



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

Executive Committee (EXECOM) Meeting – August 6, 2024, Minutes

NAREEE Committee Members Present: Dr. Kenrett Jefferson-Moore (Chair), Dr. Sreekala Bajwa, Dr. V.M. “Bala” Balasubramaniam, Ms. Donnell Brown, Mr. Richard De Los Santos, Dr. Mario Ferruzzi (Vice Chair), Ms. Vanessa Garcia Polanco, Dr. Ellen Harris, Mr. Edwin Kitzes, Dr. Jane Kolodinsky, Dr. Mark Lawrence, Dr. William Lytle, Dr. Jane Schuchardt, and Ms. Tandra Stevenson - 14

Members Absent: – Dr. Natasha Mast - 1

NAREEE Board Staff Present: Ms. Kate Lewis, NAREEE Board Executive Director/Designated Federal Officer (DFO)

NAREEE Board Staff Absent: Ms. Michele Simmons, Program Specialist

Guest: Dr. Jim McFerson, Chair, National Genetics Resources Advisory Council (NGRAC)

I. Welcome, Roll Call, Quorum Check, Agenda review.

DFO Lewis welcomed the group, took roll call, and noted that the quorum was met. She announced that Michele Simmons was out on annual leave and a court reporter was in attendance to capture the minutes.

DFO Lewis asked if there were any revisions to the July minutes. There were none. She asked for a motion to approve the minutes. All were in favor. The minutes will be marked as final, and Ms. Simmons will post them on the NAREEE website.

II. Report/Remarks from the Chair, Dr. Jefferson-Moore

Dr. Jefferson-Moore welcomed the group. She thanked them for a productive meeting in Kannapolis, North Carolina, in June and commented that it was a good representation of a NAREEE Board meeting. Dr. Jefferson-Moore shared that the Association of 1890 Research Directors invited the Board to provide an article summarizing their meetings, and she is currently working on this with the Association's Executive Director, Alton Thompson.



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In today's meeting the Board will discuss possible topics for the FY25 Relevancy & Adequacy (R&A) report. Once they have reached a decision, they will prepare a letter to share with REE. Dr. Jefferson-Moore noted that she will be calling on Board members to help write this letter, and those who would like to be involved in the process should reach out to her. She added that their voice is not limited to the report; the Board can provide recommendations, briefings, and topics as a group to the REE leadership.

Dr. Ferruzzi announced that this fall he will leave his position at Arkansas Children's Nutrition Center to become the Dean of the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

III. Old Business

EXECOM Membership and Path Forward

DFO Lewis discussed the nominations of Dr. Lytle and Ms. Garcia Polanco to join EXECOM, which were moved and seconded at the June Board meeting. The Board also approved a motion to identify Dr. Ferruzzi as the Vice Chair, with Dr. Jefferson-Moore remaining as the Chair. DFO Lewis summarized proposed changes, which include adjusting the size of EXECOM to five out of the fifteen members (30%) of the full Board, as well as moving to two-year increments. Both of these changes would begin in FY26.

Dr. Bajwa asked if going forward the Vice Chair would succeed the Chair to ensure continuity. DFO Lewis said that beginning in FY26, the plan was that the Vice Chair would ascend to become the Chair and a new Vice Chair would be nominated, preferably from among the three other EXECOM members.

DFO Lewis asked for a motion to approve Dr. Lytle and Ms. Garcia Polanco as members of EXECOM. All were in favor.

Precision Nutrition FY23/24 R&A Report

Dr. Ferruzzi stated that the ad hoc committee made amendments to the report to incorporate feedback from Board members at the June meeting. There is one outstanding update needed from the USDA working group relating to their listening sessions with stakeholders. Dr. Ferruzzi will incorporate the remaining edits requested by ad hoc members so that the final draft of the report can be voted on via email and approved by the ad hoc committee within the week. It will then



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move it forward for approval by EXECOM and the full Board. DFO Lewis stated that the goal is to submit the report to USDA by the end of August.

NGRAC Crop Vulnerability Report

Dr. McFerson said he received a lot of helpful feedback from the Board, which NGRAC incorporated into its revisions. He noted that NGRAC has not changed the report's recommendations since they were last presented to the Board, though they did expand the information identifying the breadth of NPGS's scope.

DFO Lewis stated that EXECOM approved this report in July and asked for a motion for full Board approval. All were in favor. The report will be packaged by DFO Lewis and forwarded to the Secretary of Agriculture and subsequently to ARS leadership.

Diversity & Inclusivity (D&I) recommendations

DFO Lewis said she did not have any additional context on the recommendations. They have been packaged in the form of a written briefing that has cleared REE, and is currently in the Office of the Secretary (OSEC). DFO Lewis provided a briefing to an OSEC senior advisor about this deliverable in July, and she is awaiting acknowledgement from the Secretary on these recommendations.

IV. New Business

FY25 Relevancy & Adequacy (R&A) Report Topics

The Board discussed five potential topics for the FY25 R&A report:

- Extension
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for science
- Climate justice
- Data science/precision agriculture
- Water

Ms. Brown commented that extension is an important outreach tool that makes sure solutions reach stakeholders. Multiple members agreed that extension is relevant across USDA and encompasses all the other topics. Dr. Kolodinsky said that as part of an extension R&A, they could build on KPIs that cut across USDA rather than developing KPIs themselves, which would



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require hiring a consultant and other costly measures. Dr. Schuchardt said that they would need to decide whether to look at the Cooperative Extension System (CES) by itself or take a broader look at how every agency under the REE mission has a responsibility to engage with constituents. Several members agreed that they would need to define the boundary of the work. They also discussed possible alternate titles, such as "constituent engagement" or "translating research into action." Several members expressed support for the latter, which is also a USDA priority.

Dr. Lytle cautioned that the R&A will be influenced by their current data sample, which is not symmetrical across cropping systems and regions. Dr. Kolodinsky noted that the R&A presents an opportunity to change the conversation based on evidence, rather than being constrained by the current system. Ms. Stevenson suggested specific aspects of extension that could be addressed, including the uneven distribution of resources, leveraging technology and the digital media landscape, and integrating agriculture and nutrition.

DFO Lewis summarized the remaining topics and noted that USDA is already devoting resources to data science and precision agriculture. Dr. Lytle suggested that if they chose KPIs as their topic they could add the other topics as subheadings. He added that USDA is also spending money to address climate, but it is unclear whether that money is reaching where it needs to go to enhance the wellbeing of frontline communities, and whether those communities are being included in the solutions.

Dr. Bajwa asked how many R&A topics the Board could address at one time. DFO Lewis said that it depends on the members' bandwidth and their relative specialties. There is no additional budget to support the development of R&A reports.

Dr. Harris said she would like to see a bullet around translating research to action/engagement, with possible sub-areas underneath.

The Board decided to vote on this item offline, as several members had to leave the meeting early. DFO Lewis said she will continue to build out the R&A topics, incorporating the minutes from today's meeting and discussion around possible revisions, and move them forward with a poll for an all-Board vote.

Timing and Location of Next Board Meeting

Dr. Jefferson-Moore suggested holding the next Board meeting virtually. DFO Lewis said that Ms. Simmons will query the Board members on their availability for a full two-day meeting in November or December.



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V. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m. ET.

Approved minutes may be found [here](#).

Recurring EXECOM meetings will take place the 1st Tuesday of each month.

Next meeting: Tuesday 9/10/24, 12–1 pm ET.