

State Board of Agricultural Research and Education
February 8, 2018
MINUTES

The State Board of Agricultural Research and Education met for a regular meeting at the NDSU Veterinary Diagnostic Lab conference room located at 4035 19th Avenue North in Fargo, ND on February 8, 2018, starting at 10:00 AM. Board members in attendance were Mike Beltz, Mark Birdsall, Chris Boerboom, Ken Grafton, Lance Gulleason, Larry Hoffmann, Brian Leier, Sarah Lovas, Keith Peltier, JoAnn Rodenbiker and Dean Wehri. Members Absent: Tracy Boe, Dean Bresciani, Doug Goehring, Jerry Klein and Richard Roland.

Chairman Keith Peltier called the meeting to order at 10:01 am, suggesting changes to the order of items on the agenda. Board members agreed to the adjustment. He welcomed members and guests and invited everyone to make introductions.

Administrative Update for the ND Agricultural Experiment Station (AES):

Dr. Ken Grafton noted that NDSU's preliminary budget proposal contains ranked capital priorities listing Harris Hall as the #2 priority, following Dunbar Hall. Harris Hall is home to several programs such as pulse, barley, malting, and various wheat quality research. Peltier urged members to share the importance and impact of Harris Hall widely, raising awareness of what its replacement might mean in terms of economic impact to agriculture in North Dakota. Grafton stated these details are being developed in consultation with Dr. Rich Horsley, Department Head in Plant Sciences.

On Friday, February 2, Governor Doug Burgum and Lieutenant Governor Brent Sanford toured the NDSU campus. The Lieutenant Governor was able to visit Dunbar Hall, Harris Hall, the NDAES Greenhouse, and tour the recently vacated Van Es Hall. Sanford expressed appreciation for the quality of faculty and the research being conducted on campus.

AES has received authorization to fill six faculty positions. Requests for recruitment are in process for a Precision Agriculture Engineer, an Animal Science position, an Ag Finance position, Plant Pathologist (rust), and one position with a focus on Microbiome research. Ag Budget is streamlining departmental budget processes in hopes of hiring a staffer to carry high-level responsibilities in accounting and budgeting across departments.

Now that staff and equipment are moved into the new Veterinary Diagnostic lab, a portion of Van Es Hall is vacant. Because this is a University space, AES will not handle any of the necessary renovations. Potential upgrades and various usages are under consideration by the University.

There will be a change in relationship between the NDSU Foundation and the North Dakota Crop Improvement Association, which could bring new opportunities in research. Partnerships could develop such as a type of 'food incubator' lab that researches food and commercial innovations.

Electrical work has begun at Carrington Research Extension Center's seed cleaning building project. North Central Research Extension Center's seed cleaning plant project will be bid in late March or April.

Administrative Update for the NDSU Extension Service (EXT):

Dr. Chris Boerboom reminded members that February 8, 2018 is Giving Hearts Day, providing donors an opportunity to support youth development programs such as 4-H and FFA. In December 2017, the ND 4-H Foundation announced an endowment of \$100,000 securing the naming rights for the last cabin at the 4-H camp in Washburn, ND.

Boerboom shared that the number of direct contacts with Extension users by Extension staff in 2017 exceeded 1,000,000. The breakdown by program area was provided. These numbers are used in Federal reporting. One example of 'contacts' would be providing educational workshops such as a successful event recently held in Bismarck addressing challenges related to farm economics and volatility, farm management, and farm stress.

Extension will reopen frozen positions when financially feasible. Williams County offered to pay 100% of their Family and Community Wellness agent's salary until a new base policy agreement is in place. Meetings between District Directors and county commissioners have been positive and focused on reworking the Base Policy. They are now on version three, and the full board meeting will be held in April. One region of counties made a motion to endorse a cost-share split of 40/60 going forward. A couple counties may consider increased mill levies for additional funds for 2019. Due to Federal dollars remaining flat, the Extension program that provides SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) education in North Dakota will cut 2.2 FTEs by July 2018. This will primarily affect program delivery in

northern counties, with a 20% overall program reduction.

Approval of minutes:

Chairman Peltier asked the board to review the minutes from the January 12, 2018 meeting. Mark Birdsall requested a change in the capital needs section to reflect that the Williston REC seed cleaning facility was also part of the list of items discussed. Birdsall then made a motion to approve the minutes as amended, and Brian Leier seconded the motion. Motion carried.

AES Programmatic item rankings:

AES Programmatic items were ranked on a scale of one to five during voting. Eleven of 13 ballots were returned and validated. Results show each item's average score, listed in rank order, highest to lowest. The board agreed to discuss the list in detail and decide where to draw a cutoff line.

