

**Q1 Communications and Marketing Committee Face-to-face (CARET/AHS) Meeting Notes  
Sunday, March 3, 2019, 1:00 – 5:00 PM  
Hilton Crystal City, Arlington, VA**

**Present:** Vernie Hubert (Cornerstone), Maggie Earl (Cornerstone), Hunt Shipman (Cornerstone, CMC ex officio), Bev Durgan (CMC member), Nancy Cox (CMC member), Nancy Cox (CMC member), Faith Peppers (CMC member), Doug Steele (APLU), Mark Rieger (CMC member), Jim Richards (Cornerstone), Becky Walth (CMC member), Jean Ralieg (kglobal), Jenny Nuber (kglobal, CMC ex officio), Rick Rhodes (CMC ex officio), Steve Loring (CMC member), Brian Meyer (CMC member), Ed Jones (CMC member), Deb Hamernik (CMC member), Rick Mertens (CMC member), Scott Reed (CMC subcommittee)

1. Chair Mark Latimore convened meeting at 1:10 PM
2. **Approval of agenda;** motion: Bev Durgan, second: Nancy Cox. Unanimous approval.
3. **Approval of minutes** of 11/29/2019 teleconference; motion: Mark Rieger, second: Bev Durgan. Unanimous approval.
4. **Learning about the CMC.**
  - a. Rick Rhodes shared an overview of the CMC (attached.)
  - b. Discussion ensued: What is the CMC trying to accomplish? What can we do and what should be doing? The CMC has the opportunity to step back and consider what will benefit the system.

Chair Latimore asked the group: how might the CMC better use the National Impact Database (NIDB)? Steve Loring noted that he was co-chairing the NIDB committee and suggested that the NIDB could come under oversight by the CMC. The conversation continued about the use of the NIDB by the CMC and the sources of information that drives content for the communications and marketing project. Faith Peppers noted that NIFA does not use the NIDB. Further, NIFA seeks information that is not available to university communicators. Bev Durgan asked how best to aggregate information at a national level? Steve Loring noted that at this time, the NIDB has variable quality in the statements and variable contributions by institutions. There are some very good statements that have been created by writers supported by ESCOP and ECOP. Doug Steele observed that the expectations of the CMC have changed. There are multiple sources of good content (e.g., SoAR.) What is the strategic plan? Who are the right people to have at the table? What is the best way to have a presence as a system? The conversation continued about impacts and the source of information for the communications and marketing project. What is the role of local communicators? And how might the CMC reach out and seek the compelling stories about our students and from ACOP?

Hunt Shipman introduced a different spin to the content conversation and observed that the system has vastly different expectations. The underlying goal of the communications and marketing project was “tell the story” and secure additional resources. The greatest impact that the CMC has had on advocacy was the development of the video to support the “One Ask.” The system has a nomenclature challenge on “advocacy.” The Calls to Action trigger inaction. What can be done to make the communications and marketing project more useful and relevant to the directors?

5. **kglobal report.**

- a. The Q4 report was circulated to the CMC (attached.) The Q4 activities were focused on testing engagement with “lighter” content. As the report indicates, the quarter used the theme of “Celebrating Food and Farmer This Holiday Season.”
- b. Jenny Nuber then provided the CMC with an overview of the communications and marketing project (attached.) What has the communications and marketing project done. The space has changed dramatically. In the past three years, the project pivoted from “building” a platform and attracting followers to using the platform and activating communities. By 2017, most kinks had been worked out. kglobal ran three “smaller activations” to determine that the right people were being activated and not getting into the way of CGAs. In 2018, the communications and marketing project pivoted from supporting “One Ask” to supporting the Farm Bill. For this, the project drove “eyes” to Extension by building awareness through earned media and digital advertising. Jenny also reported the challenge of “Calls to Action” and differentiating education from advocacy. Faith Peppers noted that as “we” demand metrics, we’re painting kglobal into a corner. The question was asked “What are your recommendations on what the CMC should be doing? kglobal noted that they have the information to tell the story. They know the people in the system to contact. If the CMC is thinking marketing, we can continue to do what we are doing. Alternatively, if the CMC is thinking activation, then the system is going to have to change the way they do business. How might you all address the bureaucratic stumbling blocks? How do we systematically engage the directors and secure buy-in? Jim Richards commented that the goal of the communications and marketing project is to compel Congress to invest in our system and the marketing reinforces the Advocacy. Jim asked: How does the system compel Sanford Bishop to invest in the Land-grant system? We have a great product. What can be done to compel the directors to act on behalf of the system, not just their own institution? Clearly, we need to deploy the right tools. kglobal suggested that the CMC systematically address how to overcome the institutional impediments for “Calls to Action.” Again, are the right people at the table?

