

LSU Agriculture Faculty Council Meeting Minutes
9:30 AM, Friday, November 21, 2025
Room 212, J. Efferson Hall



Call to Order

Kevin McCarter called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM

Attendance (16 members present)

In-person

William Afton, Giovanna Aita, Kayanush Aryana, Becky Gautreaux, Kevin McCarter, Donnie Miller, Maddox Miller, Vinicius Moreira, and Mark Schafer.

Online

Jennifer Duhon, Claudia Husseneder, Greg Lutz, Brittney Newsome, Jha Prashant, Jonathan Richards, and Richard Vlosky.

Absent

Michael Burnett, Chris Dunaway, Carol Friedland, Burce Garner, Michael Mamp, Sara Shields, and Brett Wolfe.

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

Dr. Matt Lee joined the AFC meeting directly after Kevin called the meeting to order.

Dr. Lee has been reacquainting himself with LSU AgCenter administration after returning to his position as Vice President of Agriculture. He is looking to meet with regional directors one on one next week to continue his reentry process.

Now that the strategic plan has been finalized, the next step is to figure out where we fit into it. Now we are looking at the departmental, regional, and research station levels to determine goals as they relate to the plan.

Administration has been planning for the next legislative session. The new LSU President and Chancellor need time to acclimate to their new roles before we learn how they want to approach the legislative session. As of now, everyone is hopefully expecting a flat budget. They are not predicting new money to be available. Exciting, interesting, and impactful projects that get the legislature's excitement could be entertained.

The University of New Orleans (UNO) is in financial disaster and was absorbed by the LSU system. The transition process has begun, and the state legislature has committed \$20M/yr for 4 years (\$80M total) to help dig them out of the hole. University of Louisiana at Lafayette (ULL) is also having financial issues. The University of Louisiana at Monroe's president stepped down

because of their financial situation. All of this competes with LSU for finances provided by legislature.

The state directive to change accreditors from SACSCOC to the new Commission for Public Higher Education (CPHE) is going to take some time. The latest update from CPHE looks to preserve the culture of shared governance seen in public higher education. If anything, LSU will need to be dual accredited by SACSCOC and CPHE. They are actively dismantling the Department of Education, which oversees regionally accrediting bodies like SACSCOC.

The Trump Administration rolled out their Compact for Excellence in American Higher Education. They asked an initial group of 9 higher education institutions to sign up. A couple smaller, more obscure schools have said they would sign on, but none of the big schools have agreed at this time. One of the requirements in this compact is to freeze tuition for 5 years.

Questions for Dr. Lee from membership

Are the 4 research campuses now one campus?

The board went through a hiring process for LSU System President. After the vetting process for candidates, the board came out and said that they were going to hire a President of the LSU System and a system level Executive Vice President/Chancellor for the flagship campus in Baton Rouge. Wade Rousse was selected as LSU President and James Dalton was selected as LSU System Executive Vice President and Chancellor of LSU BR. James Dalton will have some sort of oversight or authority over Pennington Biomedical, both LSU Health Science Centers, and the AgCenter, but Dr. Lee is not sure how this will work out because it is too early in the process. He is not sure that the authorities in the LSU Board of Supervisors bylaws, stating that the board has authority to structure the system as they see fit, are completely in sync with the current state constitution. The state constitution says that legislature has to approve mergers. The LSU Health Science Centers, Pennington, and AgCenter are legislatively distinct bodies.

What is the incentive for universities to sign on to the Trump administration's Compact for Excellence in American Higher Education?

The incentive is preferential access to federal funds, but that is a little ambiguous. One of the requirements in the compact is for universities to limit the number of international student admissions, which can be seen as a negative aspect to some universities.

How is the AgCenter doing in terms of research funding?

Dr. Lee gets monthly reports on research funding. The funding opportunities from USDA has been very limited. Dr. Lee spoke to the Secretary of Agriculture, Brooke Rollins, about this issue and the need for research universities to have access to these funds. Awards are way down at the moment. Andrew Schade thinks that this will turn around in the next few months. Expenditures are down a little bit, but we aren't too far off track. Dr. Lee is anticipating the NSF rankings, which are normally released by the end of November. He is not sure if they will be delayed because of the 43-day government shutdown.

B. Approval of Minutes

Becky Gautreaux made a motion to accept the October 17, 2025, AFC meeting minutes. Kai Aryana seconded the motion. All voted in favor and motion passed unanimously.

C. Guest Presentations – none

D. Chair’s Report

Carol Friedland was not in attendance, and no chair report was given.

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

- Executive Committee (Will Afton)

The Committee met on 11/6/25 via MS Teams. A draft agenda was created for the 11/11/25 meeting. The committee also started editing a draft of the meeting minutes from the 10/17/25 AFC meeting.

