

LSU Agriculture Faculty Council Meeting-Meeting Minutes

9:30 AM, Friday, August 23, 2024

Room 212, J. Efferson Hall



Call to Order 9:31am

Attendance

In-person Kayanush (Kai) Arayana, Sun Joe Chang, Chris Dunaway, Carol Friedland, Becky Gautreaux, Kenneth Gravois, Stephen Harrison, Kevin McCarter, Maddox Miller, Richie Roberts, Mark Schafer, Rich Vlosky, Brett Wolfe

Online Cecilia Stevens, Dennis Burns, Claudia Husseneder, Brittney Newsome, Vinicius Moreira, Evelyn Watts

Absent Bruce Garner, Kerry Heafner, Michael Mamp, Sara Shields, Raj Singh

Invited Guests

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

1. Updates

For the last two years, faculty have been awarded \$92 million in grants. The state budget was zeroed out. The state did not allocate money to provide raises to the AgCenter. Therefore, the decision was made to find money for raises within the existing budget to recognize everyone's effort through merit-based process. Students are back on campus. This is the largest class in the last decade with 481 freshmen whereas the past number was 464. This year's enrollment is robust. There was an Open House at the Hill Farm for students with 226 students attending. Departments provided information tables, plant giveaways, petting goats, and other activities. Faculty did great and captivated students well creating a great sense of engaged community. Les Voyagers have been in training all week recruiting students. All of the deans met with the Provost and voiced their needs for more faculty to cope with the increased number of students. Les Voyagers won a national competition. LSU took home the national quiz bowl championship.

2. Stakeholder Questions (See page 6-8 for questions and answers)

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

1. Award nominations will go out within the month. The ceremony will be around mid-December and not at Extension Summit.

2. PS-56 is a one-time hold harmless policy that provides a framework and direction to staff and volunteers engaged in volunteerism within the educational extension and research programs conducted by the LSU Agricultural Center through the La. Cooperative Extension Service, the La. Agricultural Experiments Stations, and other entities of the agricultural enterprise. There will be an Ad-Hoc committee to review this.
3. Grad students troubled about enrolling should call the Bursar Office and send Ashley their names.
4. Human Resources is now conducting (30min – 1hour) monthly meetings with hiring managers. They answer questions about laptops and welcome signs. They invited 16 people and eight showed up. The meetings are for managers whose positions have recently closed and an individual was hired.

Dr. Mike Salassi, Exec. Assoc. Vice President & Director LAES Administration

1. Updates (See page 9-11)

Dr. Tara Smith, Exec. Assoc. Vice President & Director LCES

Executive Leadership Updates

1. Louisiana Future Farmers of America (FFA) is now fully under the administrative structure of the LSU AgCenter, Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service. Our youth development programs include both 4-Hand FFA.
2. With the retirement of Dr. Toby Lepley, we have an active search ongoing for an LCES Associate Director of Youth Development (4-H and FFA).
3. We have an active search underway for an Executive Director of Louisiana FFA.
4. We recently filled a Program Development and Evaluation Specialist position with an overall goal of stratifying our organizational and development unit to support our extension faculty. Ms. Olivia Phelps is our new program development specialist.
5. Interviews are planned for the Weed Science Specialist (specialty crops) at Hammond Research Station
6. Interviews are planned for the Community and Economic Development statewide position
7. The Vegetable Specialist position will be readvertised soon.
8. The Consumer Horticulture Position will be advertised soon.
9. The Wildlife Specialist will advertise this fall.
10. The Extension Internship Program wrapped up on August 8th with a symposium featuring the projects that the 19 interns participated in. The program achieved great success in its second year, and we are optimistic that participants will be interested in extension as a career choice.