6. **Cornerstone report.**

- a. Hunt Shipman shared that Cornerstone focused on engagement on the Farm Bill. He noted that the system had a significant effect driving the SNAP-Ed provisions of the Farm Bill. While the system didn't prevail, the system held its own against a host of countervailing interests (e.g., state governments, parties, system outliers, etc.)

For FY19 appropriations, the system captured an additional \$54M in BAA supported areas. That's a win. Hunt shared that the BAA was seeking \$125M in additional support for FY'20 in the 6 priority areas that span capacity and competitive funds. He also sounded a word of caution. We could be facing headwinds in FY'20. Faith Peppers reminded the CMC that the motor should always be running and that we have to hone our engagement and build relationships with our nationwide network of communicators. Chair Latimore thanked Cornerstone for their work.

7. **Strategic Direction Subcommittee.**

- a. Steve Loring (AES), chair of the subcommittee, provided an overview of the initial work of the subcommittee that is composed of Scott Reed (CES), Brian Meyer (communicator), Faith Peppers (communicator), Gary Thompson (AES), Nancy Cox (AHS), and Rick Rhodes (NERA.) Steve shared that he had met via phone with Doug Steele. During that conversation, Doug noted that while the CMC initiatives are driven by the BAA, the CMC has an antiquated reporting system (should the CMC be a BAA Task Force or something else?) and may not be constituted with the right people (more communicators, less directors?) Who should be at the decision table? Mark Rieger asked if we provide a forum for the communicators? Should the CMC convene a meeting to ensure inclusion and buy-in by the communicators? Bev Durgan observed that the "Dean" has to make "system stuff" a priority and the communicators must win the hearts and minds of the Deans. The conversation continued with suggestions to include communicators at the CMC's next face-to-face meeting at the APLU, at a New Administrators Orientation (December 10 - 12, 2019), or on a webinar prior to our next quarterly conference call (June, TBD.) Cynda Clary volunteered the OSU communicator as a possible facilitator for arranging a webinar/teleconference.

8. **Executive Session.**

9. **Passing of the gavel.**

- a. Chair Latimore passed the gavel to Steve Loring.

10. **Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 4:45 PM.

## **Learning about the CMC** (Rick Rhodes notes, March 3, 2019)

### *Where did the CMC come from?*

- The communications and marketing project started as an ESCOP initiative dedicated to marketing and advocacy.
- Grew from a white paper, Marketing the SAES – A Background Paper on Marketing the SAES written by Dave MacKenzie, Executive Director – NERA, early in the 2000s.
- Establishment of an ESCOP standing committee (Communications and Marketing) and development of a communications and marketing strategy (2008.)
- 2012, ECOP joined with ESCOP on the CMC with a goal to oversee and guide a coordinated and targeted educational effort to increase awareness of the Agricultural Experiment Stations and Cooperative Extension Services.
- 2013 and 2014, the cost of the project was \$400,000 annually and was split equally between ECOP and ESCOP. Leadership of the committee was shared between the Experiment Station Section and the Cooperative Extension Section; the long-term outcome of the communications and marketing project was to seek increases in federal funding to competitive and capacity lines.
- 2014, the administrative heads (AHS, collectively represented by Ian Maw) joined the effort. Again, the membership of the committee changed to reflect the supporting divisions and the annual operating budget was split evenly between AHS, ECOP, and ESCOP.
- 2015, the first Plan of Work.

### *What does the CMC do?*

- Oversees the Communications and Marketing Project (CMP)
- Manages the activities of independent consultants engaged in CMP activities
- Coordinates with the BAA on issues of importance

### *What is the Communications and Marketing Project?*

- Focused on BAA initiatives; in 2017, this included Water, Healthy Food Systems and Infrastructure. In 2018, One Ask and the Farm Bill.
- Provides strategic and targeted educational efforts to increase awareness of the value of Land-grant University agricultural and related programs, Agricultural Experiment Stations (AES) and Cooperative Extension Services (CES).
- Supports unified messages to increase the understanding and appreciation of the impacts of federal funding to the state agricultural experiment stations and Cooperative Extension services.
- Implements targeted media strategies utilizing Land-grant University and stakeholder assets.
- Mines data, produces reports, and leverages work of consultants.
- Uses a strategy of educating key decision makers (e.g., state citizens, community leaders, opinion makers and institutional allies) that have access to congressional leadership.

