

2018 NCAC-014 Meeting

Minneapolis, MN – Wednesday, February 28

The Graduate Minneapolis (formerly The Commons) **Think 3 Room**

615 Washington Ave. SE - Minneapolis, MN 55414

Introductions, housekeeping

- **Attending:** Chris Staiger (Purdue), David Wright (SDSU), Jack Rasmussen (NDSU), Jim Steadman (UNL), Thomas Bauman (ISU), Carolee Bull (PSU), Patty McManus (UW), Martin Draper (KSU), Jim Bradeen (UMN).
- **Administrative Advisor,** Rick Bennett, unable to attend, but was available by phone if needed (not needed).
- **NIFA Representative:** Rubella Goswami.
- Items added to the agenda – graduate recruiting.

NIFA updates and discussion (R. Goswami)

- Second NPL-Plant Pathology will start at NIFA in mid-March, Tesfa Mengistu. He is a nematologist and came to NIFA from a faculty position at the University of Florida.
- Reassignment of NPLs for multi-state committees – 2 NPLs will now be assigned to improve attendance and connection with committees.
- General Update –
 - There is no new Appropriations act for the current fiscal year. The agency is under a **Continuing Resolution until March 23, 2018.**
 - FY2018 funding is based on the CR of FY2017 discretionary funding.
 - However, mandatory spending is not affected (SCRI, some organic programs).
 - Budget estimate is \$1.353B, working plan – operating under a CR is better than the President's FY 2018 budget proposal, which reduced the funding for several programs, eliminated others and reduced NIFA's appropriation by 7% from FY2017.
 - Some **changes** are afoot at NIFA –
 - **AFRI** will now have three major foci – three separate RFAs
 - **Foundation and Applied Science – which will now add** applied programs as opposed to the previous Foundational Programs RFA. There were a couple of applied programs that had found their way into that RFA and the name change will be more descriptive of the content.
 - Challenge areas being rolled into a new program - **Sustainable Agricultural Systems**, which will accommodate large integrated projects that address major outcomes for agricultural systems. Some indications are that elements of the old challenge areas may be embedded, but only in a systems context.
 - **Education and Workforce Development** (formerly Educational Literacy Initiative - ELI) – This newly labeled program/RFA will be negligibly different from the old ELI program.
 - Applied stakeholder involvement will still be an important part of funding programs.
 - RFAs are expected mid-March – Likely one at a time with the Foundational and Applied Science RFA coming out first.
 - **Virtual panels** will become the norm –
 - IFPS is moving to virtual panels as the first choice.
 - The panel manager would be on site, but panelists would be remote.
 - Connections will be primarily through Zoom as a *cost savings* move.

- There is an increasing emphasis on **appropriate acknowledgement of NIFA funding**.
 - Proper acknowledgement is critical and may result in some undefined penalty in the future – at least being forced to change the reports to show support.
 - Watch for the checkbox of if cited as NO or if the PD actually did not really cite the funding.
 - <https://nifa.usda.gov/acknowledgment-usda-support-nifa>
 - *"This work is supported by [Program Name] [grant no. XXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX/project accession no. XXXXXXXX] from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture."*
 - Be sure you have the program correctly identified. There have been some issues with incorrect naming of the program source.
 - Acknowledgements apply to capacity programs as well (Hatch, Hatch Multi-state, Smith-Lever, McIntire-Stennis, RREA, etc.)
- **NIFA State Liaison** program
 - Liaison program is being reinvigorated/re-emphasized to NIFA staff
 - One and sometimes two NPLs are assigned to each state plan – ideally, an 1862 and 1890 institution are submitting joint plans and reports, but Ohio is still submitting separate reports since Central State is new to the game and still learning about program planning and reporting.
 - Liaisons serve as the reviewer for the state Plan of Work and Annual Report against capacity funding (Hatch, Hatch Multi-State and Smith-Lever Act funding).
 - Liaisons also serve as the primary POC for issues between that institution and NIFA.
 - <https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/POW%20State%20Liaison%20Assignments%20FY2018.pdf>
- **Tactical Science** Initiative
 - Repackaging of biosecurity program funding lines for simplicity.
 - NIFA has 60+ funding lines
 - This proposal merges six funding lines, into one funding line, but programs would remain intact. Some integration would be attempted.
 - The most recent report in the Tactical Science Initiative is posted at this link (<https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/tactical-science-continuing-commitment>).
- External **Listening Sessions**
 - Four areas were noted: (check with Rubella)
- A list of possibly **useful grant programs** was shared (*include attachment*)
 - New program in data management (FACT) and it is still not completely defined. NPL is open to calls for deeper conversation (Alicia Frame – alicia.frame@nifa.usda.gov)
 - EAGER – Plant Breeding Exploratory Research (excerpted form program announcement – *"This USDA-NIFA, NSF-BIO Joint Activity is soliciting Early Concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER) proposals that address the development of innovative approaches for phenotyping and microbiome characterizations, as well as for elucidating the role of microbiomes in plants and animals. This activity addresses critical gaps in tools available for characterizing plant and animal phenotypes and microbiomes, in part to more fully realize the potential of low-cost high throughput sequencing and genotyping technologies"*).

