

Colorado State University

College of Agricultural Sciences



Strategic Roadmap 2035

Leading the National Model Modern Land-Grant's Flagship College

Executive Summary

College of Agricultural Sciences — Strategic Roadmap 2035

The College of Agricultural Sciences (CAS) sits at the heart of Colorado State University's identity as a national model modern land-grant. We're not chasing the future — we're creating it.

CAS advances foundational, curiosity-driven discovery as the engine that makes application, innovation, and impact possible. From fundamental discovery to applied solutions, we integrate research, teaching, Extension, and engagement to sustain food, water, land, and community for everyone. This Roadmap advances CSU's Strategic Roadmap 2035 by positioning CAS as a driver of student success, research impact, and statewide engagement.

Our Strategic Priorities

1. **Student Success, Social and Economic Mobility**

Every CAS student will graduate career-ready, grounded in learning, and prepared for meaningful lives and leadership across agriculture, food, and natural resources.

2. **Research and Academic Excellence**

CAS advances hypothesis-driven, foundational, and applied research across biological, physical, social, and design sciences — from soil to satellites and barns to biotech — translating discovery into public good, policy insight, and innovation.

3. **Institutional Competitiveness**

We strengthen trust, transparency, and effectiveness by aligning recognition, workload, and resources with strategy and by investing in people, leadership, and shared governance.

4. **Rural, Statewide, and Global Engagement**

CAS integrates research, teaching, and Extension and engagement as co-equal pathways for discovery and impact, serving Colorado communities while addressing global challenges in semi-arid and working-lands systems.

5. **Democracy and Civic Engagement**

CAS prepares students to engage thoughtfully with food, land, and policy issues, convening evidence-based, nonpartisan dialogue and advancing interdisciplinary research at the intersection of democracy and agricultural systems.

Built on Momentum, Not Expansion

This Roadmap does not introduce a wave of new work. It aligns and accelerates work already underway across the College. Enrollment growth, research expansion, student career outcomes, interdisciplinary collaboration, and rural and global engagement are established trajectories in CAS. Alignment allows these parallel efforts to compound rather than compete.

Focus, Sequencing, and Stopping

CAS will sequence attention over time, focusing leadership energy and coordination on a small number of priorities each year while maintaining momentum across all five strategic areas. The priorities themselves remain constant; sequencing affects emphasis, not direction.

Alignment also requires stopping. As priorities are sequenced, CAS will sunset, consolidate, or redesign activities and processes that are no longer aligned, effective, or high-impact, creating space for work that matters most. Growth in one area will often require simplification or contraction in another.

Resources and Realignment

The primary resource for this Roadmap is time — the time of faculty, staff, students, and leadership. CAS already has this resource. Most financial resources are committed; progress will come through intentional realignment, coordination, and strategic tradeoffs, not by simply adding funding or expectations.

A Living Roadmap

This Roadmap will be reviewed annually by the CAS Leadership Team, informed by departments, centers, and shared governance. Units will identify a small number of aligned contributions, ensuring clarity and line of sight without new reporting burdens.

Our promise is simple:

CAS is career-connected, Colorado-grown, and globally engaged. We're building a model for how modern agriculture advances discovery, serves society, and inspires progress.

Full Strategic Roadmap (Detailed)

Framing Statement

The College of Agricultural Sciences (CAS) sits at the heart of what it means to be a national model modern land-grant. We're not chasing the future — we're creating it. CAS advances foundational discovery and curiosity-driven research as the engine that makes application, innovation, and impact possible. This Roadmap advances CSU's Strategic Roadmap 2035 by positioning CAS as a driver of student success, research impact, and statewide engagement.

Our mission is to pursue intentional, curiosity-driven discovery, cultivate excellence in teaching and learning, and spark collaborative engagement. We integrate science, education, and partnerships to sustain food, water, land, and community for everyone.

From fundamental discovery to applied solutions we turn research into action, prepare students to lead, and partner with people to shape Colorado's future — because *ag needs everyone*.

