Educational Policies Committee Program Proposal, College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences, March 18, 2011

Utah State University

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Utah State University
Proposal to Create a Center to Support Research and Extension Activities
For Agronomic and Woody Biofuels Production

Section I: Request

Utah State University Cooperative Extension, working with its academic partners in the Colleges of Agriculture and Natural Resources requests permission to create the “Center for Agronomic and Woody Biofuels.” This “Center” would provide the organizational structure to support current research and extension activities related to the production of woody and vegetative crops and their conversion to biofuels in Utah, the region and the nation. It would enable continued success with extramural funding, graduate student education, and development of partnerships with non-governmental organizations and state and federal agencies.

Section II: Need

Utah State University has become the leader in the U.S. in developing the agronomic practices for the production of oilseed crops for biofuels in arid and semi-arid systems, particularly on non-traditional lands such as highway rights of way, airports, and military bases. In addition, USU is providing leadership for state and federal agencies in the development of processes to produce biofuels from woody biomass. All of these activities are funded extramurally and involve students and faculty. A central entity is needed as the “umbrella” organization to represent the many components within USU that participate. A “center” would serve this purpose, increasing awareness, enhancing marketing, and allowing increased collaboration and partnership development. The current governmental administration has initiated policy and funding opportunities that have provided significant engagement in the biofuels arena. The agronomic and tree crops focus of this proposed center would compliment current work being conducted by the College of Engineering with its partners on algae production for biofuels purposes.

Section III: Institutional Impact

The College of Agriculture is providing leadership in the development of a “Sustainability” curriculum that would provide educational opportunity to undergraduate students across campus. A center, as proposed, would provide opportunity for undergraduate hands-on experience, research, and community engagement in the renewable energy field. This proposed center would provide the organizational structure and branding to enhance extramural funding for graduate student research and education. The “Center for Agronomic and Woody Biofuels” would be managed and administered by Utah State University Cooperative Extension working with its affiliated academic departments on the USU campus and its many external partners. No new physical facilities or modifications to existing facilities will be required. Personnel and equipment required to create this center and implement its programs are already in place.
Section IV: Finances

This proposed center’s operation would be primarily funded from extramural funding with some partnering from Cooperative Extension and the Agricultural Experiment Station to enhance extension and research activities and support marketing and contracting activities.
DATE: February 13, 2011

TO: Raymond Coward
   Executive Vice President and Provost

FROM: Noelle Cockett
       Vice President for Extension and Agriculture

SUBJECT: Request to create the Center for Agronomic and Woody Biofuels

I would like to request that the Center for Agronomic and Woody Biofuels be created at Utah State University. As described in the attached R401 proposal, this center provides the organizational structure to support research and extension activities related to the production of woody and vegetative crops and their conversion to biofuels. Given the significant amount of work being done by USU faculty members and students, it makes sense to formally recognize those efforts by the creation of this center.

Please let me know if additional information is needed.

Cc: C. Gay, USU Extension