

LSU Agriculture Faculty Council Meeting Minutes

9:30 AM, Friday, May 16, 2025

Room 212, J. Efferson Hall



Call to Order

Carol Friedland called the meeting to order at 9:40 AM

Attendance

In-person

William Afton, Giovanna Aita, Kayanush Aryana, Jennifer Duhon (Becky Gautreaux), Carol Friedland, Becky Gautreaux, Donnie Miller, Maddox Miller, and Jha Prashant (Donnie Miller).

Online

Chris Dunaway, Claudia Husseneder, Greg Lutz, Brittney Newsome, Rich Vlosky, Jeffrey Plumlee (Brett Wolfe)

Absent

Michael Burnett, Bruce Garner, Michael Mamp, Kevin McCarter, Jonathon Richards, Mark Schafer, and Sara Shields

- A. Remarks and Items from Dr. Matt Lee, Vice President of Agriculture/Dean, College of Agriculture
Dr. Lee arrived during the second half of the meeting because of the LSU Spring Commencement ceremonies. He commented that it was a good event and that there were 260 graduates from the College of Agriculture.

Dr. Lee thanked the council for restructuring and getting back to committee work. Ultimately, he thinks it is a good decision that will produce good outcomes. Once he gets more time, he will join and engage with committees.

The strategic plan provides a general direction for the organization over the next 5 years. Most of it shouldn't be anything new because it focuses on the core mission, but employees are asked if there are ways that we can amplify the impact. The organization has made good progress in the last three years. The state legislature has provided monies for renovations, equipment upgrades, and other facility costs. Administration is focused on tools, talent, and culture. Hire good people, give them the tools needed to excel, and to manage a healthy work environment.

The Regional Strategic Plan meetings are being held so that the administration can listen to faculty and provide reassurance. After the regional meetings are complete, Dr. Lee will have time to meet with the AFC Strategic Plan Committee.

With respect to the workplace environment, the LSU Office of the Ombudsman can help employees who have issues with their supervisor. The Office of the Ombuds can help

facilitate communication with a documented procedure. Dr. Lee agrees that having the Ombudsman as a guest to the next AFC meeting would be a good thing. HR units tend to default to transactional work unless they are encouraged to do things of greater value. Dr. Lee speaks with HR every day about programmatic things to help employees feel good about working at the AgCenter. The HR department has implemented a new employee onboarding program, the Wellness Wagon program, and an awards recognition program. The Management Development Program is supposed to provide mid-level managers with knowledge in working with others and self-reflection. HR also provides executive leadership development, and Dr. Lee met with this group last week. It's easy to get locked into the day-to-day administrative work. He spoke to them about self-reflection, values, how you were raised, and how your upbringing influences your work. Dr. Lee is trying to get the executive leadership team to think about these things because it will make them better, more thoughtful leaders.

LSU AgCenter is closing out the budget year at the moment, and everything is under control.

LSU A&M Provost, Dr. Roy Haggerty, has announced that he is stepping down. Dr. Troy Blanchard will be the Interim Provost. Dr. Lee holds Dr. Blanchard in high respect and approves of his appointment.

Carol Friedland asked a question regarding an email that Dr. Lee sent out on December 2 regarding the Ethics, Integrity, and Misconduct Helpline. She asked if there is any crossover between this route and the LSU Office of the Ombudsman. Dr. Lee doesn't believe that these two routes intersect. Take the cautious and conservative approach and assume that these offices don't talk to each other.

Carol followed up with a question on whether the work environment committee should meet with HR to discuss committee assignments. Dr. Lee stated that he and HR would meet with the committee in the future.

Donnie Miller asked a question about the hiring freeze and issues with federal grants. He asked Dr. Lee if the university had said anything about pausing the promotion and tenure process for untenured faculty members. This would affect bringing in graduate students and grant monies for research. Dr. Lee apologizes for the blanket hiring freeze. He believes this is a fair point, and he would be happy to deal with this on a case-by-case basis. If the current environment has impeded the employees' ability to do their work, then Dr. Lee wants to treat them fairly.

