

NERA Meeting Minutes

March 06, 2018

In attendance: Jan Nyrop (Chair), Fred Servello, Rick Rhodes, Jason Hubbard, Carol Thornber, Ted Andreadis, Jody Jellison, Matt Wilson, Eric Wommack, Gary Thompson, Brad Hillman, Adel Shirmohammadi, David Leibovitz

The agenda was approved unanimously.

A motion to approve the minutes from the September NERA meeting and the December NERA Zoom meetings were approved unanimously.

Executive Committee Report (Jan Nyrop)

A recent change was made to consolidate Cornell's voting into one vote that accounts for both Ithaca and Geneva. **When your station is asked to vote, please vote promptly.** Stations all pay assessments to NERA, stations are empowered to participate, and NERA asks that stations take prompt action.

The vote counts for your station – not for a particular individual. NERA can carbon copy a Director's designee or Executive Assistant on voting correspondence. **NERA can identify designated backups for Station Directors when required to vote. The OED will post a list of voters and designees within each NERA Station. OED will also reach out to Eddie Gouge about how APLU communicates ballots to BAA membership.**

Multistate Activities Report (Fred Servello)

The MAC oversees the work of northeast multistate projects and recommends/approves Administrative Advisers for those projects. Both NERA and NEED are represented on the MAC. This committee also provides oversight of both NERA and NEED-NERA joint planning grants.

- NE Project Recommendations (reviewed projects and requests to write)
 - NE_TEMP1834 – TITLE _____
 - Administrative Adviser – Bob Taylor, WVU (designee of Dan Robison and member of the technical team)
 - Received three positive peer reviews for what's been a longstanding project
 - The MAC largely agreed with the reviews but would like the technical team to polish the proposal's language and formatting
 - Significant list of participants, not many from the Northeast yet, but more will be gathered
 - **A motion was introduced to approve NE_TEMP1834, after the technical team accepts the suggestions from the peer reviews and the MAC. The motion was seconded and received unanimous approval.**

- Administrative Adviser assignments
 - Both Directors and individuals designated by Directors may serve as Administrative Advisers on multistate projects.
 - NRSP6: Walter DeJong, Cornell University, will serve as AA for the Northeast as designated by Jan Nyrop. A premier potato breeder in the world, Walter will serve as AA while Jan is available to assist with associated administrative work.
 - NE1602: Pat Vittum, UMass, is the current AA. She will remain the AA in name on NIMSS, while working together with Jody Jellison and Bill Miller (UMass) to lead the project. UMass will likely name a replacement for Pat Vittum in the future.
- NERA Planning Grants
 - NERA has held a successful planning grants program for the past 10 years for Northeast teams to get together and plan a research activity which would result in a large grant proposal.
 - Proposal quality has weakened in the past 4-5 years – e.g. the proposal had a weak research core, too much extension involvement.
 - The MAC thought we could incentivize interest from newer teams of faculty by targeting the next planning grant RFP toward an emerging regional focus area.
 - The recent draft RFP targeted Invasive Species
 - With a narrower focus area, Directors can more easily encourage specific faculty to pursue the NERA planning grant opportunities.
 - NIFA's Food, Energy, Water RFP was recently released
 - Is there a realistic large funding opportunity out there for the current target 'Invasive Species in the Northeast'?
 - Should the target area reflect a specific funding opportunity?
 - In previous years, NERA held forums
 - e.g. Functional Foods, Invasive Species
 - Forums served as mechanisms to bring faculty together and catalyze planning grant proposals
 - Should these be rolling planning grants? Year-to-year
 - Should NERA provide funds up-front to an institution so that they can provide administrative support to the planning grant team?
 - NERA has preliminary information on the next USDA RFP and can gauge the potential for the Northeast to score an opportunity
 - **NERA will draft a document to seek multi-investigator, multi-institutional (2+) teams, who are interested in submitting an RFP which will result in applying for a targeted funding opportunity. Under this model, the NERA planning grants program would be open and rolling, year-to-year. This document will clearly define what the funding can be used for - e.g. 'funding to support grant applications'**
 - **NERA has the capacity to support more than the three projects at \$7,000 each**
 - **The MAC will review the RFP document and any submissions NERA receives**
 - **NERA will examine how to cut a \$7,000 check to the institution**
- NE ESS Award for Excellence in Leadership
 - NERA voted to nominate Ian Maw as the Northeast winner for Excellence in Leadership

