

Jim Ippolito – A vision for Student Success, Philosophy for CAS Teaching and Learning Success, and the Role of Associate Dean for Academic Programs for Ensuring Student Success

The College of Agricultural Sciences at Colorado State University is focused on being the leader in food safety, security, and sustainability of natural resources and agroecosystems for enhancing the well-being of humans, plants, and animals. We work with stakeholders to collaboratively identify and solve critical needs, and engage in knowledge dissemination for the betterment of the agricultural sector globally.

Given this important role played by the College of Agricultural Sciences, it should come as no surprise that first and foremost our focus should be on student development. Many of us came through similar university settings, providing us the tools and guidance needed to solve critical needs, achieve goals, and hone talents. The time is now to utilize our talents and develop current/future students so that they become successful in their communities, society, and to solve the grand challenges of tomorrow.

In order to create the best and brightest students of tomorrow, my philosophy is to ensure that they are well versed in the fundamentals of agroecosystem science, receive current, state-of-the-art theoretical and practical hands-on training, and thus have the necessary tools to move forward successfully post CAS-CSU. I personally follow this philosophy daily in my teaching, research, and outreach programs. Furthermore, I believe the CAS currently has the foundation set in our faculty and staff to provide our students these tools. Our college has historically taken pride in providing an environment of teaching excellence, a fundamental hallmark of the college. Yet, remaining stagnant in our teaching methods is unacceptable. Why?

We know that changing student demographics requires curricula changes. We need to meet the every-changing demands of students, and thus society, in order to be competitive in the university realm. Increasingly, our students are coming from sectors other than agriculture (I myself also followed this path towards agriculture and thus know first-hand the challenges faced by these students). For example, in Colorado alone the growing urban sector seeks fundamental knowledge on balancing local food production, agricultural issues/hurdles, and environmental stewardship. I envision an eventual change in curricula programs that partially or wholly emphasize the challenges faced by our current/future students at the urban nexus. I would take the lead in opening discussions with CAS department RI coordinators and faculty members as to the future demands our students face, and thus the challenges we face in modifying programs to meet those needs.

I further envision more hands-on pathways by which our students can become fully involved in the CAS, lending learning towards real-world problem solving. As an example, the Department of Food Sciences is placing an 'in-your-face' fermentation facility in the Ramskeller. Students will be provided hands-on experiences in front of the public sector. When I first encountered this concept, I immediately thought why can't we in the CAS do the same? Why can't we have a

place(s) on campus where we bridge faculty experience, students' thirst for knowledge and ingenuity, and solve real-world problems in a hands-on setting that showcases publicly what we do best as a college? This will provide our students with additional tools, increase learning success by applying their fundamental knowledge gained with the CAS towards solving real-world problems, and allow our graduates to be successful post-CSU. On the other hand, attracting future students to some of our discipline has historically been difficult. Can you imagine how much easier it would be, recruiting-wise, if we could have our STEM 'in-your-face' experiences for students considering CSU as a home? I would take the lead in opening discussions with all members of the CAS community with regards to these concepts, how we move forward supporting these types or other cutting-edge ideas, and thus making what we as a college do 'behind the scenes' more forthright for current and future CAS students.

In order to attract future students to our College, we need to more strongly promote STEM in relation to the agricultural sector at an earlier stage (e.g., 9th-12th grade high school students both in and out of state under a diversity of student backgrounds; I know we as a college focus on early K-12 education already with Ag Adventure). Based on the path that led me to my career, I can first-hand describe the merits of following a career in the agricultural sector. Furthermore, coming from a family that heavily cherished STEM, growing up in an urban environment myself yet finally finding my home in agriculture, my experiences may only help to solidify future student's decisions in joining our family. I envision spending part of my time visiting high school classrooms, providing excerpts from my experiences, sharing images similar to what I described in the previous paragraph (e.g., real-world hands-on experiences for solving the challenges of tomorrow), with the outcome of increasing student enrollment in CAS disciplines.

Once finding a home in our College, we need to be creative in ways to both maintain our increased student population and close the gap of graduation success. Ensuring students are fully involved in our disciplines can help; some of the above ideas can further support student retention and success. However, to further improve positive student outcomes, additional support is likely required. In our college we currently follow the 360 students per advisor rule; reducing this ratio would better serve our student population. This would also take some burden off a position that lends itself to premature burnout. I would be willing to take an active role in finding creative solutions to this problem.

We should also take note of first generation students and more closely monitor their success. As Associate Dean of Academic Programs, taking a more active role with first generation students would be exciting. I would promote a listen-learn program, whereby I listen and learn what is needed and what is missing to support these students, as we work collectively together to build a support program for future first-generation students in our college. This program could be housed within and supported by the proposed CAS student success center, of which I would be willing to play a leadership role. This type of program could also lend itself to potential leadership roles within our first-generation student community; let them take pride in ownership of the

program they help develop. I envision our college as the model for other colleges on and off campus when it comes to supporting first generation students.

To further help support our students, I feel at times administration can be more interactive with students within our programs. Much of my strength lies in the fact that I am a people person, I enjoy the one-on-one interaction, and behind-the-scenes thrive off of seeing others become successful. In addition to the current role the Associate Dean plays in CAS academic success, to make this position more transparent I envision looking over the fall and spring course schedules and setting up a calendar to spend time visiting students in classrooms. Something as simple as carving out 5 minutes of time at the beginning of classes to let students know who I am, what role the Associate Dean of Academic Programs plays on campus, provide them the information, tools, and guidance necessary to become successful both now and in the future, and to let them know I/we sincerely care about them will likely be greater than simply laying out a plan for their success based on provided paperwork.

The above statements briefly outline many of the ideas and concepts I have either used or have dreamt about utilizing over my 30 year career. The thoughts outlined above can be condensed into a simple yet powerful statement regarding my overall philosophy with regards to the Associate Dean position: My philosophy for CAS teaching, learning, and student success is to empower people and provide opportunities to help advance either their academic or (future) professional career, and be a strong advocate for faculty, staff, and students. This approach provides a sense of ownership and hopefully a sense of pride, accomplishment, and willingness to give back to the system that provided such opportunities.