

**LSU AGRICULTURAL CENTER FACULTY COUNCIL  
MINUTES  
AUGUST 15, 2008**



**Members Present:** Mandy Armentor, David Blouin, Miles Brashier, Wayne M. Gauthier, Andy Granger, Mary Grodner, Mike Hebert, James Hendrix, Richard Keim, Collins Kimbeng, Donna Lee, Joan King, Donnie Miller, Diane Sasser, Phillip Stouffer, Adrienne Vidrine, Rich Vlosky, Jerry Whatley and Deniese Zeringue.

**Members Absent:** Clayton Hollier and Dale Pollet.

**Guests:** Chancellor William B. Richardson, LCES Vice-Chancellor & Director Paul Coreil, and HRM AgCenter Director Ann Coulon.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Rule Compliance Complicated Distributions of Pay Raises (3)
- Governor's Office Requests Itemization of Fruits of LSUAC's Work (4)
- Chancellor Encourages Employee Participation in Town Hall Meetings (4)
- Fostering Relationships With Congressional Representatives Benefits LSUAC (5)
- LA Legislature Commits Three (3) Million Dollars to Animal Science Complex (6)
- Status of Some Senior Leadership Positions Within LSUAC (7)
- Appreciation Expressed for Internal Leadership Program (8)
- LSUAC Vision Statement Expected in September, 2008 (9)
- Coreil Offers Humbling Observation From A 30 Years of Service Perspective (10)
- Causes & Implications of A Most Challenged 2008-09 FY LCES Budget (11)
- Basis For Tying Increases in LSUAC's Appropriations To Tuition Increases (12)
- LCES Goal: Raise Level of Local Parish Support From 10% to 20% in 3 Years (13)
- Dedicated Taxes For Support of LCES Offices A Reality In Other Places (14)
- Local Support for LCES Viewed As Discretionary Spending by State Auditors (15)
- Dr Bobby Fletcher's Primary Mission Assignment: Implement Item 13 (16)
- Orleans Parish Fails to Support LCES (16)
- Hendrix Identifies LCES's Contributions At All Educational Levels (17)
- Parish Superintendents of Education Important to LCES' Mission (18)
- Public's Anti-Tax Mood Challenging to Maintenance of LCES Funding (19)
- Skills Enhancing Sessions To Be Replicated at Annual Conference (20)

- Natural Law Justifies Existence of Local County Agent's Office (21)
- Some Vacant LCES Positions to be Advertised as "Internal" Fills (22)
- Creation of New LCES Positions in FY 2008-09 Not Likely (23)
- Coreil Offers Assessments of Future Opportunities & Employment Patterns (24)
- Geo-Spatial Technology (24a)
- Local Grown Food, Master Gardener Program, and Prison Labor (24b)
- Financial Interdependencies: High Feed & Fuel Prices, Contracted Animal Production, Diminished Employment (24c)
- Healthy Lifestyles Contributes to QOL & Lower Health Insurance Costs (24d)
- Ag Magic & Ag Alley Enhance Awareness of Agriculture's Contributions (24e)
- LCES Accepting Requests to Review Agro-Tourism Initiatives (24f)
- Maintenance of In-House Capacity to Address Invasive Species Outbreaks (24g)
- Coastal Restoration Commands Response By Multi-Disciplinary Units (24h)
- Management of Food Chain (24i)
- Electronic Communications Technology Alters Culture of Agriculture (24j)
- O&M Appropriated Funds For Multi-Purpose Evacuation Center Short (27)
- NIFA Has Serious Implications For Formula Funding, 4-H, & FCS (28)
- County Agents Offices Need to Expand Offering Beyond Matters Agricultural (29)
- Response to Local Control of LCES Offices Proportional to Contributions (30)
- Ombudsperson Position Resuscitated (31)
- Annual Leave Donation Policy Under Design With Conflicting Views on Pool (32)
- General Policy Authorization For Four-Day Workweek Being Drafted (33)
- LSUAC: 1,500 Employee Workforce Representing 1,100 FTEs (34)
- Negatives Associated With Government Funding (35)
- Implications of A Challenged LAES Budget (36)
- Identifying 2009 P&T Review Committee Membership (37)

### **Call to Order**

1. Chairman Vlosky called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. on August 18, 2008 in the Sullivan Conference room.

### **Approval of July 18, 2008 Minutes**

2. Minutes of the July 18, 2008 meeting were approved by a voice vote.

### **Chancellor William B. Richardson's Report**

3. The paperwork for the pay raises were submitted to the LSU Systems office for the Board of Supervisors' review and approval at their August 25-26, 2008 meeting. If approved, Louisiana State University Agricultural Center (LSUAC) employees will receive supplementary raise checks for July and August 2008. Thereafter, the employee raises will be reflected in regular checks beginning in September 2008. In preparing the raise recommendations, the administration had to comply with a set of unusual rules. For example, any employee who had realized an increase in pay within the last six months was not eligible to receive a raise. This

included employees who had realized additional pay as a consequence of assuming additional responsibilities. This was unacceptable and necessitated justification to correct. This created additional work and delayed the submission of the paperwork. The Faculty Council expressed its appreciation to the administration for budgeting for the merit raises.

