

DASNR Faculty Council Meeting Minutes
May 9, 2016

Meeting called to order at 8:30 AM.

Roll call:

Dr. Tom Coon, Dean and Vice President, Division of Agricultural Science and Natural Resources
Dr. Chris Richards, Animal Science (chair)
Dr. Eric Rebek, Entomology and Plant Pathology (secretary)
Dr. Mike Smith, Horticulture and Landscape Architecture
Dr. Gina Peek, Design, Housing, and Merchandising
Dr. Jon Ramsey, Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership
Dr. Ajay Kumar, Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering
Dr. Rodney Jones, Agricultural Economics
Dr. Robert Matts, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
Dr. Max Melstrom, Agricultural Economics
Dr. Mark Wilkins, Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering
Dr. Tyson Ochsner, Plant and Soil Science
Ms. Deb Garrard Foster, Nutritional Sciences
Dr. Ranjith Ramanathan, Animal Science
Dr. Nathan Walker, Entomology and Plant Pathology (OSU Faculty Council rep)
Dr. David Lalman, Animal Science (DASNR RPT Committee rep)
Dr. Gopal Kakani, Plant and Soil Science
Dr. Craig Davis, Natural Resource Ecology and Management
Dr. Sam Fuhlendorf, Natural Resource Ecology and Management

A. Questions for Dr. Coon, Dean, Vice President, and Director of DASNR (Dr. Coon's responses are in italics below each question submitted by faculty and staff)

1. OAES expects a 20% reduction in funds equal to \$4.9 million. Does Dr. Coon support cancellation of the cumulative review raise program, which would result in cost savings of only \$53,000 (according to most recent estimate). Will canceling this program really address the budget issue? The cumulative review raise program addresses the serious issue of salary compression at OSU, and canceling it only makes this issue grow worse in tight budget years.

We do not know how much our budgets will be reduced. The 20% figure is what the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education asked for us to plan for as a worst-case scenario. That being said, we've never said we will not fund the cumulative review raises. When the policy was implemented we stated that we would support it. That remains the case.

2. The budget prediction is that FY 2017 will be >20% lower than FY 2105. How will DASNR administration address the shortfalls? What contingency planning has been made if the shortfall grows, as is likely? Are mandatory furloughs being planned?

The basic strategy is to use reserves to fund shortfalls until attrition due to retirements and resignations cuts the budget by the needed amount. This plan appears to be clearly feasible with a 10% cut, probably feasible with a 20% cut, but not feasible with bigger cuts. This strategy will result in vacancies in some areas of expertise that we will need to continue to serve. In these cases, we will work with the units affected to develop ways of serving these needs with current staffing.

More specific plans are indicated by mission:

Extension:

- 1) *Counties are currently implementing a downsize plan that cause each county to go from 2 OSU funded Educators in each county to only 1.5 OSU/funded Educators in each county, This will be the case unless the county chooses to increase its funding level to pick up the .5 reduction in FTEs. This action will result in a combination of salary reductions or increased revenue amounting to approximately \$2.8 million. Note that counties opting to fund the .5 FTE reduction are being allowed to increase their financial commitment over a 4-year period (by approximately \$10,000/year). So not all of the \$2.8 million saving will come within a year.*
- 2) *Selected fees will be increased. Initially the most significant fee increase will be in 4-H where a membership fee (or a combination membership fee and increases in event fees) is being developed that may raise about \$400,000.*
- 3) *The co-parenting classes taught by FCS are now being done on a fee basis.*
- 4) *M&O to departments will be reduced by "at least" the amount of reduction in personnel*
- 5) *Cuts to block salaries will be cut by approximately the same amount as the general budget cut*

Research:

- 1) *See 4 and 5 above relative to block salary and M&O*
- 2) *Cash reserves will be used to decrease allocations to several budgets*
 - a. *Directors budget will be reduced by \$97,000*
 - b. *Backcharge budget from the University will be reduced by \$300,000*
- 3) *Plant fund accounts will be released (one-time savings of \$800,000)*
- 4) *Faculty retirements/separations*
 - a. *From January 1, 2016 to June 30, 2016 will amount to \$850,000 for salary and fringe*
 - b. *Will not completely halt new hires but they will be closely evaluated*
- 5) *Allocations to other Colleges and departments will be reduced*

Teaching:

- 1) Faculty retirements/separations
- 2) Reductions in Block and M&O

Division:

- 1) Cost savings/restructuring/reduction in the following service areas
 - a. Fiscal affairs
 - b. DASNR IT
 - c. consolidating in other administrative areas

Furloughs are not being planned.