- See also the Dear Colleague letter from NSF-
<https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2016/nsf16058/nsf16058.jsp>
- Program contacts:
 - Michael Mishkind, Program Director, Integrative Organismal Systems Division, NSF at mmishkin@nsf.gov or 703-292-7190
 - Larry J. Halverson, Program Director, Molecular and Cellular Biosciences Division, NSF at lhalvers@nsf.gov or 703-292-7278
 - Edward Kaleikau, National Program Leader, Division of Plant Systems, Institute for Food Production and Sustainability, NIFA at ekaleikau@nifa.usda.gov or 202-401-1931
 - Lakshmi Matukumalli, National Program Leader, Division of Animal Systems, Institute for Food Production and Sustainability, NIFA at lmatumalli@nifa.usda.gov or 202-401-1766
- REEU program – APS Office of Education is supporting UG research through all grant projects and will offer a letter of support (contact Lydia Tymon at Washington State) for how UGs can interact at an APS meeting (lydia.tymon@wsu.edu).
- Multicultural Scholars – <https://nifa.usda.gov/program/higher-education-multicultural-scholars-program-msp> (NPL: Ray Ali rali@nifa.usda.gov).
- Women and Minorities in STEM (WAMS) - <https://nifa.usda.gov/program/women-and-minorities-science-technology-engineering-and-mathematics-fields-grant-program>
- Data Gateway is a good source of information at great detail –
- The USDA “improving customer services” initiative in USDA is really being addressed at NIFA through building redundancy and team approach to interacting with clientele groups.

Review of NCCC307, Biochemistry and Genetics of Plant Fungal Interactions (C. Staiger)

- Recommend continuation.
- Project AA was present and concurred

Review of NC1183, Mycotoxins: Biosecurity, Food Safety, and Biofuels Byproducts (M. Draper)

- Recommend continuation.

How best to use of AULF meetings at APS (C. Bull, group discussion)

- There seems to be a lot of one-way communication. Can we do something to improve interaction?
 - Topics might be:
 - 1) Active graduate student recruiting;
 - 2) Communication methods – Listserv?,
 - 3) Building collaborative teams across disciplinary boundaries;
 - 4) Recruiting junior faculty to grant and multistate teams;
 - 5) Committee reports from Office of Education, Extension Committee, Extension Committee;
 - 6) Department exposure – external communications.
 - The fact that we are together is good. It gives more opportunity for interaction and to know our colleagues.

- Carolee and Marty will share our ideas with Sandy Pierson (current Chair of AULF).

Active Graduate Student Recruiting

Most of us agree that we are waiting from good students to fall from the sky.

- Purdue – new approaches, no data yet.
 - Identify good candidate undergraduate colleges (through websites) and contact their plant science faculty directly.
 - Developed a Twitter bot that is designed to spread the word to a broad audience and the increase in applications by about 50 was attributed to the bot.
- PSU – recent changes
 - Previously provided internal funding for two assistantships that are tied to the student.
 - Now the faculty must have half funding and the department will fund the rest, stretching the money twice as far.
 - Bridge funding or gaps is funded through other funds controlled by the Department Head/Chair.
- UW – uses a rotation program.
 - Three five-week stops in labs.
 - Rotations are optional – some students can be direct admissions to a project.
 - They currently have 30 students, distributed among 22 faculty mentors
 - Recruited students like the rotations, especially for students with a molecular interest.
 - Some believe (though it is not proven) that the rotation program increases diversity in the student population.
 - Other programs on the UW campus have a different approach and may require projects to fund their own rotator.
- Iowa State
 - Some departments have only interdepartmental programs and that impacts the program their students are enrolled in.
 - The plant path department has 50 students, but only a fraction are plant pathology students (see above).
 - There are no funds for departmental support of students (all project level support).
 - Faculty can recruit from the best pools available, such as genetics, genomics, plant biology, etc., which may be the best source of students, especially if they are molecular. Plant pathology students are mostly applied, which erodes the major.
 - There is a campus recruiting weekend for genetics which provides a huge advantage in drawing students.
- UNL
 - Moved one faculty member's teaching assignment to a mentoring intense assignment – seminar and student mentoring.
 - That faculty member has used the mentoring assignment as a fundable piece in his grant applications.
 - Undergrads are taken on a bus tour to see plots in the state and the DPH.

