

LSU Agriculture Faculty Council Meeting Minutes

9:00 AM, Monday, December 15, 2025

LaHouse Research & Education Center, 3622 Gourrier Ave, Baton Rouge, LA 70820



**Call to Order**

The chair called the meeting to order at 9:09 AM

**Attendance**

*In-person*

William Afton, Chris Dunaway, Carol Friedland, Becky Gautreaux, Kevin McCarter, Donnie Miller, Maddox Miller, Vinicius Moreira, and Mark Shafer.

*Online*

Claudia Husseneder, Greg Lutz, Brittney Newsome, Richard Vlosky, and Brett Wolfe.

*Absent*

Giovanna Aita, Kayanush Aryana, Michael Burnett, Jennifer Duhon, Bruce Garner, Michael Mamp, Jha Prashant, and Sara Shields.

14 members were present; Quorum met.

A. Introduction of all council members

The Chair asked everyone to introduce themselves around the room. Several new 2026 Council members were in attendance. Our new council members for 2026 include:

Eric DeBoer, Assistant Professor, School of Plant, Environmental, and Soil Sciences

Randall Mallett, Natchitoches & Red River Parishes

Erika Derma, Bossier Parish

Maddox Miller, Lafayette Parish/Master Gardener Coordinator

Chester "Tripp" Morgan, Union Parish

Carol Friedland, Biological & Agricultural Engineering

Chuanlan Liu, Textiles, Apparel Design, and Merch.

Vinicius Moreira, Animal Sciences

Jessica Richard, Ag Economics & Agribusiness

B. Remarks and Items from Dr. Matt Lee, Vice President of Agriculture/Dean, College of Agriculture – invited

Dr. Lee started his presentation with thanking AgCenter administration team for keeping the organization moving forward while he served as interim LSU president. He thanked the 2025 LSU Ag Faculty Council members and the new 2026 members for participating in the council. He

also thanked everyone for coming out and participating in the 2025 Louisiana Land Grant Extension Summit.

LSU AgCenter Communications has developed collateral material for the strategic plan. All faculty should read the plan to see where they fit it. The strategic plan document is meant to be revisited at times to remind faculty how their work relates to the overall organizational goals.

The LSU College of Agriculture (CoA) continues to attract new students. It has seen an 8.4% increase in undergrad admissions and a 9.4% increase in undergrad graduations. Dr. Lee interacts with CoA graduates during his day-to-day schedule. He enjoys hearing of their successes. Engineering and Sciences get a lot of the spotlight, but he is meeting many agriculture graduates who are doing amazing things. One of the keys to success within CoA is providing scholarships. When Dr. Lee came into his current role, CoA administered \$250-\$275K in scholarship funds. LSU CoA administered \$560K in scholarships this past year. Currently, there are 1,700 undergrads enrolled in CoA and Dr. Lee would like to see that number increase to 2,000 in the future.

Financial support.

Money must come in to pay for everything. There have been a couple university presidents who have resigned due to poor money management. Dr. Lee focuses on financial management because to get better and be more impactful, you have to watch the money. Endowments are some of the major sources of money. The LSU AgCenter and CoA both have endowments. When Dr. Lee started the combined endowments of both organizations was around \$36M. Currently, those endowments total \$49M. Dr Lee has a 5-year goal of \$100M. This takes time but we must stay on top of it.

Both bathhouses at Camp Grant Walker will be renovated with donor funds, possibly next year. Money was found to renovate the aquaculture station. Dr. Lee is currently looking for ideas and ways to improve infrastructure at the local and regional level. Faculty should keep administration aware of any suggestions to improve infrastructure and facilities in their regions and parishes. The Red River Research Station is conducting a fundraiser to renovate and update the iconic red barn. Working with donors takes time. Being consistent and following up are helpful skills in the eventual collection of those funds.

The current NIFA Director, Dr. Jaye L. Hamby, is in town for the Extension Summit today and Dr. Lee will have meetings with him to discuss funding opportunities. The USDA isn't open for grants at this time and that is not working. Dr. Lee spoke to USDA Director, Brooke Rollins while he was interim LSU President and expressed concern or our producers if land grant universities don't get access to federal funds.

Policy changes.

Research faculty domiciled in a region get evaluated in the region. Regions are treated like departments. Faculty are evaluated by folks at the same academic level, not necessarily similar academic backgrounds. Dr. Lee would like to see an environment where faculty with a clear disciplinary alignment that aren't domiciled in an academic department are getting connection with an academic community within their discipline. This is a conversation that needs to be held.

A member commented to Dr. Lee about the recent reinvigoration of committee work being done within AFC and wanted to know if there was a way that AFC can give feedback earlier in the process. There have been two policy revisions, the grievance policy and the potential new F&A policy that the Policy Committee has undertaken. Feedback was provided but with very little time to work in before the estimated posting date. Is there a way to include AFC feedback earlier in the process?

Dr. Lee responded that when an idea or thought comes to mind he likes to write it down and then start passing it around as a draft. These aren't final drafts but rather a starting point for discussion. He will always answer any questions from the council, even if it's something that you don't want to hear, and if it's legally allowed. He wants a high level of feedback.

An online member participant commented that in previous annual conference events, faculty would be divided into disciplinary groups. Maybe these groups could be included in the promotion and tenure process?

Dr. Lee responded that he generally thinks that we have a weak annual review process because it's mostly conducted by one person. As an assistant professor in sociology department, you are evaluated by everyone at a higher rank in that department. As a leader, you want to see everyone succeed. Dr. Lee meets with visiting faculty as they go through the employment process. He tells them that they are here because we believe you have what it takes to be successful. It is on our part that we give you the tools needed for success and annual, robust feedback on promotion is needed for them to be successful. Dr. Lee is astounded at how many split votes he sees on promotion & tenure packets, and he suggests that we need to be more robust in the evaluation process to address that.

