

DASNR Faculty Council Special Meeting Minutes

March 21, 2006

Members Present: Lynn Brandenberger, Dwayne Cartmell, Jim Criswell, Shiping Deng, Sam Fuhlendorf, Udaya Desilva, Gerald Horn, Mike Kizer, Ramamurthy Mahalingam, William McGlynn, Derrell Peel, Dan Tilley, Sharon von Brombsen, Debbie Richardson (for Sissy Osteen)

Members Absent: Steve Hallgren

Ex-Officio Members Present: Bob Whitson, Vice President, Dean and Director, DASNR

Call to Order: Chair Lynn Brandenberger called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM in Room 139 Ag. Hall.

Agenda:

The only agenda item was discussion with Dean/VP Whitson regarding changes in the administrative arrangements within the Division.

Dr. Whitson began the discussion by recounting that one of the purposes of the DASNR Faculty Council is to act as a sounding board for the administration, representing the views of the faculty with regard to any policy changes made by the DASNR administration. Changes in the DASNR administrative structure are being contemplated and Dr. Whitson wanted to present the proposed changes to the Council and receive the Council's feedback before presenting the proposal to the Board of Regents.

The proposed changes will concern three positions not associated with any agency within DASNR (Experiment Station, Cooperative Extension or CASNR), but solely with DASNR administration. The positions are those currently filled by Steve Stone, Director of Fiscal Affairs; Gary Shearer, Legislative Liaison; and a newly-created position. The proposal would change the title of the Director of Fiscal Affairs to Associate Vice President for Fiscal Affairs. The Legislative Liaison position would be re-titled as Assistant Vice President for External Affairs. Both re-titled positions would continue to be filled by the current personnel. The third proposed change would move Dr. Bob Westermann from his current position as Assistant Director for the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station to a newly-created administrative position of Assistant Vice President for Special Projects.

By way of explanation for the title changes, Dr. Whitson said that he felt the changes would help the Division administration function more effectively. The Associate Vice President title change would put Steve Stone's position on par with staff performing similar duties within other units elsewhere in the OSU system. The Assistant Vice President title will give Gary Shearer greater cachet when dealing with legislators and legislative staffers as he represents DASNR at the capitol in Oklahoma City.

The newly-created Assistant Vice President for Special Projects is intended to be a transition position. It may or may not be refilled in the future. Dr. Whitson pointed out that he has been in

the Dean/VP position in DASNR for less than a year. We will soon have a new Associate Director for the Experiment Station and a new Associate Director for Cooperative Extension. Dr. Miller would be the only person in the DASNR administration at the Associate level or above with a long history in the Division administration. It is necessary to maintain as much institutional memory as possible during the next few years as the Dean/Vice President and the two new Associate Directors get up to speed and familiarized with the history of the Division. Dr. Whitson felt strongly that Dr. Westermann's history with the Experiment Station would be an especially valuable resource during this transition period.

Dr. Whitson emphasized that despite the Vice-Presidential titles these positions would carry they would not be "line" positions and would not be another level of administrative hierarchy between the department heads and the Dean/VP. These positions would appear as a separate branch within the organizational structure of DASNR. Steve Stone's position would be brought into decision-making only with regard to financial policy. Gary Shearer's position would be dealing with legislative initiatives DASNR should be looking at and promoting the Division's position with regard to legislative support. Bob Westermann's position would be assisting the Dean/VP with special projects and contributing to information gathering.

When the floor was opened for questions and discussion the following issues were raised by the Council members:

1. *The Vice-Presidential titles will make these positions sound like they are superior to the Associate Director/Associate Dean positions, especially to observers from outside the Division.* Dr. Whitson gave assurances that they were not superiors to the Associates, and these positions are not in decision-making line between the faculty and the Dean/VP with regard to promotion and tenure issues, faculty and staff hiring, etc.
2. *There is often a tendency for "mission creep". Even if these positions are not in the decision-making hierarchy, as time passes there is the danger that the people in these positions may assume more authority than originally intended. This is most likely to occur when there is a change in the personnel occupying these positions.* Dr. Whitson gave assurance that such a growth in authority would not occur during his watch as Dean/VP, and expressed the view that if the position descriptions list detailed job responsibilities the chances for such an escalation of authority over time are unlikely.
3. *Filling the Assistant Vice President for Special Projects position without a national search may likely open your decision to question with regard to following proper procedure. Could this not be avoided by filling the position on an interim basis?* Dr. Whitson said that this might be possible. However, Dr. Westermann was chosen for the position specifically because of his history within the Division and the institutional memory he would bring to the position. He could not conceive of an external candidate being as qualified because of this lack of background in OSU DASNR administration.
4. *It was asked if perhaps another senior faculty member or department head from within DASNR might be just a qualified and would like the opportunity to apply for this position with the title of Assistant Vice President?* Dr. Whitson said that could be true, but was confident that

Dr. Westermann was the best person for the position, given his long tenure as a faculty member, department head and Assistant Dean of the Experiment Station.

5. *It was asked if the department heads had been informed about the possibility of this administrative change, and what their opinions were?* Dr. Whitson said that the Council was the first group with whom the proposal had been discussed. He anticipated communicating with the department heads and unit heads via e-mail or in a meeting as soon as possible after this meeting with the Council.

Dr. Whitson thanked the Council for its opinions and comments. The opinions of the department heads and unit heads, along with the Council's, would be taken under advisement with regard to the final form of the proposal. Dr. Whitson anticipated presenting the proposal to the April meeting of the Board of Regents.

Announcement:

Dr. Whitson also announced that Jane Carpenter-Fuhlendorf would be joining the DASNR staff as Administrative Assistant to the Dean/Vice-President. Her duties will be to assist Dr. Whitson in preparing for the many on-campus and off-campus meetings and functions he attends, and in maintaining his schedule. It takes a good deal of background work to assure that he is properly prepared to represent the Division, and she will be of great assistance in that preparation.

The meeting adjourned at 2:25 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Michael Kizer, DASNRFC Secretary