4. Governor Jindal has been making town hall meetings throughout the state. His administration has requested an identification of positive contributions that the work of the LSUAC has created in various areas of the state. Chancellor Richardson encourages LSUAC employees to participate in those town hall meetings and for the employees to request participation by their constituents. It is important to the well-being of the LSUAC for the Governor and his assistants to be made more aware of the contributions that agriculture makes to Louisiana and for the significant contributions that the LSUAC makes to agriculture and to the citizens of Louisiana.

5. The LSUAC enjoys good relationships with our U.S. senators and other members of our congressional delegation. By virtue of his appointment to the U.S. House Agriculture Committee, Representative Rodney Alexander is in a key position to help Louisiana agriculture and the LSUAC.

6. The 2008 session of the Louisiana legislature provided a three million dollar appropriation for the Animal Science, Food Science and Veterinarian Science Building (Complex). This appropriation enhances the probability that the remaining 16 to 20 million dollars necessary to complete the Complex will be forthcoming in the future. Chancellor Richardson anticipates that there will be another special session of the Louisiana legislature after January 1, 2009 to address the distribution of excess monies now flowing into the state's coffers. There are, however, limited categories into which expenditures can be made such as paying down the state's debts and highway construction.

7. In response to Joan King's question, Chancellor Richardson indicated that a new department head had been appointed in plant pathology, that Associate Director Russin was starting today, and that a search for a new head of the School of Human Ecology would begin in the fall.

8. Joan King extended appreciation to the Chancellor for the internal leadership program.

9. Chancellor Richardson indicated that the vision statement for the LSUAC would be ready for review by the LSUAC Faculty Council at its September 2008 meeting.

**Dr. Paul Coreil, Vice-Chancellor and Director, Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service (LCES)**

10. Dr. Coreil began his remarks by thanking members of the LSUAC Faculty Council for their service. On a personal note, he identified 2008 as a unique year in his personal and professional life. September 1, 2009 will mark seven years of service in his present position as Director of the LCES and 30 years of LSUAC employment commencing as an assistant agent in Cameron Parish. He observed that the work of the LSUAC was "bigger than any one individual".

11. Dr. Coreil observed that the current LCES budget was the most challenging budget for the LCES since the 1990s. He explained that both the Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station (LAES) and the LCES generally start the fiscal year on July 1 with negative salary savings. During the course of the year, these negative salary savings get offset as people leave the unit and the lapse of time between their leaving and their replacement provides salary savings which generally eliminates any negative salary savings. This year, the negative salary savings for the LCES is 2.2 million dollars. One million of the 2.2 million is merit raise money; 0.5 million is added to cover the increased fuel costs associated with travel; and the remainder is for salary adjustments for long-time employees. These support monies were allocated so that people could have the resources necessary to do their jobs. The budget challenge results because, although the LCES requested an additional five million dollars for fiscal year (FY) 2009, it only received money to provide for civil service system raises. No money was provided for promotions, inflation, indirect costs for utilities and other essentials. Some savings will be realized by shifting federal funds into salaries. This, however, is a practice that can only be done for one year. The core problem appears to be with the formula used by the Board of Regents in making its allocation to the LSUAC. According to the formula, the LSUAC is being funded at a 122% implementation rate. In response to a question, Dr. Coreil indicated that the LSUAC is trying to determine the components of the formula. Dr. Coreil argues that being funded “above average” should not be viewed as a negative or as indicative of a need to adjust the LSUAC’s allocation downward. For 2009 and beyond, the magnitude of the LCES deficit can only be offset by reducing positions. To that end, he has submitted a plan for the elimination of a set of unfilled positions representing one million dollars in annual salaries. He also indicated that many vacant positions will go unfilled and, without an increased allocation of money to the LSUAC, significant downsizing of the LCES will be forthcoming. As an example of other actions being taken to cope with the budget shortfall, a vacant horticulture position is being filled by moving an individual already employed by the LCES into Lafayette. This results in a vacancy elsewhere within the LCES.

12. In exploring its various options, the LCES learned that the extension services in Arkansas and Virginia are receiving instructional tuition dollars. It was noted that the agricultural units within a land grant university system bear substantial costs maintaining land, buildings and livestock needed by advanced degree students in satisfying their degree requirements. Chancellor Richardson is using this argument in discussions with Dr. Lombardi regarding LSUAC funding. The LSUAC administration is exploring the possibility of seeking legislation that would provide that whenever there is a tuition increase, there would be an automatic “trigger” increase in funding for the non-tuition campuses in the LSU System.

