

**LSU AGCENTER FACULTY COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES  
July 17, 2009**

**Members present:** Joan Almond, Andrew Granger, Mike Hebert, Clayton Hollier, Jeff Hoy, Natalie Hummel, Donna Lee, Johnny Saichuk, Diane Sasser, Phil Stouffer, Deniese Zeringue

**Members absent:** Mandy Armentor, David Blouin, Wayne Gauthier, James Hendrix, Collins Kimbeng, Joan King, Ed Twidwell, Adrienne Vidrine, Richard Vlosky

**Proxies:** Natalie Hummel for Dianne Glasgow

**Guests:** Chancellor William B. Richardson, Frankie Gould, Fred Piazza, Sandy Fiser

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- **AgCenter budget reduction plan to be implemented; some details provided (1)**
- **LSU System hiring freeze; petitions filed to fill some positions (2)**
- **Continued budget shortfalls expected for 2-3 years; different approaches for meeting cuts and possible impact (3-5)**
- **Possible re-structuring plans for higher education; potential AgCenter impact (6)**
- **Future plans for Annual Staff Conference (7)**
- **Assessment of performance and usefulness of Service Unit Advisory Committees (8)**
- **AgCenter website use statistics (9)**
- **AgCenter accounts with social networking websites and guideline development (10)**
- **Other IT initiatives to improve communications efficiency (11)**
- **AgCenter e-commerce site now in operation; products and plans (12)**

**Call to Order**

Natalie Hummel substituting for Joan King called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM on July 17, 2009 in the Sullivan Room of the John M. Parker Coliseum.

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

1. The AgCenter budget reduction plan is now being implemented. A total cut of approximately 10% must be implemented. There are no plans for lay-offs or furloughs. A total of 82 vacant positions across all units will be eliminated. The Board of Supervisors approved an incentive-based retirement plan for the AgCenter which now moves forward for approval by Dr. Lombardi. Approval by Dr. Lombardi is expected shortly. There will be a cap for the program of \$1,000,000 with a maximum of \$25,000 per participant. Approximately 50 people are expected to opt for the program. The details of the program remain to be worked out, but will be announced soon. Implementation of the retirement incentive program is expected to proceed quickly. Additional reductions in budget support categories are anticipated, but the amount of these reductions remain to be determined.

2. Dr. Lombardi has instituted a hiring freeze for the LSU System. Imposing a hiring freeze at the LSU System level will provide some flexibility with Dr. Lombardi being able to consider and approve the filling of positions. Blanket approval has been sought to fill transient and grant funded positions. Dr. Richardson hopes to re-fill a portion of the positions vacated by retirement.
3. Unfortunately, state budget shortfalls are anticipated for the next 2-3 years. If the state revenue estimating committee continues to project lower state revenues, it may be necessary to impose another mid-year budget cut.
4. Attrition and retirement incentives will not be available to meet further budget cuts. Other approaches will be required. Furloughs are not viewed as a good mechanism to deal with budget reductions by the Chancellor. If any furlough was ever to be imposed, it would be applied to all members of the AgCenter. Reductions in programs will likely be necessary. The Faculty Council will be involved in any deliberations concerning program cuts. In this eventuality, it may be necessary for the council to meet more than once per month.
5. A question was asked whether the Chancellor thought the AgCenter would ever regain its current size in terms of personnel. Dr. Richardson replied that he did not think it would. The size at which it will stabilize is uncertain at this time.
6. Another question inquired about the impact on the AgCenter of any re-structuring plans for higher education. There were complaints in the legislature that there was no comprehensive plan for re-structuring in higher education to deal with reduced budgets by increasing efficiency. The Tucker Commission was formed by the legislature to consider changes in higher education structure. The Chancellor stated he anticipated that program duplication, program performance, and program impact would be addressed again. Agricultural programs do not have as much duplication as some, such as engineering, as an example. Dr. Richardson was hopeful the AgCenter would fare relatively well in any discussions addressing re-structuring. AgCenter programs have demonstrated impact on important industries, and the AgCenter enjoys strong support for its programs.
7. A question was brought up concerning the future of the Annual Staff Conference. Dr. Richardson stated that this was under discussion. Any staff conference for this year will be shortened. It would be desirable for ACE groups to meet with perhaps some ceremony to recognize award winners. However, there is a possibility that no conference will be held during 2009.

