

November 20, 2009
Ag Faculty Council Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Tom Royer, Deb VanOverbeke, Dave Engle, Nurhan Dunford, Kefyalew Desta, Joe Schatzer, Damon Smith, Bruce Dunn, Jody Campiche, Chad Godsey, Dan Storm, Shane Robinson, Dean Whitson, Garvin Quinn

1. Call to Order: Tom Royer called the meeting to order at 2:30 pm.
2. Approval of Minutes: A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the September 18, 2009 meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously.
3. Questions for Dean Whitson: Below are responses to questions submitted by faculty for Dean Whitson.
 - Admittedly, I do not know all the facts. My understanding is, for a faculty member to pay his/herself 11 and/or 12 month salary the funds must have: 1) overhead, and: 2) specifically been budgeted for salary. So why can we not use “unrestricted” funds to pay faculty salaries? They are “unrestricted”. I am hoping that during these tough economic times there may be an incentive to change the policy.

Answer: Administration has agreed to study incentives more. The current policy goes back to the 1990s when faculty were appointed to 11 month positions vs. 12 month positions. This change in appointment provided an incentive for a faculty member to obtain a grant for their 12th month of pay. While administration has not looked at a need to change, they have investigated additional incentives for grants to contain salary. For example, can a PI get incentive for two months salary – allowing them to pay their 12th month plus get a one time bonus (you cannot say 13th month because 13 months do not exist). This has not been finalized, but the Deans are looking at alternative and additional incentives and the impact such alternatives/incentives would have within a department or within the college given the ability of researchers in some disciplines having a better ability to obtain such incentives because of the typical pool of money from which their research is funded. Draft versions of these incentives/alternatives have been started. This topic can remain on the table in order to provide AFC with updates as they become available.

- Why is there no DOT-certified driver training for Division personnel who pull trailers using state-owned vehicles? It seems to me that this should be a standard training exercise for anyone who has to haul field-research equipment with a trailer. This could help reduce University liability and better educate those with little experience manipulating a large vehicle with a trailer.

Answer: If a vehicle/trailer meets the weight restrictions (> 26K lbs), the driver must have a commercial drivers license. To get this license, drivers must complete the DOT training program – we would never hire someone to do a job without the proper license to complete the requirements of their job. We realize there is a farm exception to this regulation and, as such, we ask faculty and supervisors to provide necessary on the job training for graduate students and/or employees that are required to pull trailers to be sure they

have enough experience in doing such tasks. Remember, safety is our number one priority.

- Referring to the new online travel reimbursement system, will administrators from the Department Heads on up to the President, have to file their travel like the faculty? In addition, will they be required to provide their account number that the travel was paid from and have that account number open for viewing to the public like the faculty in this new system?

Answer: Yes, everyone is using the same system. Account numbers were used and are still used on the paper system, so they are available to public viewing if needed in the paper system as well as the online system. The question still remains as to if files are more accessible within the online system than via the paper system.

- What is the status of the facility at Ardmore? What is the vision for this facility? Will this facility be more efficient in Ardmore than a similar facility in Stillwater? If so, why is that the case?

Answer: The facility operation itself could be more 'efficient' in Stillwater. But, efficiency is with the Noble Foundation in that 75-80 faculty are located there. We are hoping to increase facilitation of integrated research, perhaps with adjunct appointments, graduate student training, and increase the opportunity for graduate students. The vision is not to be a 'wing' of the Noble Foundation, but to increase ties with the Noble Foundation and more efficiently bring in that part/geographic region of the state. The Division would like to see Extension staff with a bigger role in research even though they are not hired for that specifically, and this gives those in that area the chance to become involved in research even though they are not faculty or in tenure track positions. Other institutions are envious that OSU will be located in a facility right next to the Noble Foundation.

- What is the process by which the design and layout of departmental web sites are decided? We have received instructions via departmental systems administrators that new departmental web sites are mandated to follow a set template with no variations allowed. The latest proposed template dedicates all prominent links going back to division pages with departments immediately losing all visitors back to the division main pages leading to considerable confusion. Was faculty/ departmental input, other than a few computer support personnel, sought in the decision making process? Would the Dean spell-out the policy on departmental web resources?

Answer: In July, OSU rolled out a new website. Generally, the website provided a new refreshing look. Typically, universities will unveil new looks every two years to keep their look up to date and fresh for visitors. This was done without input from DASNR and when the new look was unveiled, the Division was asked by OSU marketing to adopt the same feel. Dewayne Hunter and IT discussed the new template and proposed a template that was then approved by Dr. Whitson in October. This meeting to discuss the template that was proposed was open to all IT personnel in the Division as well as anyone else that wanted to attend (people were invited/informed by

email and there were 3-4 face to face meetings). The template that was approved meets the general intentions by look and feel of the OSU marketing group and allows for a lot of creativity in Departmental sites. The departmental flexibility is that the 'real estate' between the top drop downs/header and the footer is for a department to do whatever they feel meets their goals best. The header and footer are consistent with the OSU system.

- I read in the paper that OSU is under a soft hiring freeze. Exactly what does a soft freeze mean and will that allow us to fill critical roles of those that opt for early retirement?

Answer: Soft means that as positions become vacant they will be evaluated hard before the position is refilled. DASNR is the only division with an early retirement option at this time. We currently do not know who or how many will commit to taking the option. Once it is determined who is opting for early retirement, we will have to determine what positions are critical in priority areas and those will need to be filled. Nearly 250 people in DASNR meet requirements for early retirement and employees have until January 2 to make a decision. If a department loses 4-5 faculty, that will provide a base for concern and some of those positions will have to be refilled. The purpose for early retirement is to get us ready for the proposed 2012 budget (which will have a base budget down 10% from 2009). The debate is still going on at the state level on going into the rainy day fund, early spending of stimulus money or increasing the decrease in allotment of allocations to prepare for budget shortfalls. We have brought in \$5.4 million to add to the base the last few years – if we lose 10% of our budget, the budget will become similar to the 2002-2003 fiscal year.

4. Old Business:

- a. Update from Distance Education Committee – Shane Robinson
Shane has not heard from Dr. Miller, but has heard that there will be changes in the distance education policy from other faculty. Shane will contact Dr. Miller to touch base on the next meeting of the committee and attend as the AFC representative.
- b. Ag Education is actively searching for a Department Head

5. New Business: None

6. Next Meeting: February, 2010

7. Adjourn: A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.