**Context**

Many of us have heard/read about recent trends in higher education that predict declining enrollment. These concerns have been underscored in messages from the President/Provost and from college leadership. To address these challenges – it will be necessary in the next short months to re-imagine the PLS and PLP curricula and tailor our courses and teaching to address near- and longer-term graduate and undergraduate education needs and trends.  This will require involving the full faculty, while, as Ravi and Mark are pointing out, crafting the end products are the responsibility of our grad and undergrad curriculum committees, as well as faculty ratification.

Date show that the number of SPLS PLS and PLP majors is the lowest in the college. In effect, units that teach upwards of several hundred undergrads are subsidizing SPLS. Our graduate program is also relatively small compared to other grad programs in the college. We may perceive ourselves as highly relevant because we are committed to our Land Grant mission, to growers and the agriculture industry, and to our love of science, research, teaching, and outreach - but given changing circumstances, we have been tasked by to do more to pull our own weight.  How can this be accomplished – what are the best processes and plans of action for visioning and re-aligning grad and undergrad coursework and teaching responsibilities. There is no one right way but there are important considerations that will help drive some or most of the decision-making.

My role is to start the ball rolling - to encourage engagement of faculty in a thoughtful, nimble planning process to establish relevant curriculum offerings while also ensuring a high-quality educational experience for PLS/PLP majors and shared programs. An added challenge is the new mandate to operate effectively, despite the 14% or more reduction in faculty FTEs, and still grow student enrollment. Remedies are needed to eliminate courses with historically low enrollment or potentially, creatively merge two related course topics, or teach 2–7-week courses, if essential to core curricula. How can all this be accomplished and implemented in a reasonably short time?  Substantive strategic change requires incorporating effective changes that facilitate adaptation to new environments and scenarios.  Effective curriculum design and execution i.e., teaching are unique, crucial, and exacting functions of university faculty.  Your help is needed to achieve this goal - I can only be effective as a catalyst if faculty agree to take the ball and run with it.

**Starting point and rationale**

An *ad hoc* working group was formed to help me gather metrics for my report to CALES and will double as a means to get the ball rolling toward the curriculum review/re-imagining. Their charge is to (1) review course offerings/ frequency of offering/student enrollment; other relevant data, (2) summarize the findings. The outputs will be compiled course metrics for all courses listed, including metrics for courses taught, frequency, enrollment, and if possible a breakdown of majors, shared majors, and non-majors enrolled. It will naturally identify the most attractive courses as well as those with low enrollment.

These metrics and summary will be shared with the SPLS Grad and Undergrad curriculum committees to launch an academic program/curriculum review and lead discussion/brainstorming sessions (mini-retreat?) with faculty. Note that the course caps metric most of you participated in several weeks ago has been completed. Expect guidance on course caps from Mike Staten.

The database summary is expected to provide starting metrics for the CCs to begin their review of both graduate and undergraduate courses and potential re-imagining of course listings, required and electives, and sequence. In this context, this *ad hoc* ‘Curriculum Re-imagined Committee’ is charged with, as the name implies, the discovery phase to precede the review/revision phase ‘re-imagining the PLS/PLP curricula’. This second phase considers revisions to required courses for each major (grad and undergrad), and use of branding, marketing, and other tactics to assure continued quality and increase enrollment. Branding and marketing themes will be considered.

The overarching goal is to evolve the SPLS courses and curriculum into a viable, workable structure that meets immediate present and future needs. This will require smart changes and adaptability to accommodate present and future challenges with resilience. This involves processes and deliberation among options and choices.

**Examples of possible solutions:**

Several ideas implemented by other departments also revamping curricula are: prioritize relevant core courses pertaining most directly to the mission, core courses of greatest value to students and that contribute the greatest potential for achieving maximum student enrollment; offer 400-500 courses when possible, establishing as required courses that will attract grads and undergrad  seniors (especially destined for grad school), reduce elective courses to conserve faculty FTE resources, establish required course listings, offered in sequence,  eliminated low-enrollment courses, or if essential, offer 7 week course; if inter-related themes, offer both sequentially in same semester.  The rationale is to grow enrollment and capitalize most efficiently on limited faculty FTE resources. There are certainly similar and perhaps other creative ideas discussed previously in our committees, per previous email (Ramin, others).

**Other questions to consider**:

Can enrollment be increased by more effective branding or marketing to garner greater student interest toward attracting more students to our majors, and/or boosting course enrollment. One idea is to capitalize on our expertise in arid cropping systems and research underway to combat abiotic-biotic stresses, in conjunction with more efficient water use (see SPLS strategic plan language). incorporating regenerative practices that utilize lower inputs of inorganic fertilizers and can enhance microbiome community diversity.

Can our majors’ names be revisited to a more descriptive terminology that also capture the respective academic specialization/profession. The above themes to not only explain who we are but attract other like-minded research interests and collaborators, as well as student from other arid parts of the world. Plant and soil health are compatible concepts/themes, among others. As an aside, the soon to be hired Extension Specialists have irrigation and contemporary agronomic expertise that could enhance the scope of collaborations with main campus researchers, and with whom grad students may in time, be able to engage in summer internships in Yuma or Maricopa. I imagine this is all about individuals reaching but the potential will be there and can be considered when considering possible scenarios 1,3, 5, 10, and 35 years from now.