- Employs earned media (e.g., op-eds), the use of grassroots and grassroots connections, digital and social media approaches and engages all Land-grant University communicators.

*How does the CMC know that the committee is making a difference?*

Using the “One Ask” as a gauge:

- Produced a video seeking support for the “One Ask.”
- Promoted the video (which enabled users to contact members of Congress) through various channels:
  - AgisAmerica website and social media
  - Digital advertising
  - Direct engagement with university communicators
  - What do the analytics tell us: rates are above industry standards
- While the conversion rate (those that watched the video/those that took action) was low (23%), the results were encouraging:
  - *The number of messages sent to Congress, almost 1,000, far exceeds the number of requests that have ever been delivered by the BAA in any year.*
- The use of education campaigns through digital, print, and video platforms remains a growing component of complex advocacy campaigns.

Using the “Farm Bill” as a gauge:

- Analytic: Cornerstone’s qualitative assessment. The effort allowed us to stay in the game.

*What does this mean to you?*

- Time commitment consists of 3 quarterly teleconferences (1 hr each) and 1 annual face-to-face meeting (4 hr; takes the place of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarterly call.)
- 2019 is the outlier year in which we’ll have two face-to-face meetings. We’ll hold our last March meeting this weekend and migrate the face-to-face meeting to the APLU meeting in November.
- Aside from the meeting times, there’s a modest amount of reporting out, reaching out and communicating. That would not be more than an hour a month. All told, not a big time commitment, but an important endeavor.
- I’d posit that 2019 will be particularly interesting as the CMC considers what it wants to be and should be...

*CMC Member responsibilities:*

Participate in quarterly CMC calls

- Participate in face-to-face meetings
- Contribute to conference calls and meetings
- Provide feedback and suggestions on program activities to the communications consultant

- Contribute to the implementation of the Communications and Marketing Project as guided by the Plan of Work
- Serve on standing and ad hoc committees as necessary

And in the end, what should the CMC do?

What are the attributes of an effective, communications and marketing project?

What is the appropriate committee structure? Essential personnel?

## Association of Public and Land-grant Universities 2018 Q4 Insights Report

October 1, 2018 – December 31, 2018

### Overview

The goal of the Ag Is America project is to serve as a public, unified voice to communicate the value of the land-grant system in order to protect and grow its federal funding sources.

After several targeted activations that focused on select institutions this year, we created and launched an awareness campaign to include any institution that wished to participate. Our goal was to engage with institutions that are outside of our target states, driving broader internal engagement and awareness of the AgIsAmerica platform. Additionally, after so many “asks” of our community, we wanted to test engagement with “lighter” content, in this case a timely theme of “Celebrating Food and Farmers This Holiday Season.” The following report details our efforts.



## Community Activation (CTAs)

The goal for this quarter’s CTA was to engage with institutions that are not located in “blessed states” offering a chance for greater systemic participation with the CMP. kglobal utilized our AgIsAmerica platforms to create and deliver educational materials that highlight the impacts from institutions across the country around the theme of “Celebrating Food and Farmers This Holiday Season.”

kglobal reached out directly to identified communicators to source the most compelling stories around the holiday theme. We created and shared materials to support the impacts we received from each of the **11 participating institutions**, including individualized blog posts. A campaign report can be found in **Appendix A**.

## Digital + Social

The foundation of our content is sourced from land-grant institutions, housed on our AgIsAmerica.org website and promoted across our social channels. Every social media post links back to our website and provides visitors the opportunity to return to the originating LGU institution’s page. You can find a detailed breakdown of our Q4 social engagements as part of the holiday CTA in **Appendix A**.

## Media Relations

While our activities in Q4 focused on our digital audiences, our social community still engages with the media online. AgIsAmerica continues to be a trusted resource on agricultural affairs for the media as exhibited in this [tweet from Craig Jarvis, a reporter for The News & Observer in Raleigh, NC](#). This tweet resulted in over 113 engagements, 11 retweets and 13 likes.

## Internal Communications

On November 11-13, our team attended the APLU Annual Conference in New Orleans, presented our efforts from the first three quarters of 2018, and discussed ideas for our future activations.



The image is a screenshot of a tweet from Craig Jarvis (@CraigJ\_NandO). The tweet text reads: "Storms, tariffs, trade wars — where do farmers turn when they face unprecedented stress? newsobserver.com/news/business/ ... @NCFarmFamilies @NCFarmBureau @NCAgriculture @NCExtension @agisamerica". Below the text is a video thumbnail showing a man in a cap driving a tractor in a field. A text overlay on the video says "Ag Is America - We end our #holiday s with a toast! Cheers to...". Below the video, the tweet text is truncated: "Storms, tariffs, trade wars — where do farmers turn when they face unprece... Stresses are mounting for North Carolina farmers, who are suffering from a string of problems: storms, tariffs, trade wars, low prices, bad public relations. Experts say... newsobserver.com". The tweet is dated "4:29 PM - 17 Dec 2018" and shows "11 Retweets" and "13 Likes". At the bottom, there are icons for replies (1), retweets (11), likes (13), and a direct message icon.



# Appendix A – Holiday Activation

November-December 2018

## What We Did

To celebrate the holidays, we launched an awareness campaign, called “Celebrating Food and Farmers This Holiday Season,” that highlighted LGUs’ research and Extension activities for the holiday season. We sourced information from institutions that might be related to the holidays, and the farmers and food that make them special.

We reached out to 68 communicators and schools from a list provided by the CMC to source our content. Our original goal was to have participation from six institutions, and we were thrilled to have 11 different institutions respond positively to our call: **Oklahoma State University, Oregon State University, Prairie View A&M, University of Connecticut, University of Arizona, University of Florida, University of Georgia, University of Missouri, University of Tennessee, University of Wisconsin, and Virginia State University.**

Each of the 11 institutions noted above were excited to work with us on this campaign. All of our conversations were positive, and many schools shared our social posts on their own channels. The communicators at each of the participating institutions could not have been more responsive and helpful.

We requested information on topics from farming innovations to food prep safety or anything with a holiday angle. kglobal received a wide variety of topics for our content, including food gift labeling, keeping pets safe during the holidays, the ins and outs of poinsettia production, and tips for a holiday fish feast.

We crafted 10 blog posts that were featured on AgIsAmerica.org and utilized 3 infographics for our social media channels to highlight these topics. Our team drafted the materials, then worked with the institutions to ensure that the information was accurate and helpful. We shared the content with our network on Facebook, Twitter, and AgIsAmerica.org.

## Insights + Analytics

We received an abundance of interest from institutions to participate in this CTA and exceeded our goal of six participating institutions. This excitement and participation translated into high engagement on our social channels:

- **Total Campaign Social Media Posts: 26**
  - 13 Facebook Posts + 13 Tweets
  - Total Campaign Organic/Unpaid Engagements: 227
  - The top performing social media posts on both Facebook and Twitter were successful because they were retweeted or shared by the institution, which can be seen in **Appendix 1.**



- The [top tweet featured information from Oregon State University](#), and the @OregonStateExt Twitter handle retweeted it to their network resulting in 1,529 impressions and 12 engagements.
- The [top Facebook post](#) featured UConn’s poinsettia production tips and reached 807 people and had 51 engagements with the assistance of UConn Extension sharing it on their page as well.

## Key Campaign Takeaway


This campaign was a success because of two key elements:

1. **High participation and engagement** from LGUs sharing Ag Is America’s content with their own channels furthered organic reach.
2. The topic made it easy for us to feature work from a breadth of institutions across the country that was **timely and relevant to a broad audience**.

We were able to drive website traffic to both AgIsAmerica.org as well as the institution’s websites. The campaign utilized the holiday time period to showcase the wide range of research performed and programs implemented within the land-grant system that are beneficial to local citizens.

