TALL XVIII Cohort
SESSION I

College Station, TX
July 12-15, 2022

Daniel Alders - #1

Day 1 - July 12

TALL - Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership.

- Uniquely Texan, with Texas leadership and Texas producers and industry leaders at the helm, as well as a cohort that is specifically Texan.
- Agricultural in focus, but broad in impact as Agriculture touches every facet of our lives - local, national, and global economies, public health, national security, and so much more that we often take for granted.
- Lifetime lessons that shape the way we view and interact with Ag producers, consumers, and policy makers around the world as the mantle is passed down to the next generation.
- Leadership traits that will serve us in every capacity of our lives - in our families, churches, communities, and industries.

Shortly before 1 p.m. on Tuesday, July 12, 2022, the eighteenth cohort mustered at the Texas A&M Hotel & Conference Center, ready for our 1 p.m. start. The venue was conveniently adjacent to Kyle Field - a perfect backdrop for any warm-blooded fan of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas. Over the course of the next hour, we were welcomed into the TALL family, given a glimpse into how unique the program is and the history behind it, and challenged to make the most of the next two years. And maybe most importantly, we were thoroughly cautioned that we were not to be tardy, and that Dr. Mazurkiewicz waited for no man (or woman).

Following a welcome from Dr. Jeff Ripley, Associate Director of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, and introductions from each of the cohort members, we jumped into our first presentation of the day. Mr. Todd Swick serves as Deputy Director of Agribusiness, Land & Minerals within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. While I was aware that TDCJ had correctional institutions and a hand in agriculture, I was surprised by the breadth of the operation. With 20,000 inmates in a variety of correctional facilities, we learned that the Agribusiness sector produces $85-90 million worth of goods with a $55-60 million budget. That results in $25-30 million returned back to the State's general fund, and saving taxpayers money. The number of goods produced per year does not disappoint: 3 million yards of fabric (most support the Texas prison system), 30,000 jackets, 1.5 million socks, 60,000 shirts and pants, 230,000 slip on shoes, 1 million towels, 10 million license plates… the list goes on. Thanks to

these departments, TDCJ is not only saving taxpayers money, but the inmates in these institutions are learning valuable skills that they could potentially take with them and continue to be productive members in their communities.

Next we headed to the bus for a short drive to the headquarters of Texas A&M Forest Service. Director Al Davis was unable to join us but we were left in the capable hands of Bill Oates, the Associate Director for Forest Resource Development. Bill, who spent some time in East Texas and at Stephen F. Austin State University, explained that the Forest Service works to serve, protect, and support Texas forestland. It's still amazing to me that out of 171 million acres in Texas, 63 million of them are classified as forestland, with the greatest bulk of them located in East Texas. And yet there is still a significant portion of that number composed of mesquite "forests" located west of I-35. I was also grateful for the quick tour through the many applications and resources that are available via the Texas A&M Forest service website, including the ability to map your land, identify trees, analyze timber supply, view drought conditions, and more. We wrapped up our time on site in the command center, where staff keep an eye on all current wildfires around the state, and where our various resources are located to be able to support the efforts to combat those fires. We were all shocked to learn that the state has already had over 6000 wildfires so far this year, with over half a million acres burned. Thanks to the Texas A&M Forest Service, Texas forests are an active piece of the agricultural pie, contributing $41 billion to the Texas economy, and providing 172,000 jobs.

At this point, we had to book it back to the hotel, where after a quick wardrobe change and our first attempt at business class, we gathered downstairs for a lesson in Etiquette from Dr. Susan Quiring. She bore with our queries and occasionally superfluous questioning and imparted some important lessons for us as we continue our professional careers and have the opportunity to enjoy a periodic fine dining experience. The biggest take away would probably be that as a table guest, we must always be mindful of those with whom we are eating, and let that dictate how we sip our soup, drink our tea, pass the bread, and make conversation.

Finally, having sufficiently made it through supper without offending each other, most of the cohort gathered around the proverbial Polish soda water cooler and began getting to know the leaders in agriculture with whom we would be spending the next two years. It had been half a day, and we were just getting started.

Day 2 - July 13

No rest for the late night crowd - we were gathered in our hotel meeting room at 7 a.m. for breakfast and to prepare for the first presentation of the day. Dr. Guy Sheppard, Veterinary Diagnostician with the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory, kicked us off with an overview of the TVMDL. We learned that the lab was separate from the Veterinary College at A&M, and that was because the founders were intent on its focus being diagnostics, with education as a secondary role. TVMDL has four labs strategically located around the state, with two poultry-specific labs in Gonzales and Center. Their slogan: "Protecting human and animal health through diagnostics." They run nearly a million tests per year, and they receive

submissions from across the state, country, and the world. It's another proud arm of the Texas A&M University system.

