



Agricultural Research Stations Committee Meeting

Friday, October 29, 2021

8:30am-10:00am

250 Ag Hall

Attendees: Francisco Arriaga, Phil Dunigan, Nancy Esser, Luiz Ferraretto, Erica Flyte, Claudio Gratton, Brian Luck, Deena Patterson, Mike Peters, Jamie Reichert, Doug Reinemann, Mark Rickenbach, Doug Sabatke

Not present: Julie Dawson, Valentin Picasso Risso, Phil Townsend

Minutes by: Erica Flyte

Attending as public meeting: None

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Brian Luck at 8:32am.

Welcome and introductions

Brian Luck welcomed the committee and introductions were made.

Approval of April 6, 2021 meeting minutes

One correction was noted of a misspelled word on the fourth page. Francisco Arriaga made a motion to approve the April 2021 meeting minutes with the misspelled word corrected. Luiz Ferraretto seconded the motion. The motion was passed with 6 votes in favor, 0 votes not in favor, and 1 vote abstaining.

Potential revisions to committee bylaws

Revisions pertaining to the ex officio membership section of the bylaws were proposed. The aim of the revision is to offer the committee a flexibility in leadership depending on changing needs and areas of expertise. Discussion ensued, resulting in the proposed language of ‘the committee will have a minimum of three ex officio members that include the associate dean for research, the assistant dean for facilities, planning, health and safety, and the director of the Agricultural Research Stations.’ Jamie Reichert made a motion to approve the revisions with the above phrasing. Deena Patterson seconded the motion. The motion was passed with 6 votes in favor, 0 votes not in favor, and 1 vote abstaining.

ARS Director’s report

- The agricultural research stations experienced a great growing season with high yields. Spooner Research Station experienced weather issues but had a successful season despite this challenge. There was more activity at all stations this year, with field days, tours, and educational events taking place. The stations are successfully upholding the Wisconsin Idea as educational centers for visitors.
- The Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC) visited CALS and ARS facilities October 15-28, 2021. The visit was successful, and many accolades were given during the exit briefing.
- UW-Madison’s Title and Total Compensation Project (TTC) is going into effect on November 7, 2021. There are some impacts across the research stations. In the mapping of new titles, some wages will increase for lower earners. The TTC title changes tracked logically.

- Ben Erdman began as the manager at the Walnut Street greenhouses on July 17, 2021. The greenhouses were without a manager for five months, but due to the diligence and robustness of the greenhouse staff, there were no lapses in service during this time.
- The final 118 acres on the south side of Marshfield ARS is slated to be sold. The city of Marshfield paid UW \$250,000 20 years ago to reserve the right to purchase this land. This year, the city exercised their option to purchase the land. Final land appraisals and bureaucratic procedures are in process and will likely be complete in 2022. Revenues beyond the \$250,000 from the land sale will most likely be reinvested into Marshfield ARS.
- Tom Kohn has been hired as the CALS safety coordinator. This position reports to the CALS assistant dean for facilities, planning, health and safety. Tom will work closely with the associate dean for research and graduate programs, the director of CALS Agricultural Research Stations, the senior associate dean, department chairs, center directors, faculty, and other college team members. An item of priority is to build a robust program at the college and at the stations.
- Phil Dunigan, associate director of the Agricultural Research Stations, will be retiring in January 2022 after 39 years of service. In lieu of rehiring an associate director, an Agricultural Research Stations Financial Manager position has been created and posted. Among other responsibilities, this position will handle financials, day-to-day operations regarding funding, depositing of revenues, and will serve as the delegate purchasing authority. Jane Cahoon will absorb the HR and effort certification duties that the associate director previously held. Office managers at sites will have more responsibilities for purchasing.
- There will be a celebration of career for Phil Dunigan on January 20, 2022.

Questions/comments from committee:

- How will the reshuffling of administrative duties affect staffing at smaller stations?
 - Office managers will now have check machines at their desks, so deposits can happen electronically. This change was received positively during office manager visits. Hours can be looked at if this addition is overwhelming. The financial manager position may take on these duties for stations that do not have an office manager.