## Appendix 1

### Top Performing Tweet + Facebook Post




**Ag is America**  
@agisamerica

Will vodka make your Christmas tree last longer? [@OregonStateExt](#) [#ChristmasTree](#) specialist answers this and other important questions to keep your tree looking its best for the [#holidays](#): [bit.ly/ORChristmasTree](http://bit.ly/ORChristmasTree)

1:05 PM - 17 Dec 2018

3 Retweets 1 Like



**Ag Is America**  
Published by Jean Raleigh [?] · December 20, 2018 · 🌐

Which one is these is not a color of poinsettia: red, pink, marbled, blue, or white? Find out the answer from [UConn Home & Garden Education Center](#) plus how farmers are able to produce enough of this Christmas staple in just 5 months: [bit.ly/PoinsettiaProd](http://bit.ly/PoinsettiaProd)  
[#uconnextension](#)

AGISAMERICA.ORG  
**From Planting to Pinching: The Ins and Outs of Poinsettia Production - Ag is America**

807 People Reached      51 Engagements      [Boost Post](#)

UConn Extension      2 Shares

## The Communications and Marketing Project (CMP): AgIsAmerica 3 Year Overview

March 1, 2019

When kglobal began our partnership with the CMC, our goal was to create a public, unified voice to communicate the value of the land-grant system in order to protect and grow its federal funding sources. The AgIsAmerica project has been from its start about education—sharing the value of the land-grant system and its impact on communities. When we educate the right people in great enough numbers, we have a powerful tool ready to support the system when it needs it.

Our focus for the first four years of the CMP was on “building.” We built three education platforms—a website, Facebook page, and Twitter profile—from which we communicate a continuous stream of land-grant impacts. The AgIsAmerica brand quickly became an established and trusted source of information for influencers, stakeholders, the media and the general public. We’ve built robust communities of both digital and traditional grassroots and grasstops that act as third-party validators of, and advocates for, the land-grant mission. We’ve built strong internal relationships with communicators, administrators, researchers and Extension agents throughout the system.

As a result, by year 5 (2016), we had a strong brand; a steady stream of powerful stories; a robust community of advocates; and internal buy-in and support. We knew it was time to take the next step with the project.

### 2016

In Q4 of 2016 we undertook a strategic shift in the CMP pivoting our resources and focus to a strategy of “engagement,” leveraging and activating our community of supporters on the funding issues that matter most to the system, including the Congressional appropriations process.

We also narrowed our content coverage to focus on the BAA priority areas. By concentrating our efforts on water, healthy food systems and people, infrastructure, and as a result, ongoing funding, we can ensure the CMC’s resources are dedicated to the strategic issues that matter most.

#### Highlights:

- Conducted 5 Twitter townhalls to drive engagement and showcase land-grant resources
- 250+ impact stories posted on AgIsAmerica.org
- 500+ social media posts directed at our target audiences

### 2017

In 2017, we officially launched the new engagement strategy, including the first broad activation of our community through a video-driven call-to-action(CTA) in support of the NIFA “One-Ask.” Based on the learnings of that CTA, we conducted 3 smaller activations later in the year aimed at specific target demographics to further test content and action delivery vehicles.

#### Highlights:

- Launched the redesigned and updated AgIsAmerica.org website



- Conducted the national “One Ask” Video CTA in support of NIFA
  - 5,000+ clicks to stories and views of video
  - 600+ clicks to Ag Action page
- Conducted 3 targeted CTAs to test the engagement of our social audiences on survey responses, social engagement, and downloads/click throughs to AgIsAmerica.org
- 200+ impact stories posted on AgIsAmerica.org
- 450+ social media posts directed at our target audiences
- Media placements in *The Hill* and *NPR*

## 2018

In 2018, we continued activating the community with 5 multi-week CTAs over the course of the year: 4 campaigns targeting specific demographics and 1 large scale national campaign in support of a proposed expanded role for ECOP in the 2018 Farm Bill.

### Highlights:

- Conducted the Farm Bill education campaign in support of ECOP
  - 60,000+ clicks to article highlighting the impacts and existing capacity of ECOP’s role in SNAP-Ed
- Conducted 4 targeted CTAs including:
  - Testing audience engagement on the BAA priority area of “healthy people, healthy communities”
  - Testing audience response to a petition vehicle on the BAA priority area of “water”
  - Testing audience response to a legislative messaging vehicle on the topic of hunger and food insecurity
  - Testing audience engagement through a “CTA- lite” holiday campaign
- 150+ impact stories posted on AgIsAmerica.org
- 400+ social media posts directed at our target audiences
- Media placements in *the Washington Times*, *Agri Pulse*, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, *Scranton Times Tribune*, *Talk Business and Politics*