Focus and Sequencing

This Roadmap aligns and accelerates work and demonstrated achievement already underway across the College so progress compounds rather than competes. Where growth serves us, it will be pursued in ways that strengthen quality, excellence, and sustainability.

Alignment also requires stopping. As we sequence priorities, CAS will intentionally identify activities, processes, and initiatives that are no longer aligned, effective, or high-impact and will sunset, consolidate, or redesign them. Creating space is essential to focus, quality, and sustainability.

We will sequence attention over time — focusing leadership energy and coordination on a small number of priorities each year — rather than simply adding a lot of new initiatives or expectations. Progress will come from alignment, reduced friction, and coherence, not simple addition. Annual sequencing and goals will be identified through the CAS Leadership Team with unit input shaping the selections, informed by departments, centers, and shared governance bodies. The five priorities outlined below will remain constant; sequencing affects emphasis, not direction.

Built on Momentum

The goals and progress markers in this Roadmap reflect trajectories CAS is already on based on data we already have. Enrollment growth, research expansion, student career outcomes, interdisciplinary collaboration, and statewide engagement are established patterns across the College. This Roadmap aligns those parallel efforts so progress compounds rather than competes.

Our Commitment

We ground our work in four linked priorities identified by members of CAS over the last five years: food safety, food security, wellness, and economic prosperity – all pursued through the lens of sustainability. These commitments shape how we teach, research, partner, and serve.

We believe that actions matter – and action matters.

We serve with excellence, intention, rigor, optimism, empathy, creativity, and wisdom, knowing that people experience our impact through what we do, not just what we say.

1. Student Success, Social and Economic Mobility, and Solving Labor Market Shortages

Strategic Intent

Every student who walks into our college should walk out ready for a great job, a meaningful life grounded in learning, and a clear sense of purpose – fully prepared to contribute to the agriculture, food, and natural resources industries. We connect coursework to careers through accessible, hands-on learning, internships, research, and industry collaboration.

Goals

- Ensure every student has access to an internship or applied professional experience aligned with their career plan.
- Expand student development and career readiness through deep curricular experiences, AI-aware practices, and meaningful connections with peers, faculty, staff, and industry.
- Bring industry, agency, community, and public partners (especially our alumni) into classrooms to help students build both understanding and networks.
- Create clear pathways from classroom to career in every major.
- Expand stackable credentials, certificates, and flexible online options for working professionals and lifelong learners.
- Strengthen recruitment pipelines from community colleges, FFA, 4-H, and rural, suburban, and urban schools.
- Improve degree completion through proactive advising and flexible learning options.
- Modernize high-impact learning spaces, on the main campus and across our Research Centers.

- Broaden access to international experiences through the Colorado GROW Youth Institute and the North American Agricultural Advisory Network (NAAAN).
- Increase curricular flexibility to enhance student retention across CAS and CSU.

USDA NIFA Critical Issue

- Empowering Colorado Youth through Leadership and Development Programs. (4-H Youth Development)

Progress Markers

- +10% annual growth overall in resident, transfer, and rural student enrollment.
- Within 5 years:
 - 2nd-fall retention $\geq 90\%$ and 6th-fall retention $\geq 75.2\%$.
 - +10% enrollment growth for majors that have not been growing at that rate already.
 - $\geq 80\%$ of students participating in internships, research, or professional experiences.
 - $\geq 90\%$ job or graduate-school placement within six months.
- Year-over-year growth in certificate and online program participation.
- Students finish their education with careers, networks, and applied experience. Track key indicators and make changes annually that improve our outcomes in measurable ways.
- Track and improve alignment to intended career outcomes for students.

2. Research and Academic Excellence, Catalyzing Mutually Beneficial Economic Development

Strategic Intent

Our science and teaching matter because they advance understanding and, over time, they make a difference. CAS leads in intentional, curiosity-driven discovery and collaborative engagement – connecting soil to satellites, barns to biotech, design studios to data labs. To the benefit of Colorado and the world, we focus on soil to supper—from fundamental discovery to applied solutions.

