



Agricultural Research Stations Committee Meeting
Tuesday, October 27, 2020
1:00pm-2:30pm
Virtual meeting via Zoom

Attendees: Francisco Arriaga, Bill Barker, Julie Dawson, Phil Dunigan, Luiz Ferraretto, Claudio Gratton, Brian Luck, Mike Peters, Jamie Reichert, Doug Sabatke

Not present: Nancy Esser, Valentin Picasso Risso, Phillip Townsend

Minutes by: Erica Flyte

Attending as public meeting: None

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Brian Luck at 1:03 pm.

Welcome and introductions

Committee members introduced themselves. Luiz Ferraretto and Claudio Gratton were welcomed as new committee members. Amanda Gevens was thanked for her service as the prior committee chair.

Approval of April 29, 2020 meeting minutes (attachment)

Francisco Arriaga made a motion to approve the April 29, 2020 meeting minutes. Jamie Reichert seconded the motion. The motion was passed with five votes in favor, zero votes not in favor, and one vote abstaining.

Review of committee bylaws (attachments)

The committee reviewed prior versions of the bylaws and a proposed revised version. The proposed revised version contained minor semantic and formatting updates and five significant proposed revisions, which were described in detail:

- Prior version of bylaws: the committee is comprised of 8 faculty members, 2 academic staff members (at least one of whom is from an ARS), and 0 university staff members.
 - Suggested revision: committee membership is comprised of 7 faculty members, 2 academic staff members (at least one of whom is from an ARS), and 1 university staff member.
 - Discussion and feedback:
 - The primary reason for the desire to include a university staff member is inclusivity. There are many university staff members that contribute, and staff members need a voice.
 - This is a valuable addition. Staff members can provide valuable insight.
 - The committee agreed to the suggested revision as written.
- Prior version of bylaws: the committee chair can be a former one or two term committee member and can serve two additional terms as chair.

- Suggested revision: the associate dean for research also appoints the committee chair, who will be a committee member who has served at least one year and who may serve up to two additional three-year terms as chair.
- Discussion and feedback:
 - Does the chair have to serve consecutive terms, or is a break between terms permissible? If the chair leaves the committee, are they disqualified from serving as chair again?
 - The chair can serve 9 years and then take a break and can start over with a clean slate.
 - For the sake of clarity, the word ‘consecutive’ should be added.
 - Claudio Gratton made a motion to amend the revision to read: the associate dean for research also appoints the committee chair, who will be a committee member who has served at least one year and who may serve up to two additional three-year consecutive terms as chair. Francisco Arriaga seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The amendment was approved with five votes in favor, zero votes not in favor, and one vote abstaining.
- Prior version of bylaws: The Associate Dean for Research, the Executive Director of Wisconsin Agricultural Experiment Station, the Associate Dean for Administration, and the Director and the Assistant Director of the Agricultural Research Stations will serve as ex officio.
 - Suggested revision: ex officio members of the committee are the associate dean for research, the assistant dean for facilities, planning, health and safety, and the director and the assistant director of the Agricultural Research Stations.
 - Discussion and feedback:
 - The change is an update to the titles of the positions held by current ex officio members.
 - Do ex officio members vote?
 - This is addressed later in the bylaws.
 - The committee agreed to the suggested revision as written.
- Prior version of bylaws: meetings will be scheduled as necessary by the chair and occur typically twice per semester.
 - Suggested revision: meetings will be called as necessary by the committee chair and occur typically twice per semester.
 - Discussion and feedback:
 - The committee chair calls the meetings, which are scheduled through the CALS Dean’s Office.
 - Is any business conducted electronically?
 - We usually meet in person for standing meetings in Ag Hall. We may have subcommittees meet outside of the regular meetings as needed. Voting will typically happen during the regular meetings.
 - The committee agreed to the suggested revision as written.
- Prior version of bylaws: voting was not addressed.
 - Suggested revision: once committee membership for the academic year has been finalized, quorum shall be determined as a simple majority of voting committee members in attendance. Ex officio members are non-voting committee members.
 - Discussion and feedback:

- We need to establish a requirement for a certain number of voting members present so decisions cannot be made with only two members in attendance at a meeting.
- Should a 2/3 majority be considered? There are committees where 2/3 majority is used for important votes.
- Do we need full committee attendance for bylaw changes? No, this will be too difficult to achieve.
- There was further discussion regarding whether a tie-breaker clause is needed, after which the committee decided such a clause was not necessary. Francisco Arriaga made a motion to amend the revision to read: once committee membership for the academic year has been finalized, quorum shall be determined as greater than 50% of voting members. Once quorum is met, a motion is passed with a simple majority of those in attendance. Ex officio members are non-voting committee members. Claudio Gratton seconded the motion. The amendment was approved with five votes in favor, zero votes not in favor, and one vote abstaining.

