

NCAC-24 Annual Meeting
Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources Applied Behavioral Sciences

Stern Learning Center at Austin Cary Forest

Chair: Brian E. Myers, Ph.D.

Guest: Carlos Ortiz, Ph.D., USDA NIFA National Program Leader, Institute of Youth, Family, and Community

Thursday, January 3

Dr. Myers called the meeting to order, welcomed attendees, and gave some background on the beautiful Stern Learning Center and Austin Cary Forest, a working forestry lab for UF. Participants introduced themselves and their programs. He set an expectation for a productive meeting with meaningful outcomes. He said that the meeting should facilitate dialogue.

Following welcomes, **Dr. Carlos Ortiz gave an in-depth presentation on the programs he is responsible for, with a focus on the RFA development process.** Dr. Ortiz's role as a program leader involves facilitating the identification of agency needs, proposal solicitation, proposal review, awards, and evaluation of results. **His presentation is attached to these minutes. Of special note, comments and questions from our group focused on:**

- Key drivers for NIFA's science priorities
- Important to recognize that NIFA has 74 programs, each with a unique focus specified by its authorization; no one program is likely to support an entire project. Therefore, investigators should read RFAs carefully and submit parts of their projects to different programs.
- 3.25 of AFRI's budget is for pre and post-doc fellowships; Dr. Baker indicated he doesn't think we do enough with post docs in our discipline.
- The field would benefit from better data archiving; could NIFA warehouse large data sets?
- This group could contribute to measurement development or identifying existing measures important to NIFA funded research. Dr. Baker feels that a standard set of learning outcome measures would benefit funded research. The agency may not be able to support this, though, because they cannot endorse particular instruments.
- The group had a vigorous discussion about separation of evaluation and outreach roles on grant teams. They are not the same thing, and both tend to be a brief afterthought. It was suggested that RFAs should require named investigators for these roles, and that reviewers should be more rigorous in their evaluation of evaluation and outreach plans. Dr. Ortiz indicated that if our group writes a letter or white paper on this, he will present it to NIFA for possible action. He also suggested that leadership, education, and communication researchers should take on more PI roles and lead research by bringing on bench scientists, rather than the other way around.

Following Dr. Ortiz's presentation, the group broke into task teams for lunch. Three groups worked on specific outcomes they hoped to facilitate; they are providing their prompts and work to the group via Dr. Myers the week after the meeting.

Multidisciplinary Collaborations

The group heard presentations from Dr. Jaime Camelio, Interim Co-Director of the [Institute for Integrative Precision Agriculture at UGA](#); and Dr. Bruce Herbert, Professor of ALEC at TAMU.

Camelio gave an overview of the structure and focus of UGA's IIPA. "Integrative" is critical to the nature of their work – big emphasis on the human dimension of technology and AI implementation in agriculture. They are hosting an international conference in May 2023 and invite participants.

Dr. Herbert discussed the implications of multidisciplinary work for scholarly and societal impact of our work. He discussed a variety of metrics for measuring impact, creating better narratives for our work and programs, and new metrics that are better at estimating social impact than traditional ones. The evidence is clear that team science and in particular, multidisciplinary team collaborations, receives more citations and fares better on social impact metrics than more insular/siloed research.

Multidisciplinary work is very important – using correct metrics is critical when justifying our claims about who we are – make our work accessible – build a digital identity – exercise our influence to create academic incentives that reward broad social impact.

Dr. Herbert sent his PowerPoint to the group Monday 1/9.

The group spent the remainder of the afternoon in our working groups.

Friday, January 6

General Discussion

Dr. Jennifer Waldeck initiated some **discussion about hiring challenges**. Big research appointments are difficult for new Ph.D.s in our field, many of whom started their careers as teachers and most of whom really enjoy teaching. Mentoring committees are critical. Some chairs said that a 70-80% research appointment is too risk for our new Ph.D.s but several said we need to push to elevate our research profile. Candidates for these kinds of positions might be few, but they are out there. Dr. Myers sent a copy of UF's mentoring committee best practices by email on Monday, 1/9. Dr. Radhakrishna also suggested the [Mentoring at Purdue \(MAP\) site](#). Dr. Waldeck comes from communication studies (speech communication) where teaching assistantships are common for almost all graduate students; she thinks our field would benefit from giving Ph.D. students more teaching experience wherever possible, as well as unit-level training.

Dr. Tracy Rutherford discussed her work with Academic Analytics to improve how our field is showing up. She has worked with programmers to add what doesn't show up. **Her contact, Julie Wilson, has been very helpful and the group suggested we invite her to AA&E in Raleigh. Dr. Rutherford and Dr. Baker will work on this.** Dr. Myers encouraged us to **learn more about Academic Analytics in the meantime, and how it is being used at our home institutions.** There was further discussion that AA should not be used for faculty evaluation – it's too faulty – but as a formative tool to identify possible collaborations and to get one perspective on how a scholar is "showing up" through the AA lens.

Dr. Rutherford went on to say that **we have captured 42 Hatch and multistate projects in the database she and Dr. Retalick created. The group discussed what to do with it so that it remains useful and updated**—possibilities discussed were NCAC-24 site (but

can people find that?), subsite on AAAE, NIMSS. Nothing specific was decided. Dr. Ortiz also mentioned that all capacity and non-capacity projects are available through the NIFA data gateway.

Dr. Christopher Stripling announced that UT Knoxville is working on a protocol for awarding academic credit for 4-H projects (similar to AP credit). They are developing rubrics for portfolio review.

Dr. Myers would like to form a group of chairs interested in working on budgeting best practices and benchmarking – you must be willing to keep discussions confidential but be transparent with the group. Contact him if you are interested in participating.

May meeting topics: Progress updates and impacts from January meeting
Academic Analytics focus