

Minutes of the 31 March 2004 Special Meeting of the Faculty Council to discuss LAES and LCES Priority Reports.

Call to order by Steve Harrison at 10:00a

Members present: Steve Harrison, Donald Boquet, David Lanclos, Troy Menard, Paul Wilson, Allen Hogan, Jerry Whatley, Brian Leblanc, Bill Branch, Chris Clark, Carl Motsenbocker

General discussion of the Priority Reports.

Brian Leblanc and Jerry Whatley noted the Council did not have the time or resources to address specific points raised by each report and the Council should limit discussion to general concerns. The Council agreed that this would be the best way to analyze and comment on the reports.

In general terms, given the possible loss of personnel, the Council supports the general consensus of the Priority Reports. Some of these are that the LAES should reduce administrative positions and consolidate similar programs and units. The LCES supports increasing revenues by increasing 4-H dues, charging for publications and subscriptions, and increased regionalization for additional efficiency. Both reports recommend reviewing support services.

In other discussions Jerry Whatley noted that the AgCenter must increase focus on its primary mission: 1) Agriculture, including plant, animal and the environment, 2) Family welfare and 3) Youth. We need a system wide evaluation to determine how many faculty are required to accomplish the mission.

The Council agreed that it does not support faculty dismissal but does support financial exigency.

Carl Motsenbocker stated that administrators should be cut and not scientists and support.

Allen suggested that service units must realize that they are service providers and must satisfy faculty needs.

LCES Priority Report

4-H dues -- The LCES report recommended assessing dues for 4-H activities and books. There was discussion that this could reduce participation by those who could not afford the fees. Jerry Whatley noted that assessing dues for 4-H was legal as long as it was not discriminatory. He agreed to write a paragraph on 4-H for the Council report.

Charging \$\$ for printed publications – Allen Hogan stated that if the AgCenter is to charge for hard copy publications, then all publications should be on the web in an easily printable format. For the Weed, Insect and Disease Control Guides, charge \$5.00 for each hard copy. David Lanclos said there are still major problems accessing the AgCenter web site. The CMS software has been developed but not yet implemented because of concerns over content management. The

proposed improvement of the AgCenter web site is not moving in a positive direction. Paul Wilson said that we may have hired the wrong people to work on the web site – graphics and design and not content managers. Allen Hogan suggested that a user group be appointed to make recommendations to IT. Allen Hogan and Jerry Whatley will write a paragraph on charging for publications for the Council report. David Lanclos and Allen Hogan will write a paragraph on web publications and problems with the web for the Council report.

Area-wide work assignments across parish lines for additional efficiency – Brian Leblanc noted that the report seems to say to go further into area-wide assignments across the board but did not seem to include field agents in the expanded area-wide assignments. Jerry Whatley said they had been included and will continue to be. Bill Branch suggested that field agents should be allowed to participate in the process of developing multi-parish assignments. Jerry Whatley was concerned that area responsibilities would affect local support and accountability. The Council agreed to endorse area-wide work for all agents. Jerry Whatley and Allen Hogan agreed to write a paragraph on this topic for the Council report.

Reducing civil service positions -- Brian Leblanc noted that the Chancellor had said that reducing civil service positions was difficult and maybe too much trouble. But LCES can save \$600,000 by trimming clerical staff and this should not be overlooked. Paul Wilson made the point that LAES may also be overstaffed and some clerical workers are not productive. Brian Leblanc asked if we needed secretaries at the level supported, as most scientists and agents do their own word processing. The Council agreed that civil service should be looked at system wide. Steve Harrison agreed to write a paragraph on the need to evaluate and reduce where possible civil service positions for the Council report.

Increasing local support -- Jerry spoke against this because some parishes don't have the resources. Allen noted that other states that have done this have had problems with periodic loss of funding and with local officials expecting "ownership" of CES employees. This is something the AgCenter should continue to work on with local governments.