**Information Technology Service Unit Advisory Unit Head  
Dr. Fred Piazza, Chief Information Officer and Ms. Sandy Fiser**

8. Dr. Piazza was asked to provide his opinion on the function and impact of the advisory committee. He stated that the committee met approximately twice a year and was very useful to the Information Technology Service Unit. Feedback and recommendations were provided by the committee on IT issues of concern. He suggested it might be possible to more effectively address specific issues with smaller groups. Discussion ensued on the amount of flexibility provided to advisory committees to form smaller groups or bring in additional expertise. Opinions were expressed that such flexibility existed, but no conclusions or decisions were made. Additional council discussion on this issue is warranted. An additional point was made that the advisory committees need to realize

that adoption and implementation of recommendations depends on the availability of funds. Frankie Gould, Director of LSU AgCenter Communications, requested that she be allowed to provide another view of the functionality of an advisory committee while the subject was being discussed. The advisory committee for Communications has not met for 2 years and has therefore, not provided useful input into the operation of the department. This information led to additional discussion about whether the advisory committee chair should be a member of the committee or the unit head and the mechanism for calling a meeting. The rotational requirements for advisory committee members may not be met for some committees. The council needs to petition the Directors and Unit Heads to appoint new members.

9. Dr. Piazza provided a handout addressing two questions posed by the council concerning website use statistics.

How many unique users does [www.lsuagcenter.com](http://www.lsuagcenter.com) experience per year?

Hits	Page Views	Visits	Unique Visitors
201,638,495	62,859,373	3,994,199	1,493,160

What were the ten most common topics these individuals utilize during FY2008-2009?

Rank	Section	Visits	Page views
1	our_offices	2,563,712	3,492,593
2	crops_livestock	1,019,263	1,384,621
3	lawn_garden	868,808	1,126,571
4	administration	672,277	9,495,557
5	family_home	619,791	830,171
6	4H	598,322	813,333
7	environment	382,548	512,182
8	food_health	279,854	378,718
9	money_business	108,351	149,859
10	community	73,422	104,510

The number of “Visits” is the number of computers or individuals accessing a site. The visits by on-campus computers are not included in the values presented. Some additional discussion took place concerning how a home page is designed

10. The AgCenter now has accounts for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The primary purpose is to make video information available to a different computer user group. There is a lot of discussion going on concerning how to institutionalize social networking websites. New, active computer users expect these sites to be utilized, but there are questions on how institutions should interact with social networks. Best use policies or guidelines are being developed. There are cases in which the AgCenter logo is being included in postings with negative content. Many users do not realize that information is permanently available once posted. Users need to separate personal and professional information. Separate personal and professional profiles are needed. The potential problems are most frequent for young users, so 4-H is going to have to deal with potential benefits and problems. Another potential concern is blogs. Care must be taken with the inclusion of political content with blogs.

11. Additional initiatives are underway to improve IT efficiency. Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephone service is being evaluated to reduce telephone (long distance) charges to provide additional telephone functionality in the field. A unified communications system is being developed. It will allow any phone to be used as a spoken PDA. It will be possible to hear audio conversions of email messages and transmit email messages verbally. Efforts to reduce the use of paper are continuing. There is a focus on budget information. A campus-wide GIS system is being put into place that can be used by anyone. Map data can be put into the system that can be viewed by the public. Examples are flood elevation maps, weather data, and the distribution of 4-H or research activities.

**Communications Service Unit Advisory Unit Head  
Frankie Gould, Director, LSU AgCenter Communications**

12. The AgCenter now has an e-commerce site, <https://store.lsuagcenter.com/>, offering selected items for purchase. A committee is being formed to determine what products to develop for sale through the site. A list of current products and sales statistics was provided. Currently, products are all publications. The most popular are focused on home gardens, horticulture, and landscaping. A policy for developing and pricing sales items will be submitted to the Faculty Council for approval. Money generated by sales will be used to cover the costs of re-printing publications and new product development. There will continue to be a lot of free information available. Twenty percent of the proceeds will be returned to the authors to facilitate further product development. It is possible that the e-commerce site might be utilized for other types of transactions, such as events or sample processing.

**Old Business**

None

**New Business**

None

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon on July 17, 2009

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey W. Hoy for Wayne M. Gauthier, Secretary