

National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board

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MINUTES Executive Committee Conference Call

Friday, January 6, 2012 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 (Noon) EST.

Executive Committee Members Present: Jean-Mari Peltier (Chair), Dr. Steven Hamburg (Vice Chair), Dr. Charles Boyer, Dr. Carrie Castille, Dr. Nancy Childs, Dr. Steve Daley-Laursen, and Dr. Milo Shult.

Executive Committee Members Absent: Leo Holt, and Dr. Mary Wagner.

NAREEE Board Staff: Robert Burk (Executive Director) and Shirley Morgan-Jordan (Program Support Coordinator).

Others Present: Dr. Catherine Woteki (USDA Chief Scientist, and Undersecretary for REE).



I. Roll Call of Executive Committee Members and Other Attendees

- Rob Burk conducted a roll call of the Executive Committee as members signed on to the conference call.

II. Comments and Welcome from Chair and Review of Previous Meeting Minutes

- In reviewing the minutes from the November Board meeting, there are a number of edits necessary. The minutes tend to cover a lot of conversation and make it difficult to get to the main points of discussions.
- Dr. Steven Hamburg agrees with the take home points. He stated that the reports need more outcome summary and they need to be clear and accessible. He also would like to see a highlight paper which he didn't see on his report.
- Rob Burk said that he would follow up Paul concerning the highlights.

III. Comments from the Under Secretary of Research, Education, and Economics

- Jean-Mari Peltier thanked Dr. Cathy Woteki for joining the conference call.
- Dr. Catherine Woteki reviewed the accomplishments of the Mission Area over the past year.
- She noted that she had been reflecting on the engagement of NAREEE. She noted that she appreciated the work of the Board “volunteers.” She stated that their efforts deserved double thanks.
- She stated that she wanted to focus on 2012 and the future. She noted that the Mission Area is faced with a set of challenges from budgeting to management. The Mission Area budget has decreased. The FY 2012 budget decrease is not as extreme as the worst case projections. However, there is a significant downturn in funding of REE. The Department is taking steps to improve this. Some budget cutting steps have been taken to reduce the impact. Those include: travel reduction; implementing technological upgrades to decrease staff time; and they are looking at additional administrative actions to reduce costs. She noted that they are looking to NAREEE to provide recommendations on how to improve coverage, effectiveness, and relevance of the REE programs.
- She questioned how we can, moving forward, increase the effectiveness of the reports of the Board and their quality. She said that she thinks that the analysis that undergirds the recommendations and deliberations can be improved. She stated that there must be a way through the REE Advisory Board Office to improve contact with additional staff support to analyze and strengthen/undergird the analysis behind the Board reports. She would like to see a better exposition of factual base to the Board’s recommendations. She noted that the hearings and workshops of the Board have been effective in collecting a set of facts. At times there is a need for additional facts or exposition that will provide a better analytical exposition. One area is the idea of using Rob’s office to tap into agency expertise to be provided to the Board due to the fact that is a volunteer Board. Dr. Woteki indicated that she wants to work with the Committee to identify additional ways of working with the Board.
- Jean-Mari Peltier indicated that all those members who have worked on the reports understand the difficulty to develop these reports. She noted that staff support would be helpful. She noted that she wants to make sure that the Board maintains its independent voice. Having REE support to generate statistics relevant to the reports of the Board would be beneficial.
- Dr. Steven Hamburg noted that he agreed and felt it was important that the Board maintains its independence. He noted that one strategy would be to involve two different types of analysis. He suggested that the 1st meetings could set the stage for the initial conversation on a particular topic. The 2nd meeting could be used to do more analytical work. The added structure and resources would add more depth.
- Jean-Mari Peltier noted that the 2 step approach is a good one. The Spring meeting could be used to set up a more informed discussion in the Fall.

- Dr. Nancy Childs noted that she is concerned that a 1 years cycle would mean that short term topics, such as the efforts of the Board in reviewing the Office of the Chief Scientist's White Papers, would only be addressed in a long range fashion.
- Dr. Steven Hamburg stated that the Board could address both long range and short term reporting needs.
- Dr. Milo Shult indicated that the ability to provide a long term view is best given the charge to the Board, and the "level of the cut" required.
- Dr. Steven Hamburg indicated that this is exactly what he and Jean-Mari Peltier had discussed with the Undersecretary.
- Jean-Mari Peltier indicated that she thinks the Board should still stay open to being able to respond quickly to shorter term topics.
- Dr. Charles Boyer noted the benefit of having sub-committees use teleconferences in advance of the 2 meeting cycle.
- Jean-Mari Peltier noted that there is consensus to move forward with the approaches discussed.
- Jean-Mari Peltier thanked Dr. Woteki on behalf of the Board.
- Dr. Woteki indicated that with respect to Jean-Mari Peltier's desire for the Board to remain independent, she wants that independence to stay in tact.

