all times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members. At a minimum, this includes availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods and assured ability to acquire personally preferred foods in a socially acceptable way. According to the Food Security Institute, Louisiana has the fourth largest number of food insecure households in the nation with 13.93 percent of households' food insecure. It also ranks number 11 for households insecure with hunger (Hunger and Food Insecurity in the Fifty States: 1998-2000). There are a large number of limited resource families in Louisiana that are found in target areas that SUAREC serves. These families may lack the knowledge, information, or skills to utilize existing resources to improve their quality of life.

Action Strategies

1. Assume active positions in community and statewide food security collaborative activities.
2. Expand home gardening programs to train more residents to improve their diets by growing quality, nutritious fruits and vegetables to supplement their food budgets.
3. Conduct workshops to increase public knowledge about food security issues.
4. Identify new methods for encouraging poor people to qualify and participate in programs that can help them obtain nutritious food.
5. Pursue USDA Community Food Projects Competitive Grants and other external funding for community food security projects.
6. Survey clients and determine interest in developing other communitywide food security efforts.
7. Provide research assistance to local agencies and organizations addressing hunger and food security.

Goal 3: Expand our research activities in nutrition and health through partnership and collaboration with other USDA agencies, health care systems, research institutions and the Southern University Center of Excellence for Food, Nutrition and Health Promotion.

Objective To establish a partnership with Pennington Biomedical Research Center (PBRC).

Situation

PBRC is conducting research on studies that target nutrition, obesity, hypertension, diabetes and other diseases. Research and outreach activities in these areas at SUAREC will complement ongoing studies. Researchers at both institutions have expressed interest in collaboration. Our joint knowledge and experiences will help in the Center's expansion and improvements.

Action Strategies

1. Establish a working group to pursue external funding in the areas of nutrition, food, and health.
2. Create a forum for scientific exchange of ideas among institutions.

3. Initiate collaborative research projects with the PBRC utilizing SUAREC's metabolic kitchen.
4. Participate in joint nutrition and health activities such as tours, seminars, and conferences.

Objective To establish partnerships with USDA agencies, health care systems, research institutions and the Southern University Center of Excellence for Food, Nutrition and Health Promotion.

Situation

The incidence of chronic disease burdens low income at-risk populations. These populations would benefit from carefully designed and implemented programs targeting healthy lifestyles and chronic disease risk reduction. This represents a public health challenge facing the nation and state. These trends demonstrate the great need for collaborative basic and applied research activities targeted at eliminating health disparities, food insecurity and problems associated with food safety.

Action Strategy

1. Establish partnerships with agencies and institutions to improve health and well-being of low-income at-risk families.

Goal 4: Investigate food safety practices in low-income households.

Objective To identify and document food safety behavior among families served by SUAREC.

Situation

There are millions of microorganisms called pathogens that can invade our food supply and cause illnesses. Foodborne illnesses are a major public health concern in the United States. Each year approximately 76 million people get sick and 5,000 die because of foodborne illnesses. Low-income families are receptive to food safety messages, but they do not follow the steps most of the time. This causes problems, especially here in the south because of higher temperatures and humidity.

Action Strategies

1. Prepare and administer survey questionnaires related to food safety, knowledge, attitudes and practices in the households.

2. Conduct in depth household observation and microbial testing of household kitchen counters and kitchen utensils.
3. Use the above to conceptualize research proposals.

Objective To educate household members to follow simple steps to food safety.

Situation

There are guidelines to practice food safety but consumers need to know why and how to handle food in order to have a safe and healthy life. Household food safety practices and education are needed to minimize the risk of the foodborne illnesses.

Action Strategies

1. Train the trainer. Develop educational classes for head of households, teachers, and local school cafeterias.
2. Conduct educational outreach through seminars, workshops, expositions, etc. to reach all members of target families.
3. Develop simple, practical and easy steps on food safety practices in the form of fact sheets, flyers, and handouts.

