

Reinvigoration of CSU Water Center

Lindsey Middleton, Editor, Colorado Water Institute
Faith Sternlieb, Research and Outreach Coordinator, CSU Water Center

The Colorado State University (CSU) Water Center's roots grew out of a collaborative and interdisciplinary endeavor between the Vice President of Research and the Colleges of Engineering and Natural Resources in 1994. Neil Grigg, Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, procured a three-year grant from the Colorado Commission on Higher Education to jump start the center with the goal of embracing engineering, natural resources, agriculture, Extension, and the Experiment Center. Since then, there have been two other Directors—Robert Ward (1998-2005) and Reagan Waskom (2005-2013). Since 1998, the CSU Water Center has been co-housed with the Colorado Water Institute.

During 2012 a faculty group led by Gene Kelly was charged with developing a new vision for the Water

Center. Provost Miranda responded to the report by developing new central funding for the first time since 1998. Miranda has charged a faculty group with developing a new or revitalized CSU Water Center with the aim to engage the CSU community in water resources research, education, and outreach.

This new funding will focus more specifically on the mission of the CSU Water Center, which is to *catalyze excellence in water research, teaching, and engagement by fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and creative scholarship among CSU faculty and students*. The goals and mission of the center may evolve as the center expands its scope. In contrast, the Colorado Water Institute's mission is to focus the water expertise of all higher education in Colorado on the evolving water concerns and problems being faced by Colorado

citizens. The activities, funding, and management of each of these units will be complementary and distinct.

The Water Center will be faculty led, consisting of an executive committee that has been selected for the center, including 11 faculty members from various colleges and departments with Reagan Waskom, Colorado Water Institute Director, as the chair. The committee represents a broad range of water expertise across campus.

“It will take us some time to establish the new CSU Water Center and its role on campus,” says Waskom. “But we will be able to do so effectively with the support of faculty and the experience of the Executive Committee.”

Water is an important educational and research subject matter at CSU—22 of the university's departments house over 140 water faculty, who teach



CSU faculty met at an open house to discuss the Water Center.

Photo by Emilie Abbott

over 150 water-related courses. With its new distinction, the CSU Water Center will be able to better focus its efforts within this community.

In October, the CSU Water Center announced its first Request for Proposals to facilitate innovative research from individual faculty and faculty teams. The center received a round of proposals for 2013-2014 which exemplified “transformative water research, teaching, and engagement through interdisciplinary collaboration and creative scholarship among CSU faculty and students.” Proposal types included multi-disciplinary teams, multi-investigator teams, and water faculty fellows. These proposals are currently under review.

According to Chair of the Proposal Review Committee James Pritchett, “Submitted proposals displayed a vibrant, active water community at CSU. Proposals tapped expertise across disparate academic units by developing joint objectives that will result in impactful results and outreach to stakeholders. Proposals seek to answer pressing water questions to the local and regional community at the same time they build capacity for future collaborations.”

“We want to foster small grants that lead to big projects,” says Waskom. He hopes that the Water Center will foster many more new and innovative water-related initiatives, ranging from seed projects to newly created educational materials to invited speakers.

Another initial effort of the center will be to build a new Water Minor, housed under the School of Global Environmental Sustainability (SoGES). By fall semester of 2014, students from various disciplines will be able to pursue the new minor track.

Future initiatives include the development of a MOOC—a massive open online course— aimed at unlimited participation and open access. The first CSU MOOC was offered by CSU OnlinePlus in fall of 2013, entitled “Science of Relationships.” Another MOOC, “Water, People, and Nature— Addressing 21st Century Global Challenges,” is expected for 2014.

In addition to curriculum goals, future hires led by the Water Center will help bring the university to a nationally-recognized level in certain areas of water research. Some of these areas, for instance, may include ecohydrology, irrigation efficiency, or water for energy. The center also plans to become more involved in international water activity.

The *Colorado Water* newsletter will remain the same, but may become more faculty-based with a new feel. The Water Center website (watercenter.colostate.edu) is undergoing a redesign and will include new and improved CSU-centric information.

“We haven’t finished investing in the Water Center,” says Miranda. Future efforts will continue to establish the center as an important part of CSU’s educational, outreach, and research initiatives. He explains that the center should be a tool for faculty to more effectively and efficiently apply their own efforts—the new Water Center will be about building collaborations. “We need to hear from you,” he says.

The CSU Water Center will be located in 119 Johnson Hall, Colorado State University. Please call (970) 491-2695 or email Faith Sternlieb (Faith.Sternlieb@colostate.edu) or Reagan Waskom (Reagan.Waskom@colostate.edu) with questions. Stay in the loop with CSU Water Center activities on Facebook! ●

CSU Water Center Executive Committee

Mazdak Arabi, Associate Professor, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, College of Engineering

Kurt Fausch, Professor, Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology, Warner College of Natural Resources

Brian Fugate, Associate Professor, Department of Management, College of Business

Stephanie Kampf, Associate Professor, Department of Ecosystem Science and Sustainability, Warner College of Natural Resources

Eugene Kelly, Department Head and Professor, Soil and Crop Sciences, College of Agricultural Sciences

Melinda Laituri, Professor, Department of Ecosystem Science and Sustainability, Warner College of Natural Resources

Leroy Poff, Professor, Department of Biology; Director, Graduate Degree Program in Ecology, College of Natural Sciences

James Pritchett, Professor, Associate Department Head, Department of Agriculture and Resource Economics, College of Agricultural Sciences

Jorge Ramirez, Professor, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, College of Engineering

Pete Taylor, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, College of Liberal Arts

Reagan Waskom (chair), Director, Colorado Water Institute

Diana Wall, Director, School of Global Environmental Sustainability