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In five years, the Center will be an improved and more productive unit built on current strengths and expansion as additional resources become available. Productivity is measured in terms of appropriate and useful technologies generated and disseminated to stakeholders, and contributions to science. Improvements and enhanced productivity will be evaluated in respect to quality and quantity.

Southwest Florida is a major agricultural region with unique problems and characteristics that deserves a team of scientists specifically addressing their issues. However, it is essential that those research and extension programs interact closely with the extensive programs in the departments in Gainesville and other centers, as well as other organizations as USDA/ARS. Stronger research and extension programs at SWFREC will not come via isolation but by expanded linkages with other UF/IFAS faculty and external scientists. Research and extension program modifications and expansions must be planned and implemented with guidance from the Dean for Research and Dean for Extension Offices in Gainesville. The Center Director must collaborate closely with the respective department chairs in Gainesville regarding faculty at the center.

I envision in less than one year the formation of an active council of agricultural producers in the region providing advice and continually identifying overall needs of the area. Also, this council would provide proactive support for the Center as legislative budget requests. I envision that the agricultural producers, harvesters, packers, shippers and processors in Southwest Florida will readily give testimony to the enhanced value of the Center during the next five years. Stakeholders include large commercial operations, medium size family farms and small farmers.

Faculty in the county extension offices are a major component of the UF/IFAS team serving Southwest Florida. Highly productive programmatic relationships already exist between the Center and various county faculty, but there are significant opportunities to strengthen and expand those interactions. I envision the Center Director working closely with the District Extension Director to enhance and expand joint extension programs resulting in increased dissemination of technologies to stakeholders.

It is the responsibility of the Center Director to provide overall leadership to ensure that stakeholders, administration and faculty/staff are pulling together on the same team to produce and disseminate appropriate technologies based on good science.

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