Goals

We pursue these priorities through hypothesis-driven, foundational, and applied research spanning biological, physical, social, and design sciences.

- Dig in on knowledge creation as a key deliverable to support society.
- Foster cross-disciplinary teams that pair unexpected partners to solve complex problems through systems approaches.
- Prioritize big themes: regenerative systems; soil and plant health; water; animal wellbeing; food systems; food innovation; landscape and working lands resilience; and biosecurity.
- Increase undergraduate involvement in discovery-driven and applied research.
- Elevate graduate and professional MS programs through mentoring, applied projects, interdisciplinary opportunities, and online access.
- Expand the Ag Innovation Center and Ag Innovation Leadership Council to translate research into startups, technologies, policy insights, and public good.
- Position Spur as a statewide platform for integrated research, teaching, engagement, and Extension.
- Strengthen CAS as CSU's go-to collaborator – nimble, trusted, and boundary-free.
- Increase visibility and impact through communications that amplify publications, partnerships, and global collaboration.
- Work shoulder-to-shoulder with agencies, industry partners, and nonprofits to apply research and discovery toward more sustainable agricultural systems.

USDA NIFA Critical Issues

- Strengthening Agricultural Systems for Productivity, Drought and Wildfire Resilience, and National Security. (Agriculture)
- Advancing Horticulture and Specialty Crops for Diverse and Robust Food Systems for Rural Prosperity. (Horticulture + Food Systems)
- Enhancing Livestock, Crop, and Soil Health for Rangeland and Cropland Productivity and Stewardship. (Livestock and Range)
- Innovating in Energy and Natural Resource Management for a Sustainable Future. (Energy + Natural Resources)

Progress Markers

- +5% annual growth in sponsored funding.
- +10% annual increase in philanthropic and non-federal research support.
- Annual increases in undergraduate research participation.
- Growth in interdisciplinary grants, patents, startups, and collaborative publications.
- Steady increases in graduate student completion and placement in high-impact careers.

3. Institutional Competitiveness

Strategic Intent

Excellence grows from clarity, focus, and trust. We operate through collaboration, transparency, and accountability – making CAS a place where people can do their best work and know it matters. Faculty and staff expertise and leadership are essential to alignment, student success, research excellence, and engagement.

Goals

- Align recognition, evaluation, and workload expectations with the breadth of contributions outlined in this Roadmap.
- Simplify processes and eliminate redundancy that slows creativity.
- Clarify roles through a College Service Charter that accelerates collaboration.
- Make budget and workload decisions transparent and tied to strategy.
- Improve compensation and workload equity to retain top talent.
- Invest in leadership development through the Association for Public and Land Grant leadership programs LEAD21, FSLI (the Food Systems Leadership Institute), and internal programs including the Dean's Leadership Fellowships.
- Strengthen shared governance by ensuring College- and Department-level committees have clear charges and the authority to create positive change.
- Invest in faculty and staff support systems that strengthen teaching, learning, and assessment in an AI-enabled environment.

Progress Markers

- Annual review and retirement of outdated processes.
 - Within 5 years: faculty and staff retention exceeds peer colleges; annual surveys show improved trust and clarity.
 - Within 2 years: faster response times for IT, marketing, and administrative support.
 - Regular review of tenure-track to continuing/contract/adjunct faculty ratios and equity indicators.
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4. Strengthening Our Impact Across the State, Region, and World — Rural and Global Engagement

Strategic Intent

Agriculture launched CSU's land-grant story — and CAS is shaping its next chapter. We lead rural and global engagement, ensuring communities everywhere have access to education, innovation, and opportunity. CAS integrates research, teaching, and Extension as co-equal pathways for discovery, learning, and impact.

Goals

- Build integrated rural initiatives linking research, teaching, design, and Extension — from soil health and animal wellbeing to entrepreneurship and resilience.
- Leverage international networks to solve global and Colorado semi-arid agriculture challenges.
- Design flexible online, hybrid, and place-based programs that meet workforce needs statewide.
- Co-create applied projects with communities focused on food systems, health, and ecosystem management.
- Expand partnerships with CSU Pueblo, CSU Global, and community colleges to prepare professionals across agriculture and natural resources.
- Use Spur as a demonstration hub for statewide and global collaboration.

