

LSU Agriculture Faculty Council Meeting-Minutes
9:30 AM, Friday February 17, 2023
Room 212, J. Efferson Hall



Call to Order

Current LSU Agricultural Faculty Council Chair, Dr. Rich Vlosky called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM.

Attendance *Proxies in parenthesis.

In-person

William Afton (Andre' Brock), Andre' Brock, Carol Friedland, Kenneth Gravois, Bei Guo (Nathan Lord), Stephen Harrison, Kerry Heafner (Sara Shields), Nathan Lord, Maddox Miller, Subramaniam Sathivel, Sara Shields, Cecilia Stevens (Rich Vlosky), Sun Joseph Chang, Rich Vlosky

Online

Chris Dunaway, Bruce Garner, Michael Mamp, Donnie Miller, Vinicius Moreira, Raj Singh, Kristin Stair, Evelyn Wats

Absent

Mark Schafer, Daniel Swale

Invited Guests

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

Mid-year research productivity related to grants update from Dr. Wade Baumgartner's office: The faculty are showing an extraordinary level of productivity and success. The number of submitted proposals year over year is up 22% while the volume of money requested is up 90%. Last year at this time, faculty had requested \$43 million in funding while this year is closer to \$84 million.

In terms of new awards processed in from July 1 to February 15 was \$17.7 million last year while this year is closer to \$35 million. There's a significant volume of scholarly work being conducted by faculty.

Working with Dr. Smith and Dr. Salassi, will continue to plan to get resources in place to offset the busy work for faculty so the they can focus on drafting science plans instead of administrative work associated with grant writing.

Dr. Subudhi with SPESS is the lead researcher of a \$10 million grant from the USDA for sustainable rice production. Dr. Subudhi was brought to the Board of Supervisors to announce the award and formally announced to the President and Board.

The Federal funding landscape for higher ed research is going towards larger awards with broader coalitions of research partnerships between institutions. We will make sure that faculty have the tools to collaborate on these kinds of projects.

The retention numbers for freshmen in College of Agriculture are up 4% over last year. We have one of the higher 4-year graduation rates in the University, 7.5% higher than University average. COA has increased graduation rates 9% over the last decade. Bringing more students and more diverse students than ever before to the COA.

Currently in the Farm bill phase of the Federal legislative process. Working with the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) to ensure upgrades to experiment stations. APLU group is working to get federal funding to improve infrastructure and plan to insert \$5 billion into Title 7 of the Research Facilities Act. The experiment station infrastructure issue is a nationwide issue.

Unit Head Performance Survey (UHPS) will need to come from the Dean's office instead of AFC due to legal concerns as the Dean's office is authorized as the reporting line authority. Dr. Lee is open to working with AFC to agree on a set of questions for a confidential survey to evaluate unit heads. Data would come back to Dean's office and Dr. Lee would plan to meet with each group of faculty members to share aggregate department evaluations.

Dr. Lee hopes to shed the culture of faculty fearing retribution in the LSU AgCenter. Hopes to promote a community of scholars with a high level of respect for each other in a healthy climate.

Department Head Updates: Experimental Statistics – Dr. Bin Li; Nutrition & Food Sciences – Dr. Georgianna Tuuri & Dr. Achyut Adhikari (Associate); SPESS – Dr. David Picha & Dr. Kiki Fontenot (Associate)

Dr. Lee is aware of issues associated with competitive new hire salaries, competitive salaries for existing faculty, and HR systemic issues that need to be addressed.

Dr. Tara Smith, Interim Executive Associate VP and Director for the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service

Dr. Smith is an Interim in her position and would like to commit 110% of her effort to this position. A personal goal is to bring back some of the integrity of Extension and extend a sense of belonging for Extension at all tiers in the organization.

Been in this position for a little over two months and has been traveling over the state to network with faculty, constituents, and commodity groups.

New structure of having Directors for Extension and Research is not a “new” structure to the LSU AgCenter but is for many faculty with shorter tenure. Program leader model was great for communication and goal is continue the communication to not end up on separate ends of the hallway. Plans to work together to make sure both Extension and Research missions move forward in concert.

Plans to visit each region at the end of March/early April with Drs. Lepley and Eubanks to update and listen to Extension faculty.

Working with and through IT to update the LSU AgCenter website to make Extension more visible to the constituents. Hoping to roll out an initial phase update on www.lsuagcenter.com on March 1, 2023. Most of the AgCenter’s outreach is electronic and more attention needs to be given to that via the LSU AgCenter website.

Plans to update the crop pest management guides and make Ag Summary improvements moving forward. The updates to the crop pest management guides will be a several year process and Dr. Smith hopes to fund a graduate student to work on this project.

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

New state law passed requiring ADA training requirement for supervisors. If we do all the right things for all the right reasons, we will find ourselves compliant.

Policy Statement (P.S.) 1 is the overarching policy statement about policy statements. The draft of the new P.S. 1 will be shared with AFC members to review prior to publication.