Recruiting minority students

- Possible places to
 - MANRRs
 - SACNAS

- ARD Conference (Association of 1890 Research Directors) – largely this would be MS students looking for a PhD
- Many shared a concern that a sole focus on elite students is contrary to the land grant mission of access which has also become a mission to serve minority students.

Prelims and qualifying exams (*J. Bradeen, group discussion*)

- UM – written and oral
 - 3-day written with 1/3 focused on the student’s area of study, followed by an oral
 - Is looking to update the written portion. Their plan is to remain a question-based exam.
 - Question: Is the purpose to test knowledge or synthesize complex ideas?
 - Consensus was that synthesis is the difference between a prelim and performance in classes.
 - Students struggle with plant disease management.
 - Learning outcomes for the graduate program are the key to successful students.
 - UMN – Graduate faculty are asked to submit one question – students are given three questions in each of four thematic areas and they must answer two of the three in each thematic area. Students must get 70% overall.
 - PSU – the committee writes the questions and the written is given to a cohort after taking the basic course. Followed by a two other exams and a final/thesis/dissertation defense.
 - UW – questions come from the committee. Whoever submits the question, grades the question. It is anonymous, typed on an internet disabled computer. If they “fail” they are given an option to retake the question.
 - UNL – does not have a prelim. The only exam is the final defense.
 - SDSU – controlled by the committee. One written failed question is allowed. Failures are given a second chance.
 - Most questions are synthesis-based.
 - There is some sentiment for a common bank of questions that could be shared across the discipline.
- Student progress leading to dismissal:
 - Entire committee has to sign-off at UW.
 - Purdue has a longer annual progress report.
 - PSU has a form that looks at several areas with the understanding that the student may not have satisfactory progress in all areas, which allows the supervisor to address specific deficient areas.
- How have we addressed English proficiency?
 - UM requires both a written and oral.
 - Some non-native English speakers have particular problems when they are stressed.
- Grading student seminar
 - Most are separate from departmental seminar series.
 - Most have more of a professional development class.
 - Some departments video and critique.

Postdoc salaries and grad assistant stipends (*M. Draper, group discussion*)

- Looking for some standards for Post Docs – FLSA minimum of \$47,476 was a driver at K-State last year.

- All concurred that Post doc salaries have been set at minimum FLSA across the region.
- Is assistantship salary a factor in student recruitment?
 - None felt it was too much of an issue. Most pay in the \$20K-\$25K range for a Ph.D.
 - Recruiting students – how much does the amount matter?
 - In most cases, tuition waivers cost the department/project.
 - Waivers vary from \$6K to \$15K.
 - At one institution a tuition waiver is truly a waiver. The university bills neither the student nor the department for the tuition.
 - At K-State, Genetics students with college fellowships get \$5,000 more than plant pathology students. Additionally, there is an endowment of about six students to get \$6000 scholarships on top of their assistantships.
 - The APS survey last year had only 18 respondents, which made comparisons difficult.
 - Fellowships that pay less than the department standard, such as Fulbright, must be augmented – several departments have this issue.
 - Grad students are a university minimum at PSU. Some can be augmented and can give a raise after passing prelims.
 - UW has a campus minimum, but because of higher stipends in other departments on campus, they raised their stipend.
 - UM pays about \$50K to cover tuition and a stipend. UW is about \$42K. K-State is about \$34K. That number is salary plus tuition remission, which may or may not go directly to the student, depending on funding source.

Mentoring strategies for junior faculty (*P. McManus, group discussion*)

- Experience and collaborations are important. To help facilitate both:
 - Present seminars at other institutions? Carolee is coordinating a Box folder or Google doc where we can post information on Assistant Professors that could be available as seminar speakers at other institutions in the region. Please respond to Carolee with: Last name, First name, E-mail, Institution, Department, Key words, Project website, and Seminar titles (potential)
 - Experience as a grant reviewer? Send a 2-page CV to the NPL or program manager. Getting added to the list at NIFA is of limited value. You need to be more familiar to the program leaders.
- PSU
 - Assistant Professors meet together at monthly brown bag lunches as PT mentoring teams and the PT committee.
 - Associate Professors – trends indicate that if they don't make full Professor by 12 years they won't – one way to assess progress is to apply the USDA-ARS rubric, the position rating system rubric (national/international reputation).
<https://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/rpes/files/rpes%20evaluation%20criteria.pdf>
- UW
 - Assistant to Associate is very clear
 - Associate to Full is poorly defined
 - Uses language or performance, “sustained over time”
 - This is the tougher step in evaluation.

Clinical promotion question –

- Clinical faculty (diagnosticians, etc.) generally don't fit promotion and tenure standards very well.

- No one offered that they have separate standards for promotion. Tracks for promotion vary widely and there may not be a track.

