

ESCOP Communication and Marketing Committee

**NASULGC – Kellogg Room, Washington, DC
May 10, 2005**

Draft Minutes

Jerry Arkin, Chair

In Attendance:

Jerry Arkin (GA), Chair
Wendy Wintersteen (IA), Chair-Designate
Tom Fretz (NERA), Executive Vice-Chair
Janet Allen (CSREES)
Mary Duryea (FL)
Mireille Gerard (Fleishman-Hillard)
Cameron Hackney (WV)
Michael Harrington (WAAESD)
Fred Hutchison (BRT)
William Ravlin (OH)
Jim Spurling (CSREES)
Michael Vayda (VT)
Rubie Mize (NERA), Recorder

Action Items and Decisions Made:

1. Tom Fretz will provide Janet Allen of CSREES with a copy of the LGU photo library.
2. Add a brief description for each of the documents on the Land Grant Experience website (<http://www.agnr.umd.edu/users/NERA/LandGrant/LandGrantExperience.html>).
The EDs will share the web address to their respective stations. Other related documents that should be added to the site should be submitted to Tom Fretz at nera@umd.edu. Tom Fretz will query Dr. Gale Buchanan regarding additional links from his Land Grant University Lecture Series to the NERA Land Grant experience website.
3. Dr. Fretz on behalf of the committee will submit a recommendation to ESCOP to endorse in principle the following concepts:
 - Acquainting OMB staff to the SAES system via field visits
 - Support for the BRT seminar series to be conducted bi-annually and rotating among the four regions. The seminar will focus on a single high priority national issue.
 - Suggested evaluation and changes in the format of the Ag. Science on the Hill starting in 2007.

4. Propose a revision of the current system for writing impacts. The committee suggests a rolling deadline for specific hot topics that will incorporate submissions from the states to develop a national press release. Others can tailor the piece to fit local needs. We would propose that the impact statements be released, perhaps four times a year, system-wide on the same day. The committee identified the following topics that could be addressed:

- Quality of life in rural America
- Soybean rust
- Avian influenza
- Sudden oak death
- Honeybee crisis - Varroa mite and the resulting decline in populations

T. Fretz will visit with Janet Allen, Jim Spurling and Ron Pardini to further discuss and work on the details of this new strategy.

5. Work towards creating a culture of marketing in the system. The purpose is to increase the visibility and importance of agricultural research, and consequently to elevate the recognition accorded to agricultural science. Mention will be made whenever and wherever possible of the formula fund investment, as well as the diversified portfolio that includes competitive and state matching funds. Mary Duryea and Tom Fretz will ask Bob Holms for Sherrilyn Novack to be part of the team that will work on this activity. Bill Black (BRT) will also be invited to become part of the team. Ideas that came out of the discussion include:

- A possible supplement to the Formula for Success called 'Building on Success'. This will be one-pagers of selected topics, similar to the impacts mentioned above. FAQ's might be included in the brochure. This can also address the talking points used by CSREES in support of competitive funding. Tom Fretz will confer with the other EDs after he has developed an outline.

Notes:

1. Introductions and Review of the Agenda – Jerry Arkin

Three items were added to the agenda:

- Update on the committee's activities from the last meeting – Tom Fretz
- The Land-Grant Series in Georgia – Jerry Arkin
- ESCOP Partnership Working Group publication – Mike Harrington

2. Update on the committee's activities from the last meeting – Tom Fretz

- The Formula for Success has been widely distributed throughout the country reaching numerous stakeholders and policymakers. The release was timely and well received in view of the issues surrounding the President's FY06 proposed budget. The publication was instrumental in supporting and winning our case to retain formula funds.
- A few institutions responded to our request for photos that enabled us to build a library with about a thousand photos. Tom Fretz developed thumbnails that were shown at the meeting. BRT had received copies of all the CDs. The LGU photolibrary should be updated every 2-3 years so they reflect current research activities. Mike Harrington will contact Arizona to resubmit their CD.

- A webpage has been created to house all documents pertaining to Land-Grant at <http://www.agnr.umd.edu/users/NERA/LandGrant/LandGrantExperience.html>
Other materials that should be included should be forwarded to Tom Fretz at nera@umd.edu
- Tom Fretz drafted a set of questions regarding the Formula Fund. He asked the group if these are the right questions? Who will provide the response? This FAQ's can be a supplement to the Formula for Success publication. Tom Fretz will discuss this with the EDs after he has developed a more refined outline.

3. Congressional Update – Fred Hutchison

We are definitely on a tight budget situation. The House allocation is expected to be the same as last year's. The President's budget diverted our attention from pursuing our other priorities, but we're still hoping that key priorities will be addressed. The battle may be over, but may resurface again next year. The Farm Bill Think Tank will deal with the underlying issues that brought about the President's proposal and will share their recommendations to the Board.

A discussion ensued about the importance of accountability. It will be ideal if program reports directly match the 57 funding lines. There is also a need to sell our programs to OMB. Get OMB out in the field to experience agricultural research firsthand. Fred Hutchison suggested taking them to states that can compete well but will still be significantly affected by cuts in formula fund, e.g. Iowa.

Fred Hutchison suggested a two-prong strategy:

- A Hill visit for three small states, starting for example with the Northeast region. Have scientists from Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire meet with congressional staff. BRT can arrange for this appointment.
- Get OMB, USDA officials and staffers visit big institutions such as Texas A&M, Iowa or Idaho.

The committee thought these suggestions are worth pursuing but should be submitted as recommendations to the BAC who will in turn request BRT to implement.

