

LSU Agriculture Faculty Council Meeting Minutes

9:30 AM, Friday, June 20, 2025
Room 212, J. Efferson Hall



Call to Order

Carol Friedland called the meeting to order at 9:53 AM.

Due to technical issues the meeting was moved down the hall to Room 214, J. Efferson Hall.

Attendance

In-person

William Afton, Giovanna Aita, Kai Aryana, Carol Friedland, Becky Gautreaux, Kevin McCarter, Donnie Miller, Maddox Miller, Vinicius Moreira, and Jha Prashant

Online

Jennifer Duhon, Bruce Garner, Greg Lutz, Brittney Newsome, Jonathon Richards, and Brett Wolfe.

Absent

Michael Burnett, Chris Dunaway, Claudia Husseneder, Michael Mamp, Mark Schafer, Sara Shields, and Rich Vlosky.

16 members were present and 7 members were absent.

A. Remarks and Items from Dr. Michael Salassi, Interim Vice President of Agriculture/Dean, College of Agriculture

Dr. Salassi has met with Carol and discussed overall AFC and committee work prior to the meeting and he is in full support. He encourages AFC to update and reconcile issues with AFC bylaws.

The 2025 Spring Commencement was one of the larger classes as of late with 243 Bachelor's of Science degrees awarded, with an overall total of 281 degrees awarded. Summer commencement will take place mid-August.

Dr. Salassi got to speak at 4H University and the State FFA Convention. In the past year, there have been 139,000 participants and 45,000 active paid members in the 4H program. 1,500 4Hers participated in 4H University. There are about 13,000 members in the statewide FFA program. A St Tammany 4H Shooting Sports participant will represent the United States at the World Archery Championships in July.

From July 1, 2024 to May 31, 2025, the LSU AgCenter has received \$32.4M in grants. That is slightly lower than the previous year's total of \$35.5M.

Dr. Salassi participated in the Southern Region Mini Land Grant Meeting (Fayetteville, AR). Extension Directors and Experiment Station Directors were in attendance. A NIFA representative indicated that over the next couple of months they will release RFPs for grants. They will most likely start with 1-year awards first and then 2-year awards. She also suggested that there might be a quick turnaround (~30 days) when the RFPs are posted and subsequently due. Dr. Salassi suggest that faculty should start a rough draft proposal in anticipation of the quick turnaround.

President Trump submitted his budget to the U.S. Congress with some drastic cuts. Hatch dollars were zeroed out and a 30% cut to NIFA. The U.S. House of Representatives budget bill added back hatch funds at current levels and reduced the cut to NIFA. Congress is working to restore those funds, but Salassi thinks there will be cuts in the end. Snap Ed funding is a concern. Both U.S. House and Senate bills have cuts to Snap Ed in place at this time. The LSU AgCenter put in a request of \$5M to form a Mississippi River Invasive Species Consortium. The U.S. House bill currently has \$1M marked for this program.

The inflation Reduction Act of 2022 provided funds for expanding broadband internet. Monies were available to install cables and provide support services and activities that would enhance the use of broadband. In December 2024, Louisiana has their proposal approved that included a \$20M Precision Ag program that will install field sensors across the state. Actual funding has been delayed. The appointee that oversees the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) rescinded the funding approval. The proposal will be resubmitted at the appropriate time.

The Louisiana Board of Regents provide matching funds for professorships and chairs. They also provide grant programs that help fund departments and individual researchers, with the monies coming from the Louisiana Education Trust Fund.

Disciplines rotate and this year Agricultural, Social, and Biological Sciences will be included this year. A constitutional amendment was included on the March ballot to defund the Louisiana Education Trust Fund, and it failed. However, state legislature passed another bill to defund the trust fund, and it will go up for a vote next year. This may be the last year for funding so faculty are encouraged to apply.