LCES Impacts

1. Educational Contacts Reach – 1,209,499 for FY 24, which has increased by over 1/4 of a million over the last 2 years (up from 1,030,000 in FY 23 and 927,000 in FY 22)

2. Electronic Contact Reach – 44 million+ and increasing (up from 43 million)
3. Annual Educational Activities – 20,907 (up from 19K in FY23)
4. Approximately 120,000 youth participating in 4-H and FFA across Louisiana by the end of the program year (increased from 107,000 in FY23)
5. 4-H programs are far-reaching and active across 2,120 schools and community locations.
6. An estimated 11,000 Louisiana citizens serving as volunteers in specialized programs like Master Gardener, Master Farmer, Master Horseman, Master Cattleman, Master Goat Manager, and Master 4-H Volunteer Leader.
7. Of the approximately 9,000 Louisianans that have participated in AgCenter nutrition programs, 75% have adopted healthier eating habits and two-thirds are becoming more physically active.
8. Healthy community programs have reached 170 healthy community coalitions and have established 994 health community partnerships across Louisiana.

4-H / FFA Youth Development

1. The Louisiana 4-H Shooting Sports Team are once again reigning national champions after defeating competitors from across the United States.
2. The team has placed first in four out of the past five national competitions, including 2019, 2021 and 2023, with a second-place finish in 2022 and the 2020 event being canceled due to COVID restrictions.
3. 4-H University hosted more than 1,300 4-H members. This was the largest and most successful 4-H University since the pandemic.
4. 4-H Camp season has gone very well this year. We hosted over 3,000 campers in the 10 weeks of summer camp. We are in the process of going through our accreditation process this summer with the American Camping Association (ACA) which are standards focused on health, safety, and risk management, and are used as benchmarks by government entities. ACA accreditation provides public evidence of a camp's commitment to the well-being of campers and staff.
5. Camp Grant Walker was recently unanimously granted permission by the State Historical Register Committee to be considered as a National Historical Site. Now the application will move to Washington DC and the US Park Service for approval.
6. Over 1,300 FFA members participated in the LA FFA convention. Additional several FFA members participated in National FFA conference and several camps throughout the summer.
7. Louisiana 4-H has announced an International Travel opportunity to Ireland in 2025. We have had a great response thus far with over 900 participants engaging in informational meetings thus far.
 - ANR Extension roundtable meetings have been scheduled with all disciplines and have taken place or will take place this fall.
 - Several field days are planned for the fall.
 - The NCH state conference is taking place August 26th-29th, 2024.

Dr. Fred Piazza, Chief Information Officer

1. **Assistant Director for IT Support:** AgCenter IT has promoted Michael Turley to be the new Assistant Director for IT Support following Davis Dautreuil's retirement. Michael now leads the on-campus help desk staff as well as the efforts of our field service technicians.
2. **PC Refresh:**
AgCenter IT is continuing to distribute a new round of PC replacements for faculty and staff who have aging primary use computers with standard computing needs. Distribution of these new computers is expected to be completed by mid-Fall.

***Question: The council questioned who is receiving the computers and who is paying for them.*

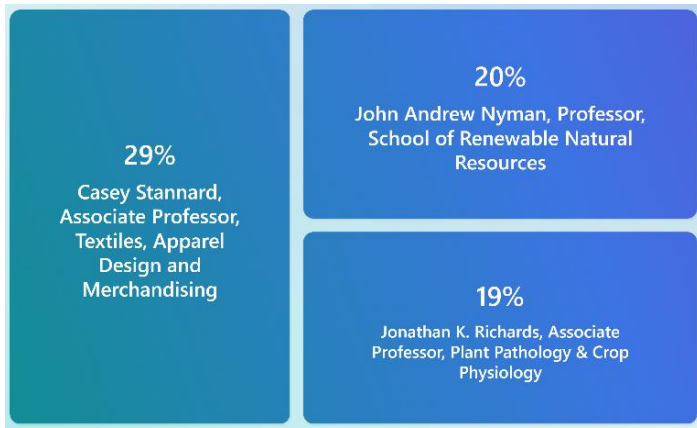
3. **AgTelecom (Teams phone services) for Campus:**
The Teams phone migration for campus-based employees has been completed.
4. **Free MS Copilot AI (web version):**
A number of faculty and staff members have asked about purchasing generative AI services such as ChatGPT. We are pleased to announce that Microsoft has given us free web-based access to their "Copilot" generative AI product. Copilot is based on ChatGPT and has similar functionality to the paid subscription services offered by ChatGPT.

