

NORTH DAKOTA STATE BOARD OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION
January 12, 2023 Meeting Minutes | USDA-ARS Northern Great Plains Research
Laboratory
MANDAN, ND

The State Board of Agricultural Research and Education met for a regular meeting on January, 12, 2023. Present: Jim Bahm, Doug Bichler, Pres. David Cook, Doug Goehring, Pam Gulleason, Larry Hoffmann, Greg Lardy, Sarah Lovas, John Nordgaard, Mark Urquhart, Dean Wehri and Julie Zikmund. Absent: John Dhuyvetter, Senator Jerry Klein and Rep. Alisa Mitskog.

Chair Lovas called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

Approval of November 11, 2022 Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: Larry Hoffmann made a motion to approve the November 11, 2022 meeting minutes as presented. Seconded by Pam Gulleason. Motion carried.

Administrative Update from David Cook, President of NDSU

President Cook reported that he has been in Bismarck for legislative sessions. He recapped his first testimony from the previous day where he highlighted NDSU's accomplishments as well as the university's goals of synthesizing student and research success. He thanked the SBARE members for their feedback and is looking forward to more input.

President Cook gave a status update on the current budget cuts. He summarized that with 65% of payroll being tuition revenue, and the state's funding formula results, that there are hard decisions on the horizon. The current biennium is projecting a 7.6-million-dollar budget cut, with the following biennium having a 5.3-million-dollar budget cut. He expressed that he understood the path NDSU has taken to arrive at this situation and noted that it won't be turned around without assistance.

On recruitment and retention of students, Dr. Cook explained how the University is looking into factors that might be keeping students from academic success. Retention has historically been in the 80% range and has started slipping into the 70% range. He also noted that student demographics are shifting as the number of rural high school graduates is decreasing. President Cook announced that the University is looking to expand opportunities to provide a variety of different outlets such as certificate programs, non-traditional student opportunities, and more.

Additionally, President Cook noted that the University is continuing to discuss college mergers. A variety of options have been proposed and he has received a lot of constructive feedback.

Administrative Update from Greg Lardy, VP for Agricultural Affairs, Dean, Director, Director

Dr. Lardy shared that the Governor's Executive Budget had been released and highlighted that it did not include a decrease in funding for the Agricultural Experiment Station (AES) or Extension. The recommendation included SBARE initiative one for Extension, and initiatives three, four, and five for AES. Dr. Lardy gave an update that four of seven machine sheds from the proposed capital improvements have been recommended. Additionally, funds have been proposed to create competitive compensation packages for hard-to-fill positions. The recommendation also includes a state employee compensation increase of 6% and an additional 4% for the biennium.

Dr. Lardy spoke on the press conference that announced the results from a NDSU study. The study showed the impact of agriculture in North Dakota to be 30.8 billion dollars in the state and one in every five jobs in the state is related to agriculture. He explained that this is the first study of this magnitude. He noted that this project was funded by commodity groups and concluded that he is excited for the database to be built upon.

He noted that the legislative sessions this year will consist of working with different legislative committees. Change in leadership, with the addition of parameters around term limits, means the budgets are no longer overseen by the same committees. He noted that there is effort required when orienting a new committee.

Dr. Lardy gave an update on the College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources (CAFSNR) budget. He began by announcing that enrollment in CAFSNR is down 600 students from the 2014 high. The college has four pillar programs which typically house 300+ student per department. Enrollment for three of the four pillar programs is down significantly with the exception of the Animal Sciences. The College experienced \$650,000 budgets cut this fall and is anticipating a \$600,000 cut in July 1, 2023.

Dr. Lardy announced that the goal is to not do things to harm overall enrollment. Due to the majority of faculty and staff positions holding split appointments in teaching (College), research (AES), and/or Extension (EXT), there are very few positions that are 100% college funded. He explained that it is difficult to eliminate positions that have an AES appointment with a minority percentage funded by teaching.