3. Historically, DASNR has used retirement incentive programs to get through tough budgets. Dr. Coon has made statements that those programs “don’t save money”. However, there is strong empirical evidence of their effectiveness in that they have been used every five or so years for the last 30+ years. What actual data is Dr. Coon basing his statements on? Is it from DASNR, or from other colleges or universities that have different structures than DASNR? Has DASNR administration actually run our numbers?

I’m aware of two buyout programs over the past 40 years by OSU/DASNR, so perhaps others have more historical information than I have available.

My statements have been that retirement incentives don’t help to solve a short-term budget problem because they typically require spending MORE money in the short term in order to incentivize a retirement. With budget reductions such as we’ve experienced in the current fiscal year, they emerge immediately and require immediate reductions in expenditures. Paying someone to accelerate their retirement plans costs more and the expenditure does not contribute to the mission that the position was fulfilling, whether teaching, research or Extension.

Retirement incentives only save money in the long term if they are sustained by keeping the position vacant. Yet because retirements that result from these practices are at the will of the retiring professor and cannot be directed to only positions in a certain area of expertise, they may very well create a gap in expertise where we cannot afford to have a gap. So during or shortly after the immediacy of a budget crisis, the department that has experienced a reduction from an early retirement in a critical area will rightly request refilling that position. So in the long term, we have not gained any savings.

If we were without any financial reserves, we might find retirement incentives more compelling, but that is not our current circumstance. By taking attrition that comes by a normal retirement or resignation pattern, we can achieve sufficient savings by not filling some positions and by delaying filling of other positions that are essential to our mission.

In the last OSU/DASNR buyout, the buyout advanced retirement dates by a maximum of two to three years and in some cases by a matter of months. On average the last OSU/DASNR buyout advanced retirements about 1 year. We have sufficient reserves to keep faculty employed and fulfilling their mission in their final years with OSU until they are ready to retire. Buyouts essentially pay personnel to not work. At a time of reduced funding, that seems illogical.

4. Do we have an update on the budget expectations (for the coming year), and perhaps the strategic planning program activities for the entire division?

As of May 6, the Oklahoma Legislature has not adopted any legislation regarding revenue or expenditures for fiscal year 2017. All we know is that revenue projections set in February predict that there will be \$1.3 billion less in the state general fund than there was in the initial budget approved for FY2016. Furthermore, there are some signs that the decline in revenues to the general fund may be levelling off. There have been a number of proposals described and proposed by Governor Fallin and by various legislators, but to date there is no concrete information on what combination of revenue adjustments or budget reductions will be enacted.

The Legislature is scheduled to end this session by May 27, so they must complete the appropriations process by that date. If they fail to complete the budget process, the Governor can call them into special session specifically to complete the budgeting and appropriations processes. The Oklahoma State University and Oklahoma A&M Regents are scheduled to meet on June 17 to approve our budgets for FY2017 so we will need to act quickly to adjust our budget plans to whatever the legislature decides.

The DASNR Strategic Planning process is still in the data gathering stage from stakeholders. I described this previously in a DASNR faculty and staff forum on Dec. 16. Dr. Rob Terry is leading a group of faculty in AECL in surveying stakeholders regarding their perceptions for priorities we should be addressing in the next five to ten years. We will compile these findings and incorporate them with the 11 Drivers of Change identified in the 2011 plan for DASNR (<http://www.dasnr.okstate.edu/vision>) through a process of discussion and priority setting with faculty during fall semester.

5. The Association of Public and Land Grant Universities published a document in March 2016 unveiling a comprehensive research agenda and action plan to integrate agriculture, nutrition, food, and health care. It seems that the VPR is embracing this in his One Health initiative and focusing on Vet Med and Human Sciences. But this is also a DASNR issue. The statistics reported by USDA and ODAFF show Oklahoma as a major producer of wheat, soybean, pecans, watermelons, peanuts, cotton, and sorghum, and these also feed the export market. Oklahoma is a major importer of vegetables and food for rural and urban populations. The costs to consumers then are driven up by transportation costs as well. Oklahoma is ranked 38th in the nation for hunger and food insecurity with 15.5% of households not having enough food. There is also good

land in Oklahoma for vegetable production and a strong nursery industry. What research initiatives would you like to promote, or envision for us faculty to coordinate to work within DASNR to improve agriculture, nutrition, food, and health care in the state?

