

Questions/Answers from AFC Meeting - September 17, 2003

Strategic Planning, the Division, and OSU

Question #1

What is the status of the DASNR planning process?

Response:

There are two separate but related planning activities in progress. One is DASNR's "Planning for the Future" process undertaken in response to our shortfall in state appropriations and the OSU Board of Regents resolution of April 25, 2003, directing all OSU institutions and agencies to engage in a planning process that would result not only in reduction of costs but in greater strength and effectiveness. The other is our portion of the University's Strategic Planning process. Both processes are on target.

Question #2

How will the Divisions' strategic planning process interface with President Schmidly's planning process?

Response:

DASNR's Strategic Plan will be part of the University's Strategic Plan.

Question #3

Do you anticipate that the current planning process will result in a physical reorganization of the division (elimination or combination of departments, etc.)?

Response:

We will be meeting with this Council and with DASNR's faculty and staff around the first of October to present the results of our "Planning for the Future" activity up to that time.

Question #4

What is the role of international programs in the new plan?

Response:

We will continue to be engaged in international programs.

Question #5

How does the College plan to cover classes where those individuals had split appointments with extension or research that are taking the retirement package? Any idea how long vacant positions will be frozen?

Response:

The College will be challenged to offer some courses in a timely way that will not have an adverse effect on student academic progress. In some cases retired teachers will be retained on a contractual basis to teach courses. This approach has been successful in some instances in the recent past. If the College continues to provide FTE's to departments to teach specific courses and active qualified faculty are available, department heads may shift faculty assignments as we do when faculty are on sabbatical. Other short-term solutions may include using part-time instructors to TA's. In the longer term the College will have to engage the OAES and OCES, as we have in the past, to set priorities and refill critical jointly funded positions.

Question #6

There seems to be a huge communication gap between the President's office and the remainder of the university. Has President Schmidly visited with the Deans concerning the future of OSU and his plans?

Response:

President Schmidly has visited with the Deans and other administrators on a number of occasions concerning the future of OSU and his plans.

Question #7

In the minutes of the February 21, 2003 meeting, Dean Curl is reported to have said: "I view Dr. Schmidly's service as our President in a very positive light...He is beginning his Presidency at what is obviously a most difficult time because of the state's financial problems. I believe he will be an outstanding President..."

- a. Has Dean Curl's opinion changed?
- b. Money seems to be plentiful for selected administrators, spouses of administrators, coaches, bulletproof windows, and athletics facilities including croquet courts. Why is it that the "financial problems" seem to be limited to faculty and staff salaries?

Response:

- a. My opinion has not changed.

- b. Financial problems are not limited to faculty and staff salaries. For example, we have reduced the OAES maintenance and operations allocations by 40% over the past two years.

Question #8

As overall morale seems to be dwindling, how is our leadership planning to keep morale up for division faculty and staff?

Response:

By continuing to do the very best we can to provide an environment in which faculty, staff, and students can achieve at the highest levels and by reflecting and encouraging an optimistic attitude about what the Division, through its programs of teaching, research, and extension, can accomplish in the future. I hope that we will be able to reward those individuals who are willing to work diligently toward those ends.

Division Administrators

Question #9

Do any of the Division administrators intend to take advantage of the retirement incentive program?

Response:

Not to my knowledge at this time, although people will have until the end of October to indicate their intentions in this regard.

Question #10

When will BMB get a Department head? Margaret has kept things going but the department needs to have permanent leadership.

Response:

We will reopen the search when financial resources permit.

Question #11

There have been some changes in administration. Could we get a new flow chart that shows names and positions in DASNR?

Response:

Yes (I distributed copies of the DASNR organizational chart to those attending the AFC meeting and will provide a copy to be distributed to all faculty along with the minutes of the meeting.)

Question #12

Based upon Article II Section 1 of AFC bylaws, "...Minutes will be sent to the AFC membership within two weeks of each meeting for revision...". Why did it take four months for April 18 minutes to be posted? Is this indicative of a lack of respect for the system?

Response:

There are apparently some misconceptions about the reasons for the time lapse between the meeting itself and the posting of the minutes. I am sure, however, that I did not provide my written responses within the prescribed two weeks due to the press of other items--organizational planning and budget decisions, for example--and the detailed nature of the response to some of the questions.

