

**LSU AgCenter
Faculty Council Meeting
February 15, 2008
Sullivan Conference Room**

HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Two Special Legislative Sessions and 65 New Legislators Imply Changes (2)**
- **Chancellor Richardson's Presentation Available Upon Request (3)**
- **Proposed Interstate Loops & New Highways Threaten AgCenter Units (5)**
- **Federal Budget Proposals: A Growing Enigma for Agriculture (6)**
- **Capital Outlay and the Animal Sciences Complex (7)**
- **State Hiring Freeze Impacts AgCenter (8, 12, 13)**
- **Chancellor Richardson Emphasizes Vigilance (9)**
- **4-H: Good Kids, Some "Misbehaving" Parents (10)**
- **2008 Raises: Either Not in Budget, or Well-Hidden (11)**
- **Wellness Program Participation NOT Mandatory, Just Encouraged (14)**
- **All AgCenter Employees to be Evaluated Annually (15, 16)**
- **Accounting Services: Striving for Excellence Despite Frustrations (17-19;29)**
- **LaCarte: Promises, Problems, and Solutions (19, 21,30)**
- **Grodner Details Challenges In Arranging Meetings (20)**
- **Vendor Payment Frustrations May Be Linked to Units (22)**
- **Need Vehicle? Can Never Order Early Enough (23)**
- **Magnetic Signs on AgCenter Vehicles to be Permanent (24)**
- **Need One Institution for AgCenter Paycheck and Reimbursements (25)**
- **Vehicle Needs 12,000 Road Miles Annually to Remain in Fleet (26)**
- **Employee Car Insurance Primary When Driving Fleet Vehicle (27)**
- **State Auditors: Vigilant and Present Daily (28)**
- **Council Seeks to Provide Chancellor With Concise, Action-Oriented Recommendations Gleamed from Summary Document Comments (31)**
- **Barbosa Resigns Chancellor to Appoint Successor (35)**
- **Inactive Advisory Committees Identified (37-38)**
- **Need for Enhanced Communication Between Council and Constituents Recognized (39)**
- **Salary Relationships Always Sensitive and Important (40)**

Members Present: Mandy Armentor, David Blouin, Miles Brashier, Wayne M. Gauthier, Mary Grodner, Collins Kimbeng, Joan King, Donna Lee, Donnie Miller, Diane Sasser, Phillip Stouffer, Adrienne Vidrine, Rich Vlosky, and Deniese Zeringue.

Members Absent: Roberto Barbosa, Andrew Granger, Mike Hebert, James Hendrix, Clayton Hollier, Dale Pollet, and Jerry Whatley.

1. Chairman Vlosky called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. on February 15, 2008 and invited Chancellor Richardson to speak.

Chancellor Richardson

2. Chancellor Richardson recognized that the first special legislative session devoted exclusively to ethics would definitively create changes. The question is how far-ranging are those changes going to go. The second special session between March and the beginning of the regular legislative session is to deal with a state budget surplus estimated at somewhere between \$750 million and one billion dollars. There are 65 new legislators who are trying to get oriented to the workings of state government.
3. Chancellor Richardson is in the process of preparing a presentation about the LSU Agriculture Center to the House Agriculture Committee. He will make a copy of that presentation available upon request.
4. Pinnacle, the new land based casino, will border the Ben Hur research farm.
5. The LSU AgCenter is monitoring all interstate highway loop development proposals in the state. At the present time, there is a proposal for an interstate loop in the Shreveport area that would destroy the Pecan Research Station. Some decision makers within the federal highway administration do not fully appreciate the amount of time it takes to create a pecan grove nor that, once established, a pecan grove cannot be moved, only destroyed. There is also a concern with the proposal to create a new road corridor in Baton Rouge that would go through the Ben Hur Research Farm.
6. Keeping abreast of the constant changes within the federal budget is proving to be an on-going challenge. Issues associated with “earmarks” are far from being resolved. The AgCenter’s lobbyists in Washington and its two vice-chancellors are working with their respective national associations to protect and preserve critical federal funds for agricultural research and extension. The protection of the formula funds are of particular significance to the work of the AgCenter.
7. Funding capital outlay projects continue to be a challenge. The Animal Science complex will require \$19 million to complete its second and third phases. Chancellor Richardson is pleased that Mr. Jerry Jones, the individual in charge of capital outlay projects within the Division of Administration and who is familiar with the Animal Sciences Complex, will continue to have that position for the foreseeable future.
8. Chancellor Richardson is hoping to hear something positive regarding the hiring freeze; particularly as it applies in the area of grants and contracts. Approval has been received at the LSU System level to hire in this area, but the AgCenter cannot hire without approval from the state. The prime hiring time for university faculty is now. Transient and student worker hiring is exempt from the hiring freeze.

9. Chancellor Richardson encouraged all employees to be vigilant about the increasing incidents of shootings on campuses. A test of the Immediate Warning System will soon be coming.
10. Chancellor Richardson observed that another case of “doctoring” the animal at the State Livestock Show was really about animosity between two sets of parents.
11. Chancellor Richardson observed that provisions for raises were not in the state budget and he was not overly optimistic that they would be as the state seems to be experiencing a “leveling off” of the economic boom created by Katrina. If no new monies are forthcoming, unfunded mandates will have to be absorbed by the units.

Ann Coulon

12. Ms. Coulon identified how the AgCenter had submitted its request to exempt up to sixty (60) positions from the hiring freeze. She indicated that with the size and diversity of the AgCenter workforce, sixty positions were quite easy to identify.
13. The ombudsperson position is one of those position caught up in the freeze and is not one of the sixty positions for which an exemption from the hiring freeze had been sought.
14. Participation in the wellness program being created by the AgCenter Wellness Committee is absolutely not mandatory. The Wellness Committee is focusing on activities that would enhance (1) nutrition, (2) weight, and (3) exercise. Family and Consumer Science (FCS) agents are developing programs focusing on disease management. The Wellness Committee has an option for the individual to track their progress without being a member of a team. Electronic technology has also made the Wii-Console available as a means of promoting exercise within the home.
15. Ms. Coulon reports that the Human Resources Division (HR) is in the process of writing a performance evaluation policy. Everyone employed by the LSU AgCenter is to be evaluated annually. The unit head will set the time frame for evaluation. There will be a faculty appeal process. It is generally best if the dissatisfied employee (1) first talk to the unit head, then (2) speak to the unit head’s supervisor and finally (3) submit a formal appeal electronically to HR.
16. Unit heads and vice-chancellors are to be evaluated by committees. Vice-chancellor evaluations are to be based on inputs provided by a committee of unit heads and a committee of faculty. There was a discussion of the merits of including anonymous vs. non-anonymous comments in the evaluation process. Sarah Johnson, the current Information Technology (IT) employee who initially receives evaluation input, cannot identify the individual who submits any particular set of comments. She can only identify those individuals who didn’t

submit any comments. The argument for the comments not being anonymous is that it tends to make people more responsible in their observations thus reducing the quantity of information that is not constructive. The value of the committee is that it allows for anonymous comments which get reviewed and screened thus providing for a more complete and constructive evaluation. The response rate from last year's evaluation was 30%. After Ms. Coulon departure, a motion was made and approved that anonymous comments were to be incorporated into the evaluation process.

Mark Legendre. LSU AgCenter Chief Fiscal Officer & Director of Accounting Services

17. Mr. Legendre began his presentation by introducing Mr. Rick Frye and other key staff people from accounting, budgeting, financing, and travel. Mr. Frye recently joined the unit as Assistant Director of Procurement. He has had 19 years of experience in procurement with the LSU-BR campus. Mr. Frye has the authority to approve research procurement requests up to \$25,000.
18. Mr. Legendre and key assistants meet with the Accounting Services Advisory Committee (Committee) twice annually. Vlosky promised to provide Legendre with a copy of the AgCenter Faculty Council rule that prohibits an administrative head from serving as chair of the Committee. Legendre finds the Committee valuable, but is frustrated that the information doesn't get distributed to the faculty. Two major problem areas identified by Legendre include (1) people not getting information and (2) procurement. The AgCenter is now at the point where an employee with intranet access and an employee number can access information relevant to their grant accounts.
19. Legendre reported that the new LaCarte process is going well. The biggest issue associated with the process is complying with the requirement for attachments to support purchases and commitments. There is a log which shows the status and provides for the tracking of procurement requests. Effective use of LaCarte has required some training.
20. Dr. Grodner outlined a number of problems encountered in setting up meetings directly attributable to Accounting Services' policies and practices. Grodner questioned the need to have to set up meeting dates so far in advance coupled with the requirement to identify the number of attendees. There are related petty issues such as placing limits on how much can be spent on coffee when the attendees pay registration fees. Grodner specifically questioned why, once we have three bids, why does it take so long to obtain approval for taking the actions necessary to perform the tasks for which AgCenter employees are being paid. Legendre observed that the root of the problem lies within state regulations. Legendre claims that it is all part of a process and that the greatest problem occurs when accounting for meetings and other events is sought after the expenditures have been incurred. Legendre indicated that if refreshments are covered by

