DASNR Faculty Council Meeting Minutes

Sept. 20, 2016

Meeting called to order at 1:00 PM.

Roll call:

Dr. Tom Coon, Dean and Vice President, Division of Agricultural Science and Natural Resources

Dr. Rodney Jones, Agricultural Economics (Chair)

Dr. Li Maria Ma, Entomology and Plant Pathology (Secretary)

Dr. Eric Rebek, Entomology and Plant Pathology

Dr. Max Melstrom, Agricultural Economics

Dr. Robert Matts, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

Dr. Ramanjulu Sunkar, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

Dr. Shane Robinson, Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership

Dr. Ryan Reuter, Animal Science

Dr. Michael Buser, Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering

Dr. Tim Bowser, Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering

Ms. Deb Garrard Foster, Nutritional Sciences

Dr. Shelley Mitchell, Horticulture and Landscape Architecture (Vice Chair)

Dr. Gopal Kakani, Plant and Soil Science

A. Elect new Ag Faculty Council (AFC) Secretary for 16-17 term

Dr. Li Maria Ma was elected as AFC Secretary for 16-17 term.

B. Questions for Dr. Coon, Dean, Vice President, and Director of DASNR (Dr. Coon’s responses are in sky blue below each question submitted by faculty and staff)

1. At the DASNR Fall Faculty Meeting on September 30, they will recognize years of service for tenure track faculty but not for non-tenure track faculty. If it was not for non-tenure track faculty, many facets of the DASNR would not exist. Many non-tenure track faculty feel unappreciated, underpaid, and trapped in a dead-end job. Why aren’t non-tenure track faculty being recognized for their years of service or rewarded/acknowledged for bringing in grants, getting national awards, publishing papers, etc.?

I agree with you with respect to NTT faculty being extremely valuable to our overall success and the fact that we need to recognize their contributions. I appreciate the suggestion of including NTT faculty in the recognition of years of service, and will incorporate them into the program on Sept. 30. I would also appreciate ideas on other ways we could recognize the contributions of NNT faculty – perhaps specific awards?

1. Early this year, Dr. Owens directed us to complete a laboratory assessment survey to check the status of various research labs within the college. I was just curious if there any plans to conduct a similar survey to assess the status of teaching labs/facilities. Some of the teaching facilities require major renovation to provide quality education. For example, the poultry facility does not meet the minimum standards for teaching.

It would be useful to have this information. Dr. Clary will begin conducting an assessment of the classrooms and teaching lab spaces that are managed by the departments and CASNR this year.

1. When are faculty and staff going to be informed on how the budget cuts are going to be implemented? Will there be layoffs? Furloughs?

We will present an update on budget reductions at the fall faculty meeting on September 30. We have managed through selective reductions in staffing, largely through attrition, and reductions in operating budgets. We have no plans to issue furloughs.

1. What is plan to deal the long term effects of faculty departing OSU through retirements and leaving for other universities that offer higher salaries and operating capital?

As we absorb budget reductions through attrition, we will be very limited in our ability to invest in new hires. We do plan to release a few faculty positions for filling in the current fiscal year based on extreme needs in teaching, research and Extension. At the same time, we continue to work with state leaders and donors to help identify opportunities for one-time or non-recurring funds that can help us address equipment needs, facility upgrades, and in some cases new construction. And we continue to seek ways of increasing operational efficiency so as to make more funds available for key position needs. Keeping open lines of communication about our plans is key to good morale. Ultimately, we will continue to be challenged to find new ways of conducting our work and focusing on the most critical needs and recognizing excellence in fair and equitable ways.

1. What is the status of the Strategic Planning effort for the Division? The assumption is that future priorities might be important for requested future positions in light of budget reductions.

In the spring semester, we developed a Delphi study with the assistance of researchers in the department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership. The round 1 survey was sent in late March and two additional surveys have been conducted since that time. The respondents are industry personnel, producers, agricultural and natural resource leaders in our state, etc. I have had one-on-one conversations with many of the DAC members over the summer months as well to seek their input. I am hopeful to have preliminary results from the surveys available in October, and will share these with faculty through a forum and with DAC members at the fall DAC meeting. Following those discussions, we will proceed with DASNR administration and department leadership, faculty, staff and students to complete our prioritization process. I believe we will have an update to our strategic plan in December or early in the spring semester and I look forward to the input of DASNR Faculty Council.

1. Are there direct Divisional guidelines for “when” departments should plan for a reduction in force to meet expected current and future budget reductions?

