



NERA News & Notes

Volume 2, Issue 1, August 2004

From the Office of the Executive Director

Summer NE Mini-Land Grant Wrap-Up

Following our summer NE Joint Mini-Land Grant Meeting in Mystic, I wanted to get back to all who participated with a Big 'Thank You'. I think we had a meaningful joint session, and the comments received in this office confirm that most felt that the session had value and that we should continue our summer joint meetings. The dialogue was constructive and meaningful. I am pleased to report that the working group that CARET admonished us to initiate has met and agreed to continue to do so on a regular basis to discuss increased regional integrated activities.

By way of a summary of the joint session wrap up, CARET challenged the NE Research and Extension directors to consider the following course of action over the next year, and report back at the 2005 joint session.

Let me attempt to summarize the thoughts that I captured from the wrap up session. CARET asked us to specifically consider the following questions.

- ⇒ Can we initiate a process for greater and more sustained joint impact reporting? Can we find a way to share our regional and collaborative successes over the course of the next year?
- ⇒ Are there identifiable impacts that we can move forward with?
- ⇒ Are there champions who can be identified?
- ⇒ What are the existing success stories that we can put forth and share? Can these success stories and programs be implemented in other states across the region? And beyond?

CARET further reiterated the need for regional collaborations and while acknowledging that significant collaboration exists across the region, noted that this needs to be systemized throughout the region. CARET cited 4 areas where they saw needs for increased collaboration:

- 1) an increase in multistate publications efforts,
- 2) increased research and outreach education focusing on obesity and diet,

- 3) a greater marketing of our programs, and
- 4) biosecurity.

Lastly, CARET suggested that we look for ways to create a systematic effort to look for new sources of funding as an alternative to our current funding, citing the **Sun Grant Initiative** as an example of progress.

These were the issues that the Joint NE CARET, NEED, NERA committee (also known as the NE "Cheese" committee, drawing from our discussion of "What is our Cheese?") discussed and wants to keep on the table as centerpieces for planning next years summer NE Mini-Land Grant Meeting.

In this light, NERA has recently initiated a Newsletter – *NERA News and Notes* now beginning its second year. In initiating this effort, we have tried a number of formats, and his past June settled on that which you see before you. Up to this time I have sent *NERA News and Notes* periodically to the *NERA* membership to increase the communication within the association, however I offered to expand this effort by sending to those on the NEED and CARET email lists in the hopes that this will enhance communication.

While the *NERA News and Notes* has been focused toward the needs of the research directors, I would like to open it up to all of our associations. All I need is information that you wish to forward to the "family". I would hope that you all agree that this would provide an excellent means of sharing information, demonstrating the level of collaboration that exists in the region, sharing of important regional success stories, noting meaningful impacts, and increasing regional communication.

So if you are willing, just sent me any material you think would be of interest across the region, and I will see that it is included in the next issue. Perhaps over time we can set aside column space for CARET and NEED as necessary.





The RE-Engineering of NIMSS

By now, you have probably heard the news regarding a new version of NIMSS, and yes, the rumors are true! A new version of NIMSS will be in place by the new fiscal year. The target roll-out dates are August 9-13. The new version is based on earlier suggestions of the directors, and the NIMSS Oversight Committee with the intended purpose to make the system more responsive and intuitive for the user.

One big change you will notice is the fact that Administrative Advisor Authorization Codes are no longer needed. The new system will automatically detect your user settings, using your email address as the identifier.

Additionally, administrative advisors will now be able to assign proper access to committee members, eliminating the need for editing passwords. Even before a user signs into NIMSS, he/she can use the guest menu. All of the functions for the guest menu will now be located on the main sign-in page. There will be no need to access a different "guest menu" as in the current version of NIMSS.

The NERA Office will offer user training sessions after the roll-out for administrative advisors, committee members, and office support staff who utilize the NIMSS system. The training session dates will be announced soon. We hope to utilize an interactive training approach via telephone/web conferencing.

NIMSS will be down for approximately one week. During this time, **NO INFORMATION MAY BE ENTERED INTO THE SYSTEM.** On or about August 13, the system administrators will be working to test the system.

The NERA Office, as well as the other regional association offices, have sent a reminder to users suggesting that all information be entered into the current NIMSS by August 1 to avoid any rollout complications.

If there are any concerns or questions regarding the new version of NIMSS or the roll-over, please contact our office.



