**Southern Region Agronomy Department Heads (SAC-1)**

**Annual Meeting**

**18-19 May 2017**

**Auburn, AL**

**Thursday, May 18**

The 2017 meeting of the Southern Region Agronomy Department Heads (SAC-1) convened in Auburn, AL and was hosted by the Auburn University and Dr. John Beasley. The meeting was held at the Auburn University Hotel and Dixon Conference Center.

Attendees were:

**Attendees**: Jeff Edwards, Oklahoma State University; Julie Carrier, University of Tennessee; David Baltensperger, Texas A&M University; Scott Senseman, University of Tennessee; Jeff Mullahey, North Carolina State University; Robert Bacon, University of Arkansas; Clarence Watson, University of Arkansas (Administrative Advisor); Jeff Steiner, USDA-NIFA and John Beasley, Auburn University (Host)

Institutions not represented at this year’s meeting were: University of Kentucky, Virginia Tech, Clemson University, University of Florida, Louisiana State University, Mississippi State University and the University of Georgia.

John Beasley gave a welcome to Auburn University and an overview of the agenda for the two-day meeting. The agenda for the meeting is listed below.

***Wednesday, May 17***

*Arrive in Auburn, AL*

*(Shuttle from Atlanta Airport – Groome Transportation (17 trips per day from ATL to AU,* [*http://auburn.groometransportation.com/*](http://auburn.groometransportation.com/) *-* [*http://auburn.groometransportation.com/auburn-shuttle-schedule/*](http://auburn.groometransportation.com/auburn-shuttle-schedule/)*)*

*(when checking the Groome Transportation schedule remember that ATL is on EDT and Auburn is on CDT)*

*Hotel Accomodations – The Hotel at Auburn University* [*http://www.auhcc.com/*](http://www.auhcc.com/)

*241 South College Street, Auburn, AL 36830*

*334-821-8200*

***Dinner on your own*** *(Auburn is home to several award winning and recognized restaurants, check with John for suggestions above and beyond the routine)*

***Thursday, May 18***

*Breakfast on your own (the restaurant at the AU Hotel, Ariccia Trattoria, has an outstanding breakfast buffet)*

*8:00 AM – Walk across the street from AU Hotel to Auburn University campus and Comer Hall*

*Comer Hall 109*

*8:15 – Coffee and light breakfast snacks*

*8:30 – Welcome and Agenda discussion – John Beasley and Clarence Watson*

*9:00 – Associate Dean for Research*

*9:30 – Associate Dean for Instruction*

*10:00 – Break*

*10:30 – Director, Alabama Cooperative Extension System – Dr. Gary Lemme*

*Assistant Dean for Extension – Dr. Paul Mask*

*11:15 – SAC-1 Business – Dr. Clarence Watson*

*Noon – Lunch (Red Barn – Ag Heritage Park)*

*1:30 – Tour of Auburn research facilities*

*The Old Rotation, Cullars Rotation, Sports Surface Field Lab and CASIC*

*3:00 – CASIC Conference Room*

*Discussion Topics*

*A. “What new challenges are facing your department?”*

*B. Federal funding – expectations under new federal administration*

*C. Multi-state projects and Hatch funding*

*D. Constraints on research programs – laboratory, field, funding*

*E. Update on IDC and state level commodity groups*

*F. Undergraduate curriculums – meeting student needs*

*G. Distance education – undergraduate vs. graduate programs*

*H. Graduate student training – requirements, expectations*

*I. Alumni relations, development*

*5:00 – Leave for AU Hotel*

*5:30 – Transportation to Auburn University Club*

*5:45 – Supper with Dr. Paul Patterson, Dean of the College of Agriculture*

*7:30 – Transportation back to AU Hotel*

***Friday, May 19***

*Breakfast on your own*

*Check out of AU Hotel*

*Comer 109*

*8:30 – Coffee and light breakfast refreshments*

*9:00 – Discussion continued on topics from day before*

*11:00 – Transportation back to Atlanta airport*

*Noon – Lunch with Heads and Chairs with later departures*

**Dr. Clarence Watson**, administrative advisor for SAC-1, began the meeting with an overview of our group’s responsibilities and an explanation of SAC-1, which is Southern Administrative Coordinating committee, and is comprised of department heads and chairs of academic departments in agronomy, crop or plant, soil and/or water science at land grant institutions across the southern region of the U.S. We are members of this committee by virtue of our positions. This group is set through 2020. The following are bullet points of topics covered by Dr. Watson.