Program Area: Youth Development

Goal 1: Conduct an aggressive educational program designed to improve standardized test scores for Louisiana youth.

Objectives

1. To decrease the number of youth failing standardized tests.
2. To identify and train youth groups on test taking skills.

Situation

During the past six years much has happened in education. There have been increasing demands for higher standards and accountability systems to ensure that standards are attained. While many still condemn the ills of American education, there is also greater optimism among some in the ability of American school/community programs to prepare youth for the future. After-school programs are implemented largely in an effort to improve education. However, a recent study found that an astronomical sum of young people is not participating in after-school or community-based programs. One national study found that 60 percent of youth were not involved in any form of community-based activity. A second study indicated that approximately 80 percent of youth had not

participated in a structured out-of-school activity. A survey sponsored by the YMCA revealed that more than half of the youth surveyed indicated they would be interested in more after-school programs in their community.

Action Strategies:

1. Develop the total youth program by:
 - Designing innovative curricula that fit the needs and interest of youth
 - Targeting different skill levels through experiential learning
 - Testing new curricula with intended audiences
 - Implementing continuous evaluation of program

Goal 2: Increase volunteer/parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

Objectives

1. To train agents and existing volunteers to work with and teach potential volunteers about working with youth.
2. To train staff how to recruit and support volunteers and parents.
3. To train staff to recognize and evaluate volunteers and parents' success.

Situation

Volunteers and parental involvement are the keys to success of any youth program implemented by SUAREC. When community groups team with volunteers and parents to support learning, children are inclined to succeed not only in school, but throughout life. Researches have shown that volunteer/parental participation in extra curricula activities improve students' behavior and learning. Such participation is critical in the early stages of the educational process and throughout a child's entire academic career.

Action Strategies

1. Develop a plan for engaging volunteers/parents in parish programs.
2. Design a volunteer/parents development curriculum and educate youth development agents and other agents who have youth development responsibilities.
3. Organize a volunteer/parent development committee in each parish.
4. Conduct a volunteer/parent conference for volunteers.
5. Develop a collaborative volunteer/parent education program with other organizations.

Goal 3: Focus on innovative youth development activities that allow youth from various communities to gain competencies in life skills and develop their full potential.

Objective To implement innovative programs for rural and urban youth with emphasis on youth from underprivileged environments.

Situation

An increasing proportion of American children are at substantially higher risks for negative outcomes such as undernourishment, child abuse and neglect, poor health, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, violence and academic underachievement, due to conditions out of their control. Current statistics indicate that 16.2 percent of U.S. children live in poverty. The percentage of children living in poverty is even greater in the state of Louisiana. The poverty rates of youth in Louisiana totals 247,970 accounting for 23 percent of youth under age 18. Most experts agree that 30 percent of youth in school now will drop out prior to graduating.

Action Strategies

1. Implement innovative programs for rural and urban youth.
2. Focus the learning experience on children, youth, and families in communities from at risk environments to increase self-reliance, self-esteem, and confidence.
3. Organize community clubs and interest groups.
4. Develop a promotional packet for the youth's development program and train extension agents and volunteer leaders to use the packet.
5. Design and disseminate an instrument that can be used to assess the skills and performance of youth.

Goal 4: Develop a youth entrepreneurship program that meets the needs of community participants.

Objective To enhance the lifestyle and skills of young community members by increasing the number of successful entrepreneurs.

Situation

Much research has been conducted on the effects of adolescent employment. Some positive effects of adolescent employment include increased personal responsibility and earning power; development of social skills; improved grades

and participation in school-related activities; higher self-esteem; and increased self-direction and independence. Further, research suggests that youth who work in non-structured work environments have higher grades than those who did not work or worked in a structured work environment. Youth are our nation's future. It is important that they are advised that self employment is another option to financial freedom.