In addition, Copilot is more secure, has more privacy features, and can also generate images. It is a strategic tool that leverages the power of generative AI to help complete tasks at machine speed and scale, including drafting emails, creating formulas for Excel spreadsheets, creating images for newsletters, and analyzing data for complex reports.

To use it, open your web browser and go to copilot.microsoft.com. Be sure to log in with your LSU AgCenter email address and password.

Old Business

1. LSU Faculty Senate Election-College of Agriculture (2024-2026 Term) Results. (Top 3) Received 25% response the first time it went out, and 50% for the second time. Casey Stannard is replacing Lisa Fultz.



New Business

LSU Agriculture Faculty Council election process (2025-2027 Term) is underway. (Rich Vlosky & Carol Friedland)

2024 Meeting Dates

~~January 19~~
~~February 16~~
~~March 22~~
~~April 19~~
~~May 10~~

~~June 14~~
~~July 19~~
 August 23
 September 13
 October 18

November 15
 December 13 (Current
 and New Members)

Adjourn

Kai Arayana motioned to adjourn the meeting. Maddox Miller seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 11:32am.

Questions/Issues Posed to Administration
LSU Agricultural Faculty Council, LSU AgCenter/College of Agriculture Meeting
August 23, 2024

(Minutes/Responses will be recorded by question/issue number)

1. Most faculty member communications to the Council dealt with a feeling of complete marginalization and anger regarding the fact that FACULTY/STAFF TUITION AND FEE REDUCTION FOR LSU COURSES does not apply to AgCenter employees. A suggestion was posed to “run this up the chain of command to President Tate.”

2.

You have to be a >50% A&M employee to have this benefit. We will look at the new PM-12 to see the wording. We will share more information when we receive the new document.

3. At June meeting, Dr. Lee said to not worry about the announced \$250 million cut to higher education in Louisiana. Should we be worried now?

We shouldn't. We have no new information on this.

4. Are all campuses across the state experiencing enrollment increases? How quickly does the BoR respond to those increases? The BoR has a formula for funding higher education institutions. I was curious as to how quickly they respond to enrollment changes and how the formula works in general.

LSUS & LSUA have an increase due to online programming. We are not sure about the UL system. The funding formula does not help the AgCenter.

5. There is often a long time between when an employee leaves or expresses their intent to leave, and when a position is advertised and filled. It has been noted by some faculty that the lag time can take several months. Is there a way to expedite this process and is there a rule in place that does not allow the advertisement of a position while filled with a retiring or exiting employee?

Back filing decisions are made by hiring managers. We have to ask the question each time if we want to keep this expertise or re-write the program or have a new expertise in this area. Department leaders should make these decisions based on faculty input. Some department heads take in faculty input and not others. Dr. Lee will look into this.

6. Is there currently a hiring freeze in place and is there a reason why certain positions can be posted while others are waiting for approval after a vacancy?

There is not a hiring freeze. Grant funded positions were green lighted 2 weeks ago. State agent positions are now starting to roll out based on priority. For teaching appointments, FTEs are rare. Most are split

with either or all three of teaching, extension, and research. Some teachers are teaching full loads with a low percentage of teaching and vice versa.

7. A Council member received questions from stakeholders regarding the Parish office's 20% requirement for local support and rebate account monies. Evidently, it is an issue.

Multiple organizations get together to pay. Some parishes provide minimal salary support, and some pay full positions. Rebate accounts are when they are paying extra. Accounting is going through a thorough process on where all of the monies are.

8. Faculty would benefit from additional clarity on travel policies related to China or other "adversarial" nations.
9. What happens to exit interviews? Who sees them? What should program coordinators do with them?

Extension exit interviews are filed in a database after the results are considered. If changes could be made, they will be.

10. Any updates on AgCenter international program structure, activities, and opportunities for faculty members?

There is no new update. We are heavily engaged in signing 3 new partnerships recently. Dr. Salassi met with one from Brazil and one from Poland.

11. From June 2024 Meeting: Are there any temporary near or on-campus accommodations for visiting scientists or short-term internship students coming from abroad? Most of them have minimum funding but not enough to afford a hotel stay. Many universities have designated housing accommodations for such situations. Doctor Lee does not think there is anything set aside. International programs used to have rooms. Burden's "Pink House" is getting renovated, and the plan is to make it available for short-term visiting scholars. Dr. Lee is looking into this.

For the Pink House, it is not ready to donate. No new news there.

12. Problems continue with Moodle and ITS on campus to relieve issues for faculty and students. Grading aspect of Moodle is slowing all procedures down. These are barriers to teaching productivity.

We are in touch with Craig Wooley in ITS and AgCenter faculty on campus. They are ironing out final issues right now. Ideally it should happen by Monday (August 26) when school starts. Slate, Elements,

Zoom, and Box are all difficult for AgCenter users. One Faculty Council member suggested a Faculty Advisory for Moodle issues. Dr. Lee agrees that there should be an ALC for this.

13. Flex Time-Any policy changes to accommodate AgCenter faculty? (From March 2024)

University of Alabama	Flexible Work Arrangements – Human Resources The University of Alabama (ua.edu)
Virginia Tech	Flexible Work Options: Telework and Alternate Scheduling Human Resources Virginia Tech (vt.edu)
Purdue	flexworkFAQ.pdf (purdue.edu)
LSU	ps 79.pdf (lsu.edu)
Missouri Western State University	Microsoft Word - Overtime, Flex Time, Comp Time Policy.docx (missouriwestern.edu)
University of Arkansas	pmgs-08-3.pdf (uada.edu)
University of Oregon	Flexible Work Arrangements Guidance and Procedures Human Resources (uoregon.edu)
NC State	REG 05.55.10 Flexible Work Arrangements – Policies, Regulations & Rules (ncsu.edu)
compilation	faq-cuwfa.flextime-jan 2012.pdf

Specific to Extension

North Dakota State	FlexTimePersonalSustainability.pdf (ndsu.edu)
Ohio State	Flexible Work Arrangements: Integrating Work and Personal Lives OSU Extension
University of California	352381.pdf (ucanr.edu)

Articles

Vermont Article	HR-MINUTE - the unfolding hybrid work model March 2021.pdf (uvm.edu)
Florida Article	HR016/HR016: The Role of Monetary and Nonmonetary Incentives in the Workplace as Influenced by Career Stage (ufl.edu)

14. **** (Additional Question):** Research Associates are employees and should be eligible for merit raises. Who will decide these raise percentages and where will funds come from?

LSU AgCenter Faculty Council Meeting
August 23, 2024 – LAES Update

- **Legislative Equipment Funds:**
 - Research station funds received from the legislature last year have been mostly expended. Funds were received this year (~\$4 million) for departmental equipment. We will work over the next few months to identify the best use of those funds.

- **LAES Faculty Hires/Start Dates:**
 - Dr. Saulo Castro – Soybean/Sugarcane Agronomist, Dean Lee, start September 2024
 - Entomology Precision Ag – Dr. Ivan Grijalva – starts January 2025
 - SPESS Precision Ag – Dr. Peng Fu – starts September 2024

- **FY24 Community Project Funding from Congresswoman Letlow:**
 - *Ag Conservation through Precision and Digital Ag Technologies*
 - Selected for funding at \$1 million – working to finalize proposal through NRCS
 - Dr. Vinit Sehgal (SPESS) plus others are developing proposal
 - Climate and digital ag network – enhancement of existing/new weather sites
 - 3 Focus Areas: soil hydrology, precision irrigation, precision weed management.

