

LSU Agricultural Faculty Council Meeting Minutes

9:30 AM, Friday, April 24, 2026

Room 212, J. Efferson Hall



Call to Order

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

Attendance

In-person

Kai Aryana, Eric DeBoer, Jha Prashant, Chuanlan Liu, Kevin McCarter, Donnie Miller, and Tripp Morgan.

Online

Giovanna Aita, Erika Derma, Carol Friedland, Claudia Husseneder, Greg Lutz, Vinicius Moreira, Jessica Richard, Jonathan Richards, Joe Willis, Brett Wolfe, and Rich Vlosky

Excused

William Afton, Michael Burnett, Jennifer Duhon, Becky Gautreaux, Randall Mallette, Maddox Miller, Brittney Newsome.

Absent

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

Dr. Lee invited Wade Baumgartner and Michelle Miller to the meeting to discuss an important topic. At yesterday's academic department head meeting, compliance issues involving USDA grants and Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Programs (MFTRP). The LSU AgCenter wants to propose that it be handled through a routing process that involves checking all kinds of boxes to identify compliance issues before being denied. The intent isn't to resolve anything, but to protect faculty. The LSU AgCenter doesn't want to be 18 months along in a grant and then a federal auditor says no.

Michelle Miller mentioned that for USDA grants, the recipient must certify that they aren't participating in a MFTRP. The USDA doesn't provide a list of countries, but information on the recipient is needed if any gift was provided by a foreign country. They want to know the intent of the gift. The intent could be unauthorized transfer of intellectual property, compensation from foreign countries, or career advancement opportunities.

However, making scholarly publications is an exception. Wade Baumgartner is the Export Control Officer. He wants questions about this to go directly to Office of Sponsored Programs. He wants to make sure that everyone is in compliance.

A council member asked a question to Wade: What if an unrestricted grant given from a company in the U.S. but it is either headquartered/funded/affiliated with a foreign country?

Wade responded that this crosses over into LSU PM 11 (Outside Employment) and Export Control and Compliance. It is state law to report foreign agreements. Countries listed in the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (H.R. 5515) and the U.S. State Department's Foreign Advisory list will require substantial certification by the recipient. LSU AgCenter believes this to be the best way to protect faculty. Faculty aren't prohibited from making scholarly presentations and advising foreign graduate students. This proposed certification is for USDA grants only (AFRI, NIFA). Retroactive certification is needed to know if the gift was provided by an MFTRP. What was the gift received for? What is the intent? If the faculty member accepted the gift, then we need to know who it was received from and why it was received. The Export control issue involves bringing a university laptop into a foreign country. It can be remotely turned off. This is a mechanism in place to protect faculty.

While attending LSU Day at capital, the Chancellor and Vice President of LSU were both very interested in the AgCenter and are delighted with what we are doing.

The LSU provost search is continuing. They are expected to bring in candidates the week after next. The end of the semester is approaching. LSU College of Agriculture (CoA) Commencement will take place on Friday May 15 at the Maddox Fieldhouse.

The LSU AgCenter is discussing how to restructure the budget for next year. Uniform hiring dates for faculty and staff were announced. Professorial ranks will be hired twice a year, and Agents will be hired three times a year. The challenge is hiring year-round is that there is no salary savings. Because we have been hiring on a rolling basis, we have no predictability with the AgCenter's budget. The last two raises were given out of pocket.

Matt Lee then spoke on the current legislative situation. LSU AgCenter is currently budgeted for \$2M in one-time funds with no new reoccurring funds. There is no new money for CoA. They are looking at a 3% budget cut which is around \$288K.

- B. Approval of Agenda
- C. Approval of Minutes – March meeting
- D. Guest Presentations

No guest presentation

E. Chair's Report

No Chair's report

F. Robert's Rules Briefing – Kevin McCarter

G. Committee Reports – each committee will provide a brief summary of their meeting and provide a written report for the minutes

- Executive Committee
Met about the agenda. Will Afton could not attend.