- Bylaws Committee (Mark Schafer)

Joanna Posada, Associate General Counsel, provided a written finding that states AFC is not a public body and not subject to open meeting laws. She advised us to revise AFC bylaws so that they don’t insinuate that we are. The committee is not ready to make a proposal but will be looking into it this month. They have identified the sections of AFC bylaws that could be revised, which is article 2 under meetings.

Last meeting was the first reading on the bylaw changes that state the bylaw committee will be a standing committee and AFC Vice Chair is the chair of the bylaw committee. There was also a first reading on the bylaw changes that add the election committee as a standing committee. These items will come to vote later in the meeting.

- Policies Committee (Jonathan Richards)

The Policies Committee did not meet this month.

- Strategic Plan Committee (Donnie Miller)

The Strategic Plan Committee will be dormant until Dr. Lee completes his reentry to LSU AgCenter Administration work.

- Work Environment Committee (Giovanna Aita)

The Work Environment Committee didn’t meet this month. The meeting with Dr. Salassi was put on hold because of the LSU President search and Matt Lee being a possible candidate.

A recent email from Matt Lee came out with a request to participate in a unit head evaluation survey. A council member made a comment that they feel like the work of the work environment committee is producing some results. However, there is some confusion about specific units and how they are listed in the drop-down menus. Dr. Lee selects who gets put on the list. Ashley Gautreaux will speak to Dr. Lee about this.

A council member expressed concern about not sharing the unit head evaluation with faculty. Another member responded that administrative changes have been made over the years, so the results of these unit head evaluations do have some consequences. Another member stated that Matt Lee has a history of following up on unit head evaluations prior to working with the AgCenter.

- Elections Committee
No report provided.

Discussion of Committee Reports

F. Other Agenda Items

a. AFC 2026 Elections

The LSU Ag Faculty Council (AFC) recently held elections for several open positions on the council. We would all like to congratulate our new council members for 2026!

1. On-campus assistant/instructor rank (1 position) – Eric DeBoer, Assistant Professor, School of Plant, Environmental, and Soil Sciences
2. Off-campus full rank (2 positions) – Randall Mallett (Natchitoches & Red River Parishes) will serve until December 2026. A special election will be held for a 3-year term due to low nominations. See Bylaws Section VIII.2.E.
3. Off-campus associate rank (2 positions) – Erika Derma (Bossier Parish) and Maddox Miller (Lafayette Parish/Master Gardener Coordinator)
4. Off-campus assistant rank (1 position) – Chester "Tripp" Morgan (Union Parish)

Newly elected department representatives starting in 2026 are:

Friedland, Carol	Biological & Agricultural Engineering
Liu, Chuanlan	Textiles, Apparel Design, and Merch.
Moreira, Vinicius	Animal Sciences
Richard, Jessica	Ag Economics & Agribusiness

Due to low nominations, an off-campus full rank position is being readvertised. Carol and Will worked with Tobie Blanchard (Communications Director) to get that email sent to all members of the organization. Tobie has permission to send correspondence to all faculty and staff of the organization.

b. PS-20 discussion and feedback to HR

Mark Schafer moved that the AFC council respond to Ashley Gautreaux's November 19 email expressing concern over PS-20. Specifically, the council has concerns about the Dec 1 posting date and would also like to hear the rationale on why council suggestions were not included. Donnie seconded the motion. There was discussion. Donnie then moved to amend the motion to include a request for the most recent draft of PS-20. Vinicius Morieria seconded the motion to amend. All voted in favor to amend and then we voted on the amended motion and it passed unanimously.

c. Bylaws changes discussion and vote – proposed Article X

The bylaw changes with respect to CoA Faculty Senate elections were voted on during the 10/17/25 AFC meeting and it passed unanimously. However, the bylaws committee recommended to wait on posting the revised document because of today's vote on additional bylaw changes.

Last meeting two bylaw changes were presented to the membership on adding two permanent (standing) committees to the AFC bylaw document. Kevin reread the changes that add the bylaws and election committees as standing committees and asked for a vote from members in attendance. All voted in favor and the changes were adopted by the council unanimously.

G. Introduction of New Business

A member brought attention to the LSU Faculty Senate email that recently came out approving the two new president positions and asked why they were able to create a new position without any prior notice. Another member responded that they were surprised at how the board found a way to do what they did. A new position was created with no notice and no advertisement which doesn't follow organization policy on new positions.

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~~

~~August 15~~

~~September 19~~

~~October 17~~

~~November 21~~

December 15 at LaHouse

Adjourn

Vinicius Moreira made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Donnie Miller Seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 11:06 AM.