Action Strategies

1. Teach youth the theoretical aspects of entrepreneurship.
2. Offer self-esteem training as preparation for self-employment.
3. Teach business ethics and business etiquette as prerequisite to business start-up.
4. Teach professional image skills for traditional employment and self employment.
5. Provide general business education training.
6. Increase the level of awareness of available funding.
7. Assist entrepreneurs in achieving funding.
8. Show aspiring entrepreneurs how to identify potential business opportunities.

Goal 5: Provide educational information to rural and urban youth on the harmful effects of tobacco use.

Objective To reduce the number of youth consuming tobacco products.

Situation

Although cigarette smoking has declined significantly among high school students, the smoking rate among middle school students has remained the same. Youth tend to underestimate the likelihood that they will become addicted. Almost 75 percent of youth who smoked daily while they were in high school are still smoking seven to nine years later, even though in high school only 5 percent thought they would be smoking five years later. Studies have shown the younger a person is when he or she begins smoking, the less likely he or she will be able to quit later. A 2003 Louisiana youth risk behavior survey revealed that 25 percent of the participants smoked cigarettes during the past month and 12 percent smoked cigarettes on 20 or more days during the past month.

Since the first Surgeon General's report on smoking and health in 1964, 27 additional reports have concluded that tobacco use is the single most avoidable cause of disease, disability, and death in the United States. The 2004 report of the surgeon general's, "The Health Consequences of Smoking," updates the evidence and conclusions of the impact of smoking on health. It is essential that tobacco training continues to be a part youth education.

Action Strategies:

1. Continue conducting educational programs in schools and community centers.
2. Update educational fact sheets and brochures on tobacco use.
3. Organize Youth Tobacco Summit.

Program Area: Urban Forestry and Natural Resource Management

Goal 1: Enhance the understanding of urban forest ecosystem and improve the management of urban forests and natural resources worldwide.

Objective: To conduct urban forest ecosystem analyses to provide quantified, compelling evidence of urban forest benefits and costs and to help develop sound urban forest management practices.

Situation

Urban forests and their effects on society and the environment are becoming increasingly recognized and important, yet little is known about this resource. In order to have a comprehensive and integrated urban forest resource management system, urban planners need to utilize the full range of technological resources at their disposal to mitigate the effects of declining air quality, enhanced ultraviolet (UV) radiation loads, elevated carbon dioxide levels leading to the "urban heat islands" phenomenon, loss of green space and habitat for urban wildlife, urban pest, storm water runoff, as well as rising utility costs for urban dwellers.

To better understand the full impact of urban forestry management choices on the urban forest benefits, we must trace the effects of management options step by step - from their effects on urban forestry processes and structure, to the resulting functions, to the final value of the urban forest.

It is essential to have quantified, compelling evidence of urban forest benefits and costs (functions) to support the sound urban forest management practice. Therefore, the scientists and extension specialists at Southern University have proposed the following strategies:

Action Strategies

1. Use Geographic Information System (GIS) and selected models to quantify the urban forest structure and function.
2. Quantify the environmental benefits of urban forests, carbon sequestration and the urban forest effects on air quality.
3. Quantify urban forest effects on UV exposure in relation to proper vegetation design.
4. Conduct advanced tree biology and arboricultural research.
5. Assist agencies, cities, and local communities in developing sound management plans.
6. Establish collaborative studies with federal, state, and other agencies to address urban sprawl, heat island, air quality improvement and species rating pertaining to urban forest and urban ecosystems.

Objective To facilitate urban forestry technology transfer and information dissemination locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Situation

Urban and community forestry is no longer just basic street tree planting. It is an essential and highly valued component of numerous large-scale, long-term environmental and community sustainability projects. Urban and community forests improve environmental quality, enhance individual and community well being, provide a range of services to communities, and produce a healthier environment for the majority of the U.S. population.

Our knowledge of the significance of urban and community forests is expanding rapidly as research continues to demonstrate the important role these forests play in improving the quality of urban life. By sharing more effective information and state-of-the-art technologies, urban and community forestry technology transfer provides a mechanism for continuous improvement of our urban ecosystems.

