Strategic Plan
2013-2018

AUBURN
UNIVERSITY
FOOD SYSTEMS INSTITUTE

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INTRODUCTION

The Auburn University Food Systems Institute (AUFSI) is a collaborative and multidisciplinary support system that integrates research, education, training, and outreach activities through faculty working groups to obtain extramural funding. AUFSI provides the unique opportunity for faculty to come together in an integrated, interdisciplinary, cross-departmental venture to contribute locally, regionally, nationally, and globally to the safety and quality of the U.S. food system.

AUFSI’s strategic planning began at the beginning of the first year when the organization was only an Initiative. At that time, goals and objectives were established, core faculty members were identified, and a plan for the staff and resources needed to accomplish the goals was defined. After a successful first year of securing $1.3 million in extramural grant funding (from a $6.5 million five year award) and the Initiative becoming an Institute, the goals and objectives were revisited and formalized into a strategic plan using the strategic management process, SWOT, to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in order to prioritize the next five years of AUFSI’s activities.

MISSION

A food system refers to the interconnected processes and activities involved in getting food from field to plate in order to feed a population (i.e. growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consuming, and disposing of food). The purpose of AUFSI is to provide an infrastructure for promoting interdisciplinary research, outreach, teaching, and training opportunities relating to food systems among faculty in academia, personnel in industry, decision-makers in government, and consumers in the general public. By establishing and maintaining partnerships and working relationships among those involved in the complex system of food production, processing, consumption, and ultimately disposal, AUFSI provides a multi-institutional collaboration contributing to the circulation of reliable and credible information.
GOALS and OBJECTIVES

GOAL: Maintain an infrastructure to support interdisciplinary research, teaching, and training collaborations, and external partnerships with academia, industry, government, and consumers

OBJECTIVE 1. Establish and maintain internal and external advisory boards to provide feedback through quarterly and annual reviews

OBJECTIVE 2. Maintain an interdisciplinary, cross-departmental venture for core faculty and working groups throughout the Auburn University network

OBJECTIVE 3: Maintain cadre of content experts in core science and technology focus areas

GOAL: Ensure the protection of public health by conducting research on pathogens and advancing food systems’ technology

OBJECTIVE 4. Facilitate and pursue collaborative funding opportunities

OBJECTIVE 5. Develop advanced tools, practices, and interventions to reduce foodborne hazards in every part of the food chain

GOAL: Promote food safety practices to ensure high quality and sustainable food systems

OBJECTIVE 6. Establish Entrepreneur Initiative to engage in research, testing, and training activities that enable the execution of food safety regulations and requirements for the startup of new food system businesses

OBJECTIVE 7. Develop quality credit & non-credit education for adult learners in safety and quality of food systems’ related disciplines

OBJECTIVE 8. Develop quality education for K-16 and graduate learners in food safety and related environmental issues

OBJECTIVE 9. Create and improve public awareness about food systems related health, economic, and implementation issues

GOAL: Facilitate and make tangible contributions to national, regional, and state food system efforts

OBJECTIVE 10. Interact and participate with the local, state, national, and international food system communities

OBJECTIVE 11. Determine impact of attendance at regional and national expos

GOAL: Inform and contribute to the legislative and regulatory creation of standards relating to food systems

OBJECTIVE 12. Build relationships with local, state, and federal government representatives that impact the food system
STRATEGIES

The following is a summary of AUFSI’s planned approaches or activities needed to achieve the goals and objectives. The Target Value is a measurable value for evaluating performance during the upcoming years.

OBJECTIVE 1. Establish internal and external advisory boards
- Establish External Advisory Board (include industry and government representation)
- Gather quarterly input and feedback from Internal Advisory Board
- Maintain current Internal Advisory Board (AU Deans)
- Maintain and expand Virtual Food Systems Training Consortium (VFSTC) Advisory Board

Target Value: Obtain feedback on effectiveness of activities and input on priorities and future direction

OBJECTIVE 2. Maintain interdisciplinary, cross-departmental venture for core faculty and working groups
- Establish a faculty professional development and mentoring research program
- Establish working relationships among AU centers and institutes
- Identify faculty for interdisciplinary working groups as needed
- Survey core faculty annually to obtain nominees and updated nominee criteria
- Locate all databases (e.g. Digital Measures) across campus to search for faculty contacts
- Use codes for working groups to determine annually how many were established