The top item, AgroBiome research, scored higher than others by a sizeable margin. At the request of SBARE, Grafton consulted with departments regarding possible ideas for the initial focus for the AgroBiome research, having the potential for a wide range of research opportunities and interactions between areas. Consensus was that the AgroBiome initiative's initial focus could be with the interactions between plants and soils. There is not an existing FTE tied to the AgroBiome initiative, thus departments will have to consider the best approach. Beltz asked if this could potentially involve a competitive grants process similar to the \$600,000 in funds given for the Precision Ag research. Grafton noted that without a critical mass of scientists in this arena, it is not yet feasible.

Precision Ag research was another strongly supported item with potential impacts on production statewide. The \$600,000 Precision Ag grant funding provided by the state only covered a portion of total requests of \$2.2 million that researchers submitted to the program. Tech companies are increasingly seeking opportunities to collaborate in research. There is also a clear need for developing a workforce in Precision Agriculture.

Mark Birdsall made a motion to draw the cut off line under the Virologist item scored at 2.82, seconded by Larry Hoffmann. After further discussion, JoAnn Rodenbiker offered an amendment to the motion to substitute the words 'Virologist item scored at 2.82,' with the new phrase 'beef research item scored at 2.91,' thereby moving the cut off line further down. The board agreed to modify the motion. The amended motion, to draw the line after the beef research item at 2.91, was seconded by Brian Leier. Motion carried.

Extension Programmatic item rankings:

Highest in the rankings list was operating funds for digital technology. Precision Ag data use followed, which would likely require an FTE as the current Extension specialist supporting UAV projects is actually an Ag machinery specialist. Operating support for Extension and farm safety were also highly ranked. Discussion followed regarding packaging highly ranked priorities.

Members agreed the mobile pesticide application lab was a stand-alone item, requiring funds to create and operate the lab as well as personnel to coordinate the work and deliver programming. Industry partnerships for this could also help build this initiative. Brian Leier made a motion to name the lab the 'Mobile Crop Protection Lab,' seconded by Mark Birdsall. Motion carried.

Members discussed the need to be strategic about looking for FTE positions in a challenging budgetary environment, noting several important items listed involve FTE. Going forward Extension will work to ensure that specialists understand their expertise does not serve specific geographic territories but rather carries statewide programming responsibilities. After additional discussion on livestock production and specialist needs, Beltz made a motion to draw the cut off line after the first item ranked at 2.91, seconded by Rodenbiker. Motion carried.

Friend of SBARE Award discussion

In the past, members agreed that the 'Friend of SBARE' Award would serve to honor individuals who help build support for and give outstanding service to agricultural causes in North Dakota, for which SBARE has been an advocate. A nomination was brought forward, and following the discussion Mike Beltz made a motion to nominate Senator Bill Bowman as the next recipient of the 'Friend of SBARE' Award. Seconded by Mark Birdsall, the motion passed unanimously. It was noted that Bowman has been strong supporter of agricultural causes for many years and has been a passionate advocate helping to advance several SBARE initiatives. Members agreed to present Bowman with this award and the earliest opportunity.

SBARE Review Report discussion

The most recent draft of the Extension Review report was shared with the board and Beltz added that a copy would be provided to Jace Beehler in the Governor's office. After all Phase 1 and 2 committee members provide their final feedback, this board will take one last opportunity to discuss it and vote on the report. Chairman Peltier will present the report at a meeting of the ND Legislative Council Budget Section, on March 21, 2018.

Capital Projects Discussion

Items were listed alphabetically. The request for a deferred maintenance increase relates to the funding formula used to determine fund distribution; it has not been adjusted upward to reflect the expansion of the infrastructure base in recent years. The Williston Research Extension Center is requesting the amount of \$750,000 for a new seed cleaning plant. Director Randy Mehlhoff of the Langdon Research Extension Center indicated they have renovated their existing plant and are satisfied they have what they need to meet their seed cleaning needs if they are able to use the existing mobile mill.

Upcoming plans

Peltier stated that the most urgent item of business for the board in the near future is to finalize and approve the comprehensive Extension Review process report, due March 21; members shall call a Zoom conferencing meeting for this purpose. While the committee prepares the final version of this report, the board will conduct the electronic ballot voting on the capital items discussed. Members should rank capital items from one to 16 when completing the ballot. The Governor's budget recommendations are expected sometime in April, and in-depth discussion of SBARE's programmatic initiatives will take place at that time. SBHE will submit their final budget in June 2018.

Tour of the new Veterinary Diagnostic Lab facility

Board members met the Director of the Veterinary Diagnostic Lab, Dr. Brett Webb. Webb briefly updated the board on the recent occupancy of their new facility, and took members on a tour to see the laboratories and speak with researchers. Peltier adjourned the meeting at the conclusion of the tour.

Respectfully submitted by Lorie Herbel.