IV. Updates on Committee Activities and/or Reports

- Jean Mari Peltier reported that she has not yet finalized the memberships of the various committees of the Board.
- There are no current updates on the status of the Specialty Crops report.

V. Updates from Work Groups/Subcommittee

- Dr. Steven Daley-Laursen provided an update on the Spring 2011 Meeting Report. He indicated that the work group had conducted the final review and editing on the report. Rob Burk reformatted the document and Dr. Daley-Laursen indicated that the report has been sent to EXECOM and then needs to go to the full board for editing. Dr. Milo Shult stated that the report was in good shape to go to the full Board. He put a motion on the floor to move the report forward. He also suggested the report go to the full Board while the EXECOM still makes the edits to the report so that the report will not be slowed down.
- Dr. Steven Hamburg had some suggestions to recommendation #1 – he felt it appeared like it was written in legislative form and needed to be re-written. The document talks about research co-op models and also talks about research centers. He questioned whether this was really what the Board is saying and he stated that there is a need to clarify whether the intent was to discuss models or centers.
- Dr. Steven Daley-Laursen stated that centers is not capitalized and can be replaced in the report to read models.
- Dr. Steven Hamburg also suggested keeping partnership out and use collaborative because it makes people think about "sharing" something.

- Jean-Mari thinks the report addresses a number of issues concerning Congress. She noted that it will be important for members of Congress to receive this information before writing the Farm Bill. We want to make the deadline of other comments by next Friday and give Board time and remove report along.
- Dr. Milo Shult stated that there will be some special challenges in management with Dr. Catherine Woteki. The recommendation #2 portion of competitive grants needs to be clear that we are asking not to be competitive but a conceptual report. He stated that the word “dedicated” is an issue. We need to change the language in the report.
- Jean-Mari asked if it would help if we say “allocate a portion of REE grant resources to collaborative grant projects.” She also stated that we may not want to use grant money.
- Dr. Milo Shult would like to see some resources from the Agency. He would like the report to say “dedicated resources” as opposed to “competitive grants”.
- Dr. Catherine Woteki stated that the Board should be as clear as possible.
- The report will run by the EXECOM after the changes and still go to the full Board for modifications.
- Dr. Steven Hamburg stated that the report needs to undergo at least three days of revision by the EXECOM and wants the EXECOM to approve language before it moves along to the full Board.
- The work group will submit the report by Friday, and the deadline for edits from the EXECOM will be Wednesday, January 18, 2012 and then it will go to the full Board for review until January 31, 2012.
- All committee members agreed to the timeline as proposed.
- Jean-Mari Peltier discussed a proposal by Dr. Mary Wagner for a brainstorming session to be held by the Executive Committee along with REE leadership. The Board has been charged to review the Relevancy and Adequacy of REE programs and to provide comments/recommendation to agencies. She indicated that Dr. Wagner has been involved in a formalized visioning process with her company. She has talked with the management of her company about pulling together a similar process to draw together a working group and discuss the transformation of USDA REE.
- Two questions that Jean-Mari Peltier felt need to be addressed include: has the creation of NIFA improved the system of intramural and extramural funding; and how can REE sort through whether the needs are being met?
- Dr. Milo Shult indicated that this sounds like a positive effort, taking a fresh look, and not containing any specific commitments.
- Jean-Mari Peltier indicated that it was an interesting offer and she felt it could improve our executive working relationship with the REE mission area. She also stated: “Has the creation of NIFA helped in the allocation of funds, and if not how can we improve how USDA allocates needs.
- Dr. Milo Shult concurred.
- Dr. Steven Hamburg also concurred and he said he can envision the two issues playing out differently. He stated that he can envision the priorities playing out in a strategic planning process. He indicated that he would like to see an agenda, or 1-2 page explanation of how the process would work.

VI. Executive Director's Report

- Rob Burk reported that the Doodle poll indicated that the majority of the Board members are able to attend the Spring meeting on March 28-29, 2012. The meeting may be outside the Washington, DC area. The thought of the meeting being outside of Washington, DC may handicap some people coming, but on the other hand, it may be more cost effective to have the meeting outside Washington, DC and will meet the regulatory requirements of the Board to hold at least one meeting outside of Washington. Dr. Shult suggested that the meeting should be held in the middle of the country.
- Rob Burk spoke with Dr. Shuchardt with the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (located with APLU) about a program to be presented to the Board concerning Extension.

Future Meetings

- **The next Executive Committee conference call will be Friday, February 3, 2012 at 11:00 a.m. EST.**
- **NAREEE Advisory Board Spring Meeting, March 28-29, 2012 - Texas**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Morgan-Jordan

Jean-Mari Peltier
Chair

Rob Burk
Executive Director

APPROVAL BY ADVISORY BOARD:

Date

Initials
Chair

Initials
Executive Director