Jamie Reichert made a motion to approve the ARS committee bylaws with the approved amendments. Claudio Gratton seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved with five votes in favor, zero votes not in favor, and one vote abstaining.

Francisco Arriaga made a motion for the revised ARS committee bylaws to be effective immediately. Jamie Reichert seconded the motion. Further discussion ensued regarding the appointment timeline of the university staff member. Mike Peters asked the committee to let him know if they have recommendations. The motion was approved with five votes in favor, zero votes not in favor, and one vote abstaining.

ARS director's report

2020 has been a difficult year with COVID-19 affecting our business. Mike Peters commended the stations for meeting all that has been asked of them. The stations have impressively achieved their goals with about 50 less personnel due to the absence of student workers and LTES. Faculty and staff have answered the call to perform within the timeframe necessary. Stations have demonstrated great compliance for PPE, social distancing, staying out of facilities as much as possible, and continuing to serve as good stewards. There were no major outbreaks at any of the stations. Mike Peters thanked the stations' personnel for their efforts and thanked the superintendents for their work. There were no concerns from the committee regarding COVID-19.

Personnel updates were provided. Superintendent Felix Navarro retired from his position at Hancock Agricultural Research Station. Troy Fishler was named as the next superintendent of Hancock ARS. Mike Peters and Jane Cahoon are taking over some ARS-related HR duties from CALS HR to help the college stay robust during times of reductions.

An overview of changes at ARS was given. The Wisconsin Foundation Seeds program, which was formerly a function of the agronomy department, is transitioning to become an ARS-run function. Agronomy approached ARS with this undertaking and Chris Kucharik, Bill Barker, and Mark Kendall are facilitating the transition.

The Biotron facility is closing. Early stages of discussion are in progress regarding the greenhouse behind the Biotron facility and whether this greenhouse can be incorporated into the Walnut Street greenhouses. CALS is currently the only user of this greenhouse. If it disappears, there will not be enough greenhouse space. Environmental researchers need these facilities. CALS and ARS are not willing to take on anything that is subsidized and would minimize the budget elsewhere. An ongoing conversation topic is how to continue to deliver this service to researchers without negatively affecting the ARS budget.

Comments and questions:

- What is campus's plan for the Biotron building? If the greenhouse disappears, what do we do?
 - We are relatively certain that we have four years remaining because the animal spaces in the Biotron facility are needed by the veterinary school. While we do have two biennia, we will have to move quickly.
- As a user of both greenhouses, the Biotron greenhouse is one of the only places where researchers can grow insects on plants. This is not easy to accomplish at the Walnut Street greenhouses. The Biotron greenhouse is a valuable facility to preserve for this reason.
- To help with the intent to avoid subsidizing, can faculty assist by advocating? Can we contribute to saving the greenhouse with the indirect funds that are brought in through research?
 - These funds are supposed to be reallocated. They would not be enough for building maintenance costs. We cannot split the greenhouse from the rest of the Biotron facility as it uses the same systems. Maintenance costs would be upwards of \$1 million.

An update on station maintenance was provided. Phil Dunigan has been working with Facilities Planning & Management to reroof Peninsular stations. Funds received from FP&M have been used to re-side the old barn at Hancock ARS. Investments into roads and asphalt have been made across the stations. Lancaster ARS had road washouts from rain, and maintenance funding repaired these roads. Rhinelander ARS is being considered for reroofing. Doug Sabatke is working on replacing boilers at Arlington ARS and has requested funding from FP&M for this purpose.

Dean Kate VandenBosch and Associate Dean Bill Barker have asked Mike Peters to be prepared to respond to budgetary reductions if they are needed. Furloughs will be reinstated but this will only accomplish a portion of what is needed. One-fourth of 101 positions have been left vacant, strategically spread out over all the stations. To help get through immediate needs, open positions due to retirements and personnel leaving will not be filled. Positions can be left unfilled for the short term, but this is not the desired long-term solution. If permanent cuts are required, discussion with this committee will occur. ARS wants to meet the cuts without furloughing or terminating positions.