LSU A&M recently told all colleges that budget will be cut by 2%. Two percent of the College of Agriculture's budget is roughly \$185k. The Office of the Dean is taking the biggest cut within CoA and the rest will come from salary savings or uncommitted funds.

The recent legislative session awarded the LSU AgCenter with one time money (\$2.5M) in HB1 to support Research and Extension, and that needs to be spent by June 30, 2026. Another \$2M in onetime funds from the supplemental bill. Some of these funds will be used to renovate labs on campus and similar projects. There was no increase in the re-occurring funds, which Salassi describes as a budget cut because operating cost increase every year. Position hirings may need to be slowed until we catch our breath. Funds were also awarded to complete the Dean Lee Research Station renovation project.

With regards to the Strategic Plan, Dr. Salassi noted that we aren't really changing our current direction. After meeting with consulting firm, the LSU AgCenter was the only campus that didn't make any changes to their current model. Dr. Salassi stated that there are two uses for the strategic plan. Internally, it helps the faculty and staff to see

what they are doing and how it supports the overall mission. Secondly, it is a way to advertise and promote our work to the public. The LSU AgCenter will identify and promote specific research and extension activities in news articles and social media posts to show out impact on the state. AFC can help by providing suggestions. The LSU and Southern University AgCenters will host an Extension Summit in December at LSU. Dr. Salassi asked the AFC council to help with session content so that the information will be beneficial to attendees.

Questions from membership.

Donnie Miller asked a question regarding the AFC Strategic Plan Committee. In the May 2025 AFC meeting, Dr. Matt Lee asked the committee to hold off until all regional strategic plan meetings were completed. Donnie asked Dr. Salassi for an update. Dr. Salassi responded that he will gladly meet with the committee even though the Northwest Region hasn't rescheduled their strategic plan meeting. The focus is to use the goals in the strategic plan to promote the LSU AgCenter. Capacity funds are taken for granted. One of the main benefits of capacity funds allows state experiment stations to research important problems in the state that NIFA doesn't hold in high priority. The strategic plan will help to promote these funds and educate both legislatures and voters and keep the LSU AgCenter relevant to funding opportunities.

Dr. Salassi other deans from LSU A&M met with International Programs to discuss a temporary hold on new international student visas. More information will follow.

Kai Aryana asked a question about what happens to current enhancements if the Louisiana Board of Regents cancels the education trust fund. Dr. Salassi responded that current year monies are in place for 1-year awards, but multi-year awards probably won't be funded.

Becky Gautreaux asked if there is a timeline on hiring the next LSU President. Dr. Salassi said that no timeline has been communicated through the LSU Board of Supervisors. Dr. Salassi guessed that it would take 8-12 months. There is an active discussion with the Board of Supervisors about splitting the LSU president position into two separate positions. The search will not begin until that discussion is complete.

Someone online asked a question about the state-wide hiring freeze and whether it has been lifted. Dr. Salassi responded that the hiring freeze should be lifted at the end of June and that he hasn't heard anything refuting that. Internally, the LSU AgCenter is going to slow down hirings as they adjust to the new budget. Only approved positions will be posted.

Out of the combined \$4.5M from HB1 and the supplemental bill, will any of that be available as seed grants for LSU AgCenter faculty? Dr. Salassi responded probably yes and no. The administrative team hasn't worked everything out yet. Some of it will go to equipment renovations. There is equipment money available for faculty. Make sure to make Dr. Salassi aware of any equipment needs.

Donnie Miller asked a question about Dr. Matt Lee moving to interim LSU President. What other administrative moves have been made to cover vacant positions in administration? Dr. Salassi responded that Kurt Guidry and Mike Stout were made into associate directors when Salassi was named as Experiment Director. They are going to help out more. Dr. Al Orgeron, current sugar station director, is going to assist Dr. Glen Gentry with extension administrative support in the Southeast Region.

