

Steve Keeley – Statement of Leadership Philosophy/Style, and Vision for the Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture

“The cost of leadership is self-interest.” This quote, attributed to a military officer in the book, *Leaders Eat Last*, resonates with me because I believe leaders must be willing to set aside individual achievements and goals so they can devote their time and energy to helping their team thrive. This is the essence of servant leadership, which is the foundation of my leadership philosophy and style. While leading an academic department is difficult, the job appeals to me because I find the greatest personal fulfillment and satisfaction in helping others be the best they can be. Ultimately, I believe giving of myself to others is the way to have a meaningful personal and professional life.

All successful academic departments are purpose-driven. That is, the faculty and staff must possess a clear understanding of why they exist, and who they serve. Without a well-defined and mutually understood mission, department members may work very hard but make little progress toward fulfilling the department’s purpose. Therefore, my first order of business as a leader is to ensure our mission is clearly defined and mutually agreed upon, and that the goals and activities of the department are in alignment with our purpose. I am certain the people of HLA have done the hard work of defining their mission and formulating goals to achieve that mission at various points in the past. There is no need to “reinvent the wheel” if it is not necessary. However, it is important to periodically revisit our mission and goals to ensure we remain relevant in our constantly changing world. Consequently, one of my first tasks as leader of the department would be to familiarize myself with HLA’s mission and goals, and then work with the faculty and staff to reacquaint ourselves with them and refine them if necessary.

As we work together toward our goals, I firmly believe a department’s success is dependent on the success of its faculty; consequently, as department head my goal is to empower and support the faculty as they seek to do their jobs to the best of their ability. The faculty, in turn, need the support of the staff; therefore, the staff must also receive the full support of the head in order to perform their jobs successfully. Along the way, I will always do my best to seek out and support collaborations, because we will be most effective when we work together.

When decisions must be made that will impact the future of the department, my approach is to seek input and make those decisions together, to the greatest extent possible. We are a team, and important decisions should be made as a team, with input from all. A leader will occasionally need to make decisions that are unpopular with some members, but those decisions should be made openly and with the best interests of the entire team in mind. Communication is key, and I strive to be open, honest, and responsive about departmental matters.

My vision for the Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture is that it will be a thriving community of faculty, staff, and students, bound together by a common purpose, who will do our work so well that we are viewed as indispensable to our stakeholders, including students and their families, industry partners, funding partners, allied professional groups, and the citizens of Colorado. Our excellent work will be so relevant and impactful to these stakeholders that they will enthusiastically advocate for us when decisions are made about how to allocate scarce resources (not just by university leadership, but by those in state government, funding agencies, industry associations, etc.). Beyond these stakeholders, our work will

significantly improve the lives of people nationally and globally. HLA's excellence in teaching, research, and extension will be manifested in the following ways.

Undergraduate and graduate education: HLA will be considered the "place to go" for education and employees, i.e., HLA will be a regional, national, and global destination department for undergraduate and graduate students. HLA graduates will be sought after by employers in our state, across the nation, and even globally.

Research: HLA research will "make the news", i.e., HLA will conduct extramurally funded research that makes the regional and national news because it is so relevant and impactful. Our research will be published in the most appropriate peer-reviewed journals for our disciplines, so that we are fully engaged participants in the advancement of knowledge for the betterment of the human condition in our state, nation, and world.

Extension: People will ask, "What does HLA say about it?", i.e., locally, regionally, nationally, and globally, HLA will be sought after as the most respected source of information and training in horticulture and landscape architecture. Additionally, colleagues will ask, "How does HLA do it?", i.e., competent, creative, and cutting-edge extension programs will result in HLA being viewed as a national model for extension programming.