- **ConnectLA Program** – La. Office of Broadband Development & Connectivity
 - BEAD – Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (federal program)
 - NTIA – National Telecommunications & Information Admin.
 - \$1.356 billion will go towards broadband efforts in Louisiana
 - ~\$700 - \$800 million – broadband deployment
 - Remainder – broadband non-deployment
 - LSU AgCenter proposal – *Digital Ag Decision Support* (potentially several million dollars)
 - Use of field-scale digital sensors to support real time farming decisions; Interconnected networks to feed digital weather, crop and soil data to central location for analysis; real time stakeholder engagement via web portal for small/medium sized farms

- **Major Faculty Grant Award Highlights:**
 - Dr. Rodrigo Diaz (Entomology) received \$778,745 award from USDA-APHIS
 - Roseau Cane Die-Back: Restoration Plots at the Mississippi River Delta

 - Dr. Qian Sun (Entomology) received a \$613,556 award from NSF
 - Mechanisms of Acclimation for Desiccation Resistance in Subterranean Termites

 - Dr. Jeb Fields (Hammond) received a \$3,996,384 award from USDA NIFA Specialty Crops Research Initiative (SCRI) - *Beyond Peat: Substrate Security for a Changing Climate*
 - Dr. Fields proposal was ranked #1 in the country in the SCRI program.
 - This is the first big SCRI award we have received since 2009.

- Dr. Jong Ham (PPCP) received a \$921,994 award from NSF Collaborative Research
 - Use of microbial agents as seed treatments to induce climatic stress protection in soybeans
- Dr. James Villegas (Dean Lee) received a \$281,116 award from USDA NIFA (CPPM)
 - IPM Extension Implementation Program for Louisiana
- Dr. Terrence Tiersch (RNR) received a \$306,292 award from USDA-NIFA
 - Safeguarding Genetic Resources of Louisiana Crawfish Industry
- Dr. Carol Friedland (BAE) received a \$1,499,722 award from NSF
 - Climate Informed Flood Risk Mitigation
- Dr. M.P. Hays (SPESS) – NIFA Equipment Grant – First ever award for LSU AgCenter
 - \$121,181 – optical spectrometer - *Characterizing Louisiana Agriculture by Innovative Fluorescent Fingerprinting of Dissolved Organic Matter*
- **Grant Award Comparison – last month:**
 - July 2023 - \$9.88 million proposals, \$4.68 million awards
 - July 2024 - \$13.72 million proposals, \$6.74 million awards
- **Grant Award Comparison – last fiscal year:**

	FY23	FY24
Proposal Amount	\$136,559,233	\$117,164,296
Award Amount	\$46,135,191	\$40,167,879
- **Post Docs:**
 - Effective 7/1/24, two-year post docs with 14% fringe rate allowed.
 - LSU System Postdoc Improvement Committee – working towards AAU status
 - Increasing post-doc numbers and training/development opportunities
- **Renewal of Multistate Groups:**
 - Most regional multistate research/extension groups have 5-year project term
 - For groups being renewed, members will need to go into NIMSS and rejoin
- **LSU AgCenter Events:**
 - Aug. 29 – Sweet Potato Field Day, Sweet Potato Research Station, Chase [75 years]
 - Sept. 10 – Dean Lee Soybean Production School
 - Sept. 12 – Dean Lee Beef & Forage Field Day, Dean Lee Research Station, Alexandria
 - Sept. 19 – Northeast Beef & Forage Field Day, Goldmine Plantation, Richland Parish

- **Commodity Boards:**

- Rice RFP out – proposals due 9/6/24, core and special (1-3 yrs) projects; meeting 10/29
- Soybeans RFP out – proposals due 10/18/24; meeting 11/20-11/22
- Cotton RFP out in Sept ; meeting 11/5