

INFAS

2020/21 ANNUAL REPORT



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Inter-institutional Network for Food, Agriculture, and Sustainability

Email: infas.coordinator@gmail.com

Website: <https://asi.ucdavis.edu/programs/infas>

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INFAS envisions a US food system that is environmentally sustainable and socially just.

Our mission is to facilitate INFAS member collaborations to:

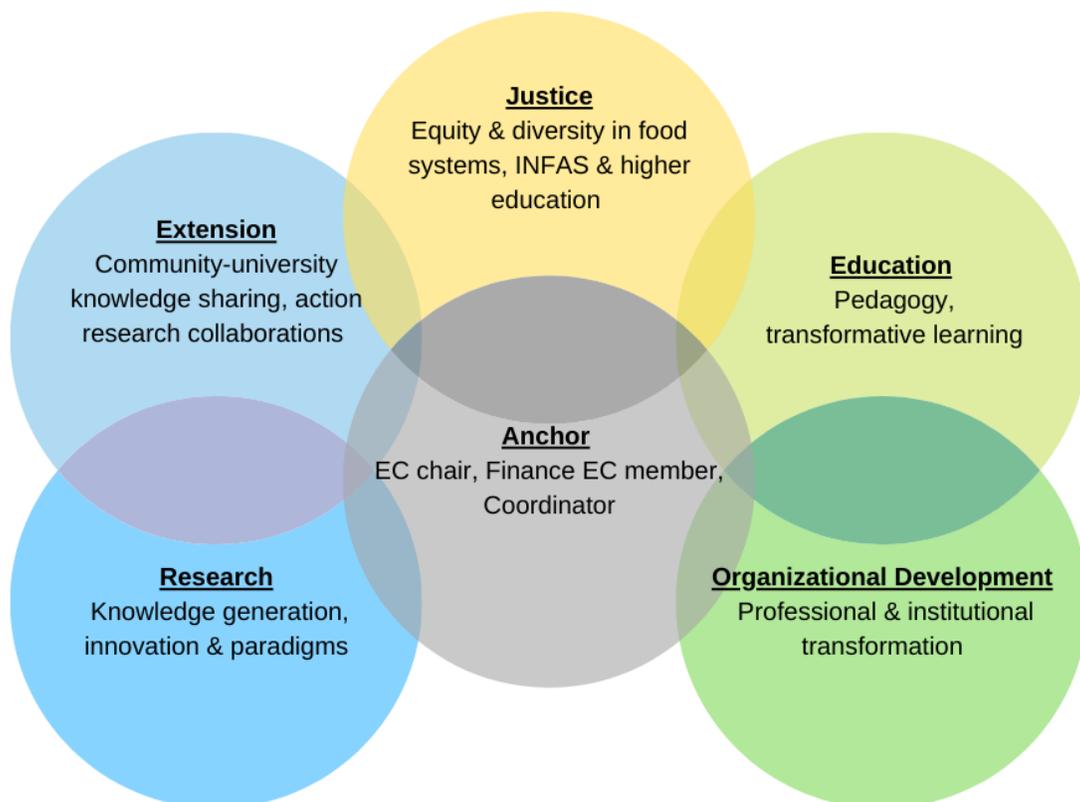
- **Increase our capacity to help build U.S. food system resilience, sustainability, and equity.**
 - **Raise visibility of research-based insights into food system problems and solutions.**
 - **Catalyze frontier work in food systems research, higher education, extension, and institutional change that we can achieve much better together than by working alone.**
 - **Diversify who is doing food systems work in academia and in action-focused research, education and extension.**
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The past year

Re-organization

This year has been a pilot of the INFAS re-organization that started in May 2020, including:

- EC members forming action-focused working groups and chairing these groups, instead of serving at-large (see illustration below).
- Allocating most of our funds to these working groups to seed or catalyze action, instead of funding a salaried 60% FTE coordinator.
- Opening INFAS membership to any people interested in achieving our mission and goals in the US.



INFAS working groups (WGs) as of May 2021

Executive committee (EC) members serve as WG chairs or as one of the two anchor members. Any INFAS member can join a WG. INFAS members at large are represented by the entire space. (Venn not to scale on actual WG overlap.)

The past year

Action and achievements

Besides the re-organization itself, top actions and achievements have included:

- Forming the working groups, some building on current efforts and others invented from whole cloth (including, most recently, organizational development).
- Piloting a Native American food sovereignty graduate fellows program with Intertribal Agriculture Council, with 18 INFAS mentors and 11 fellows.
- Growing our membership from 73 individuals in 2019 to 143 members. Our members represent 63 institutions.
- Collecting invited manuscripts for a *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* issue on achieving food system resilience & equity in the era of global environmental change.
- Co-facilitating the *Frontiers* journal special edition call for Critical and Equity-Oriented Pedagogical Innovations in Sustainable Food Systems Education.
- Collaborating that has included reinvigorating the web presence of the Sustainable Agriculture Education Association (SAEA), connecting more deeply with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition on policy, the Michigan State Center for Regional Food Systems on racial equity, and the Agroecology Research-Action Collective; and co-sponsoring the COVID-19 special issue of the *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems & Community Development* (JAFSCD).
- Hosting our first annual virtual INFAS summit in February 2021, with nearly 100 existing and prospective members registered to attend.
- Engaging in the UN Food System Summit agenda and “action track” shaping and planning, having been invited to represent “academia” on action track 4 which focuses on equity.
- Securing the details of our financial relationship and endowment conditions with UC Davis, with help and support from the endower, WK Kellogg Foundation.
- Convened the first two webinars in a new “Resilient Centers and Institutes” series, to help us collectively build our long-term capacity.
- Began conversations about potential collaboration with the national “Racial Equity in the Food System” group, facilitated by Michigan State University’s Center for Regional Food Systems.
- Revising and reorganizing our website and INFAS files.

The coming year

Overview

Our official INFAS 'years' are academic financial years, starting each July. Many of the plans for the coming year are more in the idea and discussion phase than decided, much less ready to list. This is probably why annual reports don't usually include this section. However, some plans and discussions include (and are far from limited to):

- Focusing on how transdisciplinary food system and sustainability centers and institutes can survive and thrive.
- Engaging in the UN Food Summit planning as well as in the constructive critiques of the process and content, and in alternative events.
- Organizing the second annual INFAS virtual summit in late January or early February.
- Offering another year of the IAC-INFAS graduate fellowship program, re-piloting an HBCU program in partnership with Tuskegee University, seeking a partner to run a similar program with an HSI, and seeking sustainable funding for these programs.
- Providing opportunities for students and faculty to engage more with policy.
- Creating an awards and recognition program within INFAS.
- Considering options for establishing ongoing INFAS partnership with and publication in journal(s).
- Further formalizing working group membership to foster more capacity for action, and because only working group members are eligible for EC positions in our current governance approach.
- Further expanding our membership, and engaging interested members in more action.
- Deepening existing connections and collaborations, especially with SAEA and the racial equity work at the Center for Regional Food Systems, and being open to new ones.

The executive committee

Overview

EC members can serve up to three consecutive terms of 2-3 years (by member choice) each. Current EC members are:

Executive Committee Chair: Christine Porter, University of Wyoming, Wyoming Excellence Chair in Community & Public Health. Committee Term 2016-2019; Chair Term 2019-2023.

Organizational/Professional Development Chair: Michelle Miller, University of Wisconsin Madison, Associate Director Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems. Committee term 2018-2024.

Education Chair: Damian Parr, University of California Santa Cruz, Research and Education Coordinator Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems (CASFS). Committee term 2018-2023.

Extension Chair: Lauren Gwin, Oregon State University, Associate Director Center for Small Farms & Community Food Systems. Committee term 2019 - 2024.

Research Chair: Albie Miles, University of Hawai'i West O'ahu, Sustainable Community Food Systems. Committee term 2019 - 2024.

Finance Chair: Vacant in 2019/20, just filled by Ryan Galt, UC Davis. To be occupied by the head of the Agricultural Sustainability Institute at UC Davis, which includes INFAS.

Justice Chair: Julie Grossman, University of Minnesota, Department of Horticultural Sciences. Committee term 2018-2023.