13. The average funding support for the LSUAC over the last five years from the federal government is down. On average, the current level of local support is ten percent (10%). The Southern regional average of local support for the agricultural extension service is 20%. Nationwide, the level of local support is 26%. The LCES has added people in recent times to increase its services at the local level. The time frame for getting the level of local support up to the southern regional average is three (3) years. At the present time, Arkansas and Mississippi may be the only states lower than Louisiana in terms of level of local support for the agricultural extension service. The idea of having endowed county agents similar to endowed professorships is meritorious and encouraged by Director Coreil.

14. It was observed that local governments throughout the United States are passing taxes to support their extension service. Kentucky has a state-wide property tax dedicated to support their extension service which has made it sustainable.

15. Dr. Coreil reported that Catahoula and Natchitoches parishes are nearly bankrupt as their receipts are less than their expenditures. When state auditors observe these conditions, they advise the local leaders to cut their discretionary spending. Unfortunately, this discretionary spending includes the parish's support for the local extension office.

16. Dr. Coreil indicated that Dr. Bobby Fletcher has been promoted to Assistant Director of the LCES. His new responsibilities includes work with the local county agents, sheriffs, school boards, parish police juries and city governments to increase a parish's contribution for support of the local cooperative extension service. All parishes, with the exception of Orleans parish, are providing support to the local extension service. Dr. Coreil has made multiple visits to Orleans parish to document the need for their support in exchange for the multitude of services provided ranging from education to termite eradication.

17. James Hendrix observed that in addition to the LSUAC's contributions to academic programs in higher education, the LCES also makes contributions to primary and secondary educational activities throughout the state. The fact that the LSUAC makes contributions at all levels of education suggests that it would be entitled to state educational reimbursements and tuition shares. Director Coreil did not discount Hendrix's argument, but observed that there is a need for the LSUAC to be careful about advocating mandates for other state agencies.

18. Dr. Coreil observed that the parish superintendents of education have the authority to support the agricultural extension services in their parishes. And it is his desire that those superintendents would be requesting that support as a consequence of the work of the local extension service agents.

19. Members of the Louisiana legislature are responding to the anti-tax demands of their constituents. As a consequence, the LCES will do well to maintain their current level of state appropriations.

20. Chairman Vlosky asked if the skills-enhancing sessions now being presented to LSUAC employees couldn't be replicated at annual conference. Director Coreil indicated that he would look into it. He later advised members of the Council that those training sessions would be archived and made available for presentation at annual conference.

21. Director Coreil explained that communities of people are created at the county or local level as a consequence of a natural law. This natural law is the foundation of the argument for situating the county agent at the parish level.

22. Dr. Coreil indicated that some vacant positions will be advertised as "internal". With respect to open positions, he observed that "everything is open to not being filled".

23. Dr. Coreil indicated that no new positions in the LCES are likely to be created in FY 2009. In response to a question regarding a soybean position, he indicated that the incumbent will also have to assume responsibilities for corn.

24. In response to a request to address some of the emerging opportunities and employment patterns that the LCES is likely to encounter in the future, Dr. Coreil identified the following:

a. geo-spatial technology will need to be incorporated into county agent training. Command of the technology proved useful in addressing issues created by Hurricane Katrina plus it's increasingly being incorporated into cultural farming practices. Eleven (11) agents are currently being trained by Keith Morris in its use.

b. Increasing quantities of locally grown foods are rapidly emerging phenomena in the United States. Evidence for this assertion exists in the growing numbers and popularities of farmer's markets and the provisions in the recent farm bill for research and extension work on specialty crops such as sweet potatoes. There was a discussion exploring the potential for prison inmates to grow some of their own food, the growth of the master gardener programs and the use of garden plots to introduce science into the classroom.

c. Financial management is of increasing importance as the volatility in commodity prices is making it increasingly difficult for producers and agribusiness firms to create and implements firm plans and decisions. Animal agriculture is moving toward contraction rather than expansions as a consequent of the extraordinary increases in feed and fuel prices. For example, Pilgrim Pride, a major processor of chickens in Louisiana, is laying off employees in Louisiana and other states.

d. People are seeking healthy lifestyles both as a quality of life issue and as a means of coping with the increasing costs of health care.

e. The LCES needs to enhance people's awareness of agriculture and forestry as a means of creating an appreciation for the interdependency of a strong food and fiber system to the quality of their lives. It is for this purpose that AgMagic and AgAlley were created. Both have grown since their inceptions and are very successful in communicating LSUAC contributions to Louisiana citizens and economy.

