

Plant Growth Facilities Faculty Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes – March 25, 2022

The meeting started at 2:02 PM

Members Present: Ming Guo, Stacy Adams, Katarzyna Glowacka, Sabrina Russo, Justin McMechan, Amit Mitra

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

Approval of Minutes of the November 2, 2021, Meeting – Sabrina Russo moved to approve the minutes of the November 2, 2021, meeting; Justin McMechan seconded. The minutes were approved without changes.

Updates from Amy Hilske –

- Growth Chambers –
 - There is a new bench top growth chamber at Beadle center
 - It has been ordered and should arrive early September.
 - The second set of growth chambers is scheduled to go in the plant pathology greenhouse.
 - There are currently 4 large region chambers, and only 1-2 work.
 - 3 chambers will be removed and will be replaced with 2 new ones. There is \$45,000 in grant funds right now, with the hope that we will get an additional \$45,000 to help pay for and replace the third growth chamber.
- Spring Break Projects
 - Plant Science Teaching Greenhouse – new windows and an air conditioning unit were installed.
 - Teaching Greenhouse West – one of the poly houses is on the schedule to be recovered this spring. At the same time, new interior jet tubes will be added.
 - AGH4 – a motion detected light was added in the long hallway at a relatively cheap cost.
 - Other items paid by facilities:
 - Fire alarms, heat sensor in each greenhouse room, adding university power supply backups to all greenhouse control panels, changing all pneumatic valves to electric valves.
 - Generally being done to the East Campus greenhouses since they are older.
- Staffing
 - We hired three new student workers at the Beetle center.
 - Deployed staff member is back in Lincoln and will return in a couple of weeks.

Updates from Hector Santiago –

- Plant Pathology Department – new faculty member taking over the lab (focus is on soybean pathology)
- Heuerman Lecture is on April 18
 - 2 key speakers:
 - Chavonda Jacobs-Young – current administrator of ARS
 - Paul Kiecker – current administrator for USDA FSIS
- UNL will receive \$20 million to continue partnership with ARS (was enacted in the spending bill)
 - Money will probably be used to build greenhouse complex.
 - There are efforts to build another building to place additional faculty at NIC.
 - It will be funded by the state and private sector.
 - The idea is to bring scientists from ARS and UNL as well as companies to get involved with research
- Agricultural Economics department is hiring a department head.
 - An offer has been made, but we have not heard anything else as of now.
- Big opportunity for RFA –
 - A smart farming/Farm of the Future proposal was submitted.
 - A decision has been made but has not been announced yet.
- 3 groups of scientists working together – climate smart commodities in the broader sense.
 - 2 different opportunities – 1) \$250,000 – 5 million and 2) \$5-100 million
- MPPEP proposal in progress for Animal Science/Meat Science Hub.

Agenda Items –

- Greenhouse proposal
 - The proposal was submitted to IANR Administration for review.
 - PSI APR – the review team brought forward that UNL should work more with the plant growth facilities.
 - It was brought to the table, at the PSI APR meeting, that this is within the first 3 priorities (if not first) for us.

- ORED is willing to partner with us on that. The College of Arts and Sciences us open to having a discussion and partnering since they use the facilities as well.
- Project Request Form Review
 - The form helps everyone to start planning ahead of time.
 - A one-month notice is preferred, but there is an understanding that someone may need or want the space as soon as possible. If a project ends before an experiment is over, no one needs to wait a month before starting the next project if everything is ready to go.
 - You only pay for what you use, no matter when you start and end.
 - The current form is great for research, but difficult for teaching.
 - A suggestion was made to create two separate forms – one for research and one for teaching
 - A huge problem since the beginning of COVID has been the supply chain issue.
 - We need to make everyone aware that giving the best amount of lead time we can, the better.
 - **Action item:** discuss potential changes and/or accommodations on the space request form.
 - Create a form specifically for teaching and discuss at the next meeting.
 - On the form, add a little asterisk stating that if everything is ready, you may start a project early.
 - **Action item:** share the link with the committee to share with your department.
 - Space Request Form:
<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form?EQBCT=ad01d0efbb024036a9de68497eae6963>
 - Door Access Requests:
<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/26e24be485604e41b8b53561cbd2bf2f>
 - Maintenance/Repair Form:
<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/e03c0a9db84f4a4e8d5769076225ab68>

Items from the Floor –

- Recent Event:
 - A researcher acted irrationally and inappropriately in terms of how they were working with greenhouse staff.
 - This seems to be an ongoing problem with certain researchers and not just one.
 - The biggest problem is staff is doing what they are supposed to do according to the rules.
 - After thorough research, it appears that UNL does not have great policies for how to address bullying by faculty members. There are policies for how to handle bullying by staff, but not faculty.
 - Bullying in this case is referring to verbal abuse and mistreatment.
 - There is a lot of education and training on how to handle bullying people and staff members, but there is no guidance on how to correct it.
 - Currently, the only way to address this is through documentation of interactions. This should be completed by both sides.
 - Everyone should have a safe workplace to do their work.
 - Bullying should be communicated with department head/lead.
 - At this time, it appears that a faculty member can document a reoccurring issue through the university police department.
 - This particular issue has been elevated to vice chancellor's office.

Next meeting

- Greenhouse Budget Meeting- Tuesday May 10, 2022 at 11 am.
 - Financial document provided one week in advance to discuss at this meeting.
 - Propose names at the next meeting for the election of the new chair.

Adjourn –Meeting adjourned at 2:57 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Lauren Kruger.