We next transitioned to Texas A&M AgriLife Research's Director, Dr. Cliff Lamb, who grew up on a cattle operation in Zimbabwe. Dr. Lamb shared with us his first-hand experience of what happens when the government steps in to provide "centralization," relating his family's experience with having the family farm torn away and placed in government control. Zimbabwe, which used to be the breadbasket of Africa, could feed itself and the five surrounding countries. But in 1999 the government decided to nationalize private farms, and it started with those families who didn't even have loans on their property. It only took three years before the country was unable to produce even 25% of the food needed in Zimbabwe alone, much less the neighboring countries. The lesson - never underestimate the collateral damage that comes from political intervention in food security. Dr. Lamb's testimony was enlightening and provides him a unique perspective in evaluating the true challenges facing agriculture. He focused on the next generation, and how their challenge is not knowing where their food comes from, not being connected to food production like generations before, and overall population growth. As a result, the Research Center's priorities are: sustainability - figuring out how to be more resilient (i.e. surviving droughts); technology - gene-editing and strengthening crops, making them more pest resistant or allowing them to grow requiring less water; Smart Agriculture - utilizing sensor technology, drones, and whatever the next thing might be.

Our final presentation of the morning was from Dr. Joe Outlaw, Co-Director of the Agriculture Food Policy Center. Dr. Outlaw covered a lot of ground as it related to ag policy nationally, and it's no wonder - this next Farm Bill will be the 8th one he's worked on. The Policy Center, founded in 1983, is focused on research for Congress, predominantly behind the scenes, and is informed by focus groups of 675 top producers around the country, along with 95 panels across 30 states, covering feedgrain, wheat, cotton, rice, dairies, and ranches. AFPC evaluates the success of various policies at the national level and how those policies impact farmers and ranchers, agribusinesses, taxpayers, and consumers.

Following Dr. Outlaw's presentation, we loaded up for the "Brazos Bottom" to begin our tour through the area and the various producers and agribusinesses in the Bryan College Station area. We began with lunch at Giesenschlag Farms in Caldwell, where we were treated to a panel of 3 area producers who testified to the importance that community plays in the success of the local farmer. Agriculture production is a cooperative effort.

Next door to the Giesenschlags was the Wiggins Watermelon warehouse. The crews had just finished harvesting during the first half of the day, and when we arrived they were busy sorting and packing the watermelons which would be promptly loaded into reefers and ready to roll to the supermarket. Wiggins Watermelons produce about 7-8 million watermelons each year, weighing roughly 120 million pounds.

After a hot and humid wait for our bus to arrive, we gladly jumped on board en route to the next stop - Blue Bell Creameries in Brenham. I have always wanted to stop there for a tour, and TALL

finally delivered where I had failed previously. Unfortunately the production had wrapped up for the day, but we were able to witness the automated portion of the facility, where the containers are sorted and packed, prepping for distribution. Sam Sommer, the CFO, explained that the reason why Blue Bell has such a consistent product for consumers is because they take care to handle everything from production through delivery, choosing not to go through a third party distributor. This is one reason why Blue Bell is still a regional product - the company makes sure that once the ice cream is frozen to the perfect temperature, it stays there consistently through delivery to the store freezer. That prevents melting and refreezing, and results in the perfect dairy delight for your daily dessert.

The final stop of the day was STGenetics in Navasota. STGenetics is a worldwide leader in livestock reproductive services, including sex-sorted semen and genomic testing. We were able to tour their facilities and saw where they were doing research on their own feed mix and able to evaluate how many pounds of feed are required for a pound of gain. That evening we were treated to a presentation from co-founder Juan Moreno, who walked us through the many technological advances that have been made in the industry, resulting in greater efficiencies in cattle production. Similar to how poultry producers were able to advance from producing a small bird with little meat on its bones 50 years ago to producing a 6 pound bird now in 7 weeks, STGenetics is working to impact the cattle industry. Their research is showing that 15% less food is required with their EcoFeed, and 21% less water required, but that the same level of milk is able to be produced from the dairy cows being tested. If this remains consistent, it could be a game changer in the dairy industry.

Day 3 - July 14

Thursday began early, as Texas is in the middle of its hottest summer in at least 10 years. The program involved the TAMU Challenge Course and team building activities in the outdoors, so we didn't waste any time trying to beat the heat. Soon after arrival we split into two separate groups and began working together to solve puzzles, compete individually and as teams, and coordinate as a group to accomplish tasks. When we began the morning we barely knew each other's names; by the end we knew who each of our team members were, what they were capable of, and how we could work as a team to meet our goals or exceed our expectations. After a quick lunch, we headed to the ropes course, and at that moment God smiled upon us and gave us both cloud cover and a light shower of rain to prevent the experience from being miserable. We cheered one another on as our teams scurried up poles, balanced 30' high beams and wires, and belayed like pros on the ground.

After getting back to the hotel we had a chance to relax and catch our breath, and some of us enjoyed the hotel pool while others of us got caught on work conference calls. All the same it was a nice change of pace after an active morning, and a break before the busy evening.