Action Strategies

1. Identify research and information needs of customers.
2. Communicate research results and other information with customers through publications, conferences, workshops, and other educational resources.
3. Communicate to the public the benefits and costs of urban forest.
4. Facilitate international scientific and technical exchange in urban forestry and natural resources on a long-term and short-term basis with mutually interested countries.
5. Facilitate the exchange of information among researchers, practitioners, and others involved with urban forestry.
6. Provide technical assistance urban forest management.

Goal 2: Utilize cutting edge spatial technologies and environmental simulation to address the role of urban forest ecosystem in urban water quality and urban hydrology

Objective To use the application of GIS, Global Positioning System (GPS) and computer-based mathematical simulation to quantify water quality and flood prediction in relation to urban forest ecosystems.

Situation

Urban forests have a direct impact on water quality and flood mitigation. In order to capitalize on comprehensive and integrated urban forest resource management system, urban planners need to utilize the full range of technological resources at their disposal to mitigate the effects of floods, non-point source pollution and stormwater runoff. It is essential to have quantified, compelling evidence of urban forestry benefits and costs (functions) to support the sound urban planning. Therefore, the scientists at Southern University have proposed the following strategies to quantify, characterize, and document urban hydrology and water quality, in relation to the urban forest ecosystems in the state of Louisiana.

Action Strategies:

1. Quantify the urban forest distribution and inventories by utilizing GIS and GPS.
2. Establish a Geospatial Extension Specialist position for GIS and GPS

education, training and workforce development.

3. Quantify urban forest effects on water quality and quantity.
4. Integrate collaborative studies with federal, state, and other agencies to address water issues within the urban green infrastructure.

Goal 3: Strengthen the knowledge base of Louisiana’s citizens in the utilization and profitability of urban waste wood.

Objective To enhance socially disadvantaged participation in the profitability of urban wood waste.

Situation

With the ever increasing development of forested lands into urban areas, trees are becoming more susceptible to removal for development and construction purposes. Additionally, storm blowdowns, natural mortality, severe insects and disease damage all contribute to the loss of woody plants. In the United States over 200 million cubic yards of urban tree and landscape residue are generated every year. This leads to a higher demand for wood and wood products, which places more of a demand on forestlands, and imported forest products. The use of recycled wood in our urban area could potentially contribute to the conservation of forestland resources by generating wood products from trees that need to be removed. A community-based education program on waste reduction and recycling and an effort to educate citizens and small minority tree care businesses on how to utilize wood from their removals would greatly enhance Louisiana’s economy and reduce pollution from landfills and space.

Action Strategies

1. Provide education and training for minorities in the practice of using urban wood from municipal tree removals for traditional wood products.
2. Provide training to empower minorities through ownership and pollution reduction from landfills.

Objective To determine the effects of several urban tree wood waste mulch on the dynamics of growth and development (physiology, morphology, and anatomy) of urban trees.

Situation

Mulching is an agricultural (including urban forestry and arboricultural) practice in which a layer of organic or inorganic materials is placed on the soil surface or mixed into the top few inches of soil. In the past, organic mulches were used to produce ornamental, fruit, and forest trees, but with the advent of modern

agrochemicals this soil management system was largely displaced. Increased availability of organic residues from cities are renewing interest in the use of organic mulches, not only in the traditional application of crop residues, but also in the use of composted and uncomposted urban wastes. Urban wood waste is the portion of the wood waste stream that can include sawn lumber, pruned branches, stumps, and whole trees from street and park maintenance. The primary constituents of urban wood waste are used lumber, trim, shipping pallets, trees, branches, and other wood debris from construction and demolition clearing and grubbing activities.