Arlington land purchase update

- A map was shared indicating the 70 acres being discussed. The family approached the college and the college recommend that the director of the Agricultural Research Stations pursue this purchase. The land was appraised in April 2021 at \$1,005,000. The appraisal was consistent with the projection based on appraisals of other similar tillable land.
- After the appraisal, the ARS director created a proposal for the land purchase to present to the college. An anonymous donor gave \$500,000 toward the purchase so long that 70 acres of land be used to expand the organic footprint at the station. Discussion will take place about the best location for this organic land.
- The remaining ~\$500,000 for this purchase will come from ARS and Arlington revenues and a foundation account that is reserved for land purchases by ARS.
- The second land appraisal should be complete by the end of October 2021, after which the university will write an offer and bureaucratic processes will begin.

Questions from committee:

- Does the Arlington station own the land surrounding these 70 acres?
 - The station owns the land on the north and west. A different family member owns the land on the east, and another family owns the land to the south.
- Is there anything else that the \$150,000 endowment can be used for?

- There are always potential uses. Marshfield might need land to make up for the loss of land in the sale. A consideration is the best strategic time to use the endowment. Now is an opportune time to work with a donor.
- What fraction of the sale is contingent on the sale of the crops at Arlington?
 - \$100,000-\$150,000. Arlington may not be able to invest in equipment for a couple of years but will still have revenue for maintenance needs. The Arlington staff feel that this is manageable.
- Will this purchase limit the crops that will be able to be grown at Arlington?
 - No, research needs will also be considered. Revenue is not the only driving factor in decisions about crops.
- Is there a plan for the new 70 acres?
 - The second land appraisal, offer, and other bureaucratic steps need to be finalized before planning is initiated.
- Sometimes maintenance is overlooked. Are there enough equipment and staff to take on 70 acres?
 - Yes. There are no structures on the land.
- How will organic acreage increase with this purchase?
 - There are currently 120 acres of organic land. With this purchase, there will be close to 200 acres, which will allow for more strategic rotations.
- Is the land currently leased to the UW?
 - No, the land is privately owned.
- If in the future, there is not the same value on organic agriculture and the land needs to change its use, are there any implications with the \$500,000 donation?
 - There are no long-term caveats. The land can be converted back to standard in the future through conversations with the UW Foundation.

Francisco Arriaga made a motion to proceed with next steps regarding the Arlington land purchase. Nancy Esser seconded the motion. The motion was passed with 6 votes in favor, 0 votes not in favor, and 1 vote abstaining.

CALS updates

The CALS senior associate dean and interim associate dean for research presented on ARS facilities projects that are part of the CALS priority list for the campus planning committee. Four of the five project priorities for 2023-2029 relate to agricultural research stations. There have been recent investments in animals and dairy and the life sciences, so now the area of plants is deemed a priority. Some of the projects need state support and need to be ranked on the campus list. Other projects will be funded through gifts or grants.

Priority projects include: 1) USDA ARS Plant Germplasm Facility at West Madison Station, 2) Marshfield ARS New Headquarters Building, 3) Walnut Street Greenhouses, phase 2, 4) Agricultural Hall student service center (remodel), and 5) Walnut Street Greenhouses, phase 3.

Questions from committee:

- What is phase 2 of the Walnut Street Greenhouses?
 - There will be two buildings built on the east end, which is an expansion of the 2005 construction. No demolition is involved.
- Are #1 and #2 fully funded?
 - Not yet.

The facility at West Madison is the number one priority. Conversations are being held with the federal appropriations team as well as our partners within USDA ARS. Representative Pocan and

Senator Baldwin have expressed interest and included the building in their respective budget asks. The facility at WMARS will be used to process materials from the field. It would bring USDA ARS potato germplasm collection from the Peninsular ARS to be stored at West Madison. The facility will also expand the footprint of the greenhouses.

Questions from committee:

- Will the facility include restrooms and showers?
 - The design of the facility is not yet finalized.
- Are the greenhouses going to be at the exact locations on the map?
 - There will be federal and campus users in the new facility. Exact box positions are not decided, but there will be more support for researchers.
- Will the increased building capacity cause an increase in need for land?
 - No. The building will process items coming back to campus from all over the state. Yet, additional research in the future is always encouraged and we will adapt to meet these needs.

General questions & feedback

- The next meeting will be TBD in January 2022.
- Send future agenda items to Brian Luck and Erica Flyte.

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 9:38am.