Then, once again donning our business suits, we piled into the bus to head to the Texas A&M AgriLife Center. It was a beautiful venue and a great crowd of supporting businesses and producers gathered for the introduction of our Cohort. After getting a quick profile shot for the

directory and mingling with everyone, the program began. Dr. Mazurkiewicz and Dr. Hale welcomed the crowd and for the first time the cohort ran through introductions from 1 through 26. We have been told we will have plenty of opportunities to perfect this process as we go along. We were then paired with a family or business from the area and whisked off to their restaurant of choice to learn about their work, backgrounds, and challenges. I was not sure at the time how this would go, as it felt like I was being set up on a blind date, but I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know David and Grant Carrabba of Gooseneck trailers, and I would never have had that opportunity at a banquet or some formal event for our entire cohort. My thanks to Dr. Mazurkiewicz and the team of folks that helped make that evening possible. We talked about family and faith, politics and business, travel and food. My thanks to the Carrabba family for a fantastic evening.

Day 4 - July 15

We now arrived at the last day, and even though we'd technically been in College Station for two and a half days, we had completed a week's worth of activities. Dr. Patrick Stover, Director of the Institute for Advancing Health through Agriculture, began the final morning talking to us about how food is supposed to be abundant, affordable, and accessible. For decades food production has revolved around the goal of solving world hunger, but now we've mostly solved that particular issue. The challenge at hand today is using what we know and the food production process to solve chronic diseases. As Dr. Stover put it, Agriculture is the solution to human, environmental, and economic health.

Our next speaker was Professor Andrew Natsios, who shared with us the impact of National Affairs on food security. As a result we spent the majority of the hour talking through the consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and what it means for the world. Professor Natsios confirmed much of what I believe about Putin's intentions - that he wants to recreate the Russian Empire, which has been dying on its own. Russia is facing not only high mortality rates, but also low fertility rates, which is a dangerous combo for a nation that wants to be at or near the top globally. The dangers we face from Russia as a result are economic instability (impact on the EU in regard to energy and agriculture), food instability (with exports possibly being blocked at the Black Sea), and cyber threats (a perennial issue at this point). The reality is this - the world is watching, and there are other bad actors ready and waiting to take advantage if the United States is shown to be too weak to do what is right and needful.

We stuck with the international flavor for the next topic, but routed further away from agriculture, and focused more on what it looks like to live a life of service. That is what Jim Olson and his wife and family did, as he gave up a normal life to have a career in the CIA as an intelligence officer. Mr. Olson gave a riveting lecture as every person in the room hung on his every word. He shared what it was like to finally admit to his in laws what he had spent his life doing, what it like to train and be ready to go undercover on a mission, and then finally one of the most successful missions of his career when he was undercover in Russia and they found a defector from the KGB. I don't know that I could have done what Mr. Olson did, but he has my greatest respect and gratitude. He and his wife are true patriots.

Our final presentation was from Dr. Greg Pompelli and was on Cross-Border Threat Screening and Supply Chain defense. Unfortunately I had to step out during this talk to deal with a work issue, and essentially missed the entire presentation. However, I did catch a few minutes at the end as Dr. Pompelli spoke on upcoming future work. I am particularly interested in hearing more about how they hope to utilize technology to better improve ports of entry and screening, as well as detect invasive insects in food that pass through our ports.

With that, we reach the end of our first session. Following check out and our morning presentations at the hotel, we gathered at the Bush Presidential Museum and Library for the traditional Cohort picture and final words from Dr. Mazurkiewicz. We were ready to get back to our normal lives, though the last few days had been full and encouraging, challenging, and educational. October isn't far away, though, and before long we will be gathering once again as we tackle "Session II - Production, Producers, Progress."

Tall Cohort XVIII Session One Recap

Tillery Timmons - Sims, 18

July 20, 2022

The XVIII Cohort of The Governor Dolph Briscoe Jr., Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership Program, convened on July 12, 2022, in College Station, Texas. Relationships are at the heart of the program. Therefore, all activities and meetings revolve around developing meaningful connections. These connections are intended to strengthen the individual and create a unified effort to improve the lives of Texans and the livelihoods of the Texas agriculture community.

Utilizing the Challenge Course at Texas A&M, the cohort participated in team-building activities that relied on the gifts and skills of team members to solve problems creatively. These activities revealed individuals' outstanding qualities and made it clear why they were chosen for the cohort.

In addition, Texas A&M hosted a reception to introduce the Cohort to the general public and sponsors. Members were then hosted for dinner by local individuals. A vital and intentional part of the program, these small group meetings provided an opportunity to build relationships and have meaningful conversations.

John Giesenschlag, a 6th-generation Brazos River Bed farmer, spoke honestly to the Cohort about the issue of urban sprawl and the loss of farm and ranch land. He was not alone in his assessment of the situation. Multiple speakers raised the topic. With the loss of 175 agricultural acres happening every hour in the US, it is no wonder that Mr.Giesenschlag told the story as tears ran down his face. Of all the problems mentioned, the implications of this issue will impact all ecosystems. A lack of diversity of trees has shown to have an impact on human health as reported to us by the forestry service. Property rights and biology are at risk as farmers and ranchers are forced to break up large swaths of land (Dr. Cliff Lamb). People become more and more removed from food production as urban areas expand (Patrick Stover). This lack of connection impacts economics on the farm and drives consumer misconceptions that influences policy and regulations (Joe Outlaw). Small animal ownership expands and is more profitable contributing to a lack of large animal vets (Guy Shephard). Therefore, food production systems must adapt to less land, more people, and acts of war (Andrew S. Natsios).