- Bylaws Committee

The committee met for 1 hour on April 15, 2026 at 2:00 PM and was attended by Kevin McCarter, Vinicius Moreira, Tripp Morgan. The topics of discussion involved terminology reflecting change in the head of the LSU AgCenter, attendance requirements and associated penalties, virtual attendance of AFC meetings, who can attend AFC meetings, and council term limits. The members became familiar with these issues, but no proposals were made. The committee anticipates that over the next several meetings, proposals will be brought to AFC for consideration.

- Policies Committee (Jonathan Richards)

The policies committee did not meet in April but will be scheduling a meeting for the beginning of May. We have identified an issue related to the processing of policy requests in a timely manner. Currently, the policies committee has a backlog of several policy drafts to review, but it has been difficult to enact a streamlined process to promptly solicit and summarize feedback. The main priority in our upcoming meeting will be to discuss alternative plans, such as forming ad hoc committees, to swiftly process these policy requests. The potential plans outlined at our upcoming meeting will be shared with the AFC at the May meeting for further discussion.

- Strategic Plan Committee (Donnie Miller)

On Wednesday March 25, 2026, at 3:00 p.m., the LSU Agricultural Faculty Council Strategic Planning Committee held an in-person meeting with LSU AgCenter Senior Vice Chancellor and Dean Matt Lee and Associate Vice President in the Office of the Vice President for Agriculture Hampton Grunewald to discuss the LSU AgCenter Strategic Plan. Committee members Chuanlan Liu, Greg Lutz, Prashant Jha, and Donnie Miller attended the meeting. Following are comments shared by Matt in regards strategic

planning discussions/efforts/plans within the LSU AgCenter and LSU College of Agriculture.

- Low undergraduate enrollment numbers exist in select majors and strategies are needed to attract more students
- Restructuring of undergraduate curriculum to attract more students
- Affiliation of off-campus faculty with units on campus within the LSU AgCenter based on area of expertise to facilitate promotion and tenure and increase collaborations
- Increased fund-raising efforts are needed by units through the LSU College of Agriculture Alumni Association and Friends, LSU Foundation, and industry partners
- The LSU AgCenter Strategic Plan supersedes any individual School/Department Strategic Plan
- The LSU AgCenter Strategic Plan will remain unchanged given the re-organization of research units, including the AgCenter, within the LSU Research Enterprise under the leadership of James Dalton. It was emphasized that the plan is well-established and designed to remain stable despite any uncertainties during the current leadership transition
- It was noted that the five dimensions of the LSU AgCenter Strategic Plan are not uniformly fixed across all units and can be customized, with differing weights assigned to each dimension depending on the needs of individual units within the LSU College of Agriculture and the LSU AgCenter.
- The best way the LSU Agricultural Faculty Council can contribute to the LSU AgCenter Strategic Plan is to convey to all faculty in the organization the need to realize individual program fits within the plan and maximize relevant evaluation metrics
- It is realized by administration that evaluation metrics are not equivalent across all programs given uniqueness and nature of each research/extension program and individuals will not be held to similar standards in regards evaluation metrics

The committee expressed appreciation to Matt and Hampton for the meeting, and both indicated a willingness to engage the Council more in specific proposals to increase the effectiveness of the organization.

- **Work Environment Committee**
The committee had a Teams meeting with Dr. Matt Lee and Ashley Gautreaux on April 8, 2026, from 3:00 – 3:30 pm.
Present at the meeting: Brittany Newsome, Becky Gautreaux and Kayanush Aryana.
The following 6 topics were discussed.

- Flex Time Policy – considerations, clarity, and consistency across units – An example given was getting child from school – to discuss with unit head.
- Work-from-Home Option – potential for a once-a-week remote work allowance – not an option for field agents, - Price of gas illuded to.
- Employee Resources – including EPA, FMLA, and other support tools – this information is already on web site.
- Communications Department – clarity and updates on AgCenter job postings and general organizational communications – Sent out by person with HR responsibilities from individual unit.
- Employee Retreats – interest in opportunities for staff engagement and professional development – to be determined by individual unit heat.
- Turnover and Retention – concerns related to staffing stability and strategies for improvement – raises are important.
- Elections Committee

The elections committee has not met since the last full body meeting on March 20th. One reason is because we have not heard from the Faculty Senate of how many seats Agriculture gets on that body. We need to know how many people are to be elected before we can run the election. We are otherwise working through eliminating ineligible names from the list we received from the college. We added a new member to the committee, Brett Wolfe.