At-large Member: Michelle Wander, University of Illinois, Director Agroecology and Sustainable Agriculture Program. Committee term 2019 - 2022. The EC is considering designating a more specific portfolio for this EC seat for the term starting 2022/2023 (e.g., policy and/or communications).

The INFAS coordinator for the past year was Alyssa Wechsler, University of Wyoming. The incoming coordinator is Ben Cousineau, a PhD student at Emory. INFAS currently supports coordinators to help us out with administration and communication for about 10-20 hours of work a month.

Financial report

Overview

INFAS is entering the 2021/22 year in excellent fiscal shape. With the loss of our long-time coordinator, Dr. Joanna Friesner, and our reorganization, we went from being in the red for annual income vs. expenses to accumulating additional savings this year.

Our savings also grew for two other reasons. One, the WK Kellogg Foundation, which endowed INFAS in 2010, re-opened discussions about terms and conditions with UC Davis about our endowment, leading to the refund of some endowment management charges from past years. Two, UC Davis discovered substantial accounting mistakes repeated over the past five years, leading to a large reimbursement to INFAS just last month. These funds were added to the bank balance that remained from a kick-starting fund that Kellogg had given INFAS along with the endowment.

To summarize, in numbers rounded to the nearest thousand:

- We began the 2020/21 fiscal year with \$140,000 in the bank.
- Our annual endowment payout was \$73,000.
- The total error correction recently added \$73,000, for fiscal years 2015-21.
- The negotiated refund of endowment fees charged was \$8000, for 2018-20.
- We spent \$32,000. In decreasing order, this was on INFAS staffing, working group project spending, sponsoring one graduate fellowship in the IAC-INFAS partnership, and general expenses such as supplies and memberships in other organizations. (This excludes funds that UC Davis has encumbered for future expenses.)
- We ended the year with \$237,000 in the bank, plus \$25,000 encumbered to cover commitments for staffing and spending until November of the current fiscal year.

Financial report

Income, expenditures, and balance

The table below summarizes our overall income and spending for the 2020/21 fiscal year.

Previous balance 2020	\$140,385.00
Income 2021	\$154,659.50
Total Endowment Payout	\$73,299.83
Endowment Error Credit	\$72,966.72
Endowment Fee Reversal Credit	\$8,392.95
Expenses 2021	\$32,205.46
Staff: coordination of INFAS + coordination of the IAC- INFAS fellowship program	\$13,800.00
Working Groups: each has a \$8,000 budget each year, though in this first year of this model it has taken some time for the groups to plan how to invest their funds	\$11,247.00
Graduate Fellowships: sponsoring one fellow of the 11 in the IAC-INFAS program	\$6,000.00
Memberships: NSAC	\$100.00
Other Expenses: Dropbox, supplies	\$1,058.46
Encumbered funds through UC Davis 2021	\$25,653.26
Reserved for Staff-directed investments	\$15,075.26
Reserved for Working Group-directed investments	\$10,578.00
End of year balance 2021	\$237,185.78

Table 1: INFAS financial reporting: income, expenses, and balances for 20/21 fiscal year

Financial report

Financial goals

In the 2021/22 fiscal year that just began, the EC working groups have plans to accelerate investments of their funds in their parts of the INFAS mission. Overall the EC is looking for ways to spend INFAS capital to instigate or accelerate our capacity, visibility, catalyst, and equity + diversity missions in ways that INFAS is particularly well and uniquely positioned to do.



Diné master farmer Rosemary Williams with her corn crop at Kerley Valley, where her family has farmed for generations. Credit: Grand Canyon Trust.

Do you have ideas that fit this bill that you would like to propose and put significant work into? Send working group ideas to the working group chairs listed earlier in this report, please. Send ideas for INFAS as a whole to our coordinator at infas.coordinator@gmail.com with the subject line "investment idea/s". Send to both if you are unsure how to direct your idea.

Also please contact the coordinator, Ben, with any questions or comments about this report.

Thank you for being an INFAS member! Please consider becoming more involved by joining a Working Group, participating in events and webinars, or heeding calls for leadership and service that come over the listserv.