B. Approval of Minutes

Kai Aryana made a motion to accept the May meeting minutes. Vinicius Moreira seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

C. Guest Presentations

Michael Brochu, PhD, Louisiana State University Ombuds (<https://www.lsu.edu/ombuds/index.php>) – Dr. Brochu will provide an overview of the Ombuds office.

Dr. Brochu delivered a personalized presentation at the LSU Ombuds office based off questions presented to him with the original request. A copy of that presentation is attached.

D. Chair's Report

The council continues to maintain momentum and Dr. Salassi is in support of all the committee work going on. It's a good sign that he is asking for AFC committees to get involved.

After hearing the presentation about the Ombuds Office, AFC should consider making a suggestion to include an Ombuds workshop with annual conference later this year. The Work Environment Committee should reach out to Frankie Gould to see about getting that on the agenda.

E. Committee Reports – written report from each committee for inclusion in the minutes, brief summary from each committee

- Executive Committee

The committee met on June 12 and discussed problems accessing teams, created a draft agenda, and started revising the past meeting meetings. The committee also discussed our council bylaws and policies with regard to a request for AFC to conduct Faculty Senate elections in the CoA by Dr. Salassi. AFC isn't a policy committee for CoA. Results from that discussion included a suggestion to create an elections committee to assist with this.

- Bylaws Committee

No major update at this time. A more substantive update is coming for the August meeting once members return from international travel. Online participants don't feel as engaged during membership meetings. Vinicius Moreira added that he appreciates the chair asking directly for their input throughout the meeting.

- Policies Committee (Jonathon Richards submitted by email)
The Policy Committee communicated via email regarding the LSU Faculty Senate elections. We reached out to Ashley Gautreaux about receiving contact information for all faculty with a CoA appointment as suggested by Rich Vlosky. She is currently on annual leave, but we expect to receive the list when she returns. Upon receiving the list, we will meet to discuss our approach for conducting the election and consult Rich Vlosky for advice.
- Strategic Plan Committee
The Strategic Plan committee has been in limbo waiting for all of the regional update meetings to take place. However, Dr. Salassi state din his earlier address that he is okay with meeting with the committee now. Donnie Miller will reach out to Dr. Salassi and set up a MS Teams meeting with Dr. Salassi.
- Work Environment Committee
The committee made the original suggestion of inviting the LSU Office of the Ombuds to present to AFC and thought it to be excellent. They will assist with reaching out to Frankie Gould to suggest including the Ombuds with he programs during Annual Conference.

F. Other Agenda Items

- a. Discussion about forming an Elections Committee to conduct elections for
 - i. Agricultural Faculty Council
 - ii. College of Agriculture Faculty Senate

Kevin McCarter asked membership if the council is supposed to change the bylaws at administration request. During discussion it was brought up that the current situation with LSU AgCenter and LSU CoA muddies the water within AFC. LSU AgCenter and LSU CoA are two separate campuses that share the same administrative complex. Within the faculty of both groups they are many with split appointments, but there are a considerable number of folks who are either 100% AgCenter or 100% CoA.

Kevin made a motion to create an elections committee to handle AFC and CoA elections. Kai Aryana seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

- b. Discussion about cancelling the July 18 scheduled meeting

Becky Gautreaux made a motion to cancel the July 18 AFC monthly membership meeting. Kevin McCarter seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

G. Introduction of New Business

Kevin McCarter reiterated a statement by Dr. Mike Salassi that the AFC is not a policy committee. Kevin suggested that we look at the AFC bylaws for scope and compare it to what was said. It would also be helpful to look at other college policy committees for a benchmark.

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

Dates-Planned for 3rd Friday of Each Month. Meeting Invitations Sent January 17

~~February 21~~

~~March 21~~

~~April 25~~

~~May 16~~

~~June 20~~

July 18

August 15

September 19

October 17

November 21

December 15 at LaHouse

Adjourn.

Maddox Miller made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kai Aryana seconded the motion. All voted in favor and motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 AM.