There are no division guidelines. If a reduction in force is deemed necessary by the unit administrator due to budgetary shortfalls, we refer to [OSU Policy 3-0711](https://stw.sp.okstate.edu/policies/Shared%20Documents/Layoff%20and%20Reduction%20in%20Work%20Force%20for%20Staff.pdf) “Layoff and Reduction in Work Force for Staff”. Unit Administrators will work closely with Sue Bonner to develop and implement the layoff plan.

1. When will the proposed F&A distributions changes for experiment station-based projects be implemented?

F&A distributions occur twice a year (July and January) for the previous 6 month period.  The new distribution policy will be implemented with the January 2017 distribution.

1. When will the Department Head search in Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering start? Has a search committee chair been selected yet?

I had told the BAE faculty previously that I anticipated a need for the appointment of Dr. John Veenstra as Interim Department Head to last for up to 12 months. He began his appointment August 1. Resolving ongoing shortfalls in the department budgets is one of the key issues that I asked Dr. Veenstra to address. He is working on this, and as I have stated previously, once we have a balanced operating budget for the department, we will be positioned to begin a search for a new department head. I am hopeful that we can begin the search early in 2017, but will not commit to a certain date until we have resolved the department’s budget issues.

1. Has Ag Hall been structurally inspected within the past year to evaluate potential earthquake damage? There are cracks in the wall in the 3rd floor men’s room on the south wing and in the west side stairway. (Note: this question was submitted before the magnitude 5.8 earthquake that hit us on September 3).

The structural code that Ag Hall was built under has been in place for 80+ years. I’m told this code ensures building design would withstand earthquakes of magnitude 5-6 with minimal damage.  All buildings on the Stillwater campus are built to this code and should be able to withstand earthquakes of similar magnitude with Ag Hall being among the strongest given it’s age and methods of construction at the time.

After the most recent earthquake, Ag Hall and other buildings on campus were inspected by engineers and architects and the damage to Ag Hall is cosmetic only. .If you believe earthquake damage has occurred, please notify your unit administrator and complete a work request at fm.okstate.edu or contact the Action Desk to report the damage so that it can be addressed.

1. When is the accounting administration for grants going to get better? Budget and accounting with Banner is getting worse over time. For making every little change between budget line items (there are so many more line items now), it takes weeks to get the modified budget in the system. Moving incorrect expenses between accounts are also difficult and takes weeks. I have been told by our accountant that they do not have time to make these changes often. These are slowing down research activities, consuming faculty and staff time every day and results in return of unused funds at the end of the project. Will this ever be resolved and is this the new normal?

Budgeting and accounting in Banner provides for stricter internal controls and compliance with University policy and procedures than did the legacy system.  Better budgeting, better planning, and better monitoring of the placement of initial expenses are the real keys to reducing the number of budget transfers.

For example, the legacy accounting system, FRS, did not do a budget pool check prior to the posting of expenses, so as long as the account had a positive balance, expenses were allowed to process.  Banner does a budget pool check, which is a check of available funds in the corresponding budget pool. If the balance is insufficient, the transaction is rejected. In FRS the budget line-item (budget pool) was not checked. Rather, FRS would allow a transaction to be processed if the total budget was sufficient. FRS grant accounts were often out of compliance because of this practice.  Banner will not let a fund be out of compliance in this manner and is creating the internal control that should have existed before.  It isn’t that there are more accounts out of compliance now, it’s just they can be identified and adjusted for compliance.  I believe we will have fewer funds out of compliance as we move forward.

Grant funds (accounts) that were set up in FRS and then transferred to Banner will continue to see some need for budget transfers between line items.  In FRS, budget pools were allowed to go into the negative.  While not requiring budget transfers just to fix the negative balances, when transfers are made for other reasons, it is prudent to remedy the negative line items or pools at the same time.

New funds that are created in Banner should see much less need for budget transfers, as funds are setup with the proper pools and line items initially.

In DASNR, we have modified our budget templates to assist faculty with planning the initial budget.  We’ve added more line items into the budget, rather than combining everything into pools.

Moving incorrect expenses between funds is not a Banner issue.  The crux of that problem is that the expenses were placed incorrectly to begin with.  Once that happens, it is a manual-based process to make the correction.  The ideal solution is for the expenses to be placed correctly to begin with.  That’s not always possible, but there are many corrections that can be avoided altogether.