* SAC-1 is involved in review of collaborative projects/proposals (full or pre-proposals) for multi-state funding
* NIMS (National Information Management System) – needs updating on list of participation – this is where our business is housed and stored – annual reports are posted in NIMS – Appendix E is the participation report

**Dr. Henry Fadamiro** – Associate Dean for Research, College of Agriculture, Auburn University

Dr. Fadamiro provided a welcome and an overview of the research programs in the College of Agriculture at Auburn University. The following is a summary of his comments. Approximately 20 new faculty members have been hired in the College of Agriculture at Auburn in the past year. Most of these hires have been in a research/teaching appointment with most research appointments at 60 or 75%. Dr. Dale Monks serves as the Director of Research Operations for Outlying Units for the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station. There are 16 outlying units in the system, with 6 designated as Research and Extension Centers and 10 designated as research centers. The E.V. Smith Research Center at Shorter, AL is the closest to the Auburn University campus, approximately 30 miles west of the campus.

**Dr. Amy Wright** – Associate Dean of Instruction, College of Agriculture, Auburn University

Dr. Wright provided a welcome to Auburn University and the College of Agriculture followed by a discussion and overview of the academic programs in the College. Undergraduate enrollment in the college continues to increase and the 2016-2017 academic year had approximately 1,100 undergraduate students and approximately 300 graduate students. Enrollment projections for the 2017-2018 academic year look to surpass both of those numbers. The new faculty hires in the College have filled some of the missing gaps in instruction programs in some of the departments due to retirements. The College is approaching $1,000,000 in scholarships for undergraduates. Two new majors have been approved in the College, Biotechnology through the Department of Entomology & Plant Pathology and Agricultural Sciences through the Department of Horticulture.

**Dr. Gary Lemme** – Director of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Dr. Lemme provided an overview of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Alabama has 67 counties and an Extension office in all 67. The subject matter programs are delivered through Regional Extension Agents that have specific expertise, for example, agronomic crops. There are 6 Regional Extension Agents for agronomic crops in Alabama, one each for Northwest, Northeast, West Central, East Central, Southwest and Southeast Alabama.

**Monday afternoon – travel tour of “The Old Rotation”, the Cullars Rotation, Sports Surface Field Lab and Center for Advanced Science, Innovation and Commerce (CASIC)**

Following lunch, the group toured several locations associated with Auburn University and the College of Agriculture. Stops included “The Old Rotation”, which is on the Registry for National Historic Sites and is the longest continuous cotton rotation site starting in 1896, the Cullars Rotation, soil fertility research since 1911, the AU Sports Surface Field Laboratory and the Center for Advanced Science, Innovation and Commerce, or CASIC The CASIC facility is home to much of Auburn University’s basic research in genetics, water and computational throughput.

**Discussion Topics**

1. Challenges at each represented institution
   1. Oklahoma State University (Jeff Edwards) – budget cuts ($20 million)
   2. University of Tennessee – Soil Science (Julie Carrier) – faculty (old vs. new), gateway soils course because of 2-year free college
   3. University of Tennessee – Plant Science (Scott Senseman) – in a new building and UT hired a new Chancellor
   4. Texas A&M (David Baltensperger) – IT security and meeting state laws associated with IT security, the political structure in Texas and posturing by A&M for funding, under a current hiring freeze.
   5. North Carolina State University (Jeff Mulahey) – conservative political structure in North Carolina, extensive hiring (which is a good situation), challenges within the department in development/fund raising
   6. University of Arkansas (Robert Bacon) – loss of positions (one hire in 6 years), especially in teaching positions
   7. Auburn University (John Beasley) – AU is under a new budget model that is challenging for the College of Agriculture
2. Federal Funding
   1. Jeff Steiner from USDA-NIFA led the discussion – budget for NIFA and AFRI included $25 million bumps, a hiring freeze complicated operations within USDA
   2. AFRI will be consistent
   3. Faculty need to communicate accomplishments from NIFA/AFRI funding!
3. Multi-State projects and Hatch funding
   1. Faculty need to participate in Multi-State projects and create networking opportunities
4. Constraints on research programs
   1. Support from colleges on existing versus new programs
   2. Matching instruction and research on faculty appointments

**Friday, May 19**

Discussion on SAC-1 meeting locations for next few years

2018 – Texas A&M

2019 – Starkville, MS

2020 – Stillwater, OK

2011 – Raleigh, NC

As a reference, 2015 meeting was in Knoxville, TN, 2016 in Gainesville, FL and 2017 in Auburn, AL

Continuation of discussion topics from Thursday

1. Update on IDC and state commodity groups
   1. Florida now has 12% IDC on commodity grants
   2. University of Arkansas levies plot charges
   3. Key question is how to work with state-based commodity groups and IDC charges
   4. Unrecovered F&A is used as a match in Texas
   5. At NC State, the Department of Crop & Soil Sciences is charged by the College for F&A (commodity board members impact state appropriations)
2. Undergraduate curriculums
   1. Auburn University – new Agricultural Science major
   2. Student needs – more international experience and more practical experiences
3. Graduate students and Distance Education
   1. The group discussed the variability within and among institutions regarding graduate student stipends
   2. Revenues generated from DE programs provide funding support for programs

**Next Meeting – will be held in May 15-17, 2018 at College Station, TX (Texas A&M and David Baltensperger as host)**