- Longtime Dean/Director at Rutgers, VP of Food, Ag, and Natural Resources at APLU for 18 years, strong advocate for the Northeast
 - **NERA will draft the nomination package and submit to the ESCOP Science and Technology Committee**
- ESS Award for Excellence in Multistate Research Nomination (NE)
 - Adel provided strong support for NE1335 (*Resource Management in Commercial Greenhouse Production*, he serves as AA) and would like to nominate the project – **Adel will draft a nomination**
 - Rick solicited a nomination from Bob Taylor-WVU, AA for NE1334
 - If we end up with two nominations, NERA will vote electronically
- Open discussion
 - Why is the effort for multistate projects duplicated between NIMSS and REEport?
 - When will REEport be automatically be populated from NIMSS information?
 - **David (and Rubie) can ask Bart Hewitt or his interim/replacement about this at NERAOC in April**
 - Can we assign Administrative Advisers from outside the Northeast region?
 - **NERA will foster a discussion with NIFA about duplication, specifically with regard to reporting**
 - UMD requested to purchase equipment over \$5,000 using Hatch funds
 - NIFA required UMD to cite the specific up-front language in their Plan of Work which mentioned the need for that equipment prior to approving the purchase

ESCOP Update

- Gary Thompson-PA has been serving as ESCOP Chair, and has focused meetings around targeted discussion and resulting action steps, rather than exhaustive committee reports.
- ESCOP leadership is overlapping more than in previous years. There's been a building process with more continuity across chairs.
 - Bret Hess-WY (ESCOP Chair 2016-17) engaged ECOP and visited offices in DC more so than in previous years. Advocacy groups, science societies were targeted with the intent of communicating who we are, what ESCOP's priorities are, and identifying our shared priorities
- Gary and Chuck Hibberd-NE (ECOP Chair) will be visiting DC in April to meet with some of these organizations (e.g. NC-FAR, NACO) and spend time in conversation with leadership of those groups.
- Gary and Rick Rhodes had the opportunity to make a presentation on ESCOP priorities at NC-FAR in December 2017
- ESCOP and APS, also ESCOP and ICOP both held joint sessions at APLU in November 2017. These relationships have been historically difficult, but there is overlap and an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the two.
- ESCOP's meeting on 03/05 asked the question of whether or not ESS/ESCOP is structured to serve us best?

- UMass, as a small state, is looking to retain the capacity funding to leverage competitive funding and be able to afford to support the National mission.
- Regional voices speak louder than individual state voices when pushing for national change
- Some smaller states are more concerned with competitive funds than capacity funds, but without capacity funds we can't afford to have faculty in a position to apply for competitive funds
- The multistate project program is a national program – it's the same for a faculty member to join a project within or outside their region
 - The intent of the multistate program is to foster collaborative research among individuals across institutional lines. It's beyond getting people together for a meeting – it's about getting people at multiple institutions to work around a particular program area.
 - INFUSE, CAP, SCRI – today's trend in funding is toward larger multidisciplinary grants that aren't going away
- Why do folks continue to participate on Multistate projects over the years? Larger faculty set, joint proposals over time, a national network of topic area professionals
- Time and Effort Reporting – an onerous process to undergo an audit (Joe Colletti-IA recently went through one). A new Fact sheet was recently released and NIFA will deliver a talk on Time and Effort reporting at NERAOC 2018 in Grand Rapids.
- Two years ago, UMD went through a Time and Effort reporting audit. Cynthia Montgomery came back to meet with the Dean/Director at UMD to smooth out the audit as the financial director who understood the policies and procedures had left.
- NSF, NIH do not require this level of scrutiny around time and effort – just NIFA Capacity funds
- Strategic Realignment – the next phase of the “One Ask” (\$200m increase to capacity funds across the six BAA Priority Areas)
 - Funding did not increase or decrease following the “One Ask”
 - We need to communicate the value that we bring and what we'd do with more money, rather than merely defining what the priority areas are and asking for more.
 - Strategic Realignment is the next phase – 45 individual lines managed by NIFA, ESCOP is looking to put together a strategy for how to consolidate / reorganize the budget lines
 - We look to engage the specialty programs for their input on realignment rather than drop a proposal on them
- **David will distribute the ESCOP minutes from 03/05/2018 to NERA**
- Science and Technology Committee (Adel Shirmohammadi)
 - A new Science Roadmap is being drafted
 - Describe what ESS is (1862 + 1890)
 - Present the concepts for grand challenges in research
- Communications and Marketing Committee (Rick Rhodes)
 - The committee urges Directors and Deans to engage, and respond to calls to action
 - Cornerstone has failed to send the Calls to Action to the Northeast CARET members
 - **NERA will communicate the CARET Email list to Cornerstone**
- Diversity Catalyst Committee (David Leibovitz)
 - National Land-Grant Diversity Conference
 - DelMarVa Research Coalition

- Communicate Northeast's Efforts in Diversity and Inclusion
- Indigenous people on land-grant university campuses

NIFA Update (Muquarrab Qureshi)

NIFA FY18-FY19 budget – NIFA currently operates under a continuing resolution. **Explanatory notes and budget table for FY19 are posted on the NIFA website.** No drastic changes, proposed haircuts to capacity programs.

