Jan. 9, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: SAES Faculty and Staff
FROM: Alton Thompson, Dean
RE: Welcome Back

Greetings and Happy New Year! I hope that your holiday break was rewarding, relaxing and rejuvenating.

Two and one-half years ago, we adopted a strategic plan based on three concepts - innovation, creativity, and collaboration - that added value to our work as partners of the land-grant system. The intent of this is to add value to the lives of North Carolina citizens and to introduce fully-prepared graduates of the food, agricultural, family and environmental sciences into a waiting society. We do this by seamlessly knitting learning, discovery and through the application of this knowledge to serve our communities – from local to global.

Beginning 2008 is an appropriate time to reflect on the ways SAES should continue working on the SAES Strategic Plan and our mission to add value to the lives of the citizens of North Carolina, and beyond.

The year 2007 was particularly outstanding for the School with respect to academic, research and Extension accomplishments. We took a real risk in developing some of our products that are now being duplicated across the country. Our faculty members continue to be entrepreneurial and continue to do excellent work both here and abroad to address agriculture, life sciences, environmental and educational challenges. Selected examples include:

- one of our food scientists developing a patented-protected process to inactivate allergens in peanuts.
- one of our animal scientists producing North Carolina A&T's first spin-off company, Provagen, Inc.
- SAES becoming a major partner in the creation of the North Carolina Research Campus with the development of a Center of Excellence for Post-Harvest Technologies.
- SAES collaborating with state agricultural leaders and the North Carolina General Assembly to develop a state strategic plan on biofuels.
• our enrollment increasing to an all-time high of over 800 students, making SAES the largest HBCU agricultural program in the nation and the third largest producer of African American graduates with bachelor’s of science degrees in the agricultural sciences.

As we consider 2008 and our future direction, the SAES recognizes that more challenges lie ahead and that we must strengthen our commitment to conceptually and operationally defining the SAES’s major-interdisciplinary program initiatives while concurrently promoting a collaborative culture of partnerships among academic, research and Extension programs, across disciplines, across the University and with communities, businesses and governmental agencies. One of the most important jobs of faculty members in higher education is to anticipate the challenges of the future; often, these issues, concerns, and possibilities are not yet on the average person’s radar. To this end, in our quest to be visionary, two faculty summits are being planned for the spring.

We will continue to have budget challenges in the year ahead, and we must continue to expand and increase the support from the private sector. Many agencies and organizations are recognizing our work and joining with us. Partnerships and opportunities are now evolving in ways that I previously could not have even imagined; I’m excited. One of our priorities for 2008 is to continue to identify new partners to support our programs and our students. Already, we have identified a number of prospective investors and we are busy cultivating those relationships and getting them to see and understand the value in supporting the SAES.

Other priority goals for 2008 include increasing recruitment, retention and graduation rates, creating a responsive learning environment that fosters high quality programs in teaching, research and Extension, working more effectively with the SAES Alumni Society, implementing the work plan for the Center of Excellence for Post-Harvest Technologies, and strengthening our internal control and accountability measures.

I want to personally thank you for the great work that you do day in and day out to make a difference in the lives of our students and stakeholders. We must continue to push toward the horizon, continue to tread where others dare not, continue to take a long-term view to guide our immediate actions, and continue to do so with the highest integrity, ethics and moral standards. I look forward to working with you in 2008, and beyond.