The VPR is not emphasizing other colleges more than DASNR and acknowledges that DASNR is uniquely positioned to address the FEW nexus. The point made above about the number of food insecure households illustrates the point that no single college will be able to address this issue. We are working with Dr. Sewell and the EPSCoR office to develop a research proposal with DASNR as the lead. If any faculty have interest in developing a project and/or leadership on the program please contact Dr. Owens, Dr. Huhnke, or Dr. Sewell.

6. Dr. Whitson wrote a document called Vision and Future Priority Directions and Goals of DASNR FY 2012-2020. Within that document, each Unit Head provided a written priority and goals and a significant number of those Unit Heads have retired. Since we are now 50% through this time period, is there a plan to assess how we are doing as a college to achieve this vision and is there a plan to revision given the changes both in budget and personnel within DASNR? When will we begin writing the next Vision for the College that includes Directions and Goals for Research?

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7. We recently were asked to provide DASNR with impacts from the interdepartmental TEAMS that we have been assigned to. These Teams were developed 15 years ago and faculty were assigned to them. These teams were developed to identify and address critical issues that affect agriculture across the state and mostly have been ineffective, and most do not meet. Since they are 15 years old, many of the teams are gutted by retirements, or young faculty who have left the University. I would request that the Dean re-examine the team concept, examine the external drivers affecting Oklahoma agriculture, and reorganize teams that can provide impacts that represent priorities, goals, and accomplishments that are influential.

Given the planning process that is underway, we do anticipate reviewing the team structures for our program and research priorities going forward. It is likely that some of the former teams will be dissolved or refocused, and that other new teams will be needed. Ultimately, working in teams helps to ensure that our individual efforts are contributing to overall needs with collaborative and cross-disciplinary efforts. I don't anticipate that we will stop using team approaches. At the same time that we refocus

and develop new teams, we will need to give greater attention to the goals of our team efforts and to measure how our work generates improvements for the people we serve. Ultimately, we need to be able to demonstrate and articulate the impacts of our work. This may change the way we gather planning and reporting information, and with Dr. Taylor now in the Assistant Director role for OCES, we are exploring ways to support greater attention to impact measurement and reporting.

8. The research mission of the College requires major equipment that is aging and requires repair. There needs to be a budget for maintaining equipment that is common use equipment in the NRC, Animal Science, and HBRC for the long term if we want to stay competitive. Does the Dean have a plan to address this?

Aging equipment and laboratories are a major concern for OAES to be competitive. We recently completed an assessment of laboratories in NRC, ANSI, AGH, CERL, and 4H and have completed work orders to determine cost estimates for repairs in several labs. In light of the current budget projections, we have allocated about \$150K for laboratory improvements in this phase. We will continue to allocate funds as they become available and will urge department heads to address repairs or replacement of smaller laboratory items. Some of these repairs should be funded through returned F&A to the departments. Very large laboratory equipment (high performance computing, sequencers, mass spec, etc.) have always been requested through equipment grants and we urge faculty to continue making these requests. There are currently several proposals outstanding that would purchase new equipment. Some of the common use equipment is on a cost basis so there is a replacement cost built into that cost structure. Common use equipment in HBRC is a university matter that we can discuss with Dr. Sewell.

The central administration cannot track the condition of every piece of laboratory equipment and depends on the department heads to keep us apprised of needs. Please talk with your department head to prioritize equipment needs within your department. OAES administration has quarterly meetings with department heads and equipment needs can be discussed at those meetings.

There are 2 things we will initiate in response to this question. 1) We will develop a list of equipment in common use areas including the purchase date, condition, and replacement cost, and 2) In the annual departmental report OAES will request a specific section on equipment needs and replacement for each department. Both of these steps will help in planning equipment replacement.

