

DASNR Faculty Council Minutes
102 Ag Hall
March 4, 1999

Dillwith called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. with the following faculty present: Bender, Curl (ex officio non-voting member), Dillwith, S. Dolezal, Epplin, M. Essenberg, Hayes, Hermann, Krenzer (ex officio non-voting member), Murray, Oehrtman, Solie, and Turton. Absent: Horn, Maness, and Needham. Coston and Love attended until about 9:40 a.m.

The agenda was presented by Dillwith and approved without exception. Minutes of the November 16th, 1998 meeting were read and approved.

Responses by Dean Curl to Questions Submitted by Faculty

Dean Curl provided responses to nine questions that had been submitted prior to the meeting.

***Question 1:** The FAPRTC building contains excellent facilities for targeted conferences. However, currently it is difficult to arrange for non-OSU participants to park near the building. Many of the potential participants are very busy business people who desire the flexibility to arrive late and leave early. Are there any plans to improve access to parking near the facility for non-OSU people?*

Response: Parking near the Oklahoma Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center, like other buildings on campus, is under the purview of the OSU Parking Services Office and subject to OSU parking regulations. If there is a group or individual who needs to park close to the building, arrangements can be made with the OSU Parking Services Office to obtain temporary parking permits. The permits can be obtained in advance of the meeting and sent to the participants. This is standard procedure for some of our advisory committee meetings in the Student Union and Center for International Trade Development. There are no plans for development of parking spaces near the FAPRTC dedicated to use by "non-OSU people." If such is desired, the Dean's Office would be pleased to work with the FAPRTC director to seek the addition of several parking meters to the parking lot north of the Center which could be used by visitors.

***Question 2:** Are there ways the faculty with computer expertise within the division can assist the dean's office to improve e-mail communications?*

Response: The Dean's office invites and encourages positive, helpful comments that can aid our support staff in troubleshooting and diagnosing problems associated with electronic communication. The following opportunities for communication are currently available to all Division personnel:

1. A listserv has been created especially targeting discussion regarding information technology. This listserv is identified as dasnr-mgr@listserv.okstate.edu. Along with Dean's office personnel, many departmental/unit computer support professionals are subscribed to this listserv. Your comments can be posted to this listserv; Dean's office support staff will respond.
2. With respect to information technology, the Division works in a "distributed computing" environment. Many departments have elected to fund computer support specialists through their departmental budgets. Though these specialists do not report to Dean's office personnel, meetings between departmental/unit information technology professionals and Dean's office personnel are scheduled on an "as-needed" basis. (A meeting of this type was held just a few weeks ago.) All interested personnel are invited to participate in these meetings. These meetings serve as another forum for expressing concerns and offering advice on computing-related issues.

3. Dwayne Hunter helps coordinate technology related issues throughout the Division. He has an open-door policy. Feel free to make comments directly to Dwayne (x5536).

The Dean's office computing support staff, like many departmental support specialists, work closely with CIS to maintain services such as e-mail. Funding levels and issue prioritization limit those technologies and capabilities that can be offered to the departments/units through the Dean's office. At this time we cannot offer and maintain an environment to support all departments/units with regard to e-mail. If departments/units feel this technology (e-mail) is a high priority issue, a reallocation of funds would be necessary to initiate support at the Dean's level.

***Question 3:** Based on the plan approved by the regents that there will be an emphasis on 4-H in the counties and most counties will have two extension educators, unless the county covers additional positions, is there a plan for how the two county educator positions will be filled? Is one position definitely going to be 4-H, and the other dependent on county needs, or will one position be Ag and one FCS and both will perform 4-H, or no specific plan at this time?*

Response: Position descriptions and evaluation procedures for all county educator positions will be rewritten. Based on consistent input from all stakeholder groups, 4-H activities will be a high priority. The expectation in counties with two staff will be to have one with the title 4-H/Agriculture and one, 4-H/Family and Consumer Sciences. Other arrangements are possible, i.e., two counties deciding, in consultation with the District Director, to “team up” and share certain resources across county lines. Not all counties will operate in the same manner. We believe that all of our program areas are important and that this system will provide service to meet a multitude of needs of our citizens.

