

ESCOP Science & Technology: <http://escop.info/committee/scitech/>

05/03/2021

4 pm ET, via Zoom

Committee Members:

<p>Chair: <i>Jody Jellison (NERA)</i> Past Chair: Laura Lavine (WAAESD)</p> <p>Delegates: <i>Alton Thompson (ARD)</i> John Yang (ARD) Joe Colletti (NCRA) Bernie Engel (NCRA) <i>Indrajeet Chaubey (NERA)</i> <i>Mark Hutton (NERA)</i> <i>Susan Duncan (SAAESD)</i> <i>Nathan McKinney (SAAESD)</i> <i>Gene Kelly (WAAESD)</i> <i>Chris Davies (WAAESD)</i></p> <p>Executive Vice Chair: <i>Bret Hess (WAAESD ED)</i> <i>Saige Zespy (WAAESD Recorder)</i></p>	<p>Liaisons: <i>Robert Matteri (ARS)</i> Wendy Powers (ECOP) Tim Conner (NIFA) <i>Jim Farrar (NIPMCC)</i> Tim Killian (SSCC)</p> <p>Guests: <i>Rick Rhodes (NERA)</i></p>
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Agenda:

1. [Welcome and Introductions](#) – Jellison
 2. [Roll Call](#) – Zespy
 3. **Liaison Updates, as needed**
 - a. [ARS](#)
 - b. [ECOP](#)
 - c. [NIFA](#)
 - d. [NIPMCC](#)
 - e. [SSSC](#)
 4. [Approval of meeting notes from 04/05/2021](#) – Jellison
 5. [Agricultural Research Infrastructure Advocacy](#) – Thompson
 6. [Communications Professional](#) – Hess
 7. [Climate Survey Results](#) – Rhodes
 - a. [Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate](#) – Jellison
 8. [Next Scheduled Meeting\(s\)](#) – Jellison
- [Action Items](#)

Minutes:

1. **Welcome and Introductions** – Jellison
 - a. Jody welcomed everyone to the last "spring" meeting of the year. With graduation approaching, the summer season is upon us.

- b. Bret reported that Bill Barker will be taking retirement this summer, ending his term on the committee. Jody thanked Bill for his time and his participation.
 - c. Bernard Engel will join the committee as the North Central Representation in Bill's stead.
- 2. **Roll Call – Zespy**
 - a. Jody asked Saige to gather the roll call for the minutes.
- 3. **Liaison Updates, as needed**
 - a. **ARS (Robert Matteri)**
 - 1. Robert noted that not much has transpired since the last meeting.
 - 2. Climate change continues to be a big topic for ARS.
 - 1. Program increases have been seen for climate change, including more money to climate hubs, increased funding in soil carbon research, and additional money going to sustainable water use programming.
 - 2. ARS already has funding and programming associated with climate change.
 - 3. The President's budget has proposed a significant increase to agricultural R&D, including climate change.
 - 1. Robert noted that things are beginning to ramp up, and stakeholders are likely to get behind the President's budget.
 - 2. Additional activity is expected.
 - 3. COVID-19 pandemic operations continue under the new administration with a heavy focus on safety, meaning there are some differences from the past.
 - 1. ARS is allowed to operate with 25 percent occupancy.
 - 1. Staggered shifts are available, meaning quite a few people are on site doing research overall.
 - 2. There is no clearance to "come back to work" in the pre-COVID sense.
 - 2. Numbers are looking relatively good across the country, so Robert expects to see policy changes in the near future.
 - 1. University colleagues have reported that there will be requirements for vaccination as operations return next fall.
 - 1. For example, Washington State University is requiring proof of vaccination for people coming back onto campus.
 - 2. Robert requested that Experiment Station Directors inform the ARS regional leaders whether or not proof of vaccination will be required prior to returning to campus.
 - 1. He noted ARS will work to comply with those requirements to the best of their ability.

