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Attendees:

Jamie Strange, Chair (Ohio State)

Brian McCornack (Kansas State)

John Ruberson (U. Nebraska)

Sujaya Rao (U. Minnesota)

Hannah Burrack (Michigan State)

Steve Harris (Iowa State)

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| **Quick recap** | |
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| The team discussed the challenges they are facing due to recent federal cuts, layoffs, and budget constraints, including the impact on their work, grants, and the need for guidance in making changes. They also reviewed project reviews, the implications of federal funding cuts, and the challenges faced by faculty members in grant applications. Lastly, they discussed the transition of leadership, the organization of a dinner for the upcoming North Central branch meeting, and the value of getting together amidst potential changes. | |
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| **Next steps** | |
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| • Hannah to send out a poll for the best night to have a dinner during the upcoming North Central branch meeting. | |
| • John to help find a suitable restaurant near the North Central branch meeting venue for the group dinner. | |
| • Brian to start the process of organizing a broader CEDA group meeting to discuss implications of recent federal cuts and university responses. | |
| • Jamie to forward Hannah's name to Chris as the new chair of the group. | |
| • Hannah to grab the full list of department chairs and heads from the previous email for future communications. | |
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| **Summary** | |
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| **Work Challenges and Layoffs Discussed** | |
| Jamie, John, Hannah, and Brian discussed the current state of their work and the challenges they are facing. Jamie is rewriting their appointment, promotion, and tenure document and patterns of administration documents. John mentioned that they removed all of their Dei websites and references. Hannah expressed the need for guidance in making changes and the inconsistency they are facing. John noted that their upper Admins might not know what to do either. Brian shared that they lost a chunk of their AR people and the situation with the Meat Animal Research Center. The group also discussed the potential impact of the layoffs on their work and the animals in their care. | |
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| **Entomology Graduates and Federal Cuts Discussed** | |
| In the meeting, Hannah expressed concerns about the relevance of conducting employer surveys for skills in entomology graduates due to the current glut of well-qualified job seekers. Jamie then introduced the agenda for the 2025 meeting, which included a discussion on two project reviews and the implications of recent federal cuts on budgets and grants. Jamie also suggested a future meeting involving a broader group of administrators to discuss university responses to these changes. The participants introduced themselves, with John Ruberson from the University of Nebraska, Hannah from MSU, Brian from Kansas State, Steven from Iowa State, and Sujaya, a past department head at MSU, in attendance. | |
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| **NCERA224 Review** | |
| Sujaya reviewed the project NCERA 224, highlighting the need for consistency in reporting and better collaboration among states. She noted that while individual states were active in disseminating information, there was a lack of collaboration and linkages across states. Sujaya also mentioned that the attendance at meetings had been variable, with some states not participating. Jamie suggested that Sujaya's comments could be used to improve the project. Sujaya also noted that reporting on the project could be improved. | |
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| Jamie, John, Sujaya, and Brian discussed the mid-review process for a project. Sujaya highlighted the need for better linkages and engagement in the project, and John explained that the review would go back to Chris and the NCERA group for further action. Brian suggested that advisors could provide coaching to improve the quality of reports. The team agreed that the advisors' engagement was crucial for the project's success. | |
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| **Arthropod Management Renewal Proposal** NC246 | |
| The group discusses a renewal proposal for a project on arthropod management in corn. Jamie notes that the review is mostly positive, but highlights two areas of concern: inadequate literature citations and unclear research responsibilities of participants. The group suggests these issues should be reported back for improvement. Brian, who is involved in the project, mentions a recent memorable snowstorm in Florida where the project team is based. | |
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| In the meeting, Brian praised the activities of a diverse group of participants engaged in multi-state projects, specifically the Sentinel project, which tracks corn earworm resistance across numerous locations. John echoed Brian's sentiments, mentioning the group's large and active participation. Hannah and John discussed the challenges of managing such a large and diverse group, including the need for a condensed proposal and the difficulty in detailing everyone's work. They also discussed the group's interactions with the industry and government agencies, and the potential implications of EPA deregulation on these relationships. The conversation ended with the suggestion to provide the group with clarity on their purpose and objectives. | |
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| **Federal Funding Cuts and Hiring** | |
| Jamie initiated a discussion about the implications of federal funding cuts on his department, particularly in relation to recent graduates and international students. Hannah shared her concerns about supporting recent graduates and the need to help them adapt to the uncertain job market. Sujaya discussed the university's response to the funding cuts, including a hiring freeze and the need for all communication to go through the general counsel. Jamie mentioned that while there isn't a hiring freeze in place at OSU, positions would need to be approved by the Dean's cabinet, and Brian hinted at potential cost-saving measures. The team agreed to be cautious about proposing new hires in light of the budget situation. | |
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| **Grant Application Challenges and Solutions** | |
| Brian discussed the challenges faced by faculty members in grant applications, particularly in relation to changes in the Request for Applications (RFA) without clear communication. He highlighted the importance of faculty members being diligent in checking the RFA for changes, as they are not always communicated. Brian also mentioned the impact of the USAID on some major projects and the need to quickly reassign personnel who lost their positions. Jamie and Hannah shared their experiences with similar situations, including a postdoc who lost their job with APHIS and the need for a pool of potential candidates for temporary positions. Hannah suggested considering the research associate line for postdoc hiring to have a pool of available candidates. | |
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| **Team Addresses Funding and Security Concerns** | |
| The team discussed the challenges they are facing due to the current climate of uncertainty and funding issues. Steven mentioned that a USDA grant was terminated and the department is trying to ensure graduate student stipends can continue for at least 90 days. John echoed these concerns, mentioning that they are trying to support students for at least two months. They also discussed the issue of faculty and staff security, with Steven mentioning that a faculty member's name was publicly disclosed on Twitter. Hannah advised the team to proceed as normal unless they have an active stop work order. | |
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| **Transition of Leadership and Meetings** | |
| The group discusses the transition of leadership, with Hannah Burrack volunteering to take over as the new chair. The members present unanimously voted to approve her role as chair. They agree that the ideal time for their annual meeting is January or February, as it aligns with the review process. Brian suggests organizing a broader discussion with the seated group to address timely topics, such as the future of their institutions. John proposes having two meetings: one virtual meeting to discuss reviews and another in-person meeting linked to the North Central branch meeting for more in-depth discussions about their units. | |
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