In terms of timeframes, a budget transfer not requiring agency approval should take from 3-8 business days upon the PI notifying departmental staff. If the transfer requires agency approval, the transaction can be completed in 12-25 business days. For more detail, see the attached document “Life Cycle of a Budget Transfer”.

1. Some portions of Ag Hall have no AC on weekends during hot months (nor heat during cold months for that matter), making it a very uncomfortable work environment. What determines which portions of the building get AC and/or heat control on weekends?

Ag Hall has different air handlers for each section of the building (south wing, north wing, east wing and hex). OSU has implemented many energy cost savings measures, including more controls on conditioned air in our buildings. All air handlers are on by 6:00 a.m. in Ag Hall on weekdays. The air handlers power-up independently in the evenings/weekends when the temperature in that wing is >85 degrees or <55 degrees. During the warm months, the air handlers are powered down at 5:00 p.m. on weekdays and then power-up independently when >85. In October, we can change the evening setting for offices to 6:00 p.m. because energy costs are no longer at peak rates from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Other buildings occupied by DASNR faculty and staff have customized schedules which are not very different from that of Ag Hall.

All of the air handling is adjusted for classes. If there is a later evening class, or an early morning class, the air handlers are set to accommodate these times. You can request conditioned air for events by completing this form 10 days prior to your event: <http://energy.okstate.edu/sites/default/files/VSER_Form.pdf>

1. Why do full members of the Graduate Faculty have to renew their memberships (which they never had to do in the past) simply because they are not currently tenure-track? How will these faculty members be notified of their Graduate Faculty status/expiration date? What will happen to the graduate students of these faculty members should their Graduate Faculty status NOT be renewed?

All faculty whether tenured, tenure-track, or non-tenure track are required to renew their graduate faculty status every 5 years.  This is typically done at the same time as a cumulative review or promotion.  This requirement was instituted several years ago because the database of graduate faculty was out of date with people who had left the university or retired.  Faculty are notified of the timing of the review by their department heads and by the Graduate College, and the review is conducted within the department.  A recommendation is then made to the proper Group within the Graduate Faculty.  If a faculty member’s graduate faculty status is not renewed, current graduate students would need to find another advisor within the department.

1. Can you please provide an update on the status of the tuition waiver for children of faculty and staff at OSU?

Provided by the provosts office: The proposed tuition waiver for dependents of faculty and staff remains “under consideration” on the Faculty Council recommendation list.  As you know, the recommendation has strong support from employees, as well as the administrative team.  Unfortunately, the budget failures of FY2016 and the budget reductions for FY2017 have forced a delay in finalizing and implementing this policy. This will continue to be an issue for the Provost and Faculty Council to discuss.

C. Old Business

1. Approval of meeting minutes from May 9, 2016.

Meeting minutes were approved.

D. Committee Reports

1. OSU Faculty Council update (Tom Royer)

No report. Tom Royer was elected as OSU Faculty Council liaison for AFC.

1. CASNR Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee (Dr. Joe Shatzer)

Dr. Shatzer stated that the major works have been completed on course action forms.

Note that DASNR Faculty Council will need a liaison for this committee

1. DASNR RPT Committee Report (David Lalman)

No report

Note that DASNR Faculty Council will need a liaison for this committee

1. Teaching and Advising Workload Committee (Rodney Jones)

Dr. Jones presented the report from the Ag Faculty Council Sub-Committee on Teaching-Advising Workload Expectations (attached). The report revealed that our College’s current workload expectations in teaching and advising are very high relative to peers AND many activities related teaching and advising are not explicitly recognized in the current guidelines, such as graduate student advising which often requires additional hours of field and lab work, among others. It was suggested to conduct a more comprehensive formal survey (as a project), perhaps by a graduate student on what the needs on teaching and advising in our College are and how teaching and advising responsibilities are distributed among our faculty and staff compared to other Colleges and peer institutions. Dr. Coon suggested a meeting between Dr. Cindy Clary and the Sub-Committee on Teaching and Advising Workload Expectations.

E. New Business

1. Election of Vice Chair

Dr. Shelley Mitchell was elected as the Vice Chair.

1. Election of OSU Faculty Council liaison

Dr. Tom Royer was elected as OSU Faculty Council liaison for AFC.

1. Election of Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee liaison

Dr. Robert Matts was elected as Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee liaison

1. Election of DASNR RPT Committee liaison

Dr. Max Melstrom was elected as DASNR RPT Committee liaison

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.

Meeting minutes prepared and submitted by Dr. Li Maria Ma, Secretary, on behalf of DASNR Faculty Council.