9. Competing agricultural universities in the region have established Core Phenotyping Facilities that are high-tech facilities for automated field or greenhouse phenotyping and seed processing. This is the future for agriculture and essential for educating the next generation. Iowa, Texas, Purdue, North Carolina, Cornell, and St. Louis are among the plant breeding programs using such facilities for breeding corn, soybean, and sorghum. If we want to stay competitive in wheat or other crops, we need to consider

developing state-of-the-art facilities to compete regionally. Is there a vision for expanding the competitiveness of our research programs through gaining investment in these facilities?

The Core Phenotyping Facility at UNL was reported to be a \$4,000,000 investment in new greenhouses and a Lemnatec system. Several of our faculty have participated in research at that facility and have submitted grant proposals to 2 different sources to build such a facility at OSU. This has not been a priority within DASNR and was only brought to our attention with this question. Given all the fund raising challenges, we would like to talk with department heads to set priorities for this facility relative to other DASNR needs. This will require extramural funding from either grants or fund raising to complete.

10. Extension District Director position applicants without an agricultural background are typically asked what steps they will take to effectively supervise Ag Educators and Ag programs. For EEO purposes, this challenge could be resolved if it were to be addressed by administration. We are asking that administration write a process/policy that addresses this barrier.

The District Extension Director position descriptions states that one of the qualifications is: "A master's degree with at least one degree in an Agriculturally related discipline, including Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Science, or in an area related to Extension education."

Various candidates by virtue of their background have difference strengths and weaknesses and those differences lead to probing questions. An individual with a Family and Consumer Science degree would likely be asked about their ability to lead agricultural programs just as an individual with an agricultural related degree and background would be asked about their ability to lead an FCS program. A person with a Natural Resource background (specifically fisheries or forestry) might be asked about their ability to understand the cattle and wheat industries of Oklahoma as well as FCS programming.

Historically it is true that we have had very few District Extension Directors with non-agricultural backgrounds/degrees, but there have been several and we have had finalists for recent searches to fill District Extension Director positions. It serves OCES well to have a diversity of disciplinary expertise in leadership roles and we will continue to seek diverse candidate pools for vacancies.

11. Would it be possible to assign a new employee an email address before their start date?

Yes. The people responsible for payroll signup can accomplish this if the new employee conducts payroll signup in advance of their first day of work.

12. Does DASNR administration recognize that OSU probably does not need a full-time Assistant Dean for academics?

I have been impressed with the impact that Dr. Damron has had on the quality of our undergraduate programs through his leadership on many fronts. As we work through this transition time, Dr. Clary has asked two professors to share the Assistant Dean role so as to benefit from their different skills and to keep from taxing one department by removing a faculty member completely from their departmental responsibilities. I think we will learn more about how we can administer academic programs effectively and efficiently in the College during this interim period. But I do not anticipate that we will eliminate the Assistant Dean position.

13. Will Dr. Coon schedule a follow up meeting with BAE faculty? If so, when?

Yes. I sent a message to BAE faculty on May 2 inviting nominations of candidates for the interim department head position and indicating that I would meet with BAE faculty to discuss their perceptions of needed strengths to look for in candidates for the interim role. We are working to find a date and time on the week of May 16 for a faculty meeting.

14. I would like to follow up on the question that was mentioned last meeting regarding how safe is Ag Hall in the event of a major earthquake and would an assessment be conducted. I read the answer and I felt the answer put the inspection duty on the shoulders of occupants. Were there any plans for official inspection of the Ag Hall structure to withstand earthquakes? If not, I would like to ask the question again: are there plans to officially inspect the structure of Ag Hall building (over 80 years old) to ensure that there is no damage from previous and frequent small earthquakes and can it withstand future earthquakes with a magnitude between 2.0 and 5.3?

The Vice President for Administration and Finance indicates that his consultants state that our design and build standards are sufficient to withstand the earthquakes at the level we have been experiencing. They do periodically survey structures on campus to look for any signs of damage from earthquakes and other forces (wind, ice, etc.) and although they have found a few instances of minor damage, they have not seen any evidence that would suggest structural integrity has been compromised.

Long Range and Facility Planning recently inspected all of our structures on campus and on the DASNR lands west of Western Avenue as part of our master planning process. This involved architects and structural engineers. Although they identified need for major repairs or replacement of major infrastructure (HVAC, utilities) in the north and south wings of Agricultural Hall, they did not find any evidence of compromise to the structural integrity of our buildings on campus.

Neither the University nor DASNR administration plans to conduct any additional inspections at this time other than in follow-up to any subsequent earthquakes or damaging storms. This has been and will continue to be the management practice.

B. Old Business

1. Approval of meeting minutes from November 11, 2015 and February 15, 2016.

Meeting minutes from both meetings were approved.

C. Committee Reports

1. DASNR Planning Process (Jon Ramsey)

Nothing new to add to Dr. Coon's response to questions about DASNR Planning and Vision for the Future (see responses to questions 4, 5, and 6 in Questions for Dr. Coon, above).

2. OSU Faculty Council update (Nathan Walker)

For a comprehensive list of reports and recommendations, see Meeting Minutes for April 12, 2016 Faculty Council meeting, available at:
<https://facultycouncil.okstate.edu/agendas-minutes>

Note that DASNR Faculty Council will need a replacement for Dr. Walker as OSU Faculty Council representative since his term with OSU Faculty Council ends in Spring 2016.

3. CASNR Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee (Mike Smith)

No report.

4. DASNR Supplemental Pay Committee (Ranjith Ramanathan)

No report.

5. DASNR RPT Committee Report (David Lalman)

Dr. Lalman confirmed that the role of the committee is to review the process of RPT activities of each department, not focusing on merit. Thus, the committee ensures that there is consistency and adherence to review policy. With respect to policy, Dr. Lalman provided a list of recommendations made by the committee. The complete report was provided to Dr. Coon. Unit administrators received notice of unit-specific issues during

the RPT documentation review process. Dr. Coon feels this is a faculty governance issue and has provided the RPT committee report to the DASNR Faculty Council for consideration of action.

DASNR Faculty Council members agreed that Dr. Coon should share the report with department heads and request that all units review their departmental RPT guidelines and create a clear and detailed checklist with dates and items needed at each point. In order to be in place for the next RPT cycle, these items should be completed by August 15, 2016.

Further discussion prompted several questions regarding implementing RPT policy changes:

- 1) How will promotions for adjuncts (e.g., assistant to associate adjunct professor) be handled?
- 2) Will adjunct promotions be subject to review by the DASNR RPT committee?
- 3) Do guidelines need to be established for promotions for adjuncts to ensure consistency across departments?

Based on these questions, a motion passed that the DASNR RPT Committee draft a checklist that addresses recommended RPT policy changes for all faculty, including adjunct and non-tenure track faculty. It was also suggested that the DASNR RPT Committee provide a checklist for promotion to Regents' Professor, following review of the university's perspective on whether this special promotion is strictly an award and, therefore, not subject to RPT review.

6. Teaching and Advising Workload Committee (Rodney Jones)

Dr. Jones expressed that there is frustration and exhaustion among CASNR faculty with teaching appointments. Currently, CASNR teaching faculty have the heaviest teaching and advising load across the university. The Committee is gathering data from other colleges and peer institutions to gain other perspectives on how teaching and advising responsibilities are distributed among their faculty and staff. The bottom line is their major concern over retention of CASNR teaching faculty given the current workload.

Further discussion about teaching workload revealed there is frustration about CASNR administration's perspective that graduate student advising, which often requires additional hours of field and lab work, is treated as a function of research, and not as a function of teaching (hence, no credit is given for these activities for faculty with heavy teaching appointments). In addition, given the current budget crisis, there is concern that course offerings will suffer in quality and quantity as workload increases on teaching faculty as teaching FTE's diminish due to separations/retirements.

D. New Business

1. Election of Vice Chair and Secretary

Chris Richards will send a solicitation to all 2nd- year members of DASNR Faculty Council regarding the Secretary position. The Vice Chair position will be elected this fall amongst new DASNR Faculty Council members.

2. Reminder for all departments to elect new DASNR Faculty Council members to replace those rotating off this spring.

3. Next DASNR Faculty Council meeting

The next DASNR Faculty Council meeting will be scheduled based on Dean Coon's availability and the outcome of departmental elections for new members. Faculty will then be polled for their availability to meet.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 AM.

Meeting minutes prepared and submitted by Eric Rebek, Secretary, on behalf of DASNR Faculty Council.