Target Value: Maintain active core faculty to serve 3 year terms and represent the science areas needed for identified opportunities and AUFSI’s efforts

OBJECTIVE 3. Maintain cadre of content experts in core science and technology focus areas
- Develop post-working group survey to evaluate and improve collaborative working group process

Target Value: Establish Content Experts’ database

OBJECTIVE 4. Facilitate and pursue collaborative funding opportunities
- Document when proposals are submitted
- Use social media (Twitter, Facebook, webpage) when proposals are submitted and when funded

Target Value: Submit 15 grants annually and maintain a rate of 10% funded
Long range Target Value: 5 million per year in continuous funding

OBJECTIVE 5. Develop advanced tools, practices, and interventions
- On-demand modules for consumers and FDA training purposes
- Deliverables completed from currently funded grants

Target Value: Pursue at least one advanced tool, practice, or intervention grant to address current events and/or results obtained from Needs Assessment
OBJECTIVE 6. Establish Entrepreneur Initiative
- Host Entrepreneur Initiative training conference in 2013
- Conduct entrepreneur needs assessment
- Coordinate faculty and facilities needed for testing and validation of food systems and quality-related technologies
- Develop business and market plans in collaboration with core faculty in College of Liberal Arts and School of Business
- Establish partnership between Auburn Business Incubator and AUFSI
- Establish partnerships between Food Testing Lab, FDA Vibrio Lab, and AUFSI
- Establish Flexible Food Processing Plant
- Follow up with industrial contacts to explore equipment placement on Auburn University’s campus
- Maintain entrepreneur efforts as part of AUFSI’s communication efforts

Target Value: Pursue at least one effort to address current events and/or results obtained from Entrepreneur Needs Assessment

OBJECTIVE 7. Develop quality credit & non-credit education for learners
- Become an IACET approved provider
- Conduct annual Needs Assessment among core faculty, industry, and government
- Establish procedures to interact with Auburn University’s administration and colleges to participate in the maintenance and creation of appropriate educational standards in food safety-related disciplines
- Continue support as needed for Alabama Cooperative Extension Systems’ (ACES) training such as GAP, Seafood HAACP, etc…
- Explore the opportunities to offer Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) with selected options for certification
- Continue sponsorship and facilitation of the National Egg Products School
- Provide support to academic programs dedicated to providing high quality education and research programs for students in food safety related disciplines
- Develop and deliver food safety distance education
- Develop Food Safety Certificate Program
- Develop a university student study abroad course

Target Value: Submit a training proposal annually

OBJECTIVE 8. Develop quality education for K-16 and graduate learners in food safety and related environmental areas
- Develop a plan to include teacher training, online modules, and integration into the K-16 Alabama curriculum
- Pursue opportunities on environmental issues relating to food systems (e.g. climate change)
- Incorporate a graduate student mentoring program
- Develop and deliver teacher training and student course opportunities

Target Value: Submit at least one proposal to develop and implement teaching modules in K-16 and/or graduate classrooms
OBJECTIVE 9. Create and improve public awareness about food systems
- Document function and purpose of AUFSI’s webpage, Facebook, and twitter efforts
- Use working group codes for social network efforts
- Distribute a newsletter
- Upgrade and enhance the AUFSI webpage

Target Values: (1) Each staff member tweet and post on Facebook weekly, (2) Three articles submitted to trade magazines annually, (3) Complete and maintain an interactive AUFSI webpage

OBJECTIVE 10. Interact and participate with the local, state, national, and international food system communities
- Request from Core Faculty their involvement in food system communities
- Obtain and develop content for AU Speaks (Dr. Pat Curtis, Editor)
- Continue to participate in AU Research Week, Alabama Food Protection Conference, Educause Learning Initiative (ELI), Association of Food And Drug Officials of the Southern States (AFDOSS), and Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO)
- Enhance our connections with international organizations and institutions

AUFSI Target Value: Participate in 3 state, 3 national, and 2 international conferences annually

OBJECTIVE 11. Determine impact of attendance at regional and national expos
- Develop feasibility evaluation
- Establish booth sponsors as partners (e.g. water or energy groups/economic development)
- Encourage core faculty to attend events
- Attend Auburn University AG Roundup

Target Value: Decide cost-effectiveness after attending expos annually for 3 years

OBJECTIVE 12. Build relationships with local, state, and federal government representatives
- Participate in opportunities to help Alabama and the Federal Executive Branch fulfill food safety requirements
- Continue conducting Needs Assessments annually
- Obtain Core Faculty & Subject Matter Experts’ (SME) participation efforts
- Create a database of partners involved with AUFSI
- Maintain relationships with Seafood HAACP, AFDO, and AFDOSS

Target Values – (1) expand to include more academia and industry partners, (2) expand Needs Assessment to include four additional states each year
IMPLEMENTATION

In order to meet our goals and objectives in a logical and feasible way, additional funding and dedicated personnel, resources, and space are needed to fulfill each of the strategies listed in this strategic plan. A brief explanation on how AUFSI plans to meet these requirements is provided below.

In order to facilitate the collaborative efforts between multiple faculty working groups, the need for space to house equipment in laboratories, staff, students, meetings, and rotating faculty office space is essential. The requested space and resources is provided in the attached CASIC Space Form.

The Auburn University Food Systems Institute (AUFSI) is a collaborative and multidisciplinary project that integrates research and Extension activities. One of AUFSI’s primary aims is to bring together “working groups” to seek extramural funding for research, outreach, and educational projects that involves faculty from a variety of disciplines. AUFSI has already made significant progress in achieving the goals and objectives established during the first year. For the next 5 years, emphasis will be placed on supporting the interdisciplinary faculty who are affiliated with AUFSI to achieve their goals and providing mentorship and leadership programs for both faculty and students in food-systems-related disciplines. Emphasis will also be placed on ramping up AUFSI’s role in providing leadership in multiple areas of food systems. Therefore, additional funds will be sought through Hatch funding to continue and expand this work. By supporting Auburn University researchers and Extension specialists, AUFSI will directly address several AAES Hatch priorities, including “Enhancing Agricultural Production Systems/Global Food Security and Hunger,” “Food Nutrition, Health and Well-being and Childhood Obesity” and “Food Safety and Agricultural Biosecurity.” In addition, the AUFSI assessment specialist intends to utilize baseline data already obtained and evaluations of current activities to design a plan for interdisciplinary partnerships that can be disseminated through professional presentations and journals.

One of AUFSI’s achievements in 2012 was the establishment of a Virtual Food Systems Training Consortium (VFSTC) with the aid of $6.5 million in funding from the National Institute of Health (NIH). AUFSI has been working with faculty members from four universities (Auburn University, Purdue University, North Carolina State University and University of Memphis) to create on-line training for inspectors of FDA-regulated food products. For the next three years, AUFSI will continue this project, providing approximately 1.2 million per year toward operational costs.

The second currently funded grant that will provide approximately $966,182 per year toward operational costs for the next 4 years involves faculty from both Auburn University and Tuskegee University. This project was funded by the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture and enlists the talents of researchers from fields ranging from poultry science to rural sociology.

AUFSI has already established multiple partnerships through collaborative grant efforts. These partnerships are expected to remain and the creation of new alliances is expected to continue in the next five years. The number of grant proposals submitted is expected to increase.
LONG - TERM VISION

AUFI’s strategies may change over time as the goals and objectives are re-visited annually. However, in addition to implementing and maintaining the strategies previously outlined to meet the goals and objectives, our vision of how AUFSI will continue to expand during the next five years is outlined in the following objectives:

1. Sustainability
   - Identify and obtain funding to maintain staff and related required resources

2. Translate Collaborative Innovations and Discoveries
   - Establish a working relationship with the Auburn University Technology Transfer Office to address key issues surrounding the success of research translation
   - Conduct proactive technology recruitment
   - Participate in development of investment-worthy technologies
   - Establish technology development incentives for faculty
   - Conduct active marketing for external licensing and investment
   - Translate food safety innovations and concepts to the stakeholder communities including local, state and federal governments, suppliers, farmers, producers, distributors, and consumers

3. Develop faculty development and leadership programs
   - Work with academic and extension programs