Plans to add descriptive heading to each Policy Statement with a responsible officer for each policy. Plans to categorize policy statements to make more accessible and searchable by faculty. Policy statements can be found at www.lsuagcenter.com/policies .

P.S. 48 : Graduate assistant stipend policy is being reviewed and HR is working to update this policy. Revising guidelines for graduate assistants pending budgetary concerns.

P.S. 42 : Promotion & Tenure policy needs to be updated and new draft will be shared with AFC members before publishing. P&T process will be clarified but not much change is expected.

There are LCES and LAES policies and HR is working to consolidate these policies. Work on all of these policy statements continue.

Major HR project is focused on onboarding and retention of AgCenter faculty. Revising orientation experience for new hires.

Search committee guidelines needs to be improved for the future. All positions regardless of status need to have trained committee members.

Dr. Mike Salassi, Interim Executive Associate VP and Director for the La. Agricultural Experiment Station

One goal is to update the front page of the LSU AgCenter website to highlight research tab at the top of the webpage. Meggan Franks is working on the front pages of research and extension webpages. On the website, would like to promote current research that faculty are performing and promote faculty awards and grants.

Hired two part time associate directors – Dr. Michael Stout (30% focus on research departments) and Dr. Kurt Guidry (30% focus on experiment stations).

Advertised position for coordinator of research support. Must provide faculty support in grant acquisition and is something we don't currently do. This position will be 100% faculty support and will seek research funding.

Look into the specialties of research stations with goals to be productive and have the greatest impact on the LSU AgCenter. Goal is to bring in money to fund research.

Bringing federal grants in is of top priority. FNA is the one pot of money that Dr. Salassi can use to assist faculty with necessary funding.

New positions and shift in responsibilities for some faculty members. Dr. Al Orgeron is now head of Sugar Research Station and Iberia Research Station. Process of drafting position for Dr. Orgeron's previous sugarcane extension position. There is currently an offer out for Animal Science research position at Hill Farm. New SPESS advertisement for statewide soil specialist to focus on specialty and agronomic crops. The position in SPESS to work with soil lab to improve recommendations.

Dr. Glen Gentry will work to get new leases of tractors for experiment stations. Trying to acquire combines for stations on federal monies. Currently lease 23 tractors at cost of \$170-180k for experiment stations at an average cost of \$7,800 per year.

Rice Board for 2023 will fund \$1.7 million in projects and Soybean Board will fund \$1.7 million. Sugarcane Board funds over \$1 million per year.

Federal government has outlawed the purchase of DJI drones. Currently cannot buy any new parts for drones but can still use. Working with Dr. Kurt Guidry to draft university-wide policy. IT is working to draft a list of approved suppliers for drones.

Invasive Species Institute will be developed through the Board of Regents to position us more competitively for grant dollars.

Cost to upgrade Experiment Stations nationwide is estimated at \$11 billion. There is a renewed push to add \$5 billion to the Farm Bill to allocate monies to experiment stations across the country.

Dr. Wade Baumgartner, J.D., Associate Vice President, Strategic Initiatives

Proposal numbers last year was 286 versus 348 submitted proposals this year. Proposals last year represented \$43 million versus \$82 million in requested funds. Last year, \$17.7 million on 291 awards, \$35.8 million on 357 awards this year. 20% increase in proposals and 20% increase in number of awards. This represents nearly 100% increase in awards. Overall research expenditures are approximately 2% lower or \$200,000 less.

Global Network is in middle of registration for the joint Food Symposium with MENDEL and University of Life Sciences, Warsaw. If you search for LSU AgCenter Global, it will bring you to further information on the symposium. Daily presentations are highlighted below:

Tuesday, March 21st – Food System and Supply Security

Wednesday, March 22nd – Innovation in Teaching; Small Operations with Big Footprints

Thursday, March 23rd – Student Presentation Session

Friday, March 24th – New Trends in Food Producing Disciplines; Food Systems and Human Nutrition

Nearly 400 registered members participated in last year's event. Registration is open to the general public and not restricted to university participants. The overall limit of hosted participants is 500 individuals.

Dr. Fred Piazza, Chief Information Officer, LSU AgCenter

Dr. Piazza was not able to participate in person. He submitted typed Update and Response to AFC Questions

Updates:

1. **CMS Development** – We are in the planning phase to upgrade our existing CMS to the newest version. We are continuing to work with SiteCore, our CMS vendor, to establish the new development environment on which the upgraded system will reside. This upgrade is not a simple task and will likely take up to a year to complete. Once done, we expect some stability issues to be corrected, as well as an easier user interface for employees to use to post and maintain web content.
2. **LSUAgCenter.com Restructure** - In addition to upgrading CMS, the new Directors of Research and Extension have indicated that they would like to begin restructuring sections of LSUAgCenter.com to better align with the institutional efforts of LAES and LCES. IT and Communications have been working with each of them to begin this process.