4. Science on the Hill – Fred Hutchison

There is general assessment that the Agricultural Science on the Hill Exhibit was not effective in getting the right people to the venue. The costs incurred for holding this event may be put to better use if the format is changed. Fred Hutchison suggested having a two-day event instead. One day will be devoted at the House side and another at the Senate's. Exhibits will still be set-up but there will also be short seminars (like the N-CFAR 45-minute seminars usually attended by 20-25 people) presented by research and extension scientists on the theme. The committee suggested having a specific theme for the event. The timeframe may also be changed, perhaps in April or May.

A thought occurred that the national event may be used as a follow-on to the regional seminars as a venue to gather all the states that have significant stakes on the theme at hand, for instance "Water". The topic of "Obesity" also came up. How do we showcase the system and the critical issues? How do we demonstrate that we are working and pooling resources together, and that a diversified portfolio makes this all possible?

Planning for two seminars are underway on Water Quality (Milwaukee) and Water Supply (Wisconsin) on October and December, respectively. This may be a more effective strategy for building up our cadre of champions. The event will not only highlight specific issues, but also give the officials opportunity to connect with their stakeholders and hence be identified as the torchbearer for the selected issues. This is also the argument for making it regional instead of national. The key is selecting states that have congressional members who can be invited as keynote speakers and who can express strong support for agricultural issues in their states or region. Examples would be Texas A&M, Georgia, Connecticut or Pennsylvania.

These seminars cost a great deal to produce. The BRT is seeking endorsement for the concept and a financial commitment from the system since these seminars are not part of BRT's current contract. The committee will make a recommendation to ESCOP. Tom Fretz will draft the recommendation to ESCOP noting the need to broaden the communication and marketing efforts by the system. These efforts will include OMB visits to the field, the seminar series and reformatting the Ag. Science Exhibit on the Hill. Suggestions were also made to change the name of the Ag. Exhibit on the Hill to perhaps "Science on the Hill", "Science In Action" or "Land Grant System Addresses the Issues of _____". The event should also focus on a theme.

5. CSREES Update from the Director of Communications – Janet Allen

Janet Allen has just recently come on board as the new Director of Communications for CSREES. Her duties include both supervisory and mainly communicating what we do as a system and why it matters. She will look at how resources are used and would build a strategy to make sure that they are used to produce results. *The committee will ask Janet Allen to review the Impact Writing process in view of suggestions below to "write stories instead of impacts" on a rolling schedule about "hot topics" and disseminating them via a nationwide media blitz perhaps four times a year.*

6. Communications and Marketing Subcommittee Discussions – Ron Pardini and Mary Duryea

Ron Pardini could not make it to the meeting but asked Tom Fretz to initiate the discussion on the "hot topics". The list does not represent real "hot topics". Hot topics identified were:

- Quality of life – related to obesity
- Soybean rust
- Avian flu
- Sudden oak death
- Honeybee crisis

One pager stories of how the system responds to the above issues would be more effective than writing impact statements. There are floating hot topics that may best be addressed by having a rolling deadline. These stories can be used as press releases to be released at the same time nationwide. Local twists can be added to suit local audience. Having the story fresh constantly will attract fresh response and interest. Tom Fretz will visit with Janet Allen, Ron Pardini and Jim Spurling to flesh out the details for this activity.

Mary Duryea solicited the help of the IR4 communications coordinator, Sherrilyn Novack, in organizing a marketing plan. The points will be helpful in setting up a marketing strategy on

how the system should address issues that come up. A good learning experience is the system's reaction to the President's proposed budget. We have been successful, in part, because of the timely release of the Formula for Success publication. We should always be proactive, not reactive. Should we develop supplemental publications to the Formula for Success? Should the FAQ's be refined so answers will also address the CSREES talking points supporting competitive funding? Is there an imminent need for a culture change in marketing the system? Or create a culture of marketing, how? Do we need to sell the system or just the SAESs? Who do we really need to market to: Congress, OMB, USDA, OSTP? Are we on the science radar screen? If not, why not? How do we increase our visibility and recognition that we do produce good, even better, science using formula funds and our diversified portfolio? What is our plan to sell ourselves as a science entity?

Mary Duryea and Tom Fretz will approach Bob Holm (IR4) to request for Sherrilyn Novack's time to help with this activity. A subcommittee will be formed if necessary. The group will work with Wendy Wintersteen and Brian at Iowa for the layout of any publication that will come out from this activity.

7. Other business

Jerry Arkin gave a brief overview of the Georgia Farm Bureau (GFB) Land Grant University Lecture Series at the University of Georgia. The purpose of the seminar is to educate and to garner support for the land grant university concept and system. Tom Fretz will contact Gale Buchanan so materials related to this lecture series can be linked to the newly created Land-Grant website.

The ESCOP Partnership Committee being represented by Mike Harrington at this meeting was requesting the development of a research magazine similar to the ARS publication. The group will conduct a survey to assess the effectiveness of the current impact writing process.

Examples of these questions are:

- Do you currently have in your institution publications that highlight your success?
- Is there a need for a national publication?
- Should it be an electronic, web-based magazine?
- Can you volunteer editorial staff?
- Will you be willing to contribute to this effort financially?

The group was reminded to make sure that their institutions have stakeholders supporting formula funds present at the listening sessions to be attended by the USDA Secretary, and be able to express how valuable formula funds are. It maybe worthwhile to have copies of the *Formula for Success* distributed at these sessions. If copies are needed, please contact the NERA office at nera@umd.edu or 301-504-8655.

Jerry Arkin thanked the members for the productive discussion and adjourned the meeting at 3:32pm.

Respectfully submitted by:
Rubie G. Mize
May 12, 2005