After much discussion the Council voted to support all of the above recommendations of the LCES Priority Report except for increasing local support.

Paul Wilson brought up the question of why the AgCenter will be paying increases in health insurance premiums while the budget is being reduced. Faculty might be willing to pay the increases to save jobs. Jerry Whatley and Steve Harrison said the proportion of insurance premiums paid by the AgCenter is mandated by the legislature.

Paul Wilson recommended that the Council report on the Priority Reports should have a disclaimer that recommendations that were intended only to save money should not be implemented if state funding is, in fact, not cut. Measures to increase efficiency should still be implemented. Allen Hogan suggested that the Council recommend that the Chancellor appoint standing committees that will continuously evaluate implemented efficiency measures and ensure that measures to improve efficiency continue indefinitely.

David Lanclos asked who would analyze the economic effects of recommendations. There is apparently no one at the present time. The Chancellor said at the 26 March Council that Leo Guidry will return to help with implementing reorganization plans. David agreed to write a paragraph on the need to evaluate the financial impact of each recommendation before implementation.

Jerry Whatley noted that stakeholder input on budgeting priorities had not been sought and in the long term we need to do this.

David Lanclos suggested that the annual staff conference should be discontinued as a cost savings measure. The Council agreed and David and Paul Wilson will write a recommendation to do away with the annual conference and replace it with an on-campus awards activity to present the annual faculty excellence and other awards.

Jerry Whatley stated that, in making priority decisions, faculty welfare must be a primary consideration. Steve Harrison volunteered to write a paragraph along these lines to be included at the end of the Council report. Steve Harrison said that the Council should also inform the Chancellor that we are willing to work with him and the vice chancellors after his report to the Council and when plans are being finalized.

Don Boquet will compile all of the individual reports from Council members on the LCES report and then work with Steve Harrison to have a complete Council report by 6 April.

LAES Priority Report

Allen Hogan suggested that the first paragraph of the LAES Consensus (Page 18) should be the lead off statement for the Council report. The Council agreed.

Consolidating research stations -- Carl Motsenbocker thought the Council should support the recommendations to reduce PhD administration and consolidate research stations. Allen Hogan cautioned that closing stations was political suicide and would result in loss of legislative and clientele support.

Carl and David Lanclos will write a paragraph on these issues, and also include taking care of the faculty we have and not starting new programs during times of budget concerns.

Merging campus departments – Allen Hogan thought the Council should endorse combining units if (1) there were significant savings or (2) if a department had lost critical mass to succeed or had too few scientists to function as a department. Steve Harrison added: (3) if it will increase collaborative research.

Allen Hogan brought out that we seem to have two separate systems – research stations and departments. Paul Wilson said that all statewide faculty members should be housed in a campus department. Steve Harrison will write a paragraph on unit consolidation.

Freezing positions – Brian spoke in favor of the recommendation to temporarily freeze all positions and not hire more people when we can't properly take care of the ones we have. Steve

Harrison added that we need to come out of this prioritization process with more pay and support for remaining faculty or the process will have been wasted effort.

Administrative structure – Carl thought that the paragraph on administrative infrastructure on page 19 should be included in the Council report. David Lanclos suggested that the number of regions could be reduced. The initial 3-year appointments will end in December 2004, which provides an opportunity to evaluate the regions and regional directors. The Council agreed. Steve volunteered to write a paragraph on these topics for the Council report and also will include the paragraph on page 18 on the recommendation that unit heads should engage in some research and extension activities.

Chris Clark pointed out that these priority reports are not to be considered the final answer. These are more like the beginning points of discussion in the evaluation process. Chris agreed to write a paragraph on this topic for the Council report.

Experimental Statistics – After a brief discussion, the Council agreed that, before reducing funding to Experimental Statistics, the value of experimental statistics consulting should be fully evaluated. Could the AgCenter hire one or two applied statisticians to consult and maybe teach real-world field plot techniques courses for less cost?

The meeting adjourned at 2:30p.