AFRI Programs:

- Sustainable Ag Systems (SAS)
- Foundational and Applied Sciences (FAS)
- Education and Workforce Development (EWD) – previously K-12, evolving toward 'K-14' (including Community colleges)

Encourage faculty to submit pre-doc and post-doc applications. Funding is growing, not enough high quality applications are being received. NIFA needs to periodically dip into medium quality submissions to exhaust funding.

Some consolidation within USDA and NIFA. Three agencies consolidation: Farm Services Agency, NRCS, and RMA. Rural Development will be reporting to the office of the Secretary. Rather than an administrator there would be an adviser for Rural Development under the new model.

Regulatory Reform within USDA: The secretary is pushing to reduce regulatory burden across the department. Report regulatory burdens through the NIFA website.

Four Pillars of the USDA Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity:

- 1.) Economic Development
 - 2.) Quality of life
 - 3.) Rural Workforce
 - 4.) Innovation and Technology
- Read the task force report: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/rural-prosperity-report.pdf>
 - View the infographic: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/rural-task-force-infographic.pdf>

ESCOP should link their "Ask" to this USDA Task Force – a clear path to explain WHY we are asking

USDA has established a strong team to address science priorities. Meryl Broussard has challenged this team to establish a priority setting process which will inform future budget narratives. The team took a deliberate approach to:

- 1.) hold NIFA Science Week – Mandatory attendance by NPLs, to engage with stakeholders, committees, professional societies, and to align priorities.
- 2.) NIFA Listens sessions – four listening sessions across the USA, over 500 submissions with excellent feedback from students, teachers, producers, administrators. Those sessions have been transcribed and are being summarized to identify key themes.

NIFA is forming a 2020 budget narrative, informed by these priorities and all feedback.

USDA underwent a hiring freeze under the new Trump administration. Each USDA agency (e.g. NIFA) has been charged with drafting a staffing plan. NIFA in particular currently has 60 unfilled positions. The refill of these positions will be staggered, and some positions should be filled in the coming months.

Guidelines for Administrative Advisers (Rick Rhodes) [[Slides are posted on NERA's Spring '18 meeting website](#)]

Most NERA colleagues have served as Administrative Adviser of a Multistate Project.

What's expected of an Administrative Adviser?

- Know where documentation is housed. NERA houses all AA guidance documentation at www.nerasaes.org. Our regional counterparts do the same.
 - NIMSS Guidelines
 - Multistate Research Guidelines / Northeast Supplement to the Guidelines
 - Suggestions for Administrative Advisers (Lou Magnarelli, 2003)
- How should an AA participate and engage their technical team? Two components:
 - Management
 - Be able to log into NIMSS and read your project proposal
 - Ascribe NERA as your designee – we will handle all NIMSS mechanics on an AA's behalf
 - Leadership
 - AAs work with Experiment Stations, with researchers – what do I do at my institution to ensure the success of my work?
 - Advocate for and promote the project team
 - Assist to leverage – ask the technical team how they're leveraging multistate funds?
- Discussion
 - How should an Administrative Adviser handle formally listed participants that are not contributing, not attending annual meetings, and not reporting on their project-related work?
 - Should the AA be engaging the Directors of inactive participants to have them removed from a multistate project?
 - Serve as an advocate for the project. Attend an annual meeting and share how the team is succeeding, and where they're lacking
 - Being an Administrative Adviser is about managing people. Coach the project team, suggest a structure for the team's meetings, actively participate with and engage the project team.
 - Annual meetings should go beyond informational exchange. Collaboration should be fostered between participants at these meetings.
 - Often times, multistate projects have a leader, aside from the AA (e.g. the lead project editor). If an AA can't talk with all participants, they can talk with that project leader.

NE Multistate Projects and Impact Writing Workshops – Sarah Lupis

- NRSP1 built in dollars and capacity to provide training programs for multistate committees at their annual meetings
- **MRF Impact Writing team is seeking a Northeast Multistate project team to hold an impact training session at their annual meeting in 2018**
 - Sara Delheimer will conduct the training
- The workshop is free, as funds are already committed through NRSP1
- Purpose
 - Understand the role impacts play at a regional and national level to bolster the entire LGU system
 - Gain the knowledge, skills and experience to draft impact statements – beyond communications professionals
 - Teams can better respond to stakeholders or the media – not just useful in annual reporting, also useful for presenting to administrators and institutional leadership
 - Understand how impact statements are leveraged across media platforms to reach other audiences beyond the LGU community and the institution
- Format
 - 2.5 hour workshop – the time is allotted based on the commitment through the NRSP1 proposal, and is deemed optimal by the MRF Impact Writing Team
 - Conveying tips and information
 - Interactive component
 - Impact writing practice
- MRF Impact Team suggests holding writing training during the first or fourth year’s meeting of a multistate project’s 5-year funding cycle
 - After the fourth year – termination reports are where the MRF Impact Team draws from to create Multistate Impact Statements
 - MRF Impact Team drafts 1-2 page impact statements with pictures/graphics
- Discussion
 - Many multistate projects continue to renew over multiple cycles, and leave the Impact Statements section blank in annual reporting
 - MRF Impact writing team looks to see if particular impact statements are in line with nationally trending topics
 - Can groups provide their own funding for further impact writing training, beyond the one per region per year?
 - For the MRF program through NRSP1, the scope of work for impact training is limited to Multistate projects only, one project per year
 - To provide training to colleges and/or extension units, the MRF Impact team can do so on more of a contract basis. Sarah Lupis would lead this training, come to your site to hold multiple trainings in one session.
 - Regional Offices typically provides 2-3 teams and the MRF Impact team decides based on travel plans and prior commitments
 - NERA should identify teams in their first or fourth year to nominate for training
 - MRF Impact Team makes an urgent case to project participants for why this is important to them
 - Ease of developing future proposals

- Better outcomes from future proposals
 - Ease of securing additional support by having a track record of successful impact reporting
- For training above and beyond NRSP1, Sarah Lupis conducts those on her own. Sara Delheimer's major focus is *writing* impact statements, and she is only committed to the regionally nominated trainings as a result of NRSP1
- For a 2-day commitment of Sarah Lupis's time, ~\$1,800 in speaker fees
- MRF Impact team routinely rejects reporting on some strong multistate projects, because Impact Statements are incomplete
- Sonny Ramaswamy reads and responds to *every* Multistate impact statement
- **Homework due to Sarah Lupis**
 - **List multistate projects ready to commit to Impact Workshop at their 2018 annual meeting**
 - **List of Stations interested in campus-based training**

NRSP / Off-the-top funding Discussion (Fred Servello)

NRSPs (National Research Support Projects) are funded off-the-top from Hatch funds. (7 currently active). Regional off-the-top Projects also exist: NE9 (supports Germplasm Repositories at Geneva) and NE59 (NERCRD) in the Northeast. **Decisions on NE9 and NE59 were tabled until budgets are submitted.**

NE59 (NERCRD):

- Penn State is home to the NERCRD and provides a lot of in-kind support to the organization. For a ~\$40k investment the return on investment is high. Stephan Goetz is a responsive and thoughtful leader for the center. Gary Thompson told NERCRD to ask for more money and they've continued submitting the same ask. Their work is impactful.

Three NRSPs are up for Mid-term review in 2018:

- 1.) NRSP4
 - a. Difficult to judge the review for those not involved in the project
- 2.) NRSP6
 - a. Business plan received poor scores
- 3.) NRSP9
 - a. Received a range of scores, some particularly negative

NRSP8 (National Animal Genome Research Program) is renewing in 2018

- This NRSP has been around for multiple cycles
- Why isn't there more industry support for this project?
- The budget seems largely allocated to support salaries; a system of coordinators
- When will the sun set on NRSPs?
- If this group has leveraged \$94m, why do we need the continued investment in NRSP8? Time to close the NRSP.
- Would this effort continue if NRSP8 never existed in the first place? Likely so...
- The proposal doesn't describe what our dollars are supporting directly.

NE9 is also renewing and will soon be brought forth to the MAC. This ~\$300,000 project supports people at Cornell to support germplasm centers in Geneva, NY. Should we transfer the management of that funding to ARS?

We need to address ‘the system’ – once NRSPs are in place, there are no vehicles for getting rid of them. The funding shouldn’t extend beyond five years. Going after individual NRSPs hasn’t yet proven successful.

Perhaps we have an independent external review team examine each individual project and its structure, with the intent of seriously following their recommendations.

NERA should make the case as to why the NRSP process should be changed, and propose at least a draft alternative. The NRSP RC leadership lies in the Northeast in 2018 and 2019.

NERA can write an official statement outlining our position on NRSPs

Let’s engage NRSP thought leaders / Directors involved with NRSPs and ask – is the NRSP process *right*?

The systematic, multi-regional approach is appropriate, but it isn’t working with NRSPs

Rick will synthesize the comments from NERA Directors and ask if there’s a better process for handling NRSPs.

NERA/CARET/AHS Discussion

Joined by: Beatrix Fields (CARET Delegate, University of the District of Columbia), Sabine O’Hara (Dean, UDC CAUSES), Dan Eichenlaub (CARET Delegate, Pennsylvania State University), R. Charles Byers (CARET Delegate, West Virginia State University), Ken Niecewicz (CARET Delegate, University of Massachusetts)

(UDC, an 1862 Land-grant institution, houses the only exclusively urban agricultural program in the United States.)

- Hill visits are positive and spent largely talking about the return on investment in capacity funds. Realistically, every dollar given by the federal government, there are often \$3-5 matched from various other sources.
- Food security is national security, everyone knows that, but talks need to be targeted toward the topic area of interest of a particular legislator.
- Many young staffers don’t know what the Land-grant system is, don’t understand Experiment Stations and Cooperative Extension
- It’s important to identify and target high-level priorities for legislators – they are variable
 - Because Congress made investments in capacity funds, we have facilities up, running and active
- Powerful players in Washington, DC aim to zero out capacity funds.
- Reinventing Extension in Pennsylvania: changing the delivery system of Extension to reflect the modern generation
- It’s important to get legislators out of their offices and into facilities supported by Capacity funds – they need to SEE the impacts of capacity funds directly

- We need elevator pitches ready to go for legislators – often times, we only have one minute
- The WHY is important to legislators
- Unique characteristics of the Northeast
 - Urban communities have access to rural communities (the interface)
 - Agricultural capacity at the interface
 - Large consumer base, with money
 - Diversity of agriculture rather than ‘big commodities’ + scale
 - “Layers” along the BosWash corridor
 - Coastal/aquaculture
 - Farmers inland from the coast
 - Foresters inland from the farmers
 - Producers are closely connected to the restaurant industry, to the brewery industry
- Systems grow by dividing – we have an opportunity to be more deliberate about complementing each other
 - What spaces should we concentrate on what?
 - Concentric circles around high population centers
 - We talk about nutrient density rather than quantity
 - How can rural and urban markets cooperate?
- American society drives economic improvement by pushing out small business
 - Before this happens, we need to understand how markets evolve
 - How do we show small farmers how to succeed in an industrialized economy?
 - If we don’t prepare our farmers to change with the emerging markets, if they continue their ‘grandfather’s’ farming style, the small farmer will die
 - Small operations need to differentiate themselves to illustrate their *value-add* (e.g. organic)
- Economics, distribution systems, business plans are becoming more important than production techniques – this is the *Ten-Year View* of agriculture
- How much time do CARET Delegates spend in this role? Is it limited to time in Washington, or spent with smaller local groups?
 - You get out what you put in...
 - Visits to farmer’s markets, small producers, home visits
 - In Massachusetts, farmer’s markets in Boston receive products from the western end of the state
- We should consider another joint Summer meeting with another region to illustrate differences outside the Northeast
- Bunnie Reichle would like to draft a positioning paper on the Northeast / the Northeast Agenda

Millennial Management (slides are available at www.nerasaes.org/spring2018)

What comes to mind when you think of Millennials? - Impatient, entitled, unprepared, short-sighted, embracing of diversity, technological natives

Managing millennials is an issue of diversity and inclusion – we need to create inclusive environments for millennials to achieve excellence

Baby boomers are holding on to their jobs, and there is a generational gap in the workplace today

Not Everyone Gets A Trophy (Tulgan) – not just about managing millennials, but about managing and leading in the modern workplace

Technology is changing rapidly, reliance on technology is increasing, people can find information more easily and young people aren't retaining it in favor of knowing how to access it using technology

What influenced previous generations was more rooted in the community – family structure, work style, community activities

Smartphones and technology have redefined the definition of community

Global population has doubled since the mid-60s, this generation is born into a different world

Industry often leads academia – new faculty applicants are coming from industry

Millennials are hard-working and value flexibility

A roadmap to success is important – what do I need to do, to move forward in this job, on this project, how many grants, how many publications

Entitlement – “I’m owed a degree because I started the program”

“Surf’s up” example: New hires want to build in flex time, time for activities and/or family. Expectations should be clearly communicated – whether they’re flexible or rigid.

“Committee interrupts” example: University policies often prevent parents from being able to join these grievance meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 10:20am (a reflection of weather, cancelled flights, changing travel schedules)