UTIA–UT Knoxville Reunification
Report from the Research Working Group
March 13, 2020

Summary
The 11-member Research Working Group was charged with making recommendations to enhance UTIA and UTK research collaborations and support infrastructure. After robust discussion and consideration, the Research Working Group arrived at the following **eight** recommendations.

Charge 1: To identify the top 5 opportunities or ideas relating to enhancing research collaboration between UTIA and UTK faculty and to recommend specific changes that need to occur to take advantage of those opportunities or ideas.

> **Recommendation 1:** Create and support faculty-driven transdisciplinary initiatives that bring multiple academic units across UTIA and UTK together to address grand challenges.

> **Recommendation 2:** Increase support for graduate students in fields that span UTK and UTIA expertise with a focus on improving the grad student experience and reducing administrative barriers.

> **Recommendation 3:** Strengthen and expand the infrastructure needed to promote collaborations between UTIA/UTK faculty members and across disciplines.

Charge 2: To identify ways and specific changes that need to occur for UTIA and UTK to work together more seamlessly in research development, research administration, research compliance, and faculty research support.

> **Recommendation 4:** Provide equitable support to all faculty pursuing external funding during the pre-award process. Support may best be provided through the local unit or through centralized units depending on existing resources, expertise, current workload, and demand.

> **Recommendation 5**: Improve systems and processes to increase efficiency, reduce the administrative burden on faculty, and deliver a consistent message to our internal and external partners.

> **Recommendation 6**: Enable all faculty to access research development support infrastructure.

> **Recommendation 7**: Increase the visibility of faculty research, grants/awards, and professional success among internal and external audiences through enhanced science communications (joint with Communications committee).

> **Recommendation 8**: Coordinate research integrity and laboratory safety activities across UTIA and UTK to ensure consistency and compliance.

Members
- David White, Associate Dean, AgResearch (co-chair)
- Kimberly Eck, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research Development (co-chair)

- Holly Raynor, Interim Assistant Dean for Research, College of Education, Health and Human Sciences
- Stephen Kania, Professor, College of Veterinary Medicine
- Kevin Hoyt, Director, Forest Resources AgResearch and Education Center
- Jane Burns, Interim Director and Compliance Officer, UTIA
- Dave Ader, Research Assistant Professor, Smith Center
- Tore Olsson, Associate Professor of History
- David Harper, Professor, Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries
- Dan Simberloff, Professor, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
- Neal Schrick, Department Head, Animal Science

Process

The Research Working Group met in-person two times. Our initial meeting including an orientation to the charge for the working group, an exercise to envision our desired future state, an overview of research and administrative structures on the UTIA and UTK campuses, a review of the comments made during previous listening sessions, and open discussion.

During our first meeting, the Working Group also agreed on five guiding principles to ensure that we would have productive discussions:

1. Focus on research and refer recommendations better suited to other working groups to them
2. Focus on recommendations that will or have the potential to bring UTK and UTIA together
3. Focus conversation on the desired future state
4. Focus on information requested in report due in March report
5. Follow the Guiding Principles Document from June 2019 and note if we start to infringe on any previously communicated philosophies

The Research Working Group solicited feedback from their colleagues and integrated those responses into materials shared with the working group. The Working Group thoughtfully grouped similar or related suggestions together in the recommendations below.

Summary of Research Working Group Process
Workgroup Meeting #1:   • Welcome and introductions (15 min)   • Review charge, report requirements, and develop shared guidelines (15 min)   • Desired future state activity (15 min)   • UTIA overview (15 min)   • UTK overview (15 min)   • Review recommendations from previous listening sessions and report (15 min)   • Add other ideas (20 min)   • Next steps (10 min)
Full workgroup may add other ideas (and solicit feedback form others); email additional ideas to leads for them to compile
Leads check ideas for fit with guidelines; group and organize ideas by theme
Leads distribute comprehensive list of ideas and recommendations to full workgroup
Full workgroup ranks top 5 ideas and submits to leads
Workgroup Meeting #2   • Share group rankings

• Prioritize ideas responsive to report item #1
• Prioritize ideas responsive to report item #2
Leads draft report and send to workgroup
Full workgroup reviews workgroup report and sends comments to leads
Leads revise report and send to workgroup
Workgroup Meeting #3 • Discuss any outstanding items • Finalize report
Full workgroup reviews near-final workgroup report and sends comments to leads
Leads revise report and distribute final version to workgroup
Leads submit workgroup report on behalf of working group

Research Working Group's Charge and Recommendations

Charge 1: To identify the top 5 opportunities or ideas relating to enhancing research collaboration between UTIA and UTK faculty and to recommend specific changes that need to occur to take advantage of those opportunities or ideas.