Continuing to reflect on the budget, Dr. Lardy noted that data show there are less rural kids, of which has been CAFSNR's primary recruitment demographic. Universities across the Midwest are facing the same challenges and have taken steps to recruit different demographics. There is conversation on looking at attracting non-traditional students, international students, certificate program participants and individuals to residential experiences through the College.

Dr. Lardy gave a construction update that the Peltier complex has started constructing the second floor. He also shared that there will be some fundraising events coming up to support key programs.

Dr. Lardy thanked Christopher Schauer for taking on the responsibilities of acting Director of the Williston REC while also serving as Director of the Hettinger REC. Additionally, there are still active searches for Ag Budget Director and Director of the School of Natural Resource Sciences. These key positions will be primarily funded by AES and Extension.

Dr. Lardy shared that Drs. Flage and Casey are working as part of a larger team that is planning to submit a large NSF grant. In addition to other grant opportunities, this grant would help build additional infrastructure for research in ag technology and broadly across NDSU.

Administrative Update from Lynette Flage, Associate Director NDSU Extension

Dr. Flage expanded on the NSF Engine grant that she, Dr. Casey, and other faculty members are looking to submit under the leadership of Dr. Colleen Fitzgerald, NDSU Vice President for Research and Creative Activity. The goal of this 160-million-dollar NSF Engine grant is to build an economic engine around agriculture technology to include breeding programs. Dr. Flage noted that in the case that the NSF Engine grant is not received, other funding opportunities will

be reviewed. She noted that Chair Sarah Lovas has agreed to serve on the governance board for the grant proposal if the grant is received.

Dr. Flage continued that there has been a lot of preparation for this legislative session. Legislative updates were facilitated by county Extension programs in 17 locales in the fall of 2022. In December, 2022, an "Ag 101" virtual event was held for new legislators to get oriented with Extension and AES work. She noted that they received good feedback and questions. For those new legislators that could not attend, a recording of the session was distributed.

Drs. Flage and Casey have been working on a joint Ag committee session, date will be announced later. The focus of the joint Ag Committee session will be multiple short videos highlighting research and extension and how these agencies are involved in getting the food from the field to the fork.

Dr. Flage announced plans for hiring specialists to replace the individuals who accepted assistant director positions (Drs. Carrie Johnson, Mohamed Khan and Leigh Ann Skurupey). Searches will begin soon to hire a sugar beet specialist and a food systems specialist. She noted that she might be reaching out to SBARE members for assistance in serving on search committees. She concluded that Extension has hired a 4-H livestock specialist, Samantha Lahman, who starts the following week.

Dr. Flage referenced the successful 4-H State Fair showmanship program last year and noted that she may reach out to SBARE members for their participation again this year. Continuing on the topic of outreach, Dr. Flage announced that last year, NDSU Extension reached over 250,000 people. Additionally, 6,700 Extension sessions were held by various Extension personnel and volunteers.

Dr. Flage distributed an informational placard on Extension priorities for SBARE members to use. She also distributed an infographics handout on some of the 2022 impacts of Extension.

Administrative Update from Frank Casey, Associate Director of the North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station

Dr. Casey distributed the updated NDAES advocacy placard and indicated that he is looking to also have an infographics handout for NDAES. Additionally, he noted that he has been working with Dr. Flage on the legislative updates and informational content.

Dr. Casey indicated that in the last three years, the portfolio for federal funds has increased significantly. For example, Dr. Casey has been working with the USDA cooperative agreement and gave an update that this five-year agreement with six million dollars has ended. He is working with the USDA-ARS on the renewal of this project for the next five years for 6.5 million dollars. He explained that these funds would be used to augment the Precision Agriculture and Big Data programs. A current job description is being written for a federally-funded assistant professor of precision agriculture position in the NDSU Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering. Additionally, the Big Data initiative is hiring 2-2.5 positions to aid the initiative. He noted that numerous requests have been received from researchers to utilize the Big Data team to process the data, and that a strategic plan will be established for these resources.

Dr. Casey announced that multiple USDA cooperative agreements are coming to NDSU. To aid in management, AES has hired Aaron Reinholz as Project Manager to oversee operations starting February 13, 2023.