f. Agro-tourism is an emerging area of economic enterprise. Recent legislation reduced the liability exposure of farms associated with tourism. Dora Hatch is leading the agro-tourism initiative within the LCES. The LCES can review the plans of entrepreneurs interested in converting their farms into agro-tourism sites.

g. The phenomenon of invasive species means that the LSUAC must have an in-house capability to respond to outbreaks of plant and animal diseases. Soybean rust was cited as an example. Dr. Coreil observed that sometimes invasive species issues involve quarantines which have negative direct and indirect impacts upon people and agricultural plants and animals. LCES employees need to be capable of dealing with the physical and emotional trauma created by these outbreaks.

h. Coastal restoration is an important Governor-driven initiative. Currently, it involves the Agronomy, Agricultural Economics & Agribusiness and Coastal Forestry units of the LSUAC.

i. Management of the food chain.

j. Electronic Communications has grown in significance. It is a technology that has the potential to alter the culture through the changes it will bring to agricultural practices and people's behaviors. The LCES can play a role in enhancing the capability of the citizenry to use electronic communications.

26. The 4-H Centennial celebration has been a plus for the LSUAC.

27. The multi-purpose building that has been constructed at the Dean Lee Research and Extension station to house hurricane evacuees has been provided with an allocation of one million dollars for current year operations and maintenance (O&M). A problem being faced by the Director of the Dean Lee station is that the facility's O&M costs are about two million dollars annually.

28. Under the new Farm Bill, CSREES will cease to exist on September 30, 2009. NIFA, the National Institute for Food and Agriculture, will assume its responsibilities. NIFA introduces new features into the management of American agriculture's research and extension activities. There will now be a Chief Scientist for Agriculture (CSA) who which will be a presidential appointee. The CSA will have to develop a road map identifying where U.S. agriculture needs to be in five years. The offices that will be associated with the CSA include Food Crops, Specialty Crops, Rural Development, and Nutrition and Health. Director Coreil indicated that NIFA represents a new way of doing business. It will increase monies for grants with 40% of the funds to be directed into the integration of research and extension. The concern for the LSUAC is the absence of the traditional source of funding for the formula funds critical to the maintenance of the physical plant structure essential to its existence. The legislation creating the CSA office also doesn't make any provisions for 4-H and family consumer sciences.

29. Dr. Coreil observed that the county extension office in the parish necessarily has to become more than a storefront for agriculture. Other states, such as Georgia, have formalized extension service offices relationships with local governmental bodies. For example, In Pennsylvania and Oregon, county agent offices are also venues for accessing other public services and information particularly in health and medicine.

30. In response to Wayne Gauthier's question about shared governance of the local county agent office given that the parishes are being asked to increase their support of those offices, Dr. Coreil responded that the USDA contributes 30% of their support and doesn't share in the governance.

**Ms. Ann Coulon, Director, LSUAC Human Resource Management**

31. Ms. Coulon reported that the ombudsperson position was now being advertised and the process for filling that position would soon be moving forward.

32. Ms. Coulon provided additional insights into the design of a leave donation policy that is under consideration. The essence of the leave donation policy provides for one employee to donate their earned annual, but not sick, leave to another person. Basically, leave donation is either made into (1) a blind pool or (2) into a person-named pool. A committee would be created to review and grant requests for the donated leave. The administration of such a program is normally done by the HRM office. The employee may receive enough leave to provide 75% of the pay he/she would normally receive for the pay period. Most of the situations involved are covered by the Medical Leave Act. The committee could meet ad hoc. Similar structures exist on the LSU-BR campus, Pennington, and several other campuses and agencies.

33. The draft of a general authorization to units authorized to pursue the four day workweek option is being worked on and will be going out as a memorandum. Civil Service is not as rigid with classified service employees as it is with unclassified employees. This employment option should be of particular help to the management of the agricultural research farms. This option could help with the minimization of overtime costs. Management, however, will need to pay particular attention to the scheduling of the employee's work within single weeks so as to maintain compliance with federal wage and overtime laws.

34. There are 1,500 employees within the LSUAC whose appointments translate into approximately 1,100 full-time equivalent (FTEs) employees.

35. Ms. Coulon observed that government funding is its own entity. As a consequence, it drives short term decision making and is subject to the influence of politics.

36. Ms. Coulon reported that a large number of positions were filled in July, but that the administration is now pulling back on the filling of positions because of the funding situation.

37. Vlosky indicated that the officers of the Faculty Council (Vlosky, Whatley and Gauthier) needed to get together to submit a list of individuals to serve on the tenure and promotion decision review committee. Traditionally, this committee meets on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving.

38. Vlosky adjourned the meeting following a voice vote at 11:55 a.m. on August 15, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Wayne M. Gauthier  
Secretary