A member commented on the off-campus faculty promotion process about regional faculty potentially being voted on from someone of a different academic background. A good regional director should have a mentoring committee comprised of senior faculty within that discipline. On the back end of the promotion process, external reviewers within that discipline provide feedback on the promotion. Are you talking about adding another level of voting to the process?

Dr. Lee doesn't want to add anymore administrative layers to the process. He would consider it to be contemporaneous. When the regional committee meets to discuss the individual p&t packet at the 3 and 5 year level that there is coordination with an academic department. Not an effort allocation but some type of appointment. Plant Pathology and Entomology do this to some extent. These appointments should be part of those conversations.

Dr. Lee wanted to share his thoughts on the new suggested F&A return rate change, which goes for research and extension grants. Currently, we return 25% to the department and 25% to the primary investigator (PI). That yields an extraordinary inefficiency in the use of these funds. The organization is sitting on tens of millions of dollars in unexpended funds. This varies between people and departments. Regional balances are pretty low because regional directors take that money seriously and put it to work. Commodity boards don't pay F&A. Other universities are offering start up funds for new faculty that are 2-3 times what LSU AgCenter and CoA are offering. We have been doing a good job of getting funding from the legislature, with over \$17M in the last 3 years, but that can't be relied on every year. Dr. Lee is looking at different models like shared services and shared resources to be more efficient in the use of shared

instrumentation. The AgCenter and CoA have a lot of money that is not being put into play. Dr. Lee is proposing to roll back some of the money that we are returning. Instead of returning 50% to department and PI, he proposed sending 30% (15% to department and 15% to PI). It is not meant to be a disincentive, but rather a way to demonstrate that we are putting that money to use.

A member commented that the council received the new F&A proposal and were allowed to respond with feedback. There was also an ask to collect data on other universities F&A practices. How much leeway does the council have with respect to look at this? Can the council contact Andy Schade to learn how much is coming in? Are you open to other proposals, like on salary saving? Is it possible to increase our rate?

Dr. Lee responded that some of the work has already been done by our accounting staff. They provided a list of other university return rates. The LSU A&M campus returns 22.5% to the colleges. Of that 22.5%, deans take 7.5% to use for startup costs. The AgCenter uses other sources for start up costs. The 15% remainder for the colleges within A&M has different algorithms for returning those funds. Sometimes it's given to the department and that department with share with the PI. Overall, LSU A&M gives back 22.5% and the AgCenter currently gives back 50%. The federal government established F&A rates because it is cheaper for them to partner with a university who is providing facilities, equipment, and people to do the work versus building another federal lab.

A member commented that Nutrition and Community Health Agents don't have a foundation to raise money for programming. State office faculty write large grants and parish level agents receive smaller program grants from that money. If F&A rates are decreased then less money is available for those small program grants. If these other departments are sitting on excess money, is there another way to fix that instead of scaling back on the rest of us?

Dr. Lee responded that it's going to be on the AgCenter to provide those funds if they end up capturing more F&A money. Dr. Lee has been trying to get folks to spend more money. Folks are sitting on a lot of money because we have been through despairing times in the past. If we spend the money, Dr. Lee can then ask for more.

Another member asked if Dr. Lee has looked at telling individual units to spend their money. Dr. Lee responded yes and hears comments about saving for if something comes up. Some agree to spend but don't follow up with action. If you are paid to be a research faculty member, you are paid to get grants and publish articles. F&A funds should not be the incentive; the incentive is the job. Dr. Lee can understand how people might think of it that way, but he is very cautious about characterizing it in that way.

Dr. Lee ended his presentation by explaining the change in reporting line and official title after a discussion with President Rouse. The flagship will be composed of 5 institutions with 5 state appropriate budget lines. Those institutions are A&M, Pennington, both medical schools, and the LSU AgCenter. He directly asked Dr Rouse if the LSU AgCenter will lose their state appropriations or have them taken away to fund other institutions and Dr Rouse responded that nothing is going to change.

Due to time constraints, the chair quickly wrapped up the meeting by briefly explaining the council's committee structure and asked them to think about joining one at the January meeting.

- C. Approval of Minutes
- D. Guest Presentations – none
- E. Chair's Report
- F. Committee Reports and Overview of Committees – written report from each committee for inclusion in the minutes, brief summary from each committee
  - Executive Committee
  - Bylaws Committee
  - Policies Committee
  - Strategic Plan Committee
  - Work Environment Committee
  - Elections Committee

Discussion of Committee Reports

- G. Other Agenda Items
- H. Introduction of New Business
  - a. AFC 2026 Officer Nominations and Elections – See Bylaws Article I.1.
    - i. Chair
    - ii. Vice Chair
    - iii. Recorder
    - iv. CoFA Representative – see [LSU PM-24](#)
  - b. Committee Selection by Council Members

**2025 Meeting Dates – 9:30am-12:00pm/Room 212 Efferson Hall or Teams**

Dates-Planned for 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of Each Month. Meeting Invitations Sent

<del>January 17</del>	<del>May 16</del>	<del>October 17</del>
<del>February 21</del>	<del>June 20</del>	<del>November 21</del>
<del>March 21</del>	<del>August 15</del>	<del>December 15 at LaHouse</del>
<del>April 25</del>	<del>September 19</del>	

**2026 Meeting Dates – 9:30am-12:00pm/Room 212 Efferson Hall or Teams**

January 16	April 17	July 17
February 20	May 22	August 21
March 20	June 19	September 18

October 16  
November 20

December TBA

**Adjourn**

Beckey Gautreaux made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kevin McCarter seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 10:02 AM.

