

**LSU Agriculture Faculty Council Meeting-Agenda**  
**9:30 AM, Friday, May 10, 2024**  
**Room 212, J. Efferson Hall**



**Call to Order**

**Attendance**

*In-person*

*Online*

*Absent*

**Invited Guests**

**Dr. William F. Tate IV**, LSU President

1. Strategic Plan Update
2. Agriculture's Role in the Pentagon of Priorities
3. Stakeholder question – is there a plan to effectively have all LSU System campuses aligned under **One LSU**? As an example, generating unified departmental reports is difficult with multiple reporting systems in place (e.g. LSU A&M and AgCenter); some reports must be hand tallied which is a waste of time. As we think about AAU membership and the need for accurate and detailed reporting, is there a plan to make systems unified and easily navigable?
4. Q&A

**Dr. Matt Lee**, Vice President of Agriculture/Dean, College of Agriculture

1. Legislative update
2. Messaging strategy update
3. Stakeholder Questions/Issues
  1. Are there any discussions on how the increased assistantship awards for PhD students are going to be handled? LSU covered the first year. Are we on our own now?
  2. There has been recent discussion surrounding the raising of minimum/starting salaries for AgCenter employees. Is there a plan to also raise the salary structure for existing employees with several years of experience?
  3. My department chair asked if I would bring these up at the next Faculty Council meeting. These problems involve:

- i. Increase in the complexity / tediousness / time required to make changes to feedback for students while going through the grading process and adding / modifying feedback based on student performance.
- ii. Increase in the time required to regrade assessments made with the “Quiz” Moodle resource.
- iii. Dismissal by Moodle admin of my concerns about these issues as not being problematic.

Each of these is problematic in and of itself, but their combined effect I believe will have a big negative impact on teaching and the ability to get grades and feedback back to students in a timely manner when using Moodle. My classes are all relatively small, but this could have a huge negative impact on EXST 2201, which routinely has between 800-1000 students per semester.

I also would like to elicit feedback from other Faculty Council members on their perception of the quality of service and help they and their departments are getting from LSU ITS and related technical support staff. I have had three specific instances in the past several weeks where I received answers that we diametrically opposed to the actual truth of the matter, and I am getting increasingly concerned about the quality of help I myself am getting from these support staff.

**Ashley Gautreaux**, Assistant Vice President; Department, Human Resource Management

1. Policy updates
2. FLSA information sent from Ashley Gautreaux and Matt Lee to all AgCenter faculty members:

### **Ashley Gautreaux**

The AgCenter [FLSA Overview Meetings](#) information is found below. Please use the link to register for each meeting that you would like to participate in.

#### FLSA Changes Overview for **Supervisors & Managers**

- Thursday, May 16 at 1 pm via Teams or in 212 Efferson
- [REGISTER HERE](#)

#### FLSA Changes Overview for **Employees**

- Friday, May 17 at 1 pm via Teams or in 212 Efferson
- [REGISTER HERE](#)

The meetings will be recorded for those who may not be able to participate in the live event. If you have any questions, please email [hrmhelp@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:hrmhelp@agcenter.lsu.edu) for guidance.

## **Matt Lee**

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) is the federal law that sets standards for employee pay. It is administered by the US Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division through the promulgation of regulations. On April 23, new regulations governing overtime exemptions were issued and they take effect on July 1, 2024. Our Human Resource Management (HRM) staff are working diligently on the timely implementation of these changes.

The major change in the updated regulations is a **new salary threshold** for determining overtime exemptions. Effective **July 1, 2024**, that threshold increases from \$35,568 per year to **\$43,888 per year**. Employees paid below the threshold will be non-exempt and eligible for overtime compensation at the 1.5 per hour rate. Overtime hours may be compensated as accumulated time or cash.

This change does not impact the exemption for positions with the primary duty of educating, which encompasses extension agents as well as traditional teaching roles such as instructor and professor. Employees in those positions will remain salaried.

Those employees who will no longer be exempt from overtime as of July 1 must:

- Be converted to an hourly pay rate,
- Move to the biweekly wage payroll,
- Enter their time worked and time off in Workday, and
- Have their managers approve the Workday entries promptly to ensure payroll processing can occur.

We are aware that this may result in employees with the same job title being classified differently. One may be hourly and another salaried. When an employee in a professional level position meets the salary threshold, they will be converted to the salary pay basis.

HRM will be in touch with the affected employees and their supervisors in the coming weeks. We will also host informational meetings in May via Teams to provide an overview and answer questions. Details on those meetings will be communicated from HRM shortly.

There is currently a second adjustment to the salary threshold scheduled for January 1, 2025. More information on that implementation will be shared in late 2024. If you have any questions, please email [hrmhelp@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:hrmhelp@agcenter.lsu.edu) for guidance.

**Dr. Mike Salassi**, Exec. Assoc. Vice President & Director LAES Administration

**Dr. Tara Smith**, Exec. Assoc. Vice President & Director LCES

### Stakeholder Questions/Issues (For Dr. Smith and Dr. Lee):

These are some questions and comments I've put together from feedback I've received from agents and on-campus faculty members for administration to address. I left much of the wording the same so as to capture the true essence of the input I was provided. Please note that the scope

of questions is extremely broad due to what faculty members and staff deemed important to them.

1. What is the current retention rate for Extension agents? And are intentional efforts being made to increase retention?

Generalized follow up comments are as follows:

- a. There are discussions in the field about the high [perceived] turnover of agents who have been here less than 5 years.
  - b. Several recent departures have opted for early retirement because of issues within the AgCenter, thus taking their time and talents elsewhere. Additionally, some agents are opting to leave a few years shy of their early retirement date, many for the same reasons.
  - c. Some [if not many] of these agents have earned their master's degree while employed with the AgCenter. Now, the AgCenter is out those funds and the departing employee enjoys the [financial] benefit of a more advanced degree.
2. Are "exit" interviews still being conducted for departing agents? And if so, is anyone in administration actually looking at the documentation and taking it to heart to see where improvements can be made?
  3. Who can agents visit with when they have frustrations in the field? Making another broad generalization here, but agents who feel they can't go to their PC or Regional Director are apt to look elsewhere. Is this a case where the Ag. Faculty members need to bring these issues forward, protecting the anonymity of the agents?
  4. With visits to other states to view their Extension model, are there plans to change the AgCenter model? We've added several upper administrative positions (now we have LAES/LCES Directors – AND – Program Leaders), but the number of agents in the field is still so low that agents are being overworked and many express frustrations of being underappreciated.
    - a. As an addendum, there is concern among some of the agents that administrators covering multiple duties decreases their effectiveness as they are also spread thin.
  5. Is the Extension Summit being held in conjunction with Annual Conference or in lieu of? Agents are commenting that clarification has not been made.
  6. Last year or the year before, there was talk of the AgCenter hiring a substantial number of new agents in new positions. What happened with that initiative? Have all of those positions been filled? If so, we are still woefully understaffed in the regions.
  8. How is administration addressing the lack of qualified leaders in director and department chair roles? This is in addition to having several positions within the AgCenter that are interim and cover several regions and responsibilities? How feasible is it to have Regional Directors covering multiple research stations (Gentry) and serving as assistant to LCES Director (Cater)?

9. One person stated, "Given the critical role that leadership plays in setting the strategic direction, ensuring the quality of education and extension outreach, and fostering a supportive and dynamic learning environment and service to our clientele, I am keen to understand both the College's and the AgCenter's strategy in addressing these challenges."
10. Could you shed light on the measures being taken to *attract, develop, and retain* high-caliber leaders in our institution? Furthermore, what steps are being implemented to move towards more permanent appointments and reduce the necessity for administrators to juggle multiple roles, thereby ensuring a focused and effective leadership framework?
11. In light of the recent announcement of Dr. Lepley's upcoming retirement, will his replacement be on board prior to his departure? And, will the position vacancy announcement list the position as tenure track or non-tenure?
12. The concern is that we have several qualified internal personnel that are not currently in tenure track positions who would do well in that role. If shifting to a tenure requirement, there is concern on who might ultimately end up in that role. There's an opportunity to boost morale with the right candidate.

**Old Business**

1. Motion to accept the minutes from the April 19, 2024 LSU AFC meeting.
2. Service unit faculty satisfaction survey will be part of overall employee satisfaction survey. Survey will be conducted in Fall 2024.

**New Business**

1. LSU Faculty Senate Election-College of Agriculture. One open position to be filled:

Lisa Fultz	School of Plant, Environmental, and Soil Sciences	Agriculture	2024
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Rich Vlosky (LSU AFC Chair) and Carol Friedland (LSU AFC Vice-Chair) will manage election process June/July 2024.

Please join us in congratulating our director Dr. Carol Friedland for winning an AgExcellence award from the LSU AgCenter! Dr. Friedland was recognized for receiving a grant over \$1 million.



**2024 Meeting Dates**

January 19  
February 16  
March 22  
April 19  
May 10

June 14  
July 19  
August 16  
September 13  
October 18

November 15  
December 13 (Current  
and New Members)

**Adjourn**