

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

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## MINUTES Executive Committee Conference Call

**Friday, July 6, 2014, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. EST.**

**Executive Committee Members Present:** Milo Shult (Chair), Charles Boyer, Patsy Brannon, Carrie Castille, Leo Holt, Mark McLellan, Robert Taylor

**Executive Committee Members Absent:** Steven Daley-Laursen, Julia Sabin

**NAREEE Board Staff:** Michele Esch (Executive Director)

**Others Present:** Dr. Catherine Woteki (REE, Under Secretary), Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy, (NIFA, Administrator)

### **I. Roll Call of the Executive Committee Members and Meeting Attendees**

Michele Esch conducted a roll call of the Executive Committee once members signed on to the conference call.

### **II. Welcome from the Co-Chair**

Dr. Milo Shult welcomed the members of the Executive Committee.

### **III. Comments from the Office of the Under Secretary of USDA REE**

Dr. Woteki welcomed everyone on the call. She discussed three items:

(1) The African Leaders Summit was held on August 4-6, 2014, in Washington, DC. This was the first time that this many delegations were gathered at the same time. The African Leaders Summit focused on trade and investment in Africa and highlighted America's commitment to Africa's security, its democratic development, and its people. There was significant discussion on Open Data initiatives with the Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN) initiative. USDA/REE had several African countries sign on and commit to GODAN, with priority on agriculture and nutrition data sets. REE also held a "data jam" in conjunction with IBM.

(2) The Foundation for Food & Agriculture (FFAR) held its first meeting by

teleconference. The members approved the by-laws, elected officers, and approved a motion to open a bank account so that the funds for the foundation can be transferred and begin to accrue interest. The interest will provide the funds needed to provide support (i.e. travel, administrative support, etc.) to the FFAR and its members.

Dr. Milo Shult asked if Dr. Woteki will be sharing the names of the elected officers. Dr. Woteki stated that an announcement will be coming soon.

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=2014/07/0156.xml>

- (3) Dr. Woteki recently visited China as a part of the Joint Working Group with MOST. The focus of the trip was the renewal of two agreements with the China Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) on food safety issues.

Dr. Woteki also witnessed the signing of an agreement between China MOST and UC Davis for the establishment of the Sino-U.S. Joint Research Center for Food Safety in China. The five-year agreement calls for the two universities — UC Davis and China's Northwest Agricultural and Forestry University — to form a joint research team, carry out collaborative research projects and cooperate on other food safety-related projects.

The next joint meeting will be hosted by the US and will be held in California.

#### **IV. Specialty Crop Committee Membership**

Dr. Charles Boyer provided an overview of the current status of the Specialty Crop Committee (SCC) and the makeup of the membership. The SCC will hold their next meeting in Washington DC, on October 1-2, 2014. The purpose of the meeting is to consult with NIFA on the SCRI relevancy review process, to review the FY2014 awards, and to develop a plan and future timeline to implement the other parts of the SCC charge. Ethics will also provide a brief update/refreshers.

The membership of the SCC needs to be evaluated. There are currently two members who are past NAREEE Board members, 3 current NAREEE Advisory Board members and six members from the specialty crop industry. The committee membership has not changed in several years.

There has not been a recent discussion about the membership and the criteria for the members of the SCC.

Dr. Mark McLellan asked if Dr. Mary Wagner was still a member of the SCC. The answer was "yes," she is technically still on the committee but was initially appointed as a NAREEE representative.

Dr. Boyer suggested that there needs to be a discussion of what the committee should look like and the balance of representation.

Dr. Robert Taylor indicated that the 12 members should have interest in Specialty Crop Groups, i.e., be from the American Society for Horticultural Science, viticulture, etc.

Dr. Boyer stated that it would be challenging to have all of the different specialties represented but we have a few members who represent larger groups of commodities.

Dr. Shult suggested that a small working group could work to establish parameters. This will allow for some succession planning and consistency as we move forward.

Dr. Boyer asked if Dr. Mark McLellan and Dr. Robert Taylor would be willing to participate. They agreed. A suggestion was made to also include Julia Sabin since she represents the Food and Fiber processors and is directly engaged with the specialty crop industry.

Further discussion ensued regarding term periods, staggered rotation of members, term limits, and the balance of NAREEE members and industry members who represent specific specialty crops.

**ACTION:** A small working group of four members (Charles Boyer, Mark McLellan, Robert Taylor and Julia Sabin) was established to develop a framework on the balance and makeup of the Specialty Crop Committee membership for approval by the Executive Committee. Their report will be provided to the Executive Committee at the next meeting.

## **V. Relevancy and Adequacy Committee Update**

Dr. Carrie Castille discussed the relevancy and adequacy review and the establishment of the national priorities/waiver process.

Dr. Castille indicated that she was looking forward to getting feedback on the 2012 R&A Report, specifically knowing what went well; what didn't; what needs to be revisited; and identifying solutions. She stated that the role of the relevancy and adequacy review is an important aspect to the overall charge of the NAREEE Board and the committee needs to identify a standard process for future iterations.

The 2012 report reviewed and answered specific questions related to the development and creation of NIFA and the move from NRI to AFRI. The R&A committee needs to look at all of REE programs going forward with the added ability to focus on emerging issues related to relevancy and adequacy of REE.

Dr. Shult stated that we need to solidify the agenda for the October meeting to set

aside time to discuss R&A and also devote time for a round table discussion.

Dr. Ramaswamy stated that it has been geared towards NIFA but helpful to look all of REE. He also mentioned that the memo to the NAREEE Board on the national priorities process was in development.

Dr. Woteki stated she thinks the Board needs to consider the whole portfolio of REE. The advice to Congress and the Secretary would be incomplete without reviewing all of the programs.

Dr. Shult stated that he wanted to get a structure in place for future use by future members.

Dr. Woteki stated that we have had an ongoing discussion within REE on how to streamline and structure program planning across all of the REE agencies: NASS has an annual planning process based on the 5 year census; NIFA reviews their portfolio annually with a five-year external assessment; and ARS has a 5 year planning cycle. Dr. Woteki (generally) asked the members of the executive committee “how can we bring the cyclical reviews of the agencies together?”

Dr. Boyer agreed that establishing a consistent framework and looking at the entire portfolio of REE programs will make the recommendations move effective.

Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy, NIFA, indicated that the challenge will be compiling and reviewing all of the information/data. The agencies would need to take a snapshot to develop a collage that would coincide with the Farm Bill.

Dr. Shult suggested that we form a planning committee for preparation of the agenda for the fall meeting. We will utilize the chairs of the current working groups (Carrie Castille, Steven Daley-Laursen, Mark McLellan, Charles Boyer, and Patsy Brannon) to develop the agenda. He asked if everyone was comfortable with utilizing this process. The committee agreed.

## **VI. Balance of Crop Research – Private vs. Public Investment Working Group**

Dr. McLellan provided an overview of the current draft report of the Balance of Crop Research working group. The approach that they utilized was to develop a guide for USDA to analyze and review the issue of the balance of crop research. The Working Group steered away from trying to “solve” the problem and instead gave USDA recommendations on the tools that USDA could utilize to answer the over-arching questions on public-private research balance.

Three recommendations proposed by the working group:

- (1) The USDA should commission a set of studies to create an accurate and broad picture of current private and public funding of agricultural research.*

*(2) The USDA should host various regional listening sessions to assess public opinion on the issue of rebalancing private versus public funding of agricultural research.*

*(3) The USDA should host an annual meeting of a research roundtable for the express purpose of sharing research focus and research needs across public and private entities.*

Dr. Woteki commended the committee for getting the right altitude on the recommendations and indicated that they are actionable. She is looking forward to getting the full (approved) report.

Dr. Shult asked for a motion to move the report to review by the full NAREEE Advisory Board. Dr. Robert Taylor provided a motion and Dr. Boyer provided a second. The motion was approved.

**ACTION:** The report on *the Balance of Crop Research: Private vs. Public Investment* will be included in the agenda for deliberation at the fall NAREEE Advisory meeting.

Dr. McLellan asked if the timeline for that review and approval was ok. Dr. Woteki stated that October is a good time frame.

## **VII. Data Management Working Group**

Dr. Steven Daley-Laursen was not able to be on the call so Ms. Esch provided an overview of the current state of the Data Management Working Group. We are in the process of scheduling a briefing for the Working Group on Big Data initiatives at USDA and REE prior to the fall meeting. Presenters will include the REE agencies, USDA OCIO, and Simon Liu, NAL. This conversation will help identify the information that will be provided at the fall meeting and hopefully provide the working group with more information to construct their recommendations.

## **VIII. Agricultural Experiment Station Working Group**

Patsy Brannon provided an update on the status of the report on the Agricultural Experiment Stations. It is close to final and the group will be share a draft with Steve Slack by August and then present it to the Executive Committee by the next meeting.

Three recommendations have been identified:

(1) Partnerships:

*a. USDA/REE should actively lead the effort to establish and facilitate additional research partnerships among Land Grant Universities and within USDA agencies to enhance coordination of the research portfolio.*

*b. USDA/REE should actively lead the effort to establish and facilitate*

*additional research partnerships with other federal departments and agencies, as well as industry stakeholders, nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations to leverage the resources USDA can commit to addressing the research needs of complex problems.*

*(2) USDA's formula and competitive funding should be increased to expand and improve the impact and returns to investment commonly documented for food and agricultural research through the AES system. There should be particular attention to maintaining the correct balance of Formula and Competitive Funding because of the synergy of benefits from capacity building and infrastructure that come from formula funding and the innovation that stems from competitive funding. Both are essential to maintain the vitality, evolution and relevance of the AES system.*

*(3) USDA/REE should ensure that AES system, by design, have a strong focus on foundational issues to support and reinforce the translational research using NIFA Institutes, including Food Production and Sustainability; Bioenergy, Climate, and Environment; Food Safety and Nutrition; and Youth, Family, and Community.*

Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy stated that he has been promoting the 3C's Approach: Capacity, Capital Infrastructure – (Physical Infrastructure/review 100K), Competitive Funding.

Dr. McLellan stated that he recently asked APLU for an inventory of personnel in agricultural research in order to identify the pipeline of emerging STEM professionals in the public and private sectors. He asked Dr. Ramaswamy if NIFA had the capability to provide this information as well. It was indicated that the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Health have to record this information.

**ACTION:** Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy will send information on the inventory of personnel to the Executive Committee.

**ACTION:** The AES Working Group will send the report to Steven Slack for review. It will then be reviewed at the next EXECOMM meeting for approval for deliberation at the Board meeting in October.

## **IX. Executive Director's Report**

Ms. Esch provided the Executive Committee with an Executive Director's report prior to the meeting. She asked if there were any questions. There were none.

## **X. Other Business**

Ms. Esch indicated that the recent meetings have been extending past one hour and

it may be beneficial to schedule the next meeting for one and a half hours. There was no objection.

There being no other business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

**The next Executive Committee Conference Call is scheduled for Friday, September 5, 2014.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Milo Shult  
Chair

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Dr. Steven Daley-Laursen  
Vice Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Michele Esch  
Executive Director, NAREEE

APPROVAL BY ADVISORY BOARD: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Initials following Advisory Board Approval