

Ag. Faculty Council Meeting Minutes  
November 7, 2014  
106 Ag. Hall

Members present:

Dr. Tom Coon, Dean and Vice President, Agriculture  
Dr. Jeff Edwards, Plant and Soil Science (chair)  
Dr. Mike Smith, Horticulture and Landscape Architecture  
Dr. Ranjith Ramanathan, Animal Science  
Dr. Craig Davis, Natural Resource Ecology and Management  
Dr. Rodney Jones, Agricultural Economics  
Dr. Chris Richards, Animal Science  
Dr. Ulrich Melcher, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology  
Dr. Brian Whitacre, Agricultural Economics  
Dr. Scott Frazier, Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering  
Dr. Gina Peek, Design, Housing, and Merchandising  
Dr. Astri Wayadande, Entomology and Plant Pathology  
Dr. Eric Rebek, Entomology and Plant Pathology  
Dr. Jon Ramsey, Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership

A Call to Order was made by Dr. Edwards at 10:00 am.

The meeting began with introductions since several faculty are new members of the council.

Questions from DASNR faculty were submitted in advance and received by Dr. Coon on Oct. 31. Dr. Coon answered the following submitted questions:

1. *I would like clarification regarding use of grant funds for a 13th month of salary. Can you provide an overview of the policy and provide an opinion regarding the following scenarios. See "Examples of Supplemental Compensation, March 2014" The guiding policy on 13<sup>th</sup> month is OSU P&P #2-0115 Overload Pay for Faculty; Approval of the Provost and the OSU Board of Regents are required for overload pay when total compensation exceeds 13 months of salary.*
- a. *A PI obtains two competitive USDA grants and has one month of salary written into both grants. Okay per Use of Sponsor Funds to Pay Supplemental Month Salaries (DASNR Guideline). One grant will be used to pay a 12th month of salary. Can the salary funds from the second grant be used as salary savings and then used to pay a 13th month? If no, is this an OSU policy or a USDA policy or an interpretation of a USDA policy? Yes. See DASNR Guideline for Use of Salary Savings.*

*b. A PI has enough returned F&A to pay a 13th month of salary. Can these funds be used to pay the 13th month? What if the PI only has enough returned F&A for two weeks of salary, can a partial 13th month be paid?*

Dr. Coon started this discussion by stating that OSU ranks second to last in the Big 12 in terms of faculty salaries and he is fully in favor of increasing faculty salaries. However, the current political climate in Oklahoma is a serious obstacle to asking our legislature for more funding to increase faculty salaries.

Regarding the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> month salary issue, there is much confusion across the college about how these salary bumps are leveraged and what qualifies for approval. What is known is that only grants and contracts that allow full F&A at the rates negotiated with the respective agency are eligible for these salary adjustments. Discussion among DASNR faculty council members present at the meeting revealed that inconsistencies abound among DASNR departments, leading to widespread confusion about the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> month salary issue. Dr. Coon admitted the issue is unclear to him, but he will get clarification on the issue in the coming months and provide us with a concise answer. Clarification is given above with the highlighted insertions.

*2. A few years ago there was discussion regarding allowing faculty members to drop from eleven month appointment to 9 or 10 month appointment without a drop in salary. This would effectively provide them the opportunity to increase salary without increasing costs to the university. Where are we on this issue?*

Dr. Coon expressed he is against this type of appointment change, especially since taxpayers could perceive it as an egregious example of irresponsible spending of state-appropriated money (i.e., less work for same pay). He would consider this type of appointment change if extenuating circumstances applied, but he would impose certain limitations on the faculty member seeking this change (e.g., no salary increase for 2 to 3 years once the change took place). The point was raised that the conversion from an 11-month to a 9-month appointment may not even make sense, except perhaps for 100% teaching faculty.

There is no option for a 10 month appointment at OSU. Tenured or tenure-track appointments are either 9 month or 11 month appointments. Moving from an 11 month to a 9 month appointment is determined on a case-by-case basis. The request should be made through the department head. If the department head is supportive, it can be recommended to the dean. If the dean and associate dean/directors are supportive, the request can move forward and will need approval by the board of regents since a reduction in salary and appointment are being requested. In some cases, department heads do not support this and do not move the request forward. In other cases, the dean's office or associate directors have approved or declined the request once it was recommended by the department head.

3. *Can you provide an update on the facility at Ardmore? What is the annual cost of operating this facility? Could the research programs at Ardmore be operated in Stillwater and if so, what would be the potential savings?*

Dr. Coon visited with administrators and scientists at the Noble Foundation recently, toured the facility in question, and discussed possibilities for the future. There are currently 3 OSU faculty assigned to the Ardmore facility. There is room for more, with half of the interior labs/offices finished and the other half open and in need of bench and utility completion for lab use. How best to use the facility is something Dr. Coon has had to grapple with since he was hired at OSU this past summer. He is still weighing options and entertaining different ideas, and appreciates input from faculty to help guide his decisions. This led to a brief discussion about possibilities for the research facility in Lane, Oklahoma, which has been mostly vacant for several years now as a result of the economic downturn, but research and Extension projects continue to be conducted at the facility. There simply are no staff housed at the facility.

Specific costs associated with the Ardmore facility and potential cost savings were not discussed. Dr. Coon revealed that the original intent of the project was to possibly establish an additional OSU campus in Ardmore, beginning with the facility in question. However, funding is not in place to even conceive of this as a possibility in the near future.

It is worth noting that there was a significant start-up investment for this facility, most of which was allocated by the Oklahoma legislature directly for this project. The work of the IAB faculty who are tenured in the P&SS and BMB departments are resulting in extramural funding. F&As are not held by Whitehurst, but instead are returned to Experiment Station to offset expenses associated with operation of the facility. The offset should grow as extramural funding increases.