NCAC-14 Business meeting

1) State reports and university updates

Illinois - UI

- Not present

Indiana - Purdue

- 38 faculty (33 tenure track) 12 Assistant Professors, 4 Associate Professors, 22 Full

Iowa - ISU

- Pays a grad student for writing newsletter – supervising faculty member
- The budget model to the department from the college/university is a mess – President Wintersteen was critical when she was a Dean.
- New building is to open soon. Awaiting APHIS inspection. The ATRB – Advanced Teaching and Research Building.

Kansas - KSU

- Stand-alone plant pathology dept – graduate degree education and research only, one of two similar departments in CoA (Entomology is the other).
- Plant Pathology is the host department for interdepartmental Genetics program.
- Currently 16 tenure track faculty – 8 research faculty – 3 instructors – 7 adjuncts (3 UDPs, 7 Professors, 4 Associate Professors and 2 Assistant Professors).
- 34 grad students.
- No state funded techs, but four funded Associate Scientists.
- Budget challenges (as always)
 - Yet, filling three positions:
 - Instructor (on board),
 - Virology (in negotiation),
 - Wheat pathology (ready to offer)
 - Bikram Gill retiring in June after a five year phased (too long) and Bernd Friebe will be one year later. We will lose seven faculty members to retirement in the next five years.
- Student numbers are good, but bolstered by genetics. We would like to see more plant pathology students. We have no departmental assistantships and it makes a difference.
- A mentoring plan is being developed. It currently leans on mentoring that is too thin and requires too long a commitment.
- We are in the process of adding two new term faculty tracks, Instructor and Teaching Professor. We have a term faculty track for Research Professor, already.
- Budgets – we are working on a new model that will likely be student credit hour-based. We don't fit that model well. But the Dean like our productivity per our mission. The Associate Dean for Academics points out we have the highest per capita student credit out cost (small classes).
- We are renovating three labs and moving into a large greenhouse space at The Wheat Innovation Center (commodity commission partnership).

- Student “time to completion” - We are having a problem with some students lingering/loitering... we are ~2/3 international (1/2 Asia, 1/2 South America, 1 South Africa), but not all of the “lingerers” are international and sometimes it is a faculty attention issue.
- We are hiring a new provost (interviews start Mar 5) and our Dean is applying for multiple jobs.

Michigan - MSU

- Not present.

Minnesota – UMN

- The State of Minnesota has a budget surplus, but cuts to UMN are still common.
- Provost has defined grand challenges – reallocating “salvaged funds” with a competitive process.
- That really takes funds away from the department base line. Hiring an adjunct Economist.
- Streamlining the student selection process. Hired a person to manage the program 1/2 time.
- Addresses student challenges (mental health). New person tracks applicants Started a cohort recruitment approach this year. Implementing a signing bonus – they are paying \$2500, but the university can allow up to \$15K.
- Science Outreach through the Stakman-Borlaug Center for Sustainable Plant Health. Recently hired a person to manage the program and to facilitate “broader impacts” for NSF. One prototype science communication event at a local brewery, on brewing science, and was well attended!
- UMN has a formal relationship with Pepsico – they actually have an office on campus. Investing in research and student training. Plant path recently signed a long term lease for a trait discovery research lab with Pepsico connection.

Missouri – MU and Lincoln

- Not present.

Nebraska - UNL

- Jim Steadman is retiring within the next year and UNL is advertising for his replacement.
- 24 faculty - Faculty are located in the department, in Beadle Hall and at branch stations.
- 27 grad students.
- Has gone to a shared office staff model in the three departments in the building – that involves six shared staff members and the department still has an office staff of four.

North Dakota - NDSU

- Hosting NC Meeting June 12-14.
- Remains a stand-alone department – that is a rarity at NDSU (Plant Pathology and Polymers and Coatings are the only two that remain discipline distinct).
- 16 tenure track faculty.

Ohio – OSU and Central State

- Not present.

South Dakota - SDSU

- Had to leave for airport before reporting.

We welcome you to the 2018 North Central American Phytopathological Society Meeting

Location: Fargo, North Dakota

Dates: June 12-14

Tentative Meeting Agenda
 Tuesday, June 12 – Pre-Meeting Tours and Welcome Reception
 Wednesday, June 13 – Meeting, Banquet, and Awards Ceremony
 Thursday, June 14 – AM Business Meeting

NDSU NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Stay Play Explore

Wisconsin – UW

- Student credit hour model is problematic for the Plant Pathology Department. Small departments/ small majors are being targeted. They have already merged office/service staff in a cost saving measure.
- Program review this year.
- 30% of students are self-identified minorities.
- 100% of grads are working in fields related to Plant Path.

Pennsylvania - PSU

- 23 faculty – several are not tenure-track

2) Elect officers

- Vice chair – Jack Rasmussen

3) Location for 2019 meeting

Possible meeting sites for 2019 are Chicago or Kansas City. Marty Draper will make arrangements and send a poll for dates.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM