

**ESCOP Social Sciences
Subcommittee Meeting**

**February 15 – 16, 2024
Washington, DC**

Location

APLU Building

1220 L St NW,
2nd Floor Conference Room
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 202.478.6040
<http://www.aplu.org>

Attendees: Kristina Hains, Tracy Rutherford, Kevan Lamm, Erica Irlbeck, Mike Retallick, Corinne Valdivia, Curtis Friedel, Brian Myers, Emily Buck, Becky Lawver (virtual)

- Called to order: 8:15am February 15
- Introductions, Review of Agenda
- Review and approval of Minutes
 - o Moved to approve by Tracy Rutherford, second by Erica Irlbeck
 - o Motion passed, minutes approved

Presenter: APLU Overview & Items on the Radar Screen (*Wendy Fink, Associate Vice President Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources*)

- APLU represents 240 universities in North America
- Councils based on titles, Commissions based on themes
- Represents professional organization of administrators of Colleges of Agriculture
- Ag-NGINE – opportunity to provide student information
- Women and Minorities in STEM (WAMS)
 - o Rural focus (2023, \$2M – 18 projects)
 - o What are working definitions of rural? (opportunity to help provide input on RFA)
 - o Only 61% of agricultural jobs filled by US graduates in agriculture, food, and natural resources
- Farm Bill – NARETPA (Authorization \$40M)
- Fiscal Year starts October 1, funding agencies must spend funds by end of September
- Committee support opportunities:
 - o Why should students study programs within the agricultural domain (example: economics versus agricultural economics)
 - o What are barriers for rural participation in higher education?
 - o Opportunities for site visits at institutions

- Public perception of higher education – barriers to rural participation?

Review & Discussion of 2023 Action Items

- Rules of operation to be posted to committee website
- Committee focus areas:
 - Addressing research gaps
 - Providing support and visibility for social science
 - Increasing program awareness
 - Review and provide feedback on agency RFPs
 - Provide formal letters of recommendation
 - Funding to focus on universities providing this activity
 - Seek to add social science as a core need within grants
 - Invite USDA representatives to participate in committee discussions
 - Potential for conference call with NIFA leaders
 - Identify potential research projects for students/faculty
 - Coordinate with NIFA liaison from committee
 - To confirm who is in this role
 - Facilitate organized Zoom introductions to NIFA
 - Should these be in person? No, very limited personnel onsite
 -

Presenter: Wendy Naus, Executive Director COSSA (Zoom) *The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)*

- Advocacy organization, focuses on social science policy and social science for policy
- Based on institutional membership
- Web based Action Center available online to support letter generation for policy makers
- There is a need to promote social science to policy makers
- April 8 and 9, 2024 – Advocacy Day
- Washington Update – weekly newsletter
- WhySocialScience.com
- Needs:
 - Improve awareness
 - How to showcase broader impacts of social science research

Presenter: Issues and Current Trends in ANR, *Dr. Doug Steele, Vice President Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources*

- APLU can help to facilitate connections from policy makers and experts
- Focus areas:
 - How to get people to adopt and use innovation?
 - Generational change
 - What is necessary to have a safe and secure food supply?
 - How to build stronger relationships with AgInnovation directors for social science?
 - Persistence

- Client adaptability/resiliency – improve adoption

Presenter: Washginton Overview, *Joshua Stull, Stakeholder Affairs Officer*

- NIFA, approximately 360 individuals (approximately 30 in Washington D.C.)
- Can help facilitate connections with National Program Leaders (in person and virtual)
- Currently operation under a continuing resolution)
- Approximately 70 programs (10 capacity, remaining competitive)
- “NIFA listens” - every two years, upcoming in 2024
 - Opportunity for the committee to contribute
- Opportunity to provide a position paper on the role of social science in agricultural research

Complete Review & Discussion of 2023 Action Items

- Curtis Friedel moved to accept SSSc Rules of Operation, seconded by Emily Buck.
- Motion passed.
- Tracy Rutherford to work with Jeanette Thurston to post SSSc Rules of Operation
- Committee Membership
 - Regional Executive Director may help to nominate members
 - Discipline titles – determined by ESCOP? To be confirmed
 - Any 1890 institution nominations need to be sent to Kris Hains, will coordinate contact process
- Further discussion tabled

Presenter: Jocelyn Richgels and Keith Mueller, RUPRI (IP) *The Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI)*

- Primary theme: Rural capacity is a problem
- New program: Rural community development block grant
- Rural Partnership and Prosperity act (technical assistance grants)
- Health is a primary focus area (National Association of Counties)
- How to define rural?
 - Depends on program – most common, zip code or census tract

Presenter: Laura Wood, NCFAR (Zoom) *National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research (NCFAR)*

- Work to increase funding for research, education, and economics
- Coordinate lunch and learn sessions
- March 6 and 7 – Congressional tour
- Climate smart agriculture and nutrition security are primary focus areas
- Opportunity for committee to contribute examples of social science impact

Presenter: Dr. Jeanette Thurston, Executive Director, North Central Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors, *How ESCOP’s Science & Technology Committee Interfaces with SSSc*

- Will talk with Directors to help recommend/recruit committee members

- AgInnovation Chair – Dr. George Smith primary initiatives
 - Develop AgInnovation research roadmap
 - Broaden umbrella beyond NIFA (NSF, EPA, etc.)
 - 10 year plan – for use in advocacy efforts
- Opportunity for committee
 - Contribute to the initiatives – why social science needs to be engaged
 - Represent committee on Science and Technology (S&T) committee
 - NSF CASA-Bio – contribute to written comments (due middle of March)
 - Capacity awareness initiative – how to advocate and educate on capacity funding programs
- Response to question regarding committee structure – decision of the SSSc regarding disciplinary boxes
- Adjourn 5:12 PM
- Informal Start: 7:45am February 16

Presenter: Dr. Jeanette Thurston, Executive Director, North Central Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors and Dr. Georgia Smith, Chair of AgInnovation committee

- Committee structure clarification – may not be necessary to have a representative from each discipline and in each region
- Other committees do not follow this model
- Dr. George Smith
 - Current funding has been flat
 - Broadening umbrella to other partners (federal agencies and NGOs)
 - How to show the value to the American people – not just people who support and understand agriculture? Tangible goals, ROI?
 - Decade roadmap – strategic pillars? Risk of status quo?
 - Goal to have draft document in the next year
 - Role of social science in the roadmap? Social science is necessary for success.
 - Committee can help by having a strong presence on S&T Committee
- Called to order: 8:15am
- Meeting Reflections/Observations/Housekeeping Items
 - Time of year? Identified February 27 and 28, 2025 as preferred next meeting date in Washington D.C.
 - S&T Liason
 - Corinne Valdivia self nominated
 - Elected unanimous
 - Clarification of elected roles:
 - Kristina Hains – Chair through end of 2025
 - Kevan Lamm – Secretary/Chair-elect through end of 2025; Chair

through end of 2027

- Additional committee nomination to be sent to Kris Hains, will contact and assess interest

Presenter: Steven Thomson, National Program Leader Agricultural & Biosystems Engineering – Speaking on “AI’s Role in Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources”

- Integrated projects receive fewer proposals
- Trust is a large aspect of adoption
- Important to retain knowledge and expertise of workforce – how to capture?
- Opportunities for social science to participate in review panels
- Meeting conclusion and final discussion items
 - Opportunities for committee to contribute to input requests (CASA-Bio)
 - Christina Hamilton to assist with uploading minutes and operating procedures on committee website
 - Potential committee action items:
 - Review grant content, provide social science feedback
 - Connect with successful grant writers to collect insights and suggestions (Curtis and Emily to coordinate)
 - Why focus on agriculture (Tracy and Erica to coordinate)
 - NIFA liason – Josh to investigate and provide guidance
 - Potential for mid-year meeting
 - Website committee member list to be updated
- Adjourn 11:10 am