On the subject of funding, Dr. Coon then described an idea he has to help generate state and industry money to support research that benefits the interests of participating industries (e.g., Wheat Commission, Pecan Growers Association, Oil Seed Commission, Cattlemen's Association, etc.). The basic idea is to establish a fund and perhaps an endowment someday that generates project funds from investment revenue. In order to prove the concept, he is proposing initial funding from the legislature to conduct the program for several years. If it proves positively, we would enlist the support of the food and agriculture industries to establish and fund the endowment. Faculty would write competitive proposals seeking funds to do research and Extension projects that benefits the various industries represented in the endowment (i.e., projects that address pressing needs for research or Extension as identified by those industries). Funding would be awarded based on a peer review process and that involves representatives of those industries in setting final priorities for peer-recommended projects. Dr. Coon has to discuss this idea further with other university administrators before anything concrete develops. The idea would also require full support of both Oklahoma legislators and agricultural industries who would agree to provide the allocations necessary to fund the program.

4. *Several DASNR units include facilities that serve scientists in DASNR as well as in other colleges. Many are directed by scientists equivalent in training, knowledge, and experience to regular faculty. Yet, they have no opportunities for advancement. Could such opportunities be developed?*

Dr. Coon addressed this by saying such opportunities could, and probably should, be developed for these scientists. However, if the opportunity involved conversion from non-tenure to tenure-track status, it would require a competitive search at the national level. Thus, such a change in appointment would not be automatic. For other types of promotion/title changes/salary increases, (e.g., assistant extension specialist to associate extension specialist, and similar), Dr. Coon said it is probably best determined and administered at the departmental level.

5. *What is the future of the Cooperative Extension Service at Oklahoma State University? Are their plans for the systematic recruitment and training of undergraduate students to work in extension at the county level?*

Dr. Coon said that the future of OCES is “bright”. Currently, his perception is that OCES has a strong connection to the counties, communities, and people that it serves. However, this does not mean OCES will not face challenges in the future, especially in light of state funding for Extension. There could be leaner times ahead, especially at the county level. Efficiency and modernization are key issues to address as we face these challenges.

The issue of recruitment and training of undergraduate students for careers in extension was not specifically addressed.

The OSU career fairs are being used to attract potential educators. In addition to myself and the district directors, early career educators have worked an Extension booth at the career fairs. We are evaluating which recruiting method, or combination of methods is most effective. Additionally, a successful summer internship program continues to provide about a dozen paid summer internships for undergraduates (and occasionally a graduate student) from DASNR and/or Human Sciences.

6. *What are the plans for a New Ag Hall? When, where, etc.*

Dr. Coon discussed several scenarios that could play out over time with respect to a new Ag. Hall. One plan he is privy to involves creation of an “Agriculture Quad” on campus, which would encompass several new buildings instead of just one. This has advantages in meeting the differing needs of research, extension, and teaching (e.g., lab versus office space). The drawback to this plan is the proposed location on the west end of campus, far removed from the campus center. Cost is also another concern. Dr. Coon estimates costs could run as high as \$0.5 billion for multiple buildings. However, this could increase opportunities for matching gifts from wealthy benefactors who want their name on a building. Regardless, there are multiple construction projects on campus currently, so there

will not be any immediate developments on a new Ag. Hall. Dr. Coon welcomes ideas faculty may have in campus planning that meets the needs of DASNR.

In a recent action, the board of regents approved a request from DASNR to embark on a planning process and an architectural firm has been selected. These early studies will result in determining the location(s) for new campus agriculture & natural resources structures. Potential individual and corporate donors are being considered for lead gifts to kick-off a fundraising campaign. We are still very early in the process. Faculty and staff will be involved in identifying needs and opportunities for improvement of our facilities.

This was the end of discussion on questions submitted to Dr. Coon.

The next discussion involved the current status of proposed changes to university bylaws regarding a campus-wide RPT committee. Based on solicitation for input from OSU faculty, suggested changes were made and sent to Dr. Coon for approval. Dr. Coon mentioned he approved the changes and sent them to the Provost for approval. We are still waiting to hear from the Provost's office on that approval. Dr. Coon thanked Dr. Edwards for his service on the committee that reviewed and made changes to the bylaws. Subsequently Dr. Coon confirmed that Provost Sandefur has approved the CASNR bylaws changes.

The next item of business was election of Ag. Faculty Council positions for 2014-2015. The following nominations were made, seconded, and approved by council members present:

Dr. Jeff Edwards (Chair)

Dr. Chris Richards (Vice Chair)

Dr. Eric Rebek (Secretary)

The final item of business was discussion of changes to the Ag. Faculty Council bylaws, which were last updated in 2003. A revision to the current bylaws is needed. Dr. Edwards is making this a top priority during his second year as chair of the council. One example raised by Dr. Edwards is that the old model of larger departments electing two representatives to council and smaller departments electing only one is antiquated since most departments are much smaller than they were in the past. Thus, it probably makes sense to have two representatives per department regardless of the number of faculty in each department. Other issues needing to be addressed include term lengths for council members and the degree of member turnover on the council. Stay tuned for more information on this effort.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 am.

Notes respectfully submitted by Eric Rebek on November 7, 2014.

Note – orange or highlighted text indicates text added by Dr. Coon after the meeting. At the meeting Dr. Coon indicated he would need to review policies and procedures to fully answer some questions (e.g. 13<sup>th</sup> month salary). Highlighted text is his addendum to the minutes.