Action Strategies:

The scientists at Southern will employ the following strategies to address urban tree waste:

1. Determine the effect of mulch chemical composition on the availability of organic nutrients.
2. Estimate N mineralization rates under field and laboratory conditions.
3. Determine the effects of several urban tree wood waste mulch on the dynamics of growth and development of young live oak trees.
4. Determine carbon cycling, sequestration, disease and rhizosphere dynamics.
5. Disseminate findings to Louisiana's citizens through workshops, brochures, pamphlets, and articles.

Goal 4: Enhance minority participation in urban forestry natural resource management

Objective Increase minority awareness and participation in urban forestry and natural resource management through extension education and outreach.

Situation

Increasing the involvement of minority and underserved populations in urban and community forestry programs has been a crucial issue. How to educate minority sectors in the care and stewardship of urban forests where they live, work, and play is an important task at the national level. Creating a strong network of minority communities, non-profit urban and community forestry organizations, federal agencies, and private industries to better target the needs of the communities is an urgent task. Information on management of urban and community forestry need to be given to the minority communities.

Action Strategies

1. Develop and disseminate extension education packages pertaining to the virtues of urban forestry.
2. Prioritize technical training to a multi-cultural community.
3. Conduct outreach programs to inform people about the social, economic, and ecological values of the urban and community forests.
4. Stimulate the development of urban forest investments from both the public and private sector.
5. Establish a national network of minority leaders in urban and community forestry.

Goal 5: Attain and maintain excellence in natural resources management and conservation areas of priority to societal/scientific needs.

Objective To develop natural resources conservation research, education and community outreach activities that will enhance the environment and improve the social, economic and ecological values.

Situation

The Center is committed to advancing scientific knowledge of natural resource conservation and management research and education in an ecologically, socially and economically sound sustainable manner. Louisiana is blessed with rich soil, abundant rainfall, flat topography, warm and humid climate and a long growing season conducive for the production of various agricultural crops and timber. Hence, wise management of these resources will not only advance Louisiana's economy, but will help promote stable, prosperous farm families and communities.

Action Strategies

1. Employ qualified researchers to augment research programs in urban forestry management.
2. Develop research, education, and outreach activities centered on preservation, protection, effective management, and maintenance of Louisiana's natural resources.
3. Disseminate research findings to the scientific community and to our various

constituencies.

4. Conduct regular project evaluations to determine the significance and impact on society.
5. Develop and strengthen research collaboration with private and governmental agencies, Louisiana State University, and community colleges.
6. Sustain and expand the research components of the Urban Forestry graduate program.

Goal 6: Enhance the understanding of climate change and its impact on the natural resources through research, education, and outreach.

Objectives

1. To assess the current environmental stresses and determine their relationship to climate change.
2. To determine the effect of climate variability on the natural resource base.

Situation

Changes in greenhouse gases and aerosols constitute key factors in global and regional changes in temperature, precipitation, and other climate variables, resulting in local and regional changes in soil moisture, an increase in global mean sea level, and prospects for more severe extreme high temperature events, floods, and droughts in some places. Present global CO₂ concentrations in the atmosphere are 130 percent of pre-industrial levels. The global surface temperature this century is warmer than any other century in the past millennium. The global average temperature has increased by about 1° F over the last century and is projected to raise another 2-6.5°F by year 2100. The last two decades have been the warmest this century. Average global sea level has risen about 4 to 10 inches in the last hundred years, and is projected to rise another 6-38 inches by the year 2100.

Action Strategies

1. Conduct assessment of climate changes and its impact on society.
2. Use ecological models to predict the effects of climate change on the urban forests.
3. Evaluate the impact of climate change on the incidence of hurricanes and forest fires.

Conclusion

What began as an exercise of self evaluation has now become a framework for excellence. This strategic plan is a living document that the faculty and staff have fully embraced.

Implementation will occur immediately and the programming efforts will continue over the next several years. An implementation team will be appointed for each program area. The implementation teams will be monitored and evaluated by the administration.

It is the intent of SUAREC's administration, faculty and staff to use this plan in *"Linking Citizens of Louisiana with Opportunities for Success."*

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