

Greenhouse Committee Meeting Minutes, March 7, 2016

The meeting started at 3 p.m.

Present: Anne Streich, Alan Christensen, Amy Hilske, Hector Santiago, Keenan Amundsen, Matt Anderson, Stephen Wegulo, James Schnable, Ed Cahoon, Lance Meinke. Absent: Scott Sattler

Updates and Announcements

Old Business

New Business

Faculty grievance to the committee:

Anne Streich put before the committee a grievance from a faculty member who uses greenhouse space for research. The faculty member had written a letter to the committee and presented the grievance in person to James Schnable who in turn presented it to the committee. The grievance was that the faculty member has a research program that uses a lot of greenhouse space and therefore the charges to the faculty member for greenhouse use are too high to be sustainable and are higher compared to those at other universities that are similar to UNL. The faculty member requested the committee to reduce use rates charged to faculty with large-use research programs.

Amy Hilske presented to the committee greenhouse (= greenhouse and growth chamber) use rates (charges per unit space) from Big 10 universities including UNL and three other universities that had been mentioned in the grievance presented by the faculty member. Hilske had conducted a survey to obtain these rates following the initial inquiry by the faculty member. The committee deliberated on the rates and concluded that considering only rates for minimal service, UNL rates are comparable to those at other universities. Hilske noted that other universities are adopting the UNL model of consolidating greenhouses.

Schnable asked how much it costs to run the Beadle greenhouse per year. Amy provided the breakdown for Beadle as follows: \$100,000 – greenhouse expenses; \$12,000 – office supplies; \$42,000 – repairs and maintenance; and \$4,600 – communication. Various possible sources of funds to subsidize greenhouse use were discussed, including the UNL Agricultural Research Division (ARD) and facilities and administrative (F&A, indirect, or overhead) costs budgeted in grants. Hector Santiago proposed optimizing the use of greenhouse space, for example by changing tier allocations.

The committee concluded that although the faculty member uses a large greenhouse space (18% of entire greenhouse facilities), the charges are proportional to the space used. Alan Christensen recalled that the committee had previously discussed the impracticality of different rates for different users.

Two other issues that had been raised by the faculty member were space request response time and lack of transparency. Hilske said space requests are responded to in as little as 24-48 hours for the East Campus greenhouses to one week for other greenhouse facilities. Regarding lack of transparency, the committee has a philosophy of treating all greenhouse users equally. Schnable suggested that information be provided on total expenditure, total fees charged, and percent occupancy for each greenhouse user.

The committee asked the Chair (Streich) to draft a response letter to be forwarded to the faculty member after approval by the committee.

Information to be included in minutes:

Stephen Wegulo asked the committee to discuss what types of information should or should not be included in the minutes with specific reference to confidential or sensitive information discussed during committee meetings. The committee recommended that confidential or sensitive information be anonymized in the

minutes. Santiago said he is pleased with how the committee handled the grievance (above) presented by the faculty member.

Proposal for new LED lights at Beadle:

Hilske said UNL Facilities Planning & Construction has proposed to purchase LED lights for the entire Beadle greenhouse. Installation would start in summer 2016. Schnable said there is evidence that plants grow differently under LED lights. The committee recommended that Hilske send out a survey to users and inform users well in advance before installing the lights.

Creation of operating procedures (i.e. security, sanitation, handling of transgenics, etc.):

Hilske will put together greenhouse operating procedures for the committee to look at, discuss, and approve.

Approval of Minutes of January 26, 2016 Meeting

Streich moved to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2016 meeting; Schnable seconded. The minutes were approved.

The meeting adjourned at 3:58 p.m.