



Research, Education, and Economics (REE)
National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics (NAREEE) Advisory
Board

Specialty Crop Committee (SCC) Meeting Notes – Thursday, August 10, 2023

SCC Members Present: Gregory Goins (Chair), Donnell Brown, Carlos Iglesias, Jim Tuinier - 4

SCC Members Absent: Marguerite Green – 1

Guests: Dr. Thomas Bewick, Division of Plant Systems-Production, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Megan O'Reilly, Plant System's Division, NIFA, and Dr. Jessica Shade, Institute of Food Production and Sustainability, Division of Plant Systems – Production NIFA

NAREEE Board Staff Present: Kate Lewis, NAREEE Board Executive Director/Designated Federal Officer (DFO) and Michele Simmons, Program Support Specialist

I. Welcome, Roll Call, Approval of July 2023 meeting minutes

DFO Lewis welcomed the group and attendance was taken. A quorum was established amongst the SCC Members. The July meeting minutes were approved by consensus after the mentioned edits were made. The July minutes and agenda will be posted to the NAREEE Advisory Board Webpage.

DFO Lewis gave an update on the FY23 and FY24 nomination packages. The package that includes the SCC candidate slate is with the Secretary's office. We hope to have an update soon. We will be replacing Sean Peebles and Nikki Lynn Rothwell, whose terms expired last September. There will be new members to account for their terms and then hopefully there will be a new member for Margie Green. We expect to have Dr. Iglesias and Jim Tuinier renominated. Two additional members might be appointed to bring the Committee total up to staff. DFO Lewis asked if there were any questions. There were none.

II. Statement from Chair:

Dr. Goins welcomed the Committee Members and the guest. He mentioned that the Committee submitted their recommendations for the FY22 Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) program and their feedback. Dr. Goins opened the floor for Dr. Bewick, Ms. O'Reilly, and Dr. Shade to discuss the SCRI FY22 Program Review.

III. SCRI FY22 Program Review and Q&A

Dr. Bewick talked briefly about the impact of the rescission, difficulty in scientific merit recruitment, and the need for the SCRI program evaluation. He then turned it over to Dr. Shade that informed everyone about a seminar series on transdisciplinary based on input that was received for the SCRI review process. Ms. O'Reilly and Drs. Bewick and Shade presented a PowerPoint presentation that summarized the following:

Impact of Recission:

- In 2016, White House made a deal with Republican-controlled House in order to avert a shutdown
- Part of deal was that all mandatory programs would have a recission (sequestration)
- FY2023 OMB Report to Congress – recission to continue through FY2031
 - SCRI category of mandatory programs = 5.7 %

Reviewer Recruitment:

- Has been an issue for the last 3 cycles
 - Last 2 extremely difficult
 - Always an issue for relevance review
- Science community trying to catch-up after removal of pandemic restrictions
- More NIFA programs using SCRI model for systems science using a transdisciplinary approach
- Some NIFA guidelines for panel composition are holdovers from disciplinary-focused programs

Program Evaluation:

- SCRI implementation was reviewed in FY2011
 - Used an approach similar to a strategic departmental review
 - Costs were covered by NIFA
- Other NIFA programs have used program funds
 - Made a component of the RFA
 - SAS notable example
- Feedback on how this could be done for SCRI given the mandated relevance review is welcome

Transdisciplinary Webinar Series:

- SCRI requires applicants to use transdisciplinary approaches
- Transdisciplinary approaches:
 - Intentionally integrate knowledge from different scientific disciplines, including biology, economics, social sciences
 - Teams include relevant stakeholders and community members
 - Holistically address societal challenges
- The development of transdisciplinary approaches engages these diverse teams from the onset of project conceptualization

Dr. Bewick asked if there were any questions.

Dr. Iglesias: One of the criteria's for the review would be the impact that the SCRI projects have had. Has there been any formal review?

Dr. Bewick: We haven't done that since 2011. That's why it's important that we try to do it now.

Dr. Shade: It's very complex. That's one of the reasons why we'd like to work with an outside team that does this. For example, one of the programs that Dr. Bewick mentioned was part of their Request for Applications (RFAs) and different labs at different universities submitted proposals for it. So, they were able to get reviewed for their qualifications for exactly what they were going to do.

Dr. Goins: About 400 invitations went out, but only a few came back and reviewed. Why are so many people not offering to review? Is it because of the time period? Is it too many proposals?

Dr. Bewick: A number of factors are involved. Some folks haven't been able to get their field work done or haven't been able to write their papers, so they don't have the time to put into the review process.

Dr. Shade: Also, conflict of interest is a factor. If you're on a team that's applying, the SCRI cannot review because that's a conflict of interest.

Dr. Goins: Would you all like to see some program recommendations from us to the SCRI? Do we need to draft a new document for FY24? Where should we go from here?

Dr. Bewick: In the 2014 farm bill, SCRI was made permanent. The funding is mandatory. We're listening to our stakeholders and will provide input.

Dr. Shade: As far as recommendations, you don't have to start from scratch and write all new recommendations.

Dr. Shade will send the PowerPoint that was presented today to DFO Lewis to send to the SCC Members.

DFO Lewis requested that the SCC Members provide their SCRI recommendations draft by August 24, 2023.

Dr. Goins will start the draft and send it to the SCC Members for feedback.

Ms. Brown thanked the SCRI team for joining the meeting and for their input.

IV. SCC feedback on Hemp Research Needs Roadmap

DFO Lewis asked the Members about the Hemp Roadmap feedback and if there were any edits. The Members all agreed to approve the Hemp Roadmap Documents

Dr. Goins thanked the Members for their comments, and all agreed to approve the draft paper. The draft paper will be written on a separate document.

DFO Lewis will submit the final Hemp Roadmap comments to the Board for their approval.

DFO Lewis asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

V. Wrap-up/Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m. EDT.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 14, 2023, 2pm EDT.