

Annual Meeting of NCAC-4: Horticultural Crops
Hosted by the University of Georgia, Athens, GA
June 15-17, 2022

Meeting notes:

The annual meeting of the NCAC-4 was hosted by the University of Georgia on the Athens campus on June 15 – 17. Ten members of NCAC-4 attended the in-person meeting, and one member joined the conference virtually. The attending members were Bill Braunworth (Oregon State University), Carlyle Brewster (Clemson University), Desmond Layne (Auburn University), Frank Louws (North Carolina State University), Jeff Iles (Iowa State University), Leo Lombardini (University of Georgia), Martha Mamo (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), Thayne Montague (Texas Tech University), Thomas Bewick (USDA/NIFA), and Wagner Vendrame (University of Florida). The meeting began on the evening of June 15 with an informal tour of the university's north campus followed by dinner in downtown Athens.

The second day, Leo Lombardini welcomed the attendees to the meeting and introduced Nick Place, Dean and Director of the College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences (CAES), as the first speaker. Dean Place gave an overview of CAES which was followed by an overview of the Horticulture program at UGA, delivered by Leo Lombardini. The first half of the day was focused on recruitment and job readiness. Larry Ryan (Founder/President of Ryan Lawn & Tree) gave perspective of how to prepare students for careers in the horticulture industry. Next, Jazmin Albarran (Executive Director of Seed Your Future) provided ideas for engaging students in horticulture as well as resources for student scholarships, internships, and careers. The theme of the second half of the day was diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) of horticulture students. Lakecia Pettaway (CAES Director of Diversity affairs) talked about how to be comfortable having conversations about DEI. Jenn Thomson (Associate Research Scientist, Dept. of Crop and Soil Sciences, UGA) discussed the Food Scholars Partnership and introduced an undergraduate course that is being developed to address DEI in agriculture. After the presentation and discussion period, the attendees visited the university student-run farm, UGArden. Two CAES PhD students, JoHannah Biang, and Noelle Joy, talked about the history of the garden and herb programs and led a tour of UGArden. The second day of the meeting was concluded with a self-guided tour of the Georgia Botanical Garden and dinner in the botanical garden conservatory. John Erwin joined part of the second-day meeting via Zoom.

The third day of the meeting began with Amanda Newquist (CAES Director of Experiential Learning) talking about internships and experiential learning opportunities for CAES students. Next, David Berle (Associate Professor and Undergraduate Coordinator, Dept. of Horticulture, UGA) gave the history of horticulture student recruitment at UGA. The group then had a tour of the Trial Gardens on UGA's campus led by John Ruter (Professor, Dept. of Horticulture, UGA). In closing the meeting, Desmond Layne assumed the chair position for the group. He will host the next meeting at Auburn University in June of 2023.