

**S W O T**  
**STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS**

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**STRENGTHS**

What advantages does ALEC have?

**Teaching**

1. Curriculum emphasizing the translation of theory into practice
  - On-line Teaching
  - Hybrid courses
  - Student teaching
  - STEM laboratory
  - Leadership and eLearning Certificates
  - Alternative certification program
2. Significant impact on the educational mission of the college
  - 4 undergraduate degrees, 3 undergraduate minors, and 6 graduate degrees offered
  - High admission standards for all degree programs
3. High-Impact Experiences
  - Study Abroad
  - Study Away
  - Undergraduate Research
  - Internships
  - Student Teaching
  - Undergraduate Teaching Assistants
  - Learning Communities
  - Field Experiences
  - Fellows
4. Collaboration on and off campus
  - Texas AgriLife Extension
  - TAMU Residence Life
  - TAMU Corps
  - TAMU Student Activities
  - TAMU Multicultural Services Department
  - National FFA
  - Prairie View A&M University
  - Blinn
  - Texas Tech University
  - Houston Life Stock Show and Rodeo
  - Rodeo Austin
  - San Antonio Livestock Show and Exposition
  - Texas FFA Association
  - Texas Education Agency
  - Secondary agri-science programs throughout the state
  - Other Industry partnerships

5. Interaction with secondary agri-science teachers and Texas AgriLife Extension county faculty
  - Instructional Materials Service group
  - Texas AgriLife Extension Program Planning and Evaluation unit
6. Awards
  - Regional and National Professional Organization Teaching Awards
  - College Teaching Awards
  - Montague Scholars
  - Distinguished Professor

#### Research

1. Faculty/Graduate student research capacity
2. Selected expertise in long term research foci
3. Active participation and leadership in professional societies and organizations from regional to international level
4. Some expertise in agricultural communications, evaluation and accountability, leadership education, planned change, planning and needs assessment, research methods, and teaching and learning research
5. Potential for many collaborative efforts
6. Internationally recognized university brand
7. Public value and impact statements posted on ALEC website

#### Diversity

1. Texas is growing, attracting people from all parts of the country and world, great opportunity to reach out and recruit people that are different from the majority in the Department
2. There are opportunities to offer scholarships to promote diversity, e.g., the Diversity Fellowship
3. Hire faculty from other universities, i.e., faculty that have not received any of their degrees here
4. Hire faculty from disciplines related to the disciplines of the Department but not necessarily “agricultural”
5. Require students to do a study abroad
6. For those students with international development interests, require at least a semester-long internship to more fully appreciate, experience, and share a different culture
7. To open up the department more to a wider range of cultures
8. To select students with a wider diversity lens, i.e., to insure diversity, be purposeful, not leave to chance, actually select the ones we need for a better future for all

Engagement/Service

1. Relationship of Agricultural Experience Tracker (AET), to mission of Service to teachers provides NEW and POWERFUL mechanism to engage, excite and serve (AET is a record keeping system adopted by all 50 states for FFA youth input for their projects)
2. Historical and current relationships with counties and ISDs-and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension county staff and agricultural teachers
3. Outreach efforts and history of IMS provide established avenues for service and engagement
4. Fields of study connect theory-practice of social science with biological –physical sciences
5. Knowledge base includes transferable skills for several careers
6. Students have strong ethics (work, character, leadership, public good, vision)
7. Academic training and experiences of faculty and staff
8. Large number of former students who share an affinity for the department
9. Students and faculty with skills and experience in communications tools and methods who share their abilities to help the department engage audiences
10. Department possesses tools, programs, and experienced members that are used to engage audiences
11. Department has a strong involvement with international relations and development
12. Growing number of relationships and partnerships with community organizations and groups
13. Service Learning experiences through courses
14. Aggie Bash event enables the engagement of state agriculture teachers
15. Large number of successful and influential former students
16. Large emphasis placed on high impact experiences and study abroad work to engage students and community/global partners
17. Streamlining communications through web committee and resources such as alecnews@tamu.edu
18. Expanding our use of new media vehicles
19. TALL and VG Young connections with our department

Extension

1. Connections with external stakeholders that can help in issue identification, resource development, and financial capital
2. Presence in counties as a recruiting mechanism to the department
3. Opportunity for internships and employment for undergrad and graduate students
4. Extension agents that have departmental degrees acting as ambassadors to the University and particularly the department
5. Extension faculty who can bring real world antidotal examples from Texas to the classroom

### WEAKNESSES

What could ALEC do to improve its effectiveness?

#### Teaching and Faculty

1. Increase departmental capacity for teaching and advising effectiveness
  - Increase faculty positions
  - Increase advising positions
  - Increase graduate teaching assistant positions
  - Increase faculty and staff diversity
2. Enhance minority graduation
3. Decrease class sizes in ALED courses to improve faculty-student interaction
4. Improve, and continue to improve, teaching facilities and equipment
5. Create and hire key staff and graduate student positions with discretionary resources
6. Enhance Instructional Materials Service (IMS) longevity by adopting an operational paradigm that is visionary, contemporary, and market driven
7. Explore merit and equitable salary ranges by institution, academic discipline or function of position
  - Based on exploratory results, provide equity in faculty salaries
  - Seek to lead the discipline and institution in faculty salaries
8. Hire appropriate staff for grant management and academic advisors

#### Research

1. Lack internal collaboration
2. Lack a culture of scholarship (Boyer, 1991)
3. Most funded projects/lines of inquiry lack sustainability
4. Excessive teaching loads inhibit creative, thoughtful, and sustainable scholarship
5. Limited community impact, public value
6. Deemphasized value of impactful research (Undergrad to PhD; lacking research projects as capstone outcomes)
7. Tight confinement (reluctant to collaborate with other COALS researchers/scholars)

#### Diversity

1. Undergraduate student population is fairly homogenous, e.g., in AgCom mostly white conservative females
2. Tending to hire faculty that are graduates of not only TAMU but also of this department; this inbreeding is not promoting diversity of thought
3. How do we make shifts in attitudes permanent, e.g., after four weeks in Brazil, students did not show any appreciable change, based on Facebook comments. Students are often still processing the experience. Follow-up discussions with them might help make a difference
4. We are not good observers and we give lip service to diversity but no action-oriented efforts are undertaken
5. The selection criteria for undergraduate and graduate students related to promoting diversity is not evident, if it exists at all
6. The historical and present baseline data, based on prevailing University metrics, for each work unit in the Department is not known, publicized, or discussed
7. There is limited diversity among the faculty
8. We have limited metrics to assess or evaluate "diversity" at the departmental level

Engagement/Service

1. Lack of experiences with private-public partnerships hinders use of AET relationship
2. Service oriented without documented impact or public demand
3. Research lacks focus and dedicated time. Work is not aggregated to make policy or impact.
4. Lack of collective vision, mission, initiatives and priorities
5. This SWOT Analysis appears as an “self-benefitting” document lacking external stakeholder input
6. Lack of incentive to participate. Our merit matrix only counts this as 10%. Service not quantified. Also, a higher load of service should be expected of Professors and lower load for Assistant Professors
7. Variability of engagement and service with stakeholders other than students in class. Some seem to be VERY engaged and others are not represented hear at all
8. Communications within department and outside department are incomplete, incongruent, and not at a level we want
9. Department members are over-extended

Extension

1. Increase e-learning opportunities and training of Texas AgriLife Extension Service faculty through ALEC unit.
2. Improve collaborations and communication between Extension faculty and teaching faculty to build on the strengths of each group

## OPPORTUNITIES

What are the opportunities facing ALEC?

### Teaching

1. International influence or options at undergraduate/graduate level
2. Certificate programs to enhance degrees
3. Convert appropriate ALEC courses to online formats
4. New faculty position(s)
5. Pursue funding from former students and friends
6. Industry partnerships
7. Student participation in High-Impact Experiences
8. Recruitment efforts including diverse student populations

### Research

1. STEM integration in higher education (P20)
2. Potential to lead STEM initiatives
3. Great capacity for collaboration (ALEC)
4. Increase private industry partnerships for research in teaching, learning, and leadership in the agricultural work force

### Diversity

TBD

### Engagement/Service

1. To establish public-private partnership with AET and similar entities
2. To engage rural schools (and others) in STEM initiatives
3. ALEC has the capability to support 4-H and FFA CDEs but abandoned the practice
4. Facilitate change and innovation in agricultural education practice
5. Demonstrate relevant contributions to public education and agriculture
6. Fully engage faculty in the governance of the Department. Faculty governance should be fundamental to our work
7. Aggie Bash offers opportunity to build ties with ag teachers; for input to advance development of relevant curriculum for stakeholders; and to create relationships to ensure knowledge is relevant and solutions are identified
8. Large group of successful and influential former students can help engage audiences
9. National FFA Week
10. Teach Ag Day
11. Engage students and offer a service to them by posting job opportunities on ALEC site and social media
12. AgriLife programs and organizations have established social media accounts offering a broad network that we can join to engage audiences
13. ALEC Advisory Boards offer network of members who are passionate about the department's goals

### Extension

1. Access to diverse population for research, employment, student recruiting, etc.
2. Cooperation and collaboration on grants and research opportunities
3. Identification of emerging and episodic needs

4. Opportunities for experience through internships both in counties, private enterprises, and elected offices (state, county and municipal)
5. Provide access to key agriculture and elected officials from across the state

**THREATS**

**What obstacles does ALEC face?**

**Teaching**

1. Perceptions of program standards/rigor
2. Advisor/student ratios
3. Maintaining focus on quality of programs given quantity of faculty, advisors, staff, and graduate students
4. Reduce class size (teacher/student ratio) while maintaining large WSCH production
5. Find classrooms with positive teaching/learning environments
6. Make best use of professorial time when resources are scarce
7. Curriculum alignment to maintain rigor and relevance within a sequence of courses
8. Faculty and staff retention

**Research**

1. Loss of public value in ALEC research
2. College devaluation of ALEC research
3. Rapid innovation in higher education (Can we keep up?)
4. State/Federal reductions in long-term research investments

**Diversity**

**TBD**

**Engagement/Service**

1. Practices are stagnant and irrelevant
2. Continue to focus on internal issues and benefits rather than external audience needs (social public good)
3. Lack of global view of problems and issues
4. Departmental goals overriding academic freedom of individual faculty is a major concern.
5. Favoritism toward certain work groups creates dissatisfaction and lowers motivation
6. Mixed signals between department and university leadership
7. "Silos" or compartmentalizing work groups within department inhibiting open communication, closed minds that work for their own gain instead of departmental goals

**Extension**

1. Changing or dynamic funding base for extension that can affect continuity of programs and personnel
2. The magnitude and diversity of clientele needs that stretches resources and programming efforts