We live in troubling times but are not the first to struggle. We have in our DNA the ingenuity and determination of our ancestors and are blessed with the tools and innovations to advance necessary changes quickly (STGentics). But we must accept

that not all change is wrong. We must overcome the fear of the unknown and hold tightly to the principles that guide us safely through troubling times. Mr. Giesenschlag's response to change is a beautiful example. First, we grieve, but then as he said, *"See the birth of a new calf and know there is a Creator,"* and with hope, we continue to feed the world.

As a person who likes to take action, I have thought hard about what we can do. It would be tempting to circle up the wagons. With good reason, we could develop a defensive posture as new neighbors move into our state. But I hear Dr. Jim's voice saying, *"It's all about relationships."* The innovations, programs, departments, and research we heard about are all led by great people who care deeply for humanity and our planet. Likewise, our neighbors, those in other states, and those moving in, like us, have similar hopes, and dreams. We can allow the Russians to divide us by believing the lies they spread on the internet (Andrew S. Natsios), or we can choose to believe that the vast majority want nothing more than we do - life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Without relationships, we can only assume and continue to dig a moat around our culture. TALL has never been more vital than now. Learning to listen to better understand people and build relationships outside of my belief system is my action plan.

Tillery Sims

Experts in a wide variety of fields provided education throughout the week. A quick overview of the topics is outlined on the following pages with pertinent links.

Todd Swick, Deputy Director, Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Agribusiness, Land, and Minerals

TDCJ is a self-sufficient entity that produces 85-90 million dollars in goods yearly and adds 30 million to the Texas general fund. Government entities and non-profits are eligible to purchase products. In addition, TDJC utilizes vertical integration to provide job training and trade education to inmates who choose to participate.
The recidivism rate for participating inmates is 7% compared to a rate of 21.4% for the general prison population.
Trades and job training are available across the entire value chain of multiple industries, including:

- Farming, complete processing of food, fiber, and animals
- Garments, shoes, clothes, linens
- Graphics, printing, laser-cut metal and wood signs, decals, car wrap, textbooks, football programs, brail books
- Machine Shop and Woodworking, CAD, welding, equipment and parts, pots and pans
- Mechanics, both car and diesel
- Equipment Operator
- CDL, logistics
- Computer refurbishing

Texas A&M Forestry Service

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Wildfire Support:

- Satellite monitoring of fires
- Weather and drought monitoring
- Coordinates equipment donations from the 500 funded fire departments to the 1,300 volunteer departments
- Provides education and training
- Provides equipment to fight state and national fires as needed

Landowner Support:

- Consulting on land and brush management
- *34 apps and websites* that meet a wide array of needs, from tree identification and diagnoses to mapping and the *Funding Connector* to help landowners connect to financial assistance

The staff at the Forest Service are committed to Texas landowners. Like many speakers we heard from, they are concerned about urban sprawl and its effects on the environment and human health. They have made a concerted effort to take all available data and make it accessible to landowners. I will use their website to help my landowner customers locate funding and services. In addition, I will be adding our business to their *My Land Management Connector* to help expand our customer base.

Guy Shephard, Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory

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"Human, animal and environmental health all work together." Dr. Shephard

Created by the Texas Legislature in 1967, TVMDL services the states need for quick and economical diagnosis. Veterinarians and laypersons submit over 1 million samples for testing annually. Subsidies from the state help lower costs for Texans; however, those subsidies decrease every session.

Throughout the state, large animal veterinarians remain in short supply. Large animal vets are impacted by farm economics, and rural practices are hurt as ranchers cull herds and cut costs to survive. The county vet is a vital part of the ag community and essential to a healthy food supply. Efforts to decrease the cost of education along with creative incentives are needed to allow graduates to build practices that service large animals.

Dr. Cliff Lamb, Director, Texas A&M Agrilife Research
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A native of Zimbabwe, Dr. Lamb's family, lost their 6th generation farm and ranch to government confiscation. This abuse of power and the needless suffering it created drive Dr. Lamb's passion for private property rights and the effects of urban sprawl. Zimbabwe was once able to produce enough food to supply itself and five other nations. It only took three years of government control before food shortages and starvation became the norm. Dr. Lamb encouraged the cohort to become or stay active in grassroots politics. Political decisions have an enormous impact on food systems.

With 11 Universities,18 Agencies, 13 regional Research Centers housing 430 researchers, and offices in 250 Texas counties, Agrilife is the largest research institute in the nation. In addition, Dr. Lamb and the Board of Directors are developing relationships worldwide, expanding the impact of Texas agriculture.

Agrilife's Priorities:

- Regenerative Agriculture
    - Finding ways to become more resilient to changes in weather and climate
    - Increase yields on fewer acres
    - Develop new crops for increased carbon and biology (hemp and algae)
- Technology
    - Gene editing of animals
    - Stem cell transfer
    - Water conservation
- Smart Ag
    - Data Capture
    - Innovative equipment
    - Improved infrastructure

Serving on the Board of Directors for the Texas Hemp Growers Association, I found it encouraging that he mentioned hemp production. Without active participation from the ag community, the potential for hemp as a new food and fiber crop will be limited. Agrilife's continued research in agronomic, genetics, and end products will be vital to infrastructure development. It is good to hear of their increasing support for a new commodity crop and their awareness of the market demand for hemp products.