5th National Conference on Science, Policy and the Environment: Forecasting Environmental Change

Just an FYI. You might be interested in the above conference planned for February 3-4, 2005 at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center, Washington DC. Sponsored by the National Council for Science and the Environment (NCSE) more information can be found at their web site www.ncseonline.org/NCSEconference/. NCSE annually convenes a topical conference focusing on science, policy, and environmental issues that bring scientists, educators, business and governmental leaders together to discuss critical and emerging issues. At the conclusion of the conference, written actions and recommendations are prepared for distribution and dissemination. For additional information contact: Dr. Craig M. Schiffries, Conference Co-Chair, National Council for Science and the Environment, 1707 H Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington DC, 20006. Telephone: 202-530-5810



CSREES International Science and Education Competitive Grants Program

In the event you did not see this announcement, CSREES recently published an RFA announcing the availability of grants to support the internationalization of food, agriculture, and related programs at US universities and colleges. Projects are intended to strengthen the global competence of students, faculty and staff in agriculture and related areas. Projects are intended to enhance business performance in international agriculture and related sectors through extension, research and/or teaching programs. Each institution may submit no more than two proposals as lead. Details may be found at the following site: <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/fundview.cfm?fonum=1240>





New Standardized Nomenclature for Regional Activities

At our July 2004 meeting, NERA approved a new unified nomenclature for its project and committees activities. The new nomenclature system will become effective October 1, 2004. The four regional research associations have been working over the past year to develop and adopt a more uniform national nomenclature system. All four regional associations have now agreed to the common nomenclature for our regional project and committee activities.

Multistate Research Project (NC, S, W, NE) -

Projects that involve integrated, potentially interdisciplinary, and multistate activities; have expected outcomes, including original research results; convey knowledge; and are peer reviewed.

500 Series Project (NC-5xx, S-5xx, W-5xx, NE-5xx) –

Committees formed, for a maximum of two years, to provide a mechanism for response to acute crises, emergencies, and opportunities using the multistate research approach. Activities may range from formally organized research on targeted objectives to very informal research coordination or information exchange activity depending on the circumstances; have expected outcomes; convey knowledge; and are peer reviewed.

National Research Support Project (NRSP) –

Activities that focus on the development of enabling technologies, support activities (such as to collect, assemble, store, and distribute materials, resources and information), or the sharing of facilities needed to accomplish high priority research, but which is not of itself primarily research; funded through off-the-top MRF Hatch appropriations; and are peer reviewed.

Coordinating Committees (NCCC, SCC, WCC, NECC)–

Activities that provide a mechanism for addressing critical regional issues where multistate coordination or information exchange is appropriate within a function (i.e. research, education or extension); have expected outcomes; convey knowledge; and are peer reviewed.

Education/Extension and Research Activity (NCERA, SERA, WERA, NEERA) –

Activities that serve to integrate education (academic and/or extension) and research on a particular topic where multistate coordination or information exchange is appropriate; have expected outcomes; convey knowledge; and are peer reviewed.

Development Committee (NCDC, SDC, WDC, NEDC) – Committees of duration less than two years for the purpose of developing a multistate activity; have the expected outcome of a full proposal for a particular multistate activity; and are peer reviewed.

Advisory Committee (NCAC, SAC, WAC, NEAC) –

Committees of department chairs/heads from a particular discipline that exchange information and serve a multistate administrative function through review of multistate activities, but are not peer reviewed.

This will require that a number of our current activities, NEC's, NEREAP's and NEREC's consider a designation change. How to implement such will be discussed at our September NERA meeting in Oklahoma City.



Science in the 21st Century

If you have not seen this report I recommend that you access it at the following site: <http://www.ostp.gov/nstc/21stCentury>. This report presents the critical responsibilities of our federal science enterprise and the actions taken by the Federal research agencies, through the National Science and Technology Council, (NSTC) to align programs with scientific opportunity and with national needs. Discussions range from “Enabling the US Research and Development Enterprise, Responding to New Opportunities, to Ensuring Excellence in Education and Workforce.”



Proposal – National Institute for Food and Agriculture

The mandate of the Task Force spelled out in Congressional Legislation Sec. 7404 Review of Agricultural Research Service, instructed the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a task force to: 1) conduct a review of the Agricultural Research Service, and 2) to evaluate the merits of establishing one of more National Institutes focused on disciplines important to the progress of food and agricultural science. This task force was chaired by the Honorable William Danforth, Chancellor Emeritus of Washington University. The report was delivered to Secretary

of Agriculture Ann Veneman July 29, 2004 and a draft has been made available for comment.

The Key Recommendations of the Task Force were:

- ↪ A National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) should be formed within USDA for the purpose of ensuring the technological superiority of American Agriculture
- ↪ The mission of the NIFA should be to support the highest caliber of fundamental research
- ↪ The NIFA should accomplish its mission by awarding competitive peer-reviewed grants that support and promote the highest caliber of fundamental agricultural research
- ↪ The NIFA's mission should supplement and enhance, not replace, the existing research programs of USDA
- ↪ The NIFA should be a grant-making agency funding proposals submitted by both individual scientists and single and multi-institutional research centers
- ↪ Mechanisms should be put into place to assure that the science funded by the NIFA is both of the highest scientific caliber and relevant to national needs and priorities
- ↪ The Director of the NIFA should be a distinguished scientist appointed by the President of the United States and confirmed by the Senate
- ↪ Three offices should be created to assist the NIFA Director and the Standing Council of Advisors - (1) **Office of Assessment and Scientific Liaison** to monitor the effectiveness of NIFA's scientific expenditures and coordinate its research efforts with other public research programs in the life sciences; (2) **Office of Scientific Personnel** to work with the scientific and agricultural experts to assess the adequacy of the numbers and qualifications of scientific personnel in agriculture and related fields and to make recommendations for training programs, should any be necessary; and, (3) **Office of Advance Science and Application** to match national needs to research advances in order to facilitate solutions to issues of national importance
- ↪ NIFA's annual budget should build to \$1 billion per year over a five-year period
- ↪ NIFA should be located in Washington DC so that it is in close proximity to the headquarters of the nation's other publicly-funded scientific agencies
- ↪ NIFA should be independent of all existing management structures of the USDA
- ↪ Congress should establish funding that is stable enough to support a sufficient number of well-conceived projects and give the NIFA clear responsibility for overseeing and managing scientific and technical judgments
- ↪ Action to adopt these recommendations should take

place without delay

I do not have this as a pdf. file, however if you need a copy, let me know and I will forward electronically. This is a must read, as I am sure it is going to illicit a great deal of discussion in the agency and with the partnership.



2004 Administrative Heads (AHS) Fly In

The meeting was well attended by AHS members from across the country and the Northeast (NJ, CT, WV, PA). A major point of discussion was AHS leadership's role in the Board on Agriculture Assembly (BAA) family. Several of the other major areas discussed at the meeting are summarized below.

There was agreement that the AHS members need to take a more active leadership role, which had not necessarily been the case in the past. This would allow for better coordination and communication with our federal partners, BRT, BAA members and our own institutions. There were discussions about getting greater representation from Extension, 1890s, and 1994 groups into the AHS in order to be more inclusive. It was realized that institutions have different organizational structures and that this needs to be taken into account when deciding appropriate representation.

It was felt that the reorganization of the NASULGC Board on Agriculture Assembly (BAA) was proceeding fairly well, and will continue to evolve. The NASULGC BAA is serving the family with better coordination for budget requests and directions for coordinated legislative requests.

There was a discussion about the need for the AHS members to meet in a working session that in future years could be coordinated with joint COP's meetings. The "fly-in" approach seemed to be a good venue for getting together to discuss national issues openly.

A large portion of the meeting was spent on discussing reporting requirements for USDA-CSREES funds, and the need to establish minimal legal reporting requirements for tracking the federal formula based funds. The current reporting system needs to be overhauled to be consistent and meet legal requirements. There needs to be a clear distinction made between the accounting reports and the impact reporting.

Questions were also raised as to why USDA does not accept the established university equal employment requirements as other federal agencies do and why they were conducting separate audits. This seems to be an area that could be discussed with USDA.

Submitted by
Keith Cooper



Notes from the Joint COP's Meeting in Orlando

Joint COPS met in Orlando on July 25-27, 2004. D. C. Coston, ESCOP Chair-Elect from Oklahoma State presided over the joint sessions. Fred Cholick and members of the Blue Ribbon Team provided an update and status report on the federal budget. Also discussed was how can the COP's most effectively support the BRT's lobbying efforts.

It was stressed that the COP's work effectively together. It was recommended that each section develop its own congressional education and outreach plan. These plans should be developed by COP's, in conjunction with relevant NASULGC staff and the BRT. Samples of advocacy implements include: briefings, media outreach, newsletters, the NASULGC website and an ES/CES "week" on Capitol Hill. These plans need to be coordinated with the Budget and Advocacy Committee and then implemented by each section.

Gary Cunningham from USDA/CSREES reported on the new CSREES Planning and Accountability System. Dr. Cunningham also discussed the Portfolio Review Expert Panel and upcoming Plan of Work changes. In reporting, LOGIC models will be utilized to produce concise maps of work that produce OUTCOMES. The new Plan of Work will be due Spring 2006 for the years 2007-2011

Examples of Innovative Institutional Advocacy were presented by Suman Singha, University of Connecticut; Ed Price, Texas A&M University; and Mike Tate, Washington State University. Suggested readings and viewings include: ***Washington State Impacts: We Are Making an Impact in the Evergreen State***; <http://ext.wsu.edu/impact> and ***Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services: Reallocating Resources to Achieve Strategic Balance*** by Robert C. Dickeson.

Submitted by
Karyn Malinowski



A CARET Perspective

During the breakout sessions at the NE Mini Land Grant meetings in Mystic, CT this past July, NE-CARET had spirited discussions regarding the value of these meetings. Unanimously, NE-CARET supports the continuation of the summer regional meetings, finding that they are valuable for increasing the communication and collaboration across the region. No other venue allows for these activities in the same manner as the regional summer meeting. NE-CARET understands that we serve at the pleasure of the Administrative Heads (AHS), and as such would encourage all components of the 'family' (NEED, NERA, AHS, and APS) to meet during the summer regional meeting.

NE-CARET is aware of the challenge of cost to attend these meetings to our universities, and that this time should be used in the most constructive manner, particularly amidst an atmosphere of limited and restricted resources.

Submitted by
James Shirk, CARET (PA)

