



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

Executive Committee (EXECOM) Conference Call – February 6, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Executive Committee Members Present: Dr. Kenrett Jefferson-Moore (Chair), Dr. V.M. “Bala” Balasubramaniam, Ms. Donnell Brown, Mr. Richard De Los Santos, Ms. Vanessa Garcia Polanco, Dr. Mario Ferruzzi, Mr. Edwin Kitzes, Dr. Jane Kolodinsky - 8

Members Absent: Ms. Tambra Stevenson – 1

Guests: Dr. Deirdra Chester, Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS), Aarti Arora, OCS, and Breanne Langlois, OCS

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

I. Welcome from Kate Lewis, Roll Call, and Quorum Check. Quorum was met.

DFO Lewis welcomed the group and Ms. Vanessa Garcia Polanco as a new Board Member who was nominated by Secretary Vilsack. She also welcomed guests Dr. Deirdra Chester, Ms. Aarti Arora, and Dr. Breanne Langlois, all from the Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS).

Ms. Simmons asked if there were any revision to the January meeting minutes. There were no comments or revisions. She asked for a motion to approve the minutes. All were in favor. Ms. Simmons will have the web team post January’s minutes and agenda on the NAREEE website.

DFO Lewis introduced Dr. Chester, Director from the OCS who provided acknowledgement and remarks on behalf of the REE Leadership on the REE Feedback letter that the Board provided. She thanked the Board for their commitment for advising REE on their recommendations to help them to refine and focus on their activities. Dr. Chester also talked about the USDA Science and Research Strategy. She mentioned that the Board was one of the first stakeholder listening sessions that REE had during the NAREEE in-person meeting June 2023. Because of some of the feedback from the Board, REE created additional partnership tools to help empower their stakeholder engagement. They now have a digital toolkit that has one pager on each of the strategies, a web page, and an email address to reach out to their partners and stakeholders.



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Dr. Chester also talked about the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AGARDA). REE is having an AGARDA Innovation Prize announcement this spring to celebrate USDA science. This is an opportunity to solve some of agriculture's most challenging issues today. This is going to be a pilot project to fund a high reward research project that may not be funded in other places in USDA. More details will be provided to the NAREEE Board, and to the Committees and Subcommittees as it becomes available.

Dr. Chester thanked the Board again for their dedication and the important work they do for USDA and the REE mission area. She asked if there were any questions or comments.

Ms. Brown thanked Dr. Chester for the updates. She asked Dr. Chester if she had more details on the AGARDA Innovation Prize. Dr. Chester provided the link to the Board that showcases AGARDA and other USDA science and research activities during the meeting which is also here>>> [Research and Science | USDA](#)

Dr. Jefferson-Moore thanked Dr. Chester for her support and her assistance in forwarding the Board's work products to the REE Under Secretary's office.

II. Remarks from Chair

Dr. Jefferson-Moore welcomed the group and acknowledged new Board Members Edwin Kitzes and Vanessa Garcia Polanco. She stated that she just returned from the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists (SAAS) Meeting in Atlanta, GA on February 5, 2024. The in-person meeting was held during the Southern Rural Sociological Association event. Dr. Jefferson-Moore heard about some of the challenges in the southern region. There was discussion from the heirs' property topic about a new multi-state/multi-institutional group of individuals who are interested in research and extension coordinated efforts about heirs' property issues within the southern region. There is now funding from USDA to support those efforts. She also hosted a panel for the SERA-4. It is a multistate collaboration among research and Extension efforts in local and regional food systems at land-grant institutions in the Southern Region. Dr. Jefferson-Moore provided a link that provides more details. <https://www.nimss.org/projects/view/mrp/outline/18873> DFO Lewis asked if there were any questions for Dr. Jefferson-Moore. There were none.



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III. Old Business

DFO Lewis informed the Board Members that Ms. Vanessa Garcia Polanco from the National Young Farmers Coalition, is also a new Board Member along with Mr. Kitzes. She asked Ms. Garcia Polanco to provide a brief background of herself and also had the NAREEE Members to introduce themselves as well.

DFO Lewis gave updates on the Boards work products.

Diversity & Inclusivity Recommendations – These recommendations were sent to the REE Under Secretary’s office for review January 23, 2024. DFO Lewis is working on a transmittal memo for the 12 recommendations the Board provided and approved. She informed the Board that since the time the letter was approved and up until now, the USDA Equity Commission has released a set of 32 recommendations both within and outside of USDA. DFO Lewis is doing a gap analysis between this Board's recommendations and the recently approved and publicized Equity Commission recommendations to see if they match or if they’re different. She will update the Board at the next meeting in March about the status of their diversity and inclusivity recommendations.

Ag Climate Adaptation Report (FY22/23 R&A) DFO Lewis informed the Board that the issue of ag climate adaptation and mitigation has also been elevated in this administration and is key with Secretary Vilsack and his leadership. It is also a theme area in the Science and Research Strategy. She wants to make sure that the Board's recommendations are reviewed and acknowledged with all of the activity going on.

Citrus Disease Subcommittee’s (CDS) FY24 Emergency Citrus Disease Research Extension (ECDRE) feedback -DFO Lewis gave an update on the feedback work product. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s ECDRE team has received the CDS’s recommendations on the ECDRE program for this fiscal year. The Board approved the ECDRE feedback letter December 2023, and the briefing memo is complete and ready to route to the REE Under Secretary’s office. She informed the Board that there's no additional information or action that’s needed from them.

Precision Nutrition (PN) (FY23/24 Relevancy & Advocacy (R&A))- DFO Lewis informed the Board that she is waiting for the USDA working group to prepare their final summary report of all the PN activity that’s going on at USDA. Once the summary report is received, she will forward it to the Board’s PN Ad Hoc Committee so they can start drafting their R&A report. The goal is to have the



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Board approve the final PN R&A report at the tentative in-person meeting this June. DFO Lewis suggested that Ms. Garcia Polanco Mr. Kitzes should consider joining the Board's PN Ad Hoc Committee. DFO Lewis asked if there were any questions on the 4 work products that she just discussed. There were none.

IV. New Business

Planning FY24 Board meeting - The Board Members discussed keeping the plans previously discussed to have the meeting in North Carolina. It was decided that the meeting will be June 3-5th with June 2nd being a travel day. Dr. Jefferson-Moore will contact the North Carolina Research Center to see what would be best and to check availability. DFO Lewis will start a draft agenda to distribute for review by the next EXECOM meeting in March. She did inform the Board that the Continuing Resolution expires March 1, 2024. We hope that Congress will approve the budget for FY24 so we can move forward in planning this in-person meeting.

V. Wrap-Up/Adjourn

The next meeting will be **March 5, from 12 noon - 1 pm ET**.
The meeting adjourned at 12:59 p.m. ET.