The Research Working Group generated an extensive list of ideas, many of which are interrelated. When the group began organizing those ideas we realized that the majority of the concepts discussed were in support of three key recommendations. These three recommendations are also connected to each other and are each equally important to reunifying the UTK-UTIA research enterprise.

Recommendation 1: Create and support faculty-driven transdisciplinary initiatives that bring multiple academic units across UTIA and UTK together to address grand challenges.

Specifically:
- Provide support including administrative, seed funding, release time or additional pay for initiative Director(s), and eventually physical space. Provide clear metrics for success at the outset and define a regular process for evaluating centers that will allow for course corrections. Prompt these initiatives to consider how they relate to student training and education at the graduate and undergraduate level but do not require centers to conduct education activities.

- Elevate select centers by recognizing impact and elevating their profile, prioritizing their resource requests made to the State and key donors, and facilitating local partnerships with Oak Ridge National Laboratory, state agencies, non-profits, and other organizations as appropriate.

- Identify centers by organizing a competitive process through which groups of faculty can submit new ideas that will increase the prestige of UT in the future. This process should allow existing centers to propose how they might expand and evolve. The process should also prompt exploratory meetings among faculty who have yet to interact with each other.

- The Working Group discussed several potential topics and themes that could unite UTIA and UTK faulty, including but not limited to One Health, climate change, microbiome, opioid abuse, obesity, biodiversity, food security, clean water, urban systems, and artificial intelligence.

Recommendation 2: Increase support for graduate students in fields that span UTK and UTIA expertise with a focus on improving the graduate student experience and reducing administrative barriers.

Specifically:
- All faculty AND departments to share credit, in terms of P&T and THEC, when a graduate student is co-advised.

- Provide equitable stipends and tuition remission across both campuses.

- Provide opportunities, e.g. poster session or seminar with an invited speaker, for graduate students to interact across departments. Enable students to gain experience by organizing these programs.

- Provide opportunities for students to receive grantsmanship training, including addressing topics such as teaming, transdisciplinary collaboration, responsible conduct of research and other related professional development topics.

- Consider making more multi-campus 1-credit seminars available to graduate students so that students can share ideas and disciplinary perspectives.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen and expand the infrastructure needed to promote collaborations between UTIA/UTK faculty members and across disciplines.

Specifically:

- Host more events that bring UTIA and UTK faculty together. Several event series, such as the Research Development's Community of Scholars, Coffee & Conference, SPARKS, and FUSION, exist for the purpose of bringing faculty together to discuss research ideas and opportunities. Although UTIA faculty have been invited to these events on occasion, these events have not been explicitly created to bring UTIA and UTK together. Research Development is in the process of planning several for this purpose but their ability to do so is limited by staff time and resources.

- Work with departments to explicitly reward interdisciplinary collaboration in the P&T process in all departments. Consider dual appointments across UTIA and UTK for faculty. Although acknowledging multi-disciplinary work is common in some disciplines, it is disincentivized in the P&T process in some departments.

- Increase the amount of seed funding available for collaborative projects that include UTIA and UTK faculty. In 2019, ORE offered collaborative seed funding but very few projects were able to be supported because of the limited resources available.

- Provide access to database(s) that allows administrators and faculty to discover potential collaborators. Although databases exist (e.g. faculty.utk.edu, find an expert), they do not necessarily include UTIA and UTK faculty by discipline.

- Increase the awareness of and encourage nominations for awards that recognize UTIA-UTK collaborations, such as the Chancellor's Award for Success in Multidisciplinary Research. Additionally, consider the development of new awards directed at successful trans-disciplinary activities across UTIA and UTK.

- Acknowledge that productive collaborative research can take many forms, such as publishing, conferences, the formation of organized institutions ranging from seminars to centers, and public engagement.

- Orient new faculty and raise awareness among existing faculty to Extension, what it means to be a land-grant university, and the resources of the UT AgResearch and Education Centers (RECs) available for field research, and facilitate collaborations among them. Increase awareness of available resources through a targeted series of presentations or events.

- Both campuses should be involved in any new processes or programs as they are developed or changed (e.g. Oak Ridge Initiative)

Charge 2: To identify ways and specific changes that need to occur for UTIA and UTK to work together more seamlessly in research development, research administration, research compliance, and faculty research support.

The Working Group approached this task by considering recommendations specifically for research administration, research development, and research integrity. We considered recommendations regarding research integrity as the broader umbrella term that includes research compliance as well as other issues. We did not separately address faculty research support because our recommendations for research development encompassed what we wanted to highlight related to research support.

Research Administration

The Guiding Principles document noted that UTIA will maintain an Office of Sponsored Programs for pre-award support of grants and contracts, and this office will coordinate with the UTK ORE. In accordance with this principle, our recommendations for coordinating the research administration area are as follows:

Recommendation 4: Provide equitable support to all faculty pursuing external funding during the pre-award process, which should be seamless. Support may best be provided through the local unit or through centralized units depending on existing resources, expertise, current workload, and demand.

Recommendation 5: Improve systems and processes to increase efficiency, reduce the administrative burden on faculty, and deliver a consistent message to our internal and external partners. Specifically:
- Ensure regular, timely communication between UTIA and UTK research administration offices.

- Faculty want to be able to interact across UTK/UTIA like any two academic units within the university. Toward this end, improve the ease of submitting joint UTIA-UTK funding proposals by

eliminating parallel Cayuse routing. This likely requires UTIA and UTK (and UTSI) to use one instance of Cayuse. If this solution is pursued, consider and proactively communicate how this change will affect downstream reporting (meaning, in roll-up reports, the lead academic unit typically receives the credit for proposals and awards regardless of how many other academic units participated in the project). One way of capturing the nuance could be through research expenditures if separate accounts are established. There may be other ways to capture this nuance, e.g. through Cayuse Co-PI reports.

- Jointly plan and offer workshops for research administrators and develop a research administration onboarding training program for both campuses. Jointly plan and offer workshops to faculty on topics associated with the complexities of research administration.

- Create efficient process for jointly reporting data (e.g. elements, grants and contracts, expenditures, publications, faculty honorifics). One unit should aggregate UTK-UTIA data and the process must include representatives from both campuses and verification of data by the units that "own" it. Consider creating a data group to serve both campuses, bridging the gap and improving efficiency and data consistency.

- Send the same, consistent message by harmonizing negotiations with sponsors, including issues related to intellectual property and credit sharing. When negotiating contracts for the same sponsor, consider the most efficient method to ensure minimal delays of faculty work on a project.

- Review F&A rates and consider downstream impacts, especially under the new budget model, to ensure that research collaboration is not dis-incentivized. This may need to occur in preparation for our next F&A negotiations in ~5 years.

Research Development / Research Support

Although some research development activities take place at UTIA, the function is limited as there is no formal Research Development unit. Faculty expressed the desire to access the robust research development resources available at UTK ORE.

Recommendation 6: Enable all faculty to access research development support infrastructure by:

Specifically:
- Creating a centralized online portal where internal and external funding opportunities as well as research development services and supports (including core facilities, RECs, and other related supports) can be reviewed. We think of this portal as akin to a faculty-facing "One Stop" for research development. Many resources are gathered in a series of web pages under research.utk.edu but other resources are scattered across disparate UTK and UTIA web pages.

- Creating a system or program through which faculty who have been successful with a particular external funder are vetted and connected with faculty who are planning to submit a proposal to the same funder. The experienced faculty member can provide brief practical advice to the other.

- Increasing faculty development opportunities, specifically in team science. Although team science is a part of the Expanding Horizons program, only a small cohort of faculty participate in those sessions.

- Increasing faculty interactions with UT corporate and foundation engagement to identify new opportunities and partnerships.

Recommendation 7: Increase the visibility of faculty research, grants/awards, and professional success among internal and external audiences through enhanced science communications (joint with Communications committee).

Research Integrity

Recommendation 8: Coordinate research integrity and laboratory safety activities across UTIA and UTK to ensure consistency and compliance.

Specifically:
- Consider combining committees, functions, trainings, and processes that have similar or overlapping purposes. For example, we have two separate training modules for laboratory safety at UTIA and UTK but may only need one. Incorporate input from both campuses as changes are made and include representatives from both UTIA and UTK on any combined committees. Leverage specialized expertise where it exists.

- Provide support for improving safety of the infrastructure, including improving response time when e.g. maintenance requests are made, actively manage issues centrally and communication updates regularly, and provide funding from a central pool to make improvements to fix, e.g. roof leaks and inappropriately positioned intake valves.

- To ensure consistency and improve access, make IACUC training available online (e.g. could be third party or homegrown and added to K@te).