Comments and questions:

- Can you provide an update on internet services at Arlington ARS?
 - Internet services have been upgraded at Arlington ARS and the station is now running at business-level service, connecting through the UW network. Dairy Forage ARS has also been upgraded, with capacity for a larger upgrade if needed. Jamie Reichert is the station liaison working with CALS IT on whether to use wireless technology to

- cast a net of high-speed internet hotspots throughout the station. DoIT is now a partner assisting with this project.
- Can you provide an update on weather stations?
 - CALS is partnering with Michigan State University and finalizing funding with Associate Deans Bill Barker and Angie Seitler through the Hatch program for enviroweather stations. Robust enviroweather stations are continuing in Peninsular, Hancock, and Arlington, and enviroweather stations are being added at Rhinelander, Spooner, Hancock, and Landcaster. The hope is to have an enviroweather station at every station, but there is not enough funding currently. CALS is covering the annual fees. The stations should be operational by winter and will pull data every five minutes.
 - How is the enviroweather station equipment maintained and who is responsible for the maintenance?
 - Station staff are responsible for basic maintenance. CALS is giving ARS a .25 position for a technician to evaluate replacement equipment. Someone in the ARS system will be identified for this position. Fourteen enviroweather stations are currently being maintained. The technician position may be increased if there is funding to expand the stations.
 - Will the less robust enviroweather stations be left in the field for a year to calibrate so we can compare their data to the new stations' data?
 - There are no plans to remove any stations. If something is damaged beyond repair, it will not be replaced.

CALS Associate Dean Bill Barker provided remarks. Since March, it has been a long, strange trip, with challenges and responsibilities that no one envisioned. The university delegated broad latitude to each school for decision-making within their unit to review and approve essential research activities during the pandemic. Since ARS work happens outside, the stations forged ahead and achieved successful results. A lot of successful work happened this summer, thanks to the ARS staff and researcher cooperation. Staff personnel were careful, no one got sick, and the work got done, despite the pandemic getting worse every day. Stations have been able to pursue their agendas while keeping people safe, despite decreased numbers of students physically participating in research. ARS normally employs 50-60 undergraduate students but pandemic restrictions reduced that to 12. This endeavor was completed successfully.

Last year, CALS brought in \$72 million for research funding, and this year CALS will bring in \$98 million, which does not include cryoEM. A Gordian study of capital infrastructure at schools of agriculture addresses the backlog in infrastructure funding. Bill Barker will share this study with the committee. When Bill Barker began at CALS, the shortfall in funding was \$8 million dollars. There is now an \$11 billion shortfall in funding. CALS will keep advocating for funding to support the ARS capacities. ARS personnel have done a great job accomplishing their goals despite challenging budgets.

A plant breeding facility is in the works for West Madison and CALS is in the process of getting funding for a building. This will be a 4-5-year process.

The USDA recently announced a major mission statement to inform research funding. The Agriculture Innovation Agenda (AIA) states that by 2050, American agriculture needs to be 40% more productive and 50% less environmentally costly. Organic agriculture research funding will

be doubled, going from \$20 million to \$50 million in increments. Mike Peters and the staff are working to increase acreage of certified organic land, which will increase CALS' competitiveness for organic research funding.

Great initiative is taking place to increase pollinator and songbird habitats. There are 70 acres across all stations of pollinator plots or prairie grass. This committee helps to refine the system to get infrastructure ready for research to occur. Mike Peters and Phil Dunigan have worked hard with station staff to help CALS lead in these areas.

Rebecca Wiepz has been hired as the new superintendent at Peninsular ARS. She is taking great initiative to encourage fruit researchers to use this station.

The magnitude of budget cuts is unknown, but reductions are expected to come. Furloughs are continuing. Reductions are not as bad within CALS or UW-Madison as in other places. CALS is not closing departments, laying off faculty, or discontinuing majors. We are proud of the excellent membership in the ARS committee, and we will work with this committee to meet budget cuts while reserving our ability to continue valuable research.

Comments and questions:

- How involved is the committee in ARS budget cuts?
 - When the Wisconsin legislature cut budgets with Act 10, reductions were disproportionately handed to ARS to protect department budgets. ARS is vital to the research mission and cannot get cut disproportionately again. Within a month, CALS should receive a number from central campus regarding one time and base budget cuts to make. This committee will be involved in the decision making.

Adjourn

Francisco Arriaga made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jamie Reichert seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:24pm.

The next ARS committee meeting will be scheduled for January 2021.