2. ARS has not yet seen movement toward requiring employees to provide proof of vaccination.
3. Mission essential travel has been approved on a case-by-case basis, allowing time-sensitive collection of field data.
 1. Safety professionals review each request.
 2. Air travel is still restricted in most cases, unless it is essential and there is no other alternative.
 1. Employee-specific exemptions are made.
 2. Air travel is essential for specific destinations, such as Hawaii.
 3. Policy adaptations are expected in the future.

b. ECOP (Wendy Powers)

1. Wendy was unable to attend the meeting.

c. NIFA (Tim Conner)

1. Tim was unable to attend the meeting.

d. NIPMCC (Jim Farrar)

1. Jim reminded SciTech members that last month, three white papers were shared with the group. They are posted at the [NIPMCC website](#) through ESCOP.
 1. The committee also developed one-page leave-behinds based on the white papers. These documents can be left behind as informational pieces following visions with policymakers.
2. NIPMCC is looking at plans for their annual meeting. Typically, the committee meets the third week of October in the APLU Building in Washington, D.C.
 1. Jim noted that the committee is exploring what to do because of the "limbo" felt as a result of COVID. It is impossible to predict what things will look like in October.
 2. In the University of California system, as soon as FDA gives full approval for vaccines, it is likely that vaccination will be required. However, the next steps for in-person meetings are unknown.
 3. Jim has reached out to staff at APLU to see about conference rooms and has not heard back yet.
 4. The committee will continue to work and try to figure out what do to.
3. Vaccination status updates
 1. Jody noted that Massachusetts will be requiring vaccinations for students, but not for faculty and staff. She wondered what the policies for universities looked like across the country. She noted that students can be required in a way faculty and staff cannot be. On-campus vaccination clinics are being offered.
 2. Chris noted that Utah will not require anyone to be vaccinated, by edict of the Legislature. On-campus vaccination clinics are being held. All are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated.

3. Mark reported that students will be required to be vaccinated, but staff are not required to be vaccinated.
4. UConn will not require vaccination at this point, Indrajeet noted, offering, however, that the option is open for anyone who wants to be vaccination. However, the requirement for students may change before the fall semester as many public institutions are requiring vaccination for students. He sees that it is unlikely to be a requirement for faculty and staff.
5. Rick said University of Rhode Island is doing on campus vaccinations for all students, staff and employees.
6. Gene noted that the vast majority of Colorado Universities are requiring students and faculty to be vaccinated.
7. Nathan noted that, as vaccine receive full registration and receive full approval from FDA, it is likely that they will require everybody to be vaccinated. Until that point, all are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated.
8. Susan noted that Virginia Tech has said because it is under emergency use authorization, vaccination cannot be mandated, though students, faculty, and staff are strongly encouraged to receive a vaccine.

e. SSSC (Tim Killian)

1. Tim was unable to attend the meeting.
4. **Approval of meeting notes from 04/05/2021 – Jellison**
 - a. Nathan McKinney moved to approve the meeting notes. Mark seconded the motion, and the committee unanimously voted to approve the meeting notes.
5. **Agricultural Research Infrastructure Advocacy – Thompson**
 - a. Alton thanked the Science and Technology Committee for its work on the ARIA initiative, noting that the committee has been instrumental in developing documents, including the branch station documents.
 - b. On May 3, a stakeholder letter was delivered to the Ag Committee leaders, including the majority and minority leaders of the House and the Senate Committees. Stakeholders from around the country were asked to sign onto a letter supporting the \$11.5 billion ARIA initiative
 1. Over 350 signatures from the national, regional and local level all signed on to the document.
 2. Chairmen Stabenow and Scott are aware of the support from the nation. Chairman Scott has also indicated supported.
 - c. Champions are being identified, and the group is close to identify a few champions in Congress.
 1. After champions are identified, a Dear Colleague letter will be distributed. That letter has been drafted already.
 2. The ARIA committee is hoping to find an avenue to place the \$11.5 billion infrastructure effort within a bill via the assistance of champions.
 - d. Congressional delegations have been engaged and are using a leave behind document and talking points.