Facilities**Question #13**

A committee was established earlier this year to look at space utilization and other space issues within the Division. Has that committee reached any conclusions, and will any changes be made regarding space utilization and the division of space between departments within Ag Hall?

Response:

The committee has not yet made any recommendations to this office although I know that the committee members are looking carefully at space utilization by departments.

Question #14

All too frequently, some of the restrooms in Ag Hall emit very foul odors into the hallways of the building. This is rather embarrassing especially since the Division is in the process of building a swine facility "guaranteed" to not emit odors. Why doesn't the Division install exhaust fans in these rooms to vent the air outside rather than into the halls?

Response:

Before responding to the question, I feel compelled to point out that I have never heard anyone say that the new swine facility will be guaranteed to not emit odors. We can state with assurance, however, that the teaching and research facility will incorporate the latest technology in waste management and odor control. In response to the question, the Division is not in the business of installing exhaust fans in Ag Hall restrooms. I do appreciate having this information and will see to it that the Physical Plant is made aware of this concern.

Extension**Question #15**

What is the present position of DASNR relative to the previous issue of doing away with Area Extension Agent positions? Presently, our area agents are working in a cloud of uncertainty which is not good for overall moral and effective extension programming. The intentions of the DASNR administration relative to this issue should be communicated directly to the Area Agents and **NOT** through district directors.

Response:

Last April, area specialists were told that, based on critical need, some of them would be assigned to county positions in instances where critical vacancies existed. Since that time, several have been assigned either full or part-time to county positions. That arrangement will continue until the county vacancies to which area specialists have been assigned can be refilled. As the new comprehensive initiative teams are formed, area specialists will be assigned to the appropriate teams and will work as members of those teams as part of their overall responsibility.

Question #16

Why are in-service training events not automatically listed on the extension calendar?

Response:

In-service training activities are listed on the OCES website as soon as they are scheduled. Once the listings are all confirmed they will appear in the calendar of events. Go to http://dasnr3.dasnr.okstate.edu/inservice/inerv_main_eu.php to view the in-service events that have been scheduled thus far.

Question #17

Regents' policy with regard to treatment of encumbered funds as non-expended funds represents a very real hardship on certain departments relative to fiscal management. What is the DASNR administration doing to educate the central administration about this with the goal of getting this policy changed?

Response:

To our knowledge, the Regents do not have a policy regarding treatment of encumbered funds. Perhaps this question is related to OAES funding for FY04. At the beginning of the fiscal year, OAES informed units of their budget allocations for the year to allow for effective planning. However, actual spending authority is being given at the beginning of each quarter. Because of state budget rescissions during recent fiscal years, and potential “cash flow” issues that might loom if funds from the State do not materialize, OAES believes this is prudent management. Note that units did identify funds supporting graduate assistantships at the beginning of the fiscal year, and these funds were fully committed for the full year to assure graduate students of their stipends.

Question #18

The policy that any money coming from OAES, which includes annual allocations, start-up funds, and even animal health 1433 formula funds, is not allowed to carry over to the following year does not seem to be a very reasonable decision. Saving money as “rainy day” funds for future use becomes more necessary given the uncertainty of the prospects of the economy and funding opportunities. We understand that the legislature wants to make sure all the money allocated to OSU is not more than enough and is just about right. But if we can manage to spend less than we normally do and save some for the future, such a deed should be encouraged rather than “punished”, particularly under the current economic situation. Can the OSU administration make it clearer to the legislators and fight for change? If it happens to be an internal policy, can we engage more discussions before taking it into effect?

Response:

The Ag Experiment Station has allowed and continues to allow carry over for annual allocations and startup funds. The only funds that the experiment station has “swept” are those that were associated with internal grant accounts. We all face a challenge in these trying times. Although no individual OAES account may have large amounts of money, cumulatively there is a significant amount of money in carry-over funds. When university administration, A & M regents, and state regents see the sum of these balances, the question is asked why we need additional funds. It is incumbent on all of us to use the funds allocated and to use them wisely.

(DASNR Organization Chart attached)