Comments from Sarah Lovas, SBARE Chair

Chair Lovas thanked all of those who were able to attend the Ag Coalition legislative social that was held the night before. She noted that it was a great opportunity to connect with legislators, commodity groups and stakeholders.

Chair Lovas announced that House Bill 1020 will be presented on Monday January 16. She encouraged SBARE members to attend and support the bill. However, noted that attendance is not required and that an online viewing option is available.

Chair Lovas thanked Gretchen Wagendorf, interim Director of Ag Budget, and Drs. Lardy, Casey and Flage for consolidated resources for the budget book and legislative session for this year. Chair Lovas noted that the approach to preparing for the legislative session is different and creative. She reported that she has received a lot of great feedback from the legislators on the unique approach.

Chair Lovas made comments on the potential changes for the University's plans to consolidate. She expressed gratitude for the support from President Cook during this time of transformation at NDSU. She recalled her December, 2022 correspondence to SBARE with comments on potential displacement of AES positions into different colleges. She made it clear that SBARE does not have purview over the CAFSNR. However, the Board is responsible for budgeting and policy-making associated with AES and Extension appointments.

She voiced concerns of AES and/or Extension appointments potentially moving out of CAFSNR and hopes that SBARE and stakeholders feedback provided to the University is seen as positive. Chair Lovas noted that if SBARE wanted to take an official stance on where positions should be placed, it would be an appropriate action. This could be considered a resolution item for SBARE to act on. Dr. Lardy suggested that a subcommittee might be an option to review the situation before making an official stance. Pam Guleson voiced support of a subcommittee to help support a decision that will advance the overall goal and solutions in a way that represents SBARE.

Chair Lovas concluded that a hearing for House Bill 1020 would be held on Monday, January 16. Students in grades 7-12 in the 4-H LAW Program will be in attendance to observe the testimonies.

New SBARE Member

Chair Lovas officially welcomed new SBARE member, Representative Alisa Mitskog. Rep. Mitskog represents District 25.,. Chair Lovas reports that Rep. Mitskog is excited to join us at the next meeting. Chair Lovas extended her thanks to the Legislators who serve on SBARE including Rep. Mitskog and Senator Klein.

2023 meeting dates and location

Chair Lovas presented a draft to the board of potential meeting dates for 2023, noting that locations might be subject to change. She noted that further discussion of SBARE's involvement at the State Fair showmanship contest will happen.

MOTION: Doug Bichler made a motion to approve the 2023 meeting dates as presented. Seconded by John Nordgaard. Motion carried.

Update REC capital construction projects

Dr. Lardy distributed an NDAES capital improvement and one-time request updates report. The following requests and updates were presented which can be found at: https://www.ndsu.edu/agforlegislators/hearing_presentationstestimony/

Dr. Lardy concluded that the various projects and difficult bidding environment is being understood by the legislators. Chair Lovas clarified that these additional funding requests are from priorities that have already been previously funded by the legislature. She continued that these are separate topics from the current top priorities. Dr. Lardy also clarified that based on guidance from the State Board of Higher Education, a 14% inflationary increase has already been included for the cost estimates for the 2023 SBARE capital projects.

Commissioner Goehring noted that the legislative requirements for an architect to be on a project estimated over \$200,000 is outdated and noted that he would support that change in the legislature.

SBARE ARF Responsibilities

Dr. Frank Casey gave an educational presentation on SBARE's history and responsibility with the Agricultural Research Fund. The presentation; contact information for Mary Helvig, coordinator for the Agricultural Research Fund; and the biennium legislative report will be distributed to the board.

Economic Impact Study Review

Nancy Hodur, director of the NDSU Center for Social Research, and Dean Bangsund, research scientist in the Department of Agribusiness and Applied Economics, presented their Economic Impact Study on North Dakota Agriculture. Their presentation and links to reports will be distributed to the board.

MOTION: Dean Wehri made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by President Cook. Chair Lovas adjourned the meeting at 12:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Erin McCall