

The “WVU Agenda” *and*

Thinking about the Experiment... Station

December 12, 2024
Jason Hubbart



Outline

- Academic Transformation
- Unification
- Thinking about Productivity and Organizational Strengths
- WVU Research, Education, and Outreach Centers (the Farms)
- Thinking about a Successful/Progressive/Productive/Solvent(?)
Farm System/Experiment Station/University/Organization
 - Students First / Land-Grant / Differentiation
- What's next (approximately)?

July 1st, 2024

Core Units



CRITICAL: It is a Unification, not Merger



WVU REOC System

2025-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN MANUAL FOR WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY FARMS, FORESTS, AND THE EVANSDALE GREENHOUSE

The Research, Education, and Outreach Centers (REOC) System

West Virginia University
January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2028



In Search of Efficiencies

- In response to DLGE PIQ review.
 - Position Information Questionnaire: Job Duties
- ? How do we do a PIQ review if we don't have Plans. The Farms have been managed the same for at least 30+ years!
- Hence: Strategic Planning
- No big deal, right? **WRONG!**
 - First time.

What are we good at?

- How good are we?
- What do we have to work with?

If anything goes bad, I did it. If anything goes semi-good, we did it. If anything goes really good, then you did it.

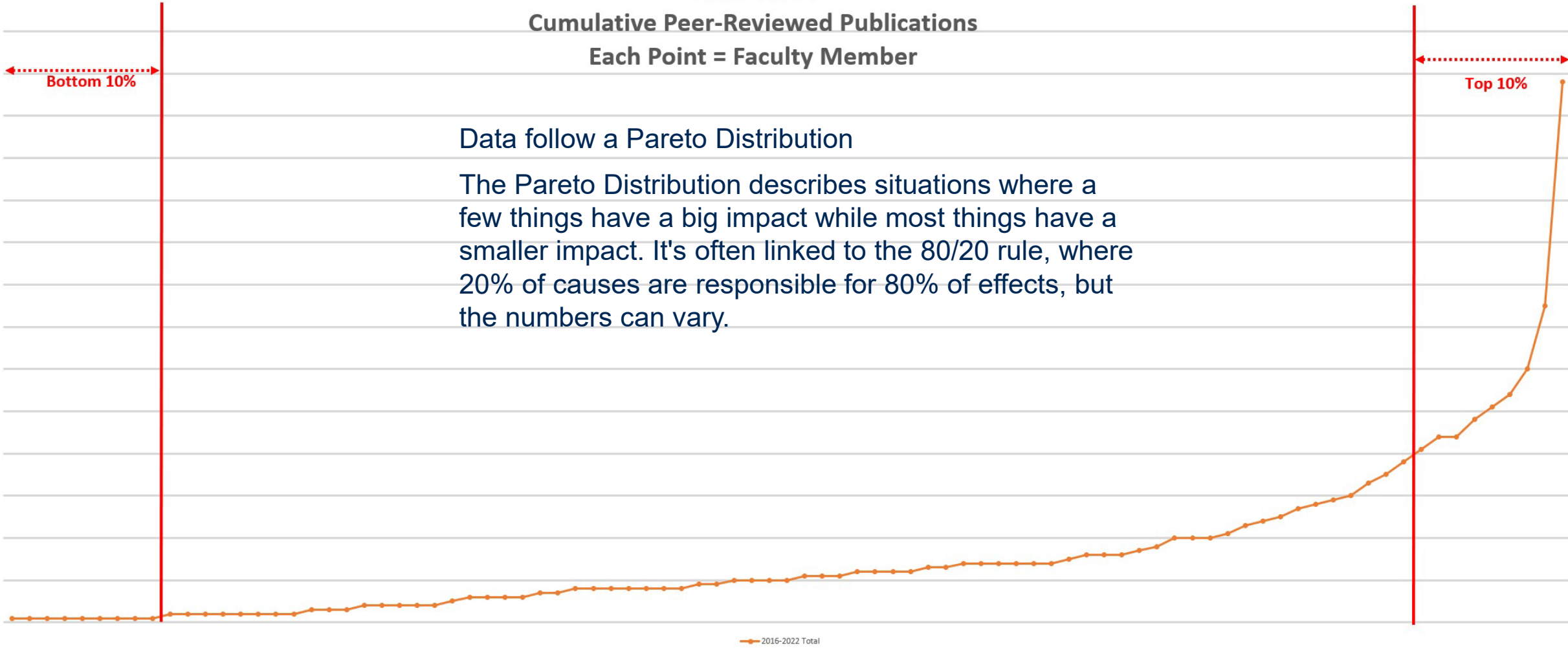
– Bear Bryant

Work with
what
you have.

2016-2022
Cumulative Peer-Reviewed Publications
Each Point = Faculty Member

Data follow a Pareto Distribution

The Pareto Distribution describes situations where a few things have a big impact while most things have a smaller impact. It's often linked to the 80/20 rule, where 20% of causes are responsible for 80% of effects, but the numbers can vary.



Faculty Cumulative and Ranked Total Grant Funding (2018 – 2022)

Top 10%

Data follow a Pareto Distribution

The Pareto Distribution describes situations where a few things have a big impact while most things have a smaller impact. It's often linked to the 80/20 rule, where 20% of causes are responsible for 80% of effects, but the numbers can vary.

What can we do to increase productivity since the data distribution is likely to stay the same?

Studies show that the most inclusive and equitable way to do this is to shift the entire curve up!

Increased Responsibilities + Increased Support (Incentives) = Increased Productivity + Job Satisfaction

Bottom 10%

0

WVU REOCs Strategic Vision and Planning

- In August 2024, a strategic planning process was initiated.
- Strategic plans for farms, forests, and controlled environments in external review (12/15/24).
- These plans present an opportunity to align with evolving state and national priorities.
- It's the first time they will have been completed.

I wonder about...

- In the coming decade, what criteria should guide our decision-making in setting priorities for Research, Education, and Outreach Centers?
 - Research impact and innovation potential?
 - Alignment with State and Federal Priorities?
 - Community and Stakeholder Needs?
 - All the above?
 - Other?

Maximizing ES Funding Impact

I'm learning that...

- Exploring innovative funding sources and public-private partnerships is a must.
- There must be a strategic allocation of capacity funds across disciplines to maximize impact and distribute funds inclusively and equitably.

I wonder about...

- What factors should be prioritized when allocating capacity funds across disciplines, facilities, and outreach/extension?
 - Potential for long-term impact?
 - Areas with immediate community or industry demand?
 - Projects that align with external funding opportunities?
 - Equally distributed to ensure balance across all areas?

Revitalizing Facilities

I'm learning that...

- Novel approaches are needed to upgrade labs, greenhouses, and forestry facilities to meet modern research needs.
- Investing in infrastructure to support cutting-edge innovation is imperative.
- Ensuring compliance with safety and environmental standards is critical to enhance operations.

I wonder about...

- Which infrastructure upgrades should be prioritized to have the greatest impact on research outcomes?
 - Modernized labs?
 - Building controlled environments?
 - Expanding land-based facilities for large-scale experiments?
 - All the above?
 - Other?

Leveraging Shared Assets

I'm learning that...

- Expanding research capacities through partnerships with other departments and research centers is critical.
- Optimizing limited land and specialized facilities for collaborative projects must be a priority to maximize the impact of the limited availability of investment resources.

I wonder about...

- How can we optimize the benefit of land and facilities to meet current and future research needs amidst declining funds and interest?
 - Empower farms to think entrepreneurially/innovatively?
 - Expand partnerships to include private lands and facilities?
 - Focus on research with immediate practical applications?
 - Reevaluate land uses: Is the way it's always been done still right?
 - All the above?
 - Other?

Responding to Evolving Needs

I'm learning that...

- Strengthening connections with local producers and foresters is critical.
- Meeting societal demands for sustainability and equity through innovative programs is critical for external perceptions.
- Expanding outreach to engage non-traditional stakeholders is important.

I wonder about...

- How can we leverage partnerships to enhance research and outreach?
 - Engage industry stakeholders to co-fund applied research?
 - Build interdisciplinary collaborations within the university?
 - Strengthen relationships with state agencies and policy makers?
 - All the above?

Fostering Organizational Agility

I'm learning that...

- Encouraging flexibility in decision-making and organizational structures is important to remain nimble.
- Building capacity to respond swiftly to emerging opportunities is important (and a challenge).

I wonder about...

- What metrics should we use to assess the effectiveness of management decisions?
 - Research output (pubs, patents, grants)?
 - Economic impact on local communities?
 - Stakeholder satisfaction and engagement levels?
 - A balanced combination of metrics?

Expanding Partnerships

I'm learning that...

- Strengthening connections with industry, NGOs, and state agencies is important.
- Creating new collaborations with non-traditional campus partners can reveal many latent opportunities.
 - Kind of a “we don't know *who* we don't know” moment.

I wonder about...

- What innovative approaches should we explore to generate additional funding for the experiment station?
 - Develop more public-private partnerships?
 - Expand grant applications and competitive funding pursuits?
 - Introduce paid training or certification programs?
 - Focus on commercialization of research outputs?
 - Other?

Building for the Future

I'm learning that...

- Investing in infrastructure and talent development is critical to avoid organization erosion.
- Aligning initiatives with state and national research priorities is a must.
- Supporting innovative, interdisciplinary projects is essential to discover new capacity building investments.

I wonder about...

- How can we ensure our funding decisions are inclusive and equitable?
 - Incorporate diverse stakeholder feedback into funding decisions?
 - Prioritize funding for underrepresented agricultural sectors?
 - Reevaluate multi-year allocations to increase flexibility.
 - Or do we just allocate evenly across all projects to avoid bias?
 - Many invest only in strengths.

Embrace Opportunities & Keep Moving

I'm learning that...

- By embracing opportunities, experiment stations can secure the future and amplify impact in our states and beyond.
- Despite our organizations' complexities, we must keep moving.
- The landscape changes beneath our feet while we make best (or better) decisions.
- Be progressive & nimble.

I wonder about...

- What roles should experiment stations prioritize in addressing future challenges?
 - Leading climate resilience research for agriculture (forestry, etc.)?
 - Supporting rural economic development through innovation?
 - Enhancing education and outreach for community impact?
 - Balancing all the above to meet evolving demands?
- If you were starting over, with a clean slate, would you build it the same?

A Few Additional Ponderous Thoughts

- How do we strengthen Experiment Station impact?
- How are Experiment Stations collaborating to maximize impact?
 - Are we truly collaborating? If we did, focusing on differentiation, what would/could happen?
- Why is America losing its innovative edge in the Global marketplace? What is our role?

If we were more effective (i.e., Strategic), would we face less scrutiny? Would we have more support?

Strategic Planning

- What I also learned...So far.

Actionable Strategies + Feasibilities + Accountability = Metaphesiophobia \times $\frac{1}{Skills}$

- This is an ultimate feasibility assessment.
- How are you navigating this?

Unification & the WV AFES

- **Process:** Aligning missions, streamlining resources, and fostering synergy.
- **Impact:** Interdisciplinary projects combining research and outreach.
- **Collaboration:** Advancing programs, research, education and workforce development.
- **AFES:** A new kind of workplan, a Land-Grant AFES, capacity building, use-inspired investments, meeting the needs of society.

Thank You

An organization's actual productivity rests on the foundation of satisfied and engaged workers. When people feel valued, their fulfillment fuels greater effectiveness and collective success. By nurturing each individual's growth, we cultivate the excellence that propels us and our organization forward.

Jason A. Hubbart (2024)