Joe Outlaw, Co-Director, Agricultural and Food Policy Center

AFPC works quietly with Congress to provide needed data, economic models, and impact studies. Data accuracy is ensured through a Focus Group of 675 top US producers that make up 95 panels in 30 states. The work of AFPC assists the (only) 2 employees in Congress that develop the budget for ag.

Along with data and economic decision aid tools for farmers, Dr. Outlaw watches legislation and regulations developing that will impact the farm, including:

- Waters of the US (WOTUS) put back into place once again expanded regulations, including playa lakes that are most often empty
- Carbon Markets
    - Environmental pledges are driving the markets
    - Texas is at a disadvantage; most of our cropland does not absorb carbon quickly (¾ ton/yr)
    - Corporations are paying 100.00/ton with some fraction of 20.00/ton going to the farmer
    - The middleman again makes the money
- Proposed changes on sustainability reporting to SEC
    - This reporting would include the producer and require tracking of operations and day-to-day activities
- Farm Bill
- Income Tax Law changes are not going away and will negatively impact farm families if there is no exception provided for them
- Cattle Price Discovery and Transparency Act of 2022

Brazos River Basin Farm Field Day

John & Connie Giesenschlag hosted the Cohort for lunch. Mr. Giesenshclag is a 6th-generation farmer and serves as the Vice Chairman of the Board of Citizens State Bank. Serving the area for close to a century, Citizens is an integral part of the ag ecosystem. Local to the area, Andrew Dusek (TALL XVII) served as MC and gave the new Cohort his perspective on the value of the TALL experience. The farmer panel featured John Giesenschlag, Jay Wilder of Wilder Family Sunflowers, and Jason Wendler. These three neighbors shared their farming experiences and the current issues they are facing. Houston growth is converting farm and ranch land into urban developments and water loss as the Carrizo Aquifer is being piped to San Antonio. Mr. Wendler shared his experience and appreciation for his neighbors who mentored him as a first-generation farmer.

The cohort then toured Wiggins Watermelons, where harvesting and packing were in full swing. Next, Blue Bell Creameries in Brenham hosted a private tour of the factory. There the 9-hour daily cleaning job was underway.

STGenetics provided the Cohort dinner and an in-depth presentation of their genetic advancements and coming innovations. Their developments in gender sorting technology and chromosomal tracking are rapidly changing the future of animal production. STGenetics is an excellent example of the unique opportunities coming available for career and investment in agriculture.

Dr. Patrick Stover, Director, Institute for Advancing Health Through Agriculture

"Ag is the solution to human and environmental health." Dr. Stover

- The current food system was created out of WWII, and a moral imperative to end hunger
- Our system makes food:
    - Abundant
    - Affordable
    - Accessible
- Building on this success, attention is shifting to new expectations:
    - Food for life-long health
    - Protect and sustain the environment
    - Ensure agriculture is economically viable

Current system and issues:

- Cheap food just pushes costs to healthcare and the treatment of diseases
- Diet-related diseases cost the US over 1 trillion annually and affect 50% of adults
- Pharmaceutical companies are making money off of treatments rather than prevention
- 50% of Americans are pre-diabetic or diabetic
- Texas medical costs for diet-related chronic disease are expected to rise to $39 billion by 2040
- Inconsistent and one-size-fits-all dietary advice
- Consumers who don't trust ag and make preference-based and not science-based choices
- Consumers far removed from agriculture
- Politics and lobbying play too much of a role in our current system
- We need to grow more and better food on less and less land
- Losing 175 acres of US farmland every hour to urban sprawl
- The ever-increasing expectations for farmers:
    - Offset GHG - 2% increase in soil carbon content could offset 100% of GHG emissions
    - Create a more resilient system

Health is complex, with many interacting factors. Therefore, collecting information through either self-reporting or tracking technology is needed. The variabilities of inherent traits, age, diseases, food composition variability, and environmental and economic factors will be enormous. This data will provide the information needed to assess decisions affecting the food supply chain.

The Institute for the Advancement of Health through Agriculture's two Initiatives support this shift in focus:

- Producers and Consumers Evidence-based research and transparency are necessary to rebuild consumer trust in the US food system. Increased knowledge will help to end the “one-size-fits-all” medical advice that is constantly changing. The evidence will be used to inform responsive agriculture decisions.
- Science Evidence Center Policies will be crafted based on the evidence and not on lobbying efforts to improve our food system.

The Initiatives’ goals will be met through research and development in three overlapping focus areas:

- Precision Nutrition “*a nascent science, is a comprehensive and dynamic approach to understanding nutrition based on individual differences in responding to diets and their impact on health due to genetics, epigenetics, age, sex, disease status, sleep patterns, and other factors.”*
- Responsive Agriculture “*a science-based, dynamic approach to agriculture that seeks to respond to the needs of human health, environmental sustainability, and economic sustainability for the benefit of producers and consumers.- developing new technologies, methods, and applications that are readily translated into commercial products that are responsive to societal needs, consumer demands, and waste reduction.”*
- Healthy Living *“an initiative to rapidly apply knowledge from research to the needs of producers and consumers, and conduct dissemination and behavioral implementation research that quickly translates findings from the other two focus areas to the community and producers.”*

Andrew S. Natsios, Director, Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs, Bush School of Government
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An expert in foreign policy, Director Natsios, gave his enlighting insight into the current crisis in Ukraine.

- Russia is a dying country
- The murder rate is three times that of the US
- High mortality rate
- Population decline from 145 million to 84 million
- Putin is not a communist; he is a fascist
- Putin believes the US is the cause for the collapse of Russia (for the USSR, yes, we were, but not for Russia)
- Putin is attempting to recreate the Russian Empire
- He will not stop with Ukraine. His sights are set on Finland and Sweden - they are preparing now
- Putin would like to drive a wedge between the US and the EU and collapse the EU
- Thugs run Russia
- Starvation is a plan of war for Hitler and for Putin
- When you shift the food supply, people go hungry, and wars begin
- Food insecurity created by Putin could cause a world war
- He is deliberately creating a refugee crisis
- Refuge crises creates a rise in alt-right and white supremacy
- The Polish people are taking the refugees into their homes

What can we do:

- Attempt to bankrupt them by shutting off oil sales
- Continue to arm Ukraine
- Realize that the anti-vaccine, anti-fracking, fake news we see on social media is a Russian attack on our unity as a nation
- Increase security and prepare for cyber attacks (Russia hacked into the AZ voting system)
- Use local banks not connected to global systems
- We MUST care and stay involved. We can not afford to be isolated.

Jim Olson, Senior Lecturer, The Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M University

Mr. Olson and his wife served for 30 years as CIA Intelligence Officers. Enumerating the current threats such as homegrown terrorists, China (our greatest long-term threat), and the number of spies in the US (more than during the Cold War), *"We have never been in greater danger than we are now,"* warned Mr. Olson. *"Our current situation is a perfect storm, and intelligence is the key to winning the battle."* His is an inspiring story, and his passion is undoubtedly catching. He is an evangelist for the CIA, and I can see how he recruited more spies from A&M than any other university in the US.

Greg Pompelli, Ph.D., Director, Center of Excellence for Cross-Border Threat Screening and Supply Chain Defense, Texas A&M Agrilife
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"Critical research and workforce development activities are needed to assist DHS in balancing the tipping point between trade as a potential source of threat introduction and economic vitality that results from safe borders open to commerce." CBTS

CBTS Objectives:

- Education and Workforce Development
    - *"Use academic initiatives, industry partnerships, and enhanced workforce development to educate and train current and future personnel throughout the homeland security enterprise to prevent, prepare for, detect, respond to and recover from evolving biological threats"* CBTS

- Novel Tools and Technology
    - *"Advance novel analytics for timely decision-making through meaningful data integration…."* CBTS
- Supply Chain Defense
    - *"Reduce the risk of biological threats by developing new operational methods to assess the national supply chain network as an integral part of a global system…."* CBTS
- Systematic Risk Assessment
    - *"Provide unique capabilities and capacities to support time-critical response for DHS through implementation of next-generation threat identification approaches…."* CBTS

CBTS provides a host of easily assessable information to fulfill its public safety mission.

Jessup Clayton Yeaman -#26

TALL XVIII

Session 1- College Station, TX

July 12-15, 2022

When I was first nominated for the TALL cohort, I researched the program thoroughly and was impressed, not only by its mission and the education that it provides, but of the quality of the past cohort members and the folks that make the program function. Many familiar industry leaders' names were found on the rolls. I'm truly honored to have been selected as member of the TALL XVIII cohort.

Our first session was held in mid-July, 2022 and was based out of College Station, TX in the striking new Texas A&M Hotel and Conference Center. This first gathering was a fantastic kick-off, and I feel blessed to join such an impressive group as we begin our journey. Without doubt the first session broadened my awareness and understanding, not only of agriculture in general, but of the the many challenges our country faces, and ways agriculture can meet many of those challenges head on with the proper leadership. Dr. Mazurkiewicz set up an outstanding and diverse group of speakers, site visits, and development activities for our cohort which I have addressed in the order of our schedule:

Opening Remarks

Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz, Professor and Leadership Program Director, opened our session with a congratulatory statement regarding our acceptance to the cohort. He provided an overview of our session and covered several housekeeping items so we could all be on the same page. He gave us a history of the TALL program itself, and I was very impressed to learn that the program has no cost to the state of Texas or AgriLife Extension through the endowment made possible from the exceptionally generous donation of the Briscoe family.

Welcome

We received a warm welcome to the program from Dr. Jeff Ripley, Associate Director of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. He discussed how much TALL would be mean to us individually, and the potential we had to lead by taking what we learned and putting it to good use. I have personally known Dr. Ripley for many years and respect him a great deal. His welcome was inspiring and energizing.

Introductions- TALL Cohort XVIII

Dr. Mazurkiewicz had each of us introduce ourselves to the group. It became immediately obvious that the group was diverse in their back grounds but had the common theme of leadership and drive. It made me very proud to be a member.

Texas Department of Criminal Justice Agriculture Today

Mr. Todd Swick, Deputy Director Agribusiness, Land and Minerals for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice was our next speaker. His presentation was focused on the agricultural and industrial aspects of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice programs. I had no idea that the TDCJ has agricultural operations on some 300,000 aces of land, runs 9,000 plus cows, has 3,000 sows and many other ag endeavors. The incarcerated work on these operations and learn skills to use upon their release. Mr. Swick said that Texas' recidivism rate is much lower than other states, mainly thanks to these types of programs. The ag program has an annual budget of $55-$60 million and produces $85-$90 million a year saving the taxpayers a great deal of money. The system produces clothing from cotton grown on their farms, food for the incarcerated, furniture, license plates, truck beds and trailers for the Texas Department of Transportation, and many other items. The vertical integration was very remarkable.

Welcome and Overview of the Texas Forest Service

We took a short bus ride to the Texas Forest Service Emergency Operations Center. The facility itself was impressive and the Emergency Operations Center at the heart of the building was especially intriguing with its multiple screens on each wall, communication equipment and high tech gadgetry. We had several speakers present to us while there, and they each brought new aspects of the Forest Service to light for me. Notable takeaways were present in abundance. The service is not regulatory in nature, they support instead, and are not just focused on what we think of as typical "forest". They offer a multitude of online tools that provide data, management tools, wildfire preparation tools, and analysis for landowners and the general public. Texas has had 6,140 wildfires that burned 563,566 acres since January 1st, 2022. The number of personnel the service has in place is larger than I thought but still dwarfed by the tasks they have. The Service is also one of the lead agencies for incident management in the state. They provide programs to aid communities across the state, giving them tools and resources to protect themselves and their property.

Etiquette Training and Meal

Dr. Susan Quiring provided a very informative training during our evening meal related to fine dining and etiquette in general. She helped prepare us for certain social or professional situations when attending high level events and I feel her instruction on place settings, conversations skills, dining tips, and generating quality first impressions certainly made a lasting impression on me.

Responsibilities of the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory

Dr. Guy Sheppard, a veterinary diagnostician housed at the College Station laboratory, discussed the critical role played by the TVMDL, as well as the challenges facing the veterinarian profession in general and at the TVMDL. He gave an overview of the value of livestock and companion animals in Texas and pointed out that livestock and poultry contribute $18 billion annually to the Texas economy. Veterinary medicine itself contributes and estimated $827 million to the Texas economy.

Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Issues Facing Agriculture

Dr. Cliff Lamb's overview of the future of agriculture and the role played by politics, regulations, and misinformation was very eye opening. This speaker really made me zoom out and look at many of the bigger picture issues that are facing agriculture and our world population and brought AgriLife Research's work into focus. He discussed how politics often plays an unintended role in food security and used his native country of Zimbabwe as an example. Zimbabwe was once a net food exporter and supported the food needs of five surrounding countries. However, after the government took farms away from all the individuals who operated without debt (mainly members of the political opponent party of the heads of government) the country plummeted to only being able to accommodate about 45% of the food needs of its own population. Here at home, he pointed to out the issues of that 99% of the population has no idea where their food comes from, urban sprawl is eating up farmland, and the regulatory environment for agriculture is daunting. He said we need to focus on putting in place resilient systems in order to be food secure.

NAFTA, Tariffs and National Policy on the World Stage

Dr. Joe Outlaw, Professor and Extension Economist and Co-Director of the Agriculture Food Policy Center gave a very interesting update on national policy. He provided an overview of the Agriculture Food Policy Center and the roles he and his colleagues play. He addressed the average percentage change in cost for various inputs for crops seen from 2021-2022 and the corresponding price changes for commodities, as well as the CBO's projection for various crops in the next decade. He discussed carbon di-oxide emissions by country and the coming carbon credit market and the situation we may see in the US related to publicly traded companies pledging zero emissions.

Lunch and Program the John Giesenschlag farm.

We were provided a great lunch by our sponsors and while we ate at Mr. Giesenschlag's facility we had the opportunity to listen to he and two other Brazos bottom producers give their input on agriculture in the area and in general. They told their individual operation's stories and provided a good bit of insight to their day-to-day struggles and successes.

Wiggins LLP- Watermelon Warehouse, Inc

Jody and Clint Wiggins gave a tour of their watermelon processing facility and discussed the intricacies of watermelon production, harvest and marketing. The Wiggons' have several different farms and facilities and their management skills must be top notch to keep everything flowing smoothly. Jody Wiggons said that inputs on watermelons are around $5,000 per acre and a terrible hailstorm can decimate a farmer. He said approximately 80% of the melons they grow are sold in Texas. Their processing facility was only one aspect of their entire operation that we got to see first hand but it's high activity level makes me think the overall vertically integrated operation must be a logistics challenge to say the least.

Blue Bell Creameries, Brenham

Mr. Sam Sommer, CFO of Blue Bell, gave us an exciting tour of their creamery that encompassed a walkthrough of their production packaging floor, the chill room (-50 degrees!) a viewing of their mixing room. The entire facility was very high tech and the robotics on the packaging floor were especially impressive. We were given a great historical run down of their business. Interestingly, they started as a butter creamery and initially just made a little ice cream for their employees. The company is heavily involved in ag commodities. It takes the milk of 50,000 cows for one day of production at their Brenham facility alone. We wrapped up the tour with some complementary ice cream!

STGenetics, Navasota

Upon arrival at STGentics, we were shown through the main office and were given an overview and run down of the company's many projects. The company started by utilizing new technology to sort bovine semen by sex. They now offer these services, along with just about any other reproductive work, on multiple species. The dairy industry is their main source of income related to sexed semen. In addition, they now perform all kinds of genetic testing, efficiency testing, and other innovative options. We were given a tour of their 1,200-acre facility and provided supper. One of their founders, Jose Moreno, gave an in-depth presentation on genomics and the innovations they are currently working on. The ability for us to select sires for multiple traits positive traits at once while avoiding genetic issue was fascinating. For example, they have developed a gene map called Ecofeed, which is an innovation that will allow producers to breed for cattle that eat less, have a lower feed to gain ratio, lower water consumption, and produce less methane. Advances such as these are potential solutions to our challenges in feeding the world population.

TAMU Challenge Works

We traveled a short distance from the hotel to the Challenge Works course. Here, were provided action based experiences that were thought provoking, increased our cohesiveness as a group, and helped us get know each other better. There were many great lessons taught through the activities about working together, in sync, towards a common goal while utilizing

everyone's strengths and accepting that no one is perfect. The final challenges were call "high elements". We climbed 40-50-foot-tall poles in full repel gear and walked rope bridges and high lines. I felt that after this session I knew the names of everyone in our group. I also thought the overarching lessons brought about by the exercises were eye opening and very useful to take back to my career and everyday working environment. The ropes/high element part of the course was fun and challenging, I had never had the opportunity to do anything like that!

TALL XVIII Welcome Reception & Dinner Hosts / Cohort Dinner

The final evening, we were in College Station we attended a welcome reception in the new Texas A&M AgriLife Center. At the reception Dr. Mazurkiewicz spoke and had us introduce ourselves to the crowd. We also heard from Dr. Dan Hale, and some of our session sponsors. We subsequently were dismissed and went to dinner with a host assigned to us individually by Dr. Mazurkiewicz. My host for the evening was Jim McCord. We dined at a very nice restaurant named Gate 12 which is at the airport, and I tired to put my newly acquired fine dining skills to use. Mr. McCord was very gracious and interesting. He owns an engineering firm that focuses on large electrical power lines, but also runs a very large number of cows. He also is a statistician the Texas A&M football team, and both the women's and men's basketball teams. We had an excellent meal with great conversation. I feel the reception and dinner host set up was great way for us to spend time with folks that support the program and agriculture in general and get to know some of them on a drilled down level.

Texas A&M AgriLife Institute for Advancing Health through Agriculture

Dr. Patrick Stover, was kind enough to join us via Zoom despite being on a family vacation in Montana. He offered a fascinating discussion of how world war two revolutionized agriculture and the food supply, but that now we are beginning to focus on food as not a way to prevent hunger, but to control chronic diseases. Essentially the government is now trying to use food to lower healthcare cost. He also discussed the idea of precision nutrition, and how one "size does not fit all" . Some foods are great for some people and bad for others, ie allergic reactions.

International Affairs and Moving Forward

Professor Andrew Natsios, Executive Professor & Director of the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs and the Bush School of Government, spoke to us on our final day of the session. He primarily focused on the war in Ukraine and discussed Putin and his mindset at length. Professor Natsios had an unsettling but certainly enlightening outlook on our international affairs position. It was very interesting to hear from someone that is very knowledgeable about the subject and doesn't just repeat talking points heard elsewhere.

A different kind of undercover

Jim Olson, Senior Lecturer at the Bush School of Government, gave a fascinating rendition of his 30 year career in the CIA as an undercover operative. The sacrifices he and his

wife made for our country were admirable. His stories made my life feel very dull in comparison! He told us there are spies everywhere. He said that we face all kinds of threats from foreign aggressors and made me much more aware of the need for counterintelligence. His discussion was one that made me much more cognizant of the world stage.

Center of Excellence for Cross-Border Threat Screening and Supply Chain Defense

Dr. Greg Pompelli, Director of CBTS - Texas A&M AgriLife Research, was our last speaker of the session. The CTBS works in collaboration the Department of Homeland Defense to develop ways to counter threats that may come across our border without compromising commercial enterprise. He relayed the goals and mission of the CBTS and focused on the pillars of the organization which are: Education and Work Development, Novel Tools and Technology, Supply Chain Defense, and Systemic Risk Assessment.

Overall Program

In closing, my first TALL session was an outstanding experience. I really appreciate Dr. Jim, Jennifer, and all our speakers and sponsors giving of their time and funds to educate us. I feel like in just a few days I have a better overall understanding of our food security, issues we face, and the roles played by various agencies, individuals, and groups in our future. I learned so much and enjoyed the fellowship with the other cohort members.