3. **AgCenter transition to a TEAMS phone system** – We are continuing to work with BR Campus to migrate existing telephone lines on campus to Microsoft Teams calling lines. We expect this migration to be completed by late summer. Each unit will be notified in advance of the migration. Training will be offered as needed.
4. **Intranet utility for internal customers** – A new intranet portal look and feel is on the wish list, but there is no timeline for completion.
5. **Security** – We are continuing to draft policies and procedures to bring the LSU AgCenter in compliance with LSU PM-36.
6. **Purchasing** – We have developed a list of common IT-related items that are pre-approved for AgCenter employees to purchase without additional IT approval. This list was ready to transfer to our website for faculty and staff to use. However, to comply with internal auditing procedures we were required to make a workflow process around this list that captures some use-case information. This has delayed the launch of the list by a few weeks. We should have this completed by the end of February if there are no further delays.

Questions/Responses:

1. *Is it still the case that AgCenter employees can't initiate a Zoom meeting but can participate in one?*

That is correct. The LSU AgCenter does not own an institutional license of Zoom. The AgCenter does own an institutional license for Microsoft Teams which provides the same basic functionality as Zoom. LSU AgCenter employees are prohibited from using the free version of Zoom to **host** meetings and events due to its lack of security and its lack of public records requirements as mandated by the State of Louisiana. However, LSU employees are allowed to use the free online version of Zoom **to attend meetings and events hosted by other institutions** that do have an institutional license of Zoom.

2. *Our understanding is that AgCenter devices are susceptible to infiltration via unsecured Wi-Fi. If yes, how are wi-fi connections at airports, doctors' offices, other universities, etc. to be handled?*

This is correct. The risk of an unprotected/insecure wireless connection is that any traffic that is not otherwise encrypted can be read by any malicious entity on that network, and if there are not sufficient other safeguards and a system is already vulnerable, then it could be compromised. Generally speaking, open/unsecured wireless should be avoided if possible. If there is no alternative, then making sure that your systems are up-to-date and ensuring that the local firewall is enabled and properly configured is a first step. Also, when using unsecured networks, it is advantageous to limit what you access to systems and services that have some level

of encryption (e.g. HTTPS for websites) and pay attention to any security warnings that may appear when trying to access systems and services, like those indicating that a connection is not secure or that a certificate does not match.

3. *How many instances of phishing or attempted entry into AgCenter IT systems monthly?*

In the last 30 days, the following threats have been identified:

- 127 emails with confirmed malicious payloads.
- 27,213 suspicious emails, of which over 3,000 were identified with high confidence as phishing
- On our cloud environment, 19,128 verified malicious sign-in attempts were blocked with another ~9,000 suspicious failed sign-ins
- There were another 20,000+ sign-in events "of interest/concern"
- While I don't have stats on the LSU A&M perimeter, I do have stats on our firewall hosted at the State of Louisiana Information Services Building which services our off-campus locations. This firewall detected approximately 562,000 suspicious connections/session attempts.

Organizational Matters

1. AFC Website: <https://faculty.lsu.edu/ag-faculty-council/index.php>
 - Contains archives of: Meeting agendas, Meeting notes Meeting documents.
 - Let Rich know of any pertinent information that should be displayed on the council website.**
 - Share website with constituents!!
2. **Council Members: Duties, Expectations, and Responsibilities.**
 - a. In past years, a considerable amount of membership has not shown up to meetings causing official quorum issues. **We made a commitment-Attend!**
 - b. *All members represent certain ranks on and off campus.* All colleagues within the same rank and designation are your constituents. Talk, gather ideas, bring forth their concerns to AFC meetings.
 - c. Please attend meetings either in-person or online. If you are completely out-of-pocket then have another member be a **proxy**.
3. **Alternate Needed** April 21, 2023 Council of Faculty Advisors & Board of Supervisors meetings at LSUA in Alexandria. Will need an AFC representative at this meeting.

Old Business

- Motion to accept the minutes from the January 2023 LSU AFC meeting was made by Stephen Harrison and seconded by Kenneth Gravois. All voted in favor.
- Carol Friedland was inadvertently left off of the emailed list for AFC updates and minutes/agenda.

Reports

Discussion Items

- VP/Dean Search Update (Rich Vlosky)
 - Met via Zoom on Monday and Tuesday, February 13th-14th to interview potential candidates.
 - Categorized potential candidates and those that made the cut are being cross referenced.
 - On March 3rd, there will be a meeting to review the candidates and references. Decisions will be made to bring a certain number of candidates to campus for in-person interviews in the near future.

New Business

Upcoming meeting dates for LSU AFC Meetings in 2023:

March 17, April 21, May 26 (date change due to commencement), June 16, July 21, August 18, September 15, October 20, November 17, and December 18 (to coincide with Annual Conference), 8:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m. for current and new members.

Adjourn

Stephen Harrison made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:07 PM. Andre' Brock seconded the motion. All voted in favor.