

Plant Growth Facilities Faculty Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes – November 20, 2020

The meeting started at 11:00 am

Members Present: Jinliang Yang, Stacy Adams, Ed Cahoon, Sabrina Russo, Justin McMechan, Stephen Wegulo

Ex-Officio Members Present: Hector Santiago, Matt Anderson, Amy Hilske, Scott Sattler

Approval of Minutes of October 6, 2020 Meeting – Cahoon moved to approve the minutes of the October 6, 2020 meeting; seconded by Yang. The minutes were approved without changes.

Updates from Amy Hilske –

- There have been only a few Covid scares amongst staff. Mostly related to daycare and family members having.
- We got new fluid lights in April or March (12). Unfortunately, 5 of the power sources have already failed. We turned this in on a repair ticket on Monday and then had that fixed in 5 days – luckily, we only lost 5 days on those.

Updates from Hector Santiago –

- IANR conducted and is now evaluating an external review on the Research and Extension Centers. From this, there were 8 areas to improve. The final report was just delivered in the last week and will be discussed this afternoon. This will influence some changes in operations to align better with goals and strengths. We will keep you all updated with the changes as they come about.
 - Russo requested that the document be shared once it can be as it may be helpful in writing the greenhouse renovation document. Santiago will look into this.
- Santiago has been entrusted by the Vice Chancellor to lead the efforts in getting the appropriate PPE for IANR. Regarding this, there may be more items restocked soon from an application/order with the state via the CARES Act.
- On the budget, ARD has been actively trying to identify sources of funding that are not state and are untapped so that those funds can be redirected to fill state budget deficits. The current deficit for IANR is 5 MIL over the next 3 years.

Agenda Items –

- Vote on Greenhouse rates for 2021.
 - Rates presented by Hilske. The timeframe for changing the rates has been changed by IANR. These changes do not need to be voted on today as they will go into effect in July 2021. Clarification that the rates can be voted on and changed at any point, but they are due now each year in June instead of December.
 - Santiago explains the process. The greenhouses are set up as a service center and each year we review the budget and adjust to accommodate inflation. ARD subsidizes the greenhouse operations each year to keep the prices reasonable – namely through supporting salaries of greenhouse staff. The rates help in covering the depreciation of equipment so that when something breaks, there is a bank of money to cover this. In this vote, we are focusing on the faculty rates. When industry projects use the greenhouses, they have a separate rate structure which depends on level of faculty involvement.
 - Cahoon points out the faculty perspective that 55% F&A is paid on city campus. He asks that this “tax” is taken into account with these rates. He’s not sure where this money goes – much of it goes to ORED he believes – and worries that much of it doesn’t come back to ARD
 - Santiago responds that some of it does go to ARD and those funds are used to subsidize the greenhouse costs, however it depends on the project and many factors what amount comes. The F&A allows us to not worry about paying utilities and upkeep of roads and other

infrastructure. There are some changes coming regarding F&A, but the impacts of that new model are unknown at this point.

- Russo suggests that the rates are reviewed now to prepare the council to review again and vote later.
- Hilske explains the expense and revenue summary. Total estimated expenses for 2020 and 2021 are just shy of \$1,000,000. Total estimated revenue for 2020 is roughly \$700,000. The estimated revenue for 2021 is roughly \$900,000. This revenue is then banked for greenhouse upkeep – recently it has been going towards lights. Generally, the rates are increased 2%-2.5% to keep up with inflation.
- Russo asks how the expected usage is estimated. Hilske responds that past years' usage is averages to give a rough idea. However, usage fluctuates greatly, so it is not exact.
- Russo asks if we should go ahead and vote or table it for spring. Hilske suggests that in March or April the rates are reviewed again and voted on, however this is completely at the discretion of the committee.
- Adams requests seeing a more detailed report, possibly monthly, before voting.
- McMechan asks what the justification is on increasing the rate & reserves – is it for unexpected expenses? Hilske confirms this and asks if the reserves could also offset the costs of future greenhouse renovations/builds.
- Adams asks how teaching vs research is accounted for.
- Hilske shows a more details expense spreadsheet that shows that the largest expense is for greenhouse supplies (pots, soils, etc.), followed by repair and maintenance.
- Santiago explains that there are no restrictions on the revolving account, however it is recommended that it is used for coming depreciation/repairs of equipment.
- Russo asks if people are not completing projects or using space because of the rate increase. Hilske responds that with the cost increase being so low (usually 3 cents per square foot), she doesn't think it does.
- Adams brings up that he knows of teaching space that is not being used due to the budget cuts this year, so worries that a further increase would decrease use for teaching.
- Santiago responds that the rate increase allows the greenhouse to continue to operate as a service center.
- Russo suggests that the decrease in use is more likely due to departments tightening their belts rather than the increase in the rate
- Santiago responds that increasing the rate slightly each year prevents a necessary larger increase after a few years of no increase, which would be harder for faculty to do. Santiago suggests that this is tabled until February when we have the final numbers for 2020 since we are not required to turn in new rates until June.
- Discussion on the greenhouse renovation document
 - Santiago explains that the external review in spring 2019 recommended a new facility because repairs are insignificant compared to the facility crumbling. Santiago will add the final report from the external review team to the working files folder for the committee to review.

Russo asks for a meeting to be called in February to continue the rates discussion and the greenhouse revitalization proposal. She will be sending out communications regarding next steps and “homework” on the revitalization project.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm.