

State Board of Agricultural Research and Education
February 23, 2017
Minutes

The State Board of Agricultural Research and Education met by conference call originating on the NDSU Campus on February 23, 2017. Board members participating in the call were Mike Beltz, Mark Birdsall, Chris Boerboom, Lance Gulleon, Ken Grafton, Larry Hoffmann, Brian Leier, Keith Peltier, JoAnn Rodenbiker, Dick Roland, Lyle Warner, Dean Wehri, and Jesse Pfaff representing Doug Goehring. Members absent were Tracy Boe, Dean Bresciani, and Jerry Klein.

Chairman Beltz called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m., welcoming members after roll call.

Administrative Updates

Dr. Ken Grafton reported that two faculty accepted a buyout under the University voluntary separation incentive plan (VSIP), along with six technicians, and the positions subsequently closed. NDSU recently announced a voluntary phased-retirement program for tenured faculty, enabling participants to retire over a two-year period while working at 50% time. The Agricultural Experiment Station (AES) will look for opportunities to utilize this phased-retirement program where possible.

Dr. Chris Boerboom noted that the Extension Service had five individuals who accepted buyouts under the VSIP. Specialists who are tenured faculty are eligible for the new phased-retirement program. Northwest District Director Mike Hanson has retired. Dena Kemmet, Mercer County Extension Agent, 4-H Youth Development, and Penny Nester, Kidder County Extension Agent, Ag & Natural Resources will serve as interim district supervisors. Extension will have only one agent-in-training this year and will eliminate the summer internship program for this biennium due to budget reductions. The Extension Comprehensive Review Committee, requested by SBARE, is comprised of 12 members; four are current SBARE members. The process is ongoing with several upcoming meetings scheduled.

Legislative Updates

The Senate completed their work on the Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension budgets and they now cross over to the House. The House Appropriations Committee hearing is March 7.

Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension Budget Updates

Extension budget reductions for the current and next biennium total approximately \$3.8 million. Agricultural Experiment Station cuts include nearly \$7.8 million for the Main Station and close to \$3 million for Research Extension Centers.

Chairman Beltz shared that the Research Extension Centers in Williston and Langdon may seek authorization from the Legislature to raise funds to complete their seed cleaning plant facilities. The North Dakota Crop Improvement and Seed Association (NDCISA) is providing \$25,000 to the centers in Williston, Carrington, and Minot in support of their facilities. Beltz thanked them on behalf of SBARE for this significant support and for recognizing the importance of the seed cleaning facilities. The NDCISA plans to provide comparable support for Langdon's seed cleaning facility once legislative approval to raise funds is in place.

Recent AES budget discussion has included the possibility of changing the way research support staff funds are handled. Currently, research staff ultimately report to the Director's office and all funding is approved by the Director with recommendations from the chairs/heads/directors. The suggestion is that each department/school would receive from the Director's office, a "block grant" of 75% of the 2015-17 funding level for research staff

that the chairs/heads/directors would have the responsibility of managing for greatest efficiency. The chairs/heads/directors would retain salary savings for use by their respective unit if a position becomes vacant (after all payout occurs). This change would ensure that technical support staff are retained in the units. It is expected that the chairs/heads/directors would approve either full funding, a portion of funding, or no funding to respective research programs, with the intent that faculty PIs would support the research staff through grant or contract efforts. If adopted, this change could possibly save \$2 million per biennium. Boerboom added that Extension is planning to reduce state support for technicians to 75% as well.

Last fall the board discussed the potential elimination of the pulse breeder position and a member inquired about the status of this consideration. Grafton noted that the pulse industry has expressed concern and support for retaining this position. If that trend continues, the board may consider keeping it on table at their discretion.

A member asked about the number of FTE cuts that would occur in a 10% budget cut situation versus a 13.5% cut. Grafton and Boerboom emphasized that due to several variables, it is difficult to give firm numbers. Retirement programs and eligibility issues make this a moving target. In order to strategize for the best possible outcomes and retain critical positions that will protect the core mission, specifying a dollar amount in the budget as opposed to specifying FTE cuts would give them more flexibility. Every position is different and has different costs attached to them.

Update from the Chair

In the coming weeks, SBARE will continue to highlight the excellent return on investment to North Dakota agricultural research and education that can be readily demonstrated by the Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension Service. This remains the core message and members are encouraged to share facts with legislators at every opportunity during this legislative session. A budget cut of 10% would be better than the 13.5% cuts now being considered. Member support at this critical time is greatly appreciated. Board members will receive notification of upcoming hearings. The Veterinary Diagnostic Lab construction project is currently coming in under budget, and there was a query regarding the use of potential leftover funds after completion. Leftover funds would go back to Budget Section and use of these dollars would be subject to their authorization.

Chairman Beltz adjourned the meeting at 3:38 PM.

Minutes submitted by Lorie Herbel.