1. Caron Gala and Alton had a long conversation with Rep. Alma Adams' office. She is the vice chair of the House Ag Committee. There will be a follow-up meeting on May 4.
 - e. The ARIA team also continues to engage with the White House Office of Public Engagement and interact with the Rebuild Rural Infrastructure Coalition, as well as the White House Office of Science, Technology, and Policy.
 - f. A communications toolbox has been developed, which is available online.
 1. Experiment Station directors are encouraged to write op-ed letters to support the effort.
 - g. The American Jobs Plan, which was announced in April, includes an R&D component of \$30 billion, as well as \$40 billion to upgrade research infrastructure.
 1. Research infrastructure upgrades should include ag research facilities, and ARIA's advocacy team sees potential to attached the \$11.5 billion effort to the \$40 billion upgrades.
 2. The Research Facilities Act is still sought as the authority to push the money through.
 - h. In response to the Northeast Region, Jeff and Alton are working on a plan distribute the funds.
 1. They are working on phased plan through NIFA in terms of EPSCOR state designation. Institutions under 17,500 students are eligible for this designation.
 2. NIFA looks at three-four variables, including minority-serving institutions, institutional size, and success rate to stratify distribution. Such an effort would ensure that all universities, regardless of size, would be competitive at all levels.
 3. This effort will be finalized the first week of May. Then, it will be shared with the advisory group and Executive Directors for their comments.
 4. After champions are identified and before Congress takes over, the ARIA group hope to provide their input on how diversity, equity and inclusion are important in the process of distributing funds.
 1. All institutions that are eligible for capacity funds should be treated fairly and equitably in receiving funds.
6. **Communications Professional** – Hess
- a. Bret noted an email sent on 5/3/2021 describes the Communications Professional Concept draft.
 - b. Bret further explained that committees, as well as the research EDs, often identify the need for material to be converted into a product to increase the visibility of the system as a whole.
 1. A proposal has been submitted for the ESCOP Chair to hire contractors/communications professionals and turn around information in a timely manner to improve the effectiveness of communications to public, press, and policy makers.
 2. The initiative is specific to ESS, but would feed into the CMC effort.

3. The research EDs would be asked to identify contractors to work on specific pieces. Pieces would be assigned on a topic basis.
 1. Examples of deliverables are follow-up on the presentation from Rick Rhodes (next agenda item) on Climate Survey results, branch experiment stations document, etc.
 4. The proposal would utilize resources already set aside by ESS in their annual budget for promotion. \$10,000 has been allotted this year.
 - c. Following a poll, the Science and Tech Committee voted to endorse the idea, supporting the ability to contract with communications professionals.
7. **Climate Survey Results – Rhodes**
- a. Rick noted that the Executive Directors conducted a survey a while back and he presented the results.
 1. Of note, eight of 13 states in the Northeast would be classified as "coastal."
 2. Rick asked everyone to think of their personal favorite climate change factoid. His favorite fact is that 2020 set a new annual record for separate, billion-dollar weather events, with 22 billion-dollar weather events. Of those, 7 were hurricanes.
 - b. A new urgency in Washington, DC has been seen with the Biden Administration's prioritization of climate change as an "existential threat." Executive Order 4008 has been issued to tackle the climate crisis at home and abroad.
 1. The President has stated a need to "supercharge" climate change responses.
 2. There are many dimensions to climate change, including national security, economy, and agriculture.
 3. The National Academies concluded that research must be accelerated using multi-directional relationships and observation, modeling, analysis, and communication of work.
 - c. Inside the survey
 1. Regional Executive Directors for ESS put together a survey, developing an assessment instrument with 7 fixed alternative and 3 open ended questions. The survey was shared across all regions.
 1. 62 or 77 institutions responded, for an 80% response rate (robust and unprecedented!)
 2. Take-away messages
 1. 93% of respondents are involved in climate change research.
 1. Research is occurring in areas of (from greatest engagement): sustainable ag, food security and food safety; natural resources, biodiversity and water resources; carbon emission, carbon sequestration and carbon banking; efficiency of nutrient use in livestock and cropping systems; and climate change science and modelling.

2. These responses are only those in which only 50% responded that they had capacity and research in their current portfolio.
 2. Many of the projects (86%) were funded by competitive funding, including USDA, NSF, DOE and NOAA.
 1. 77% also invested capacity funds in climate research.
 2. 87% were interested in nationwide efforts to address climate change.
 3. 0 institutions were NOT interested in participating in larger, nationwide efforts.
 4. Directors reported unique research capacity in human infrastructure, with international and nationally recognized faculty.
 3. Gaps and opportunities were also identified in the survey.
 1. Equity and climate impact on communities of color; social change; and impact of climate change on human health were all identified as areas where capacity is current limited.
 2. However, opportunities are present to reach out within and across institutions to engage social scientists and policy to grow and invest more.
 3. These gaps offer opportunities to engage non-traditional researchers in ESS work.
 4. Additionally, less than half of institutions have labs uniquely configured for climate change research.
 1. Facilities and instrumentation provide opportunities for investment (consistent with the infrastructure efforts).
 5. Competitive grants and agreements foster collaboration, cooperation and innovation are sought, and there is a desire to grow funding outside of traditional funding sources.
 4. ESS has the capacity to address climate change in a meaningful way, but it will require out-of-the box thinking.
 1. Rick suggested throwing the box away and turn to no-boundary thinking. ALL disciplines should be invited to the table to address climate change.
 2. Alton suggested thinking outside the barn.
 5. There are areas that are ripe for investment and collaboration, including social sciences, policy, and infrastructure (human and bricks-and-mortar).
 6. An infographic has been created to provide a brief overview, providing the conclusions of the survey.
 7. Jody mentioned her appreciation for the data associated with climate change research, adding that the solid numbers and level of participation is great.
- d. Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate – Jellison**
1. Jody called attention to the document SciTech AIM (Ag Innovation Mission) relative to Aim for Climate.

2. Jody asked attendees to take a look at the 2-page document, noting that the beginning is largely introduction, but the bulleted information is very important, in particular.
 1. Jody noted that the first page involves setting the stage and introduction, but the bulleted information is very important.
 2. There is an emphasis on basic R&D, as well as centers of international collaboration.
 3. An emphasis also focuses on partnering with Extension to deploy information.
 4. At the end of the document, the many facets of climate change research are laid out. Many stations already focus on many of these items.
 3. Jody asked members to think about the document, what it means, and how individual stations may be able to contribute.
 1. Additionally, she encouraged members to think about how STC can contribute to the initiative, if the committee decides to contribute.
 4. Bret explained that when the topics of interest are compared to the result's slide from the Climate Survey presentation are largely included in the document.
 5. Jody explained that she believes STC has a role to play in supporting
8. **Next Scheduled Meeting(s) – Jellison**
- a. The next meeting is scheduled for *4-5 pm Eastern June 7, 2021*.
 1. The next meeting will also include evaluation of the multi-state award winners. Regional winners will be received by May 17. As soon as they are received, Bret will distribute nominations for review, as well as an evaluation form.
 - b. Indrajeet moved to adjourn the meeting. Mark seconded the motion to adjourn, and all members voted to adjourn the meeting.

Action Items

- Inform Robert or ARS directors know whether your institution is planning to require proof of vaccination prior to a return to campus work. (All)
- Experiment Station Directors are encouraged to write op-ed letters to support the Agricultural Research Infrastructure Advocacy effort. (All)
- Review SciTech AIM document prior to the June meeting. (All)
 - Think about how STC can contribute to the initiative, if the committee decides to support the effort. (All)