- Hiring Policies Special Committee

On Friday April 10, 2026 at 11:15 a.m., the LSU Agricultural Faculty Council Subcommittee for the Proposed Professorial and Agent Hiring Timing Process held a TEAMS meeting with LSU AgCenter Assistant Vice President (AVP) for Human Resources, Ashley Gautreaux, to discuss the LSU AgCenter’s proposed Professorial and Agent hiring timing process being altered from the current official starting date for new hires being based on completion of the position search process to a specific calendar date interval process, regardless of timing of completion of the position search process. Subcommittee members Claudia Husseneder, Donnie Miller, and Rich Vlosky attended the TEAMS meeting. Subcommittee member Becky Gautreaux could not attend but did provide comments to AVP Gautreaux prior to the subcommittee meeting. Following are comments shared by AVP Gautreaux.

The proposed initiative was a decision made by the LSU AgCenter Executive team and not Human Resources. The initiative was shared with Unit Heads and Regional Directors in March 2026. Proposed hiring dates under the new

initiative are January 1 and August 1 for Professorial ranks and January 1, May 1, and August 1 for Agent ranks.

The proposed official start date for the initiative is July 1, 2026.

1. Benefits for the change were presented as salary savings within this fiscal year and allowing a cohort of new hires with uniform start dates to better navigate the onboarding process. It was mentioned that with the lengthy process associated with hires in the current system, restricting the number of hiring dates would not matter.
2. The proposed dates will align with other research campuses within the LSU system.
3. There will be a process whereby exemptions will be granted regarding adherence to the hiring dates. The exemption process was not known by AVP Gautreaux.
4. The initiative is not a policy; a policy number/statement has not been developed.

Subcommittee member meeting comments included a scenario where hiring processes for 4-H Extension Agents in the field that occur in early February, start of employment would not occur until May 1 when half of the school year has expired. If interviews happen toward the end of April, the candidate would not be hired until 4-H camp and 4-H University have been completed. These are two major AgCenter events that agents should attend.

This proposed policy also has the potential to deter candidates from accepting a Professorial or Agent position with the LSU AgCenter, given that the timing of position offer may occur several months prior to an official hire start date, placing the organization at a disadvantage when competing for viable candidates with multiple job opportunities with unrestricted hiring dates.

Likewise, if filling a job vacancy is delayed due to restricted hiring dates, work efficiency will be reduced due to increased workloads placed on current employees.

It was stated that salary savings were the main reason behind the proposed change, but it is unlikely that savings will be achieved without caps on hiring. It seems more practical to adjust hiring caps and priorities to annual budgets than artificially restricting the number of hiring dates to achieve salary savings.

Subcommittee members reached out to research and extension colleagues at many peer institutions including Texas Tech University, Texas A&M University, Mississippi State

University, University of Arkansas, University of Tennessee, University of Georgia, and North Carolina State University to gauge the hiring processes they use. All contacts indicated that their institutions do not have a similar process to the one being proposed. Positions are filled based on hire start dates at the completion of the search process and not specific calendar dates in a given year. AVP Gautreaux will convey subcommittee comments to Dr. Matt Lee, Senior Vice Chancellor & Dean, LSU AgCenter and LSU College of Agriculture. The subcommittee expressed appreciation to AVP Gautreaux for the meeting and sharing all pertinent information regarding the proposed change.

Discussion of Committee Reports

H. Other Agenda Items

- a. COFA Update – Kevin McCarter, Eric DeBoer
- b. Policy Committee Business

I. New Business

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

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

Adjourn

Donnie Miller made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Tripp Morgan seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:39 AM.