USDA NIFA Critical Issues

- Fostering Community and Economic Development to Build Resilient Colorado Communities. (Community and Economic Development)
- Promoting Health and Wellbeing for Individuals, Families, and Communities. (Health and Wellbeing + Individual, Family, and Community Wellbeing)

Progress Markers

- +10% annual growth in rural student enrollment and engagement.
- Create ways to track rural sentiment and address challenges and opportunities as they arise.
- Measurable outcomes from rural-serving and community-engaged projects by 2030.
- Increased funding and partnerships on multi-department rural priorities.
- Annual evaluation of international collaborations supporting Colorado-focused solutions.
- CAS recognized as Colorado's front door for agricultural and design innovation.

5. Democracy and Preparing Active, Engaged Citizens

Strategic Intent

Agriculture sits at the center of public debate about food, land, and the future. CAS leads with curiosity, courage, and civility — helping people talk across divides and find common ground. CAS research spans biological, environmental, economic, social, and governance systems that shape food, land, and community outcomes. Together, we will deploy our expertise to advance nonpartisan, evidence-based engagement by convening dialogue, strengthening civic learning, and informing policy without partisan advocacy.

Goals

- Support engagement with diverse ideas and perspectives to promote dialogue and discovery in classrooms and student organizations.
- Create a class co-led by federal, state, and industry leaders that brings students into conversations about how systems work — and how they could work better.
- Launch the Distinguished Fellow for Democracy in Agriculture to connect science, policy, and civil discourse.
- Embed communication, ethics, and civic engagement across programs — from business to biology, landscape to livestock.
- Ensure all students understand the basics of agricultural policy (e.g., Farm Bill, conservation, trade) and can communicate effectively about it.
- Create a Certificate in Ag Policy and Civic Leadership linked to the Agricultural and Resource Economics course AREC 380: Ag Issues, and the Center for Public Deliberation.
- Host public conversations, exhibitions, and forums statewide and at Spur.
- Advance interdisciplinary research connecting democracy, sustainability, and agricultural systems.

Progress Markers

- ≥ 4 democracy-focused events and ≥ 6 national opinion pieces annually.
- Within 5 years:
 - $\geq 75\%$ of students engaged in civic or community-based learning.
 - Growth in interdisciplinary policy and design research funding.
 - CAS recognized nationally as a trusted convener for food, land, and democracy.

Advancing the Model Modern Land-Grant College

What Makes This Roadmap Real

- **Clarity:** Focus on what moves the mission — and stop what doesn't.
 - **Collaboration:** Build systems and incentives that make working together the easiest path.
 - **Student Experience:** Keep students at the center — connecting learning to purpose and careers.
 - **Resources:** Align incentives and funding with CAS commitments and progress markers.
 - **Culture:** Recognize and reward the people who make CAS stronger every day.
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Resources and Realignment

The primary resource for this Roadmap is time — the time of faculty, staff, students, and leadership. CAS already has this resource. Most financial resources are already committed. Progress will come through intentional realignment, coordination, and strategic tradeoffs, ensuring that effort is focused where it has the greatest impact. Realignment decisions will be made transparently and tied to Roadmap priorities and progress markers.

Unit Alignment

Departments, programs, and units will identify a small number of aligned contributions to the Roadmap. This alignment is intended to provide clarity and line of sight, not to introduce new reporting burdens or reduce local autonomy.

Our Promise

We are the College of Agricultural Sciences — career-connected, Colorado-grown, and globally engaged. Together, we're building a model for how modern agriculture inspires progress in every sense of the word.

This is a living document, reviewed annually by the CAS Leadership Team for progress as well as updates.

What's next? Departments, programs, centers, and other groups will align existing and develop new initiatives based on the goals and metrics outlined in the plan.
