

Plant Growth Facilities Faculty Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes – March 6, 2024

The meeting started at 10:31 AM

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

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

UNL Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) Staff Present: Larry Harisis, Rebecca Cederberg

Approval of Minutes of the February 14, 2024, Meeting – Ming Guo moved to approve the minutes of the February 14, 2024, meeting; Amit Mitra seconded. The amended minutes were approved.

Agenda Items –

- IBC Protocol and APHIS Permit Discussion
 - Update on whether an IBC protocol is required for transgenic arabidopsis that doesn't require an APHIS transfer permit and/or if they are commercially available.
 - Answer – if you have transgenic plants that you're using for research, you need to have an IBC protocol. NIH confirmed this.
 - This applies to all research on campus.
 - Because the University receives NIH funding for recombinant work, all researchers need to comply with the NIH guidelines – regardless of whether their research is personally NIH funded.
 - BQMS – complies with Federal law from USDA to make sure that releases aren't occurring that aren't approved.
 - This is for transgenics that are experimental in nature or not commercially available.
 - There are no regulations on commercially available products.
 - Soybeans, corn, and cotton grown are 97-99% transgenic but available commercially even though it's going to be used for research. It is not harmful to the food chain and at the end of the experiment is harvested, data gathered, and grain is sold for income, then finds its way into the food chain.
 - Important distinction – growing in the greenhouse creates a different environment than growing in a field, so if you're growing a commercially available plant in the greenhouse next to another commercially available plant, that recombinant could create new hybrids or crosses.
 - ***For a greenhouse project - commercial or not – if it is transgenic it needs to have IBC protocol. In the field it doesn't need IBC protocol.***
 - Question – projects can't go ahead without this IBC approval, so there will be a backlog of projects to be approved in short order, correct?
 - For projects that fall under 3E, work can begin once a person applies for the IBC protocol, so you would not have to wait for full approval (3E = arabidopsis, standard Tdna insertional mutants). Most work probably falls under 3E. Adding pathogen or something else would step up to a higher guideline that requires full committee approval.
 - When faculty route their projects through NURamp, faculty members are asked if they are working with regulated materials. If yes, a notification is sent to Hector.
 - **Action Item** – Verbiage on the NU Ramp application needs to be updated (will need to go through OSP and could potentially take a longer time than expected). Currently there is a checkbox that must be clicked if individuals are working with “regulated”

plant material in the greenhouse”. Also, if an IBC protocol is needed, that will need to be added.

- The notification that Amy currently receives if the box is checked states:
“This email is to inform you that there is a new OSP Project Form that needs your attention. The investigator listed below indicated that they are proposing work with regulated plant materials, plant materials subject to export restrictions (not deregulated worldwide), or will you be conducting experiments requiring BSL2 or above restrictions in a greenhouse”.
- Not all projects are required to go through NU Ramp, so it will catch some, but there are other projects that will be missed (projects not using a grant, fee for service).
- It might take a lot of work to get protocols started, but if individuals are consistently working with the same organisms, same plants, or commercially available line, and you evaluate pathogen exposure in the greenhouse, there won't be many updates that will need to occur.
 - EHS requires an annual update form from someone with an IBC protocol, where they update if a new organism or strain is added.
- Question - Will there be a template for faculty to follow when filling out the IBC protocol? This would help those who are unfamiliar with the process.
 - Tools can be created to help and potentially zoom training to demonstrate how to fill out a protocol.
 - Section 5 – transgenic plant information. If you're purchasing transgenic organisms and you're not further modifying them, you would just put information in Section 5.
 - Section 2 - brief research description. It doesn't need to be long, but just put into perspective why you're using that organism.
 - **Action Item** – There is a need for a document to explain what products need to go through the system. Would be helpful to include which pathogens requires an IBC protocol.
- Expected timeline for getting in compliance
 - No timeline currently, but EHS will need assistance to determine the best approach for reaching out to the people that will need to submit protocol.
 - **Action Item** – Hector to work with Rebecca on a communication to all faculty.
- The issue was brought up because of adding the line “all projects of any size are required to fill out a project request form” to the current Greenhouse and Growth Chamber Policies and Procedures document.
 - The current project form captures whether the project is transgenic or not, and if it is regulated or not.
 - **Voting:** Add “all projects of any size are required to fill out a project request form” to the Greenhouse and Growth Chamber policies and procedures.
 - All in favor of the addition to the policy. None opposed.

Items from the Floor –

- Distribution of Committee Meeting minutes
 - You are representative of your peers, so you can bring issues to the committee.
 - You are entitled to talk with them about what has been discussed and where we are at.
 - Some caveats – if a specific project or group of faculty members is discussed, that should not be relayed back to other users.
 - Take a deeper look at the minutes to make sure that everyone is comfortable with the language that is being put forward before being distributed and/or posted.
 - Question – is it possible to do an email vote so that the notes can be approved in a timely manner?
 - Yes - Qualtrics survey was suggested.
- Discussion about policy addition – “All supplies purchased by PGF are the property of the PGF and need to be returned to the PGF area after project completion. Supplies are available to purchase at cost if needed”.
 - No problem with this rule going forward but needs to be discussed.
 - The situation was handled, but wanted to make sure that policies are updated, and all bases covered.
 - Discussion to be continued at the next meeting.

Next meeting

- Next Meeting- Wednesday, April 17, 2024 at 10 am.

Adjourn –Meeting adjourned at 11:40 AM.