

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
University of Arizona
Strategic Plan 2010-2020
October 19, 2009 (Revised October 25, added #7)

Frequently Asked Questions for October 19, 2009 Draft

1. Why are we revising the plan in the middle of a financial crisis?

It has been 5 years since our last plan and the conditions have changed markedly. A strategic plan should be prepared as, and used for, a guide to making today's decisions but with the future in mind. It should not be prepared simply as a requirement by others then sit on a shelf. A good strategic plan serves as a guide in good times and in bad times and it is especially helpful in uncertain times. This is why we need a current plan that realistically reviews the environment that we will be facing over the next decade or so.

2. How does the 2010 plan differ from the 2005 plan?

Some sections have been updated but are similar to the last plan but some areas are quite different. There is a new vision, a refinement of the six focus areas, creation of a new "signature focus" and a change in the overall approach (less specific goals and more guiding principles). The plan was made smaller by eliminating details such as assumptions and challenges. These relevant details are available in a "background document".

3. Why are there no specific objectives and targets to achieve in the 2010 plan?

This plan is a strategic plan and not an annual operations plan. The environment is too uncertain to make realistic long term objectives and too volatile to set specific targets.

4. In a nutshell, what is the thrust of the 2010 plan?

It is about two things: CHANGE and how we can live with it, and the NEW NORMAL. The new normal suggests that when we get through the current financial crisis and back to normal, it will not be the same normal we knew before. The new plan offers guidance and ideas without specificity. It continues the idea of living in a VUCA world (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) and using a FAIR approach to deal with it (flexible, agile, innovative, and responsive). Except, there is now a much more serious need to understand and internalize these terms.

5. How might the plan influence decisions by CALS administrators, faculty, and staff?

Past college strategic plans have been used to define a common set of focus areas and identify methods of assessment and criteria for budget allocation. Resource expenditures were tracked annually by focus area, and departmental annual budget sessions were reviewed in the context of the plan. This 2010 plan assumes future decisions will be more difficult for administrators at all levels. It therefore serves as more of a roadmap with general directions. The one-page version includes the essential elements of the plan and could be used as a *ready reference* for all administrators and others in making their daily decisions. A quick look at the 2010 one-page plan should remind us of where we would like to be and some options for getting there. Knowing the conditions that exist at the time should allow the decision maker to better see realistic options for choices. It will still be difficult to make many of the future decisions, but the plan should make it easier than if there were no plan.

6. Where can I get more information about the 2010 plan?

The full plan and the one page version are posted on the dean's website: <http://cals.arizona.edu/dean/planning> Additional information at that site includes: environmental scans, higher education scenarios for the future, Arizona-specific futures studies, how to deal with change, and a background summary for the 2010 plan. Links are provided to previous CALS plans and UA plans.

7. Why are the words “arid and semi-arid regions” in the signature focus title?

The college is located in an “arid and semi-arid region” and this is type of region is representative of many parts of the world. This identifies us as having special expertise and basic knowledge about this type of climatic region. It helps define the college from similar colleges at other universities. But while there are many parts of the college that indeed have this focus, others parts of the college do not. This situation is addressed by the six focus areas, which indicate all of our areas of expertise and knowledge and that we will continue to also focus in those areas. The signature focus in an overarching topic for much of the college but it does not cover the complete college. The signature focus is described in more detail in the Strategic Plan (10 page version) located at the main planning page or directly at <http://cals.arizona.edu/dean/planning/CALS-draft-2010-strategic-plan-10-19-09.pdf>).