Becky Gautreaux shared a comment to Dr. Lee regarding the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). She recently encouraged a co-worker to reach out to the EAP folks and learned that they offer a lot of different types of support including emotional well-being support, daily life assistance, legal services, financial services, and other online resources. She suggested that the organization would benefit from having a session or video call with HR to learn of all of these services would be very useful for all employees.

B. Approval of Minutes

Maddox Miller made a motion to accept the March 2025 Ag Faculty Council Meeting Minutes. Becky Gautreaux seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Guest Presentations

There are no guest presentations at this meeting.

D. Chair's Report (Carol Friedland)

Ag Faculty Council may seem like it is moving slowly, but with the reimplementation of the committee structure, populating those committees, and holding committee meetings, AFC is moving in a positive direction. This structure will create sustainability and continuity for the council in the future. Carol applauded the willingness of council members to join and participate in committee work.

E. Committee Reports – written report from each committee for inclusion in the minutes, brief summary from each committee

- Executive Committee (Carol Friedland)

The executive committee met on 4/30/25. We discussed key topics from the March meeting and discussed the LSU University Ombuds Office, and were happily surprised to find this office serves all LSU campuses, including the AgCenter. We agreed to forward this resource to the work environment committee. The committee continued discussions about posting information to the AFC website, which is hosted at LSU, and AFC email, which would allow the current and future councils to have a stable email address regardless of individual officers.

From the Ombuds Office website:

The LSU University Ombuds Office is a confidential, impartial, independent, and informal process for faculty, staff, medical residents, and graduate and undergraduate students to seek assistance and guidance to resolve barriers to productivity and to increase the quality of their experience at LSU. The Ombuds encourages fairness through issue resolution, communication and outreach, and systemic change and issue prevention identification.

- Bylaws Committee (Carol Friedland)

The Committee met three times: March 10, April 14, and May 13, 2025. Kevin McCarter, AFC Vice Chair assigned to enforce the bylaws, agreed to be added to the Bylaws Committee. The committee discussed the state's open meetings laws and believes that the council meetings are subject to open meeting laws. Lastly, the committee suggests that the council needs a better definition and role of a proxy member.

- Policies Committee (Jonathon Richards, email, and Claudia Husseneder)

The committee didn't meet this month. The committee is still planning on meeting with Ashley Gautreaux to discuss PS-53. An update will be provided for the next AFC meeting.

- Strategic Plan Committee (Donnie Miller)
The committee still hasn't had a formal meeting. Administration is still in the process of meeting with each region to discuss the strategic plan. The Northeast region held its meeting on May 6. The southeast region's meeting will be held on May 29. These meetings present a bird's eye view of the plan so that each employee can see how their work fits into the grand scheme.
- Work Environment Committee (Brittney Newsome)
The work environment committee met briefly on April 11th and May 14th and discussed potential approaches and actions for moving the Work Environment Committee forward. The committee is still awaiting further instructions on how to proceed, but in the meantime, during our next Ag Faculty Council meeting, we anticipate inviting the Office of the Ombuds (<https://www.lsu.edu/ombuds/>) for a discussion about their mission and resources. This suggestion was presented to the committee by Dr. Friedland. The next Work Environment Committee meeting will be held in June.

F. Other Agenda Items

- Elect alternate faculty member for LSU System Council of Faculty Advisors ([LSU PM 24, II.](#)) – needs change in bylaws
Carol – AFC will change their bylaws to reflect LSU PM 24 and the Bylaw Committee will work on this in the coming months.
- Will Afton, Michael Mamp, and Brett Wolfe were commended for the 2024-25 promotion

G. Introduction of New Business

The LSU and SU AgCenters' Annual Conference is scheduled for December 15 & 16, 2025.

AFC is considering canceling the July 18 meeting.

2025 Meeting Dates – 9:30 AM - 12:00PM/Room 212 Efferson Hall or Teams

Dates-Planned for 3rd Friday of Each Month. Meeting Invitations Sent

January 17
February 21
~~March 21~~
April 25
May 16
~~June 20~~
July 18
August 15
September 19
October 17
November 21
December

Adjourn

Becky Gautreaux made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Donnie Miller seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting ended at 11:11 AM.