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Sept. 16, 2021

**Rainey appointed assistant VP, will aid economic development, broadband, diversity efforts for UA System Division of Agriculture**

By Mary Hightower

U of A System Division of Agriculture

**Fast facts**

* Rainey’s role includes promoting value-added industries, broadband in Arkansas
* Rainey retains role as director of Southern Risk Management Education Center

(663 words)

(With art: Head shot — <https://flic.kr/p/2mr3vXf>

Rainey speaking — <https://flic.kr/p/2iB7zPn>

LITTLE ROCK — Ron Rainey, a professor and extension economist, has been appointed assistant vice president for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

Mark Cochran, vice president-agriculture for the University of Arkansas System, announced the appointment Thursday.

“Ron has excelled at making connections across a broad range of sectors which has helped ensure success not only within the Cooperative Extension Service, but also his work as director of the Southern Risk Management Education Center,” he said.

Cochran, a professor before stepping into the administrative ranks, had Rainey as a student.

“When I was still in the classroom and Ron was a student in the agricultural economics and agribusiness department, I could see Ron seeking ways to connect people and resources in ways that produced strong results. It’s a skill he will put to good use in this position.”

**New roles**

With this appointment, Rainey will be taking on several new roles:

* Serving as assistant head of the agricultural economics and agribusiness department.
* Developing ways to enable the Division of Agriculture to meet its diversity and inclusivity goals.
* Developing ways to promote the growth of value-added industries in Arkansas.
* Developing ways to integrate extension and research work conducted by the Division of Agriculture into expansion of broadband across Arkansas, with an eye to entrepreneurship.

Rainey also will continue in his current role as director of the Southern Risk Management Education Center, which serves 13 southeastern states as well as Puerto Rico and the U.S Virgin Islands.

“I’m truly humbled by this opportunity and excited to support building on the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture’s fantastic legacy of improving economic development and quality of life for all Arkansans,” Rainey said.

In more than 25 years in the UA system, “I’ve built a vast network of colleagues and demonstrated experience engaging growers of diverse sizes, new business ventures, industry, USDA agencies as well as federal and state government personnel,” he said. “I seek to leverage those relationships and experiences to grow successes for the Division of Agriculture.”

**Conway County native**

A native of the Center community in Conway County, Rainey joined the Division of Agriculture in 1993 as an assistant extension specialist in economics. All of his degrees came from the University of Arkansas. He earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in agricultural economics and his Ph.D. in economics.

Rainey also has leadership roles including program director for the Center for Agriculture and Rural Sustainability, vice president of logistics and outreach for the Food Distribution Research Society and is a member of the board of directors for the Socially Disadvantaged Farmer and Rancher Policy Center.

“Ron has a quarter century of experience in helping agriculture and rural Arkansas grow. I believe this position will enable Ron to amplify that experience in ways that will broaden not only the Division of Agriculture’s ability to reach people, but also bolster successes in critical areas such as rural broadband access and value-added growth,” said Bob Scott, the division’s senior associate vice president and director of the Cooperative Extension Service.

“One of Ron’s great strengths is his ability to build networks and bring resources together,” said Jean-Francois Meullenet, senior associate vice president for the Division of Agriculture and director of the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, the division’s research arm. “This ability is a key ingredient in our pursuit of excellence in our land grant mission and will help foster continued success.”

Deacue Fields, dean of the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences, lauded Rainey’s dedication to education, research and outreach.

“There are very few people who promote Arkansas agriculture and the land grant mission as passionately as Ron Rainey,” Fields said.

“Ron is a native Arkansan, and he is a master at building and leveraging strategic relationships and partnerships,” he said. “His experience within the University of Arkansas and the Division of Agriculture has allowed him to build valuable relationships throughout the state and nation. His role as Assistant Department Head will provide a valuable linkage between the Fayetteville Campus and the Division of Agriculture.”

To learn about extension programs in Arkansas, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service agent or visit [www.uaex.uada.edu](http://www.uaex.uada.edu/). Follow us on Twitter and Instagram at @AR\_Extension. To learn more about Division of Agriculture research, visit the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station website: [aaes.uada.edu](https://aaes.uada.edu/). Follow on Twitter and Instagram at @ArkAgResearch. To learn more about the Division of Agriculture, visit <https://uada.edu/>. Follow us on Twitter at @AgInArk.

**About the Division of Agriculture**

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture’s mission is to strengthen agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices. Through the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service, the Division of Agriculture conducts research and extension work within the nation’s historic land grant education system.

The Division of Agriculture is one of 20 entities within the University of Arkansas System. It has offices in all 75 counties in Arkansas and faculty on five system campuses.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs and services without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

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