

Plant Growth Facilities Faculty Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes – 04/07/2021

The meeting started at 2:03 pm

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

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

Approval of Minutes of 02/10/2021 Meeting – Justin McMechan moved to approve the minutes of the 02/10/2021 meeting; Ed Cahoon seconded. The minutes were approved without changes.

Updates from Amy Hilske

- No huge updates from last meeting
- All staff have been able to be vaccinated
- No decline in any projects, and probably most likely an increase
- No issues going through to the summer
- Most important thing coming up is putting on the shade cloth for the summer

Updates from Hector Santiago

- Things are progressing nicely re: Covid as long as people continue to vaccinate and take precautions we are looking to some kind of normality during the summer.
 - For the time being they don't see any major issues at all returning back to the fields this summer and have a successful summer in terms of research activities, unless something happens to roll everything back (new variant, for example.)
 - [New guidelines have come out](#) for the use of cars and travel. University vehicle travel with more than one person per vehicle may be allowed for approved academic, co-curricular, or RSO experiences. Department heads can approve for multiple people per vehicle.
 - There have not been any decisions made yet on international or domestic travel. International travel is still banned, and domestic travel requires at least two letters of approval (in IANR).
- There was an article in [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) about the infrastructure plan and what that means for academic institutions. We are working with the APLU trying to get champions to support the bill. He has had an intervention with the commodity groups where he specifically talked about the support for the bill.
 - Trying to figure out list of priorities (of which Plant Growth Facilities is in the top three.) It's not clear how much of those resources will be towards new buildings and new infrastructure, and what buildings or infrastructures is worth investing in. The bill as it is crafted right now allows for both.
- The state has another initiative with which the University has been engaged and that is the money that is received for deferred maintenance from the state. There is a petition from the University to put additional resources into that.
 - There was a recent survey to know what are the deferred maintenance that the University might need per collage. The Research and Extension Centers put together a list of projects that are in need of resources in terms of deferred maintenance for buildings.
- They continue to move on the above, and continue to engage with Federal relations partners; Matt Hammons works on that and there was a dedicated person that was hired recently that is in ORED.

Agenda Items

- Greenhouse Revitalization Proposal (GRP)
 - Re: the subcommittee for the Greenhouses Revitalization Project... the main people that are being considered to add to the committee are: Amy Hilske, Don Ladd, Stacy Adams, Héctor Santiago, and at least one other person. Amy Hilske requested recommendations for the additional person. The subcommittee would meet separately from the Plant Growth Facilities Advisory Board. Russo suggested a faculty member who uses the greenhouses often.
 - Adams asked about the intended audience for the GRP document; suggested an 8-10 page publication for a general audience, with links to a more in-depth document, with a 1-2 page summary.
 - Santiago agreed it would have to be concise, and crafted in a way that is for the broader audience. The initial audience should be Mike Bohem. Provide necessary information about why this is needed, what impact it will have, how it will support the faculty, how it can connect to projections for research expenditures for the next ten years, etc.
 - Adams has been working with an honors student in crafting a base document that the committee could use as a framework to build from; he will share that when it is completed.
 - Adams asked if the GRP would be focused on the UNL campus, or out state as well.
 - Santiago replied that so far, it's been concentrating only on campus, but the Panhandle is in need of some new facilities, so perhaps this will be a good opportunity to think about those facilities in the research and extension centers.
 - Adams stated he preferred to see a document that focused on a single facility. Santiago said that it will be part of the Plant Growth Facilities that we need as a campus and that the research and extension centers would be an extension of campus. He will follow up with Ron Yoder re: this approach.
- Items from the Committee members
 - Adams expressed concerns about the state of the current plant growth facilities; use of space, building conditions, etc. He suggested interacting with other institutions re: their facilities, for example, Oklahoma State, and Missouri, Iowa State, etc.
 - Russo asked if it would be useful to poll the current users of the greenhouses as to what needs they have, are there specialized things they could use. Also talk to each of the greenhouse managers to get their input.
 - Adams did not feel a survey would be the best option. Santiago mentioned a survey conducted a few years ago that seemed to provide useful responses. Cahoon also supported the use of surveys.
 - Hilske suggested drafting a new survey, containing a ranking of needs, comments, etc.
 - Russo asked if there were any assessments, reports, or evaluations from the extension facilities that can be shared? Most of the currently shared documents only cover plant growth facilities on the UNL campus proper.
 - Santiago replied he's not aware of that, he will ask the three research and extension centers to provide an estimate of square foot and what type of facilities they might need.
 - Russo asked if there should be a representative from those extension units on the GRP subcommittee
 - Adams suggested they asked the extension people to a meeting with the subcommittee to explain what their needs are and their vision. That would help the subcommittee frame what that looks like for them.

Action Items

- Amy Hilske will draft a new survey/revise previous survey, and possibly integrate it with the document Adams' student is drafting.

Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 2:53 pm.