***Question 4:** What priorities have been established for filling vacancies at the state and area levels for Extension specialists?*

Response: The ability to fill state and area specialist positions in coming years will be primarily dependent on achieving new funding from the Legislature. In the initiative currently before the Legislature for FY 2000 funding, priority is on increasing county staffing to needed levels in 21 counties that currently have less than two professional educators. From existing funds, it is anticipated that we will fill two of our vacant state specialist positions on a priority basis within the next six months in addition to the Associate Director position. We have fewer staff than many of the states around us primarily because of the size of Oklahoma's population and the tax base. We will have to be innovative in staffing and in the use of communications and other electronic technologies. There are also new mandates associated with Federal (Smith-Lever) formula funding which specify increased multi-state activity to be able to continue to receive those funds. With our focus on serving Oklahoma, we must be creative in how we collaborate with extension and research workers in other states to best meet the needs of our citizens.

The next two questions are very similar.

***Question 5:** If the Legislature fails to provide additional funding for extension, or inadequate funding to implement the proposed plan, what will the administration do to deal with the budget?*

***Question 6:** If the Legislature fails to support the plan for extension, is there an alternative plan?*

Response: The Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources engages in an on-going planning and assessment process. The Division's strategic plan, which has had broad involvement of

faculty, staff, and clientele in its development, provides the major guidelines for the Division in its efforts to meet the critical needs of Oklahomans.

In the untimely event that there is no increase in state funding or a reduction in state funding for the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, an assessment of all OCES programs will be made to determine which are most critical to fulfilling the OCES and Division mission as stated in the strategic plan. Because our resources for Cooperative Extension would not be adequate to sustain our current budgeted level of staffing on a continuing basis, a reduction in the number of OCES positions would occur and affected employees would be reassigned or placed in layoff status. Emphasis would be placed on maintaining staffing sufficient to insure the delivery of quality extension programming at the county level. OCES administration would continue to evaluate each position vacancy that occurs and determine whether it would be refilled based on its priority and the availability of funding.

In many cases, as you know, our state level positions are funded from more than one budget agency-- Extension Service, Experiment Station, College. Any reduction in funding for one agency, therefore, has a significant effect on the programs of one or both of the other two agencies. A reduction in OCES state funding would be detrimental to the Division's teaching and research programs as well.

I want to particularly emphasize that to be successful in the effort we are making to obtain additional state funding for extension, all of us must be convinced that we individually and OCES as a whole are performing functions of high priority and that our programs are absolutely vital to the state's future. I am convinced that if we truly believe this and that if we show this in all of our dealings with others, those whom we serve will be convinced and will support us fully. We must project a spirit of confidence that we are performing a service that is so important, the citizens of Oklahoma cannot do without it. If we are indeed successful in our legislative strategy, the Cooperative Extension Service, with the advent of the new fiscal year, will be in its best position and condition in years. Optimism is contagious. Unfortunately, negativism is also contagious. I do not believe that it is helpful to expend energy at this time on "what if it doesn't happen?" discussions. It is not productive to create additional anxiety in those who might feel that their jobs are in jeopardy. Indeed we have had discussions about what might happen. However, for the next several weeks we must all devote our full energies to assuring that we are accomplishing our mission in the best possible manner and that we are doing all that we can through our contacts with the public to ensure that our legislative strategy for FY 2000 will be successful.

***Question 7:** Given the budget problems do you anticipate a good pool of candidates for the Associate Director of Extension position? Why not appoint another Interim (Coston or Love) until the budget problems are resolved? Would this not provide a more attractive position for a potential new Director?*

Response: Yes, we anticipate a very good pool of candidates for the associate director, OCES, position. The OCES has an excellent reputation because of its faculty and staff and the high-quality programs they deliver to the people of Oklahoma. OCES and the Division need and deserve a full-time associate director of extension who can devote his/her full energies to providing aggressive leadership in fostering an effective Cooperative Extension Service program.

***Question 8:** Given the complex problems within Extension it seems that there is a need for strong leadership from someone who has no local baggage. Is the search for the Associate Director of Extension going to focus on external candidates?*

Response: The search process for candidates for the associate director, OCES, position will be nationwide with the focus on identifying the best possible candidates wherever they may be located.

Question 9: *Do we have any information on the early-out program for Cooperative extension employees (for both Federal and State plans) ?*

Response: The request for voluntary early retirement for those OCES employees who hold a federal appointment was submitted to USDA in November 1998. As of February 25, USDA personnel were reviewing our request and have indicated that a set of additional questions will be sent to us within the next two weeks.

Additional Questions

Murray asked about the potential for providing medical benefits for graduate students. Dean Curl responded that the university understands that competing institutions are providing medical benefits for graduate assistants. Alternatives are under consideration.

Gularte was summoned to the meeting to clarify the response to question nine. Approval of the federal extension early out program has been delayed at the federal level. DASNR is trying to expedite the process.

Turton asked Gularte about A&P salary ranges. Gularte responded that plans are underway to move from the current 22 pay grades to six pay grades with much broader salary flexibility within grade. She expressed optimism that the system that evolves will enable the university to pay competitive salaries for all employees including those with unique skills. Gularte said that DASNR currently has a policy to reimburse departments for half the cost of staff development programs. Guidelines for the program are available from Gularte.

Gularte was dismissed.

Dean Curl distributed copies of "A Strategy for Enhancement of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service", February 1999. (The document may be accessed through the DASNR web site at the following address: <http://www.dasnr.okstate.edu/intranet> Follow the link to "OCES plans for the future," then click on "request to legislature.") Dean Curl requested support for the strategy. He also requested that faculty provide feedback, both positive and negative, regarding the concerns of constituents including legislators relative to the strategy. He reminded the group that the Division's three functions, research, teaching, and extension are interrelated and interdependent.

Dean Curl was asked if the planning and funding for relocation of the swine facility has been fully resolved. He said that the McElroy site would not include some of the classrooms and labs planned for the 6th street facility. The McElroy site will not have a lagoon. It will have a two-stage covered bioreactor. Plans for use of the 6th street location have not been developed. Dean Curl said that he would like to see the red brick barn preserved.

Dean Curl left at 9:40 a.m.

OSU Faculty Council Report - Krenzer

Krenzer reported that he is completing the last year of his three-year term.

The OSUFC continues to monitor benefit programs including health care benefits.

Krenzer reported that one consequence of the OSUFC discussion regarding university support for faculty computer hardware and software is that in future years each dean will receive a \$400 additional allocation per faculty. However, the dean will have flexibility as to how the funds are used.

Essenberg presented and Hayes seconded a motion that appreciation be expressed to Krenzer for representing the DASNR faculty on the OSUFC and for serving as a liaison to the AFC. Motion carried.

Old Business

Dillwith expressed concern regarding the lack of a consistent system for archiving AFC minutes. Essenberg indicated that she will attempt to retrieve minutes from previous meetings since AFC was instituted. Dillwith said he would inquire whether the dean's office has copies of past minutes. If not, Essenberg offered to help try to retrieve them.

New Business

Membership and activities of the DASNR RPT committee.

By policy "...The purpose of the RPT Committee is to assist the Division in assuring that the process of reappointment, promotion, and tenure leads to a high quality Division faculty, clarity of procedures of implementation, and fairness in application..." The committee is composed of "... two members from the AFC (currently Maness and Turton) ... and three members from the Division general faculty..."

Dillwith noted that the committee has not been very active and that records of prior DASNR RPT committee activity have not been located.

Essenberg presented and Bender seconded a motion that recommendations for general faculty appointment(s) to any vacant slots on the DASNR RPT be made by the Chair and approved by the AFC in an expeditious manner (i.e. via e-mail). Motion carried.

Dillwith will issue a request to the DASNR RPT to meet and report at the next AFC meeting.

Review of role and purpose of AFC.

An informal discussion of several issues regarding the role and purpose of the AFC followed. It was decided that a more formal discussion be scheduled for consideration at a future meeting.

Turton presented and Bender seconded a motion to adjourn. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 10:43 a.m.

Francis Epplin, Secretary