- registration fees, there is no limit as to how much can be spent on refreshments. Legendre indicated that only a rough estimate of the number of attendees and not specific names of attendees need to be submitted to his office. Legendre announced that the Chancellor is now authorized to sign contracts that once had to be submitted to the LSU System and beyond.
21. Miller questioned whether the LaCarte card could be used to register on-site for an out-of-state event. Legendre responded in the affirmative and noted that the LaCarte card was not to be used for LSU AgCenter on-site registration events because of the internal costs associated with using the LaCarte card. Legendre also observed that a difference exists between using the LaCarte card to cover a registration fee of \$1000 versus paying a membership fee for which there is a \$100 maximum limit. The authorization to use a LaCarte card is made by unit heads.
 22. A concern was voiced regarding the amount of time expended getting requests processed. Vendors complain that payments on submitted invoices are not being made in a timely manner. One possible impediment is that the unit has to document on the receiving report that the item has been received and that report has to be forwarded to Accounting Services before payments can be made.
 23. A council member shared the experience of requesting a vehicle in January and receiving it in August. In the interim, a research associate sat in an office unable to perform the duties for which they had been hired for want of a vehicle. Legendre observed that Universities have been exempted by the Division of Administration from having to comply with the state procurement policies and procedures except for two items: (1) vehicles and (2) Information Technology (IT) equipment in excess of \$100,000. Procurement cards are issued just for LaCarte procurement items. The procurement cards cannot be used for travel related purposes. The concern is that there is a need for two cards. There is a central billing account (CBA). The LaCarte card can be used to buy gas for a state vehicle.
 24. Legendre indicated that the LSU AgCenter magnetic signs that are going to be affixed to AgCenter vehicles are going to be permanently affixed.
 25. Legendre indicated that an AgCenter employee's paycheck and travel reimbursements both have to be deposited into a common account. Direct deposits, within the same institution, can be split into separate accounts. Direct deposits, however, cannot be split into separate accounts at multiple institutions.
 26. There are 360 state vehicles in the LSU AgCenter's automotive fleet. State regulations provide that if a vehicle is not driven at least 12,000 miles annually, it is to be removed from the agency's fleet. This regulation poses a problem for some vehicles such as the non-running truck on the Pecan Station that has a tree shaker mounted in its bed. When needed, the vehicle is towed to the tree that is to

- be shaken. Zero miles of annual use are recorded for the vehicle. The argument that it is retained for a specialized use has to be made annually.
27. The insurance of the AgCenter employee who is driving a state vehicle is primary in the event of an accident. The first \$1000 of deductible coverage of that employee's insurance is covered by the employee's unit.
 28. State auditors are on the LSU campus every working day of the year. They have authority to access, at any time, all available information on an employee or a unit.
 29. Employees are to bring their appeals directly to Legendre. The Division of Administration puts out its regulations annually. Those regulations guide the actions of the LSU AgCenter's Office of Accounting Services. Legendre related a story of how the Marriott hotel chain had issued a policy that AgCenter employees were not state employees and thus not entitled to their state employee discount. Legendre has been in contact with the Marriott in order to resolve the issues arising from their policy.
 30. Request a LaCarte card was the response to complaints regarding delays experienced in realizing reimbursements once the Employee Reimbursement Form has been submitted.

Rich Vlosky

31. Vlosky requested that all council members review the Summary document based on the comments received and reported in the AgCenter Faculty Issues & Concerns 2007 Survey. From that Summary, Vlosky requested each council member provide five bullet points as to what might be of greatest concern to Chancellor Richardson. Vlosky will summarize those bullet points into a format that would facilitate discussion by the Council. On the basis of that discussion, a more concise and action oriented document will be presented to the Chancellor for his review, use and action.
32. Grodner moved that the January 25, 2008 Minutes of the LSU AgCenter Faculty Council be accepted. The motion was seconded by Miller and passed on voice vote.
33. The initial request to Sharon Saltzer to provide for an identification of the LSU AgCenter employees each council member represents was honored, but it contained some flaw. A clearer request for a list of constituents by council representative will be made by Vlosky.
34. In order to facilitate faster communications among council members and their constituents, it was observed that minutes of the Council can be approved by e-mail.

35. Roberto Barbosa, the representative of assistant professor on campus, has resigned. Article 8 in the Council's bylaws provides that his replacement is to be appointed by the Chancellor. Miller recalled Summary comments relative to the representative issue as between on and off campus faculty and as between research and extension faculty. Vlosky indicated that the elections are by rank.

Advisory Committee Reports

36. The Sponsored Programs Committee has not met.
37. A meeting of the Communications Committee was called, but then it was cancelled and is to be rescheduled at an unspecified future date.

Comments

38. Grodner's review of the Summary reports suggested that there is a need for enhanced communications between Council members and faculty members.
39. Vlosky requested council members provide him with pictures of themselves.
40. It was observed that the starting salaries of new hires reflect inflationary increases, but that the salaries of established faculty members have failed to keep up with those inflationary increases. Vlosky recalled Chancellor Richardson's earlier observation that the AgCenter, like the LSU Law Center, will not publish the salaries of individuals.
41. The motion to adjourn was received, seconded and accepted on voice vote at 1:30 p.m. on February 15, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Wayne M. Gauthier