

**DAFVM Senate Meeting
Minutes
September 19, 2024**

Recording: [Rescheduled DAFVM Faculty Senate September Meeting-20240919 1821-1](#)

DAFVM Faculty Senate Member Attendees:

Jaffe, Michael (Chair); Adhikari, Pratima (Secretary); Rios, Leyla; Poudel, Krishna; Wilson, Jeff; Yu, Fei; Lee, Alison; Olivier, Alicia

Excused:

Correa, Sandra (Co-Chair); Basu, Priyadarshini (Priya); Burke, Benjamin; Li, Tongyin; Mills Devon; Morrison Carley

Absent:

Cavinder, Clay; Fulford, Charles (Taze); Ganapathi, Shankar; Karunakaran, Ganesh Kumar; Lloyd, Debra; Maples, Will; Nanduri, Bindu; Sparks, Bekah; Seong, Yun; Vance, Carrie; Zurweller, Brendan; Franca, Fred; Gholson, Grissett-Hartwick, Gretchen; Drew; Howell, George (Trey);; Manginsay, Natalie; Melanson, Rebecca

Call to Order-Meeting called to order by Dr. Michael Jaffe.

Roll Call-Recorded by Dr. Michael Jaffe

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes. Dr. Alison Lee seconded it. No discussion and no opposition. The minutes were approved.

STANDING REPORTS

Office of the Vice President: Dr. Ashli Brown

- Dr. Brown mentioned the university has been very busy over the summer. She provided some of the stuff that the office has been working on. There is a large concern about the farming crisis. She emphasized what the crisis looked like back in the 80s when we had farm aid and Wille Nelson and this time predicted to be the worst farming crisis. The cost of inputs, inflation and agribusiness is skyrocketing. We do not have assigned farm bills, so any kind of relief packages for farmers are not there. Oftentimes, farming is a cash-flow business, so our farming community often goes to the Ag vendors asking for those input costs to be covered. But those input costs are so high for several reasons – such as tariffs, lack of farm bill, and draught. There was also the grain elevator that went bankrupt. But this is observed nationwide. Our Ag lending community and advocacy groups like Farm Beureu, Delta Council and we all have been meeting with our legislators to make them aware of this so that when they are in DC they can advocate. And so, we're working on ways to sort of offset that and work with our farming community, but, it does have the potential. To have some dramatic impacts especially in in our states, the administration has met with Cindy Hyde-Smith and her staff, Senator Wicker, and Betty Thompson and they are meeting with others. The office is hosting Cindy Hyde-Smith staffers this week and one of those topics will be the farming crisis again and some of the things that are either.

- Faculty, here on campus, and ag leaders here on campus, could look at, and work on how can we create policy or create avenues where we can enhance the economic status of the state. Some of them are doing an economic impact study. In forestry, we're looking at, putting together a cross-eliminated timber road trip where we're taking investors, and legislators on a road trip to look at timber construction to try to bring that industry here to our state.
- They have put together a task force looking at specialty crops. There has been a lot of talk about California vegetables moving this side of the MS and there are pros and cons to that challenges. We had a different pest pressure depending on the growing environment. We have a task force to look into that.
- The use of artificial intelligence from a research standpoint to present to our small business. So, we have an AI task force. There is also a task force looking at the effects of rural population and policy focusing on rural communities across the nation and MS. There are members inside and outside of this task force. There might be a report put together from that task force and hopefully present this to our leaders and our state so that Ag and Forestry could be invested in our state.
- They hosted a meeting in DC co-hosting with Arizona State University on looking at how food and water, can be leveraged as tools for strategic competition or tools of war. Most of the time is over water or food resources. We are getting ready to host another meeting on campus.
- Also have ERDC days coming up on Oct 29 and 30th. Erdc stands for, engineer, research and development center. There might be a lot of opportunities for students as well such as internships and research. For faculty, offering ways to collaborate. Dr. Pitmann will be a keynote speaker.
- DAFVM discovery days – Sept 19th.

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences & MAFES: Dr. Darrell Sparks

- **Departmental changes.** We used to have the Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology, Entomology, and Plant Pathology, and then we also had the Department of Food Science Nutrition Health Promotion. Those have been reappointed and approved by IHL. Now we have the Department of Biochemistry, Nutrition and Health Promotion. So, all the biochemistry faculty, and academic programs are now with what was formerly with the Department of Food Science Nutrition Health Promotion to make biochemistry nutrition and promotion. So, the Entomology and Plant Pathology programs are now part of Agricultural Science and Plant Protection. So that's the name of that department. The motivation behind that was several fold. One is that biochemistry and particularly the undergraduate program, is mainly, it's a pretty large undergraduate program of about 450 students and the bulk of the interests among those students have to do with with human health. And so the thought was by bringing them in with the Nutrition and Health Promotion so trying to better link with other opportunities.
- The other motivation for Entomology and Plant Pathology was to help bring them an undergraduate program that they could support and nurture so that they could get some students. In the past, there were concentrations out of the biochemistry degree for Entomology and Plant Pathology, but it never really developed any traction just because the bulk of the classes the students had to take weren't really what pathologists wanted to do.

- **Food Science Innovation Hub:** To promote interdisciplinary research. Dr. Wes Schilling is the head. Not going to be housed in a particular academic department, but this is a research entity that is going to work on all or other academic units. This is under promotion.
- In the August meeting, IHL approved a name change from landscape architecture to landscape architecture and environmental design. And so that was approved last month at their meeting and so the minutes from that meeting were approved today by IHL making it official.
- **Personnel updates.** Dr. Sherry Worhty began as director of the School of Human Sciences on the 1st of July. She took over from Michael Newman who retired from that role after many years of service. And then Dr. Darren Dodds served as the interim Associate Director of Operations and now he is the Department Director, Associate Director of operations. And so as a result of that, that left a vacancy in Plant and Soil Sciences for the department head because Dr. Dodds had been serving both of those roles. So, Dr. Mike Cox is filling in his interim head for Plant and Soil Sciences. The search committee voting for that is complete. Search will commit soon. Dr. Dan Peterson is acting as interim of the Biochemistry and Nutrition Health Promotion department. For Ag. Science and Plant Protection, Dr. Fred Musser has been the acting head. Dr. Wes Shilling is the head of the Food Science Innovation Hub supported by an Endowed Professorship from Reed Food Technology.
- **Facility updates.** Dorman - move-out has been completed by the end of May. So Dorman is vacant. Phase one of renovation has started including more HVAC bathroom renovation, but there it's gonna be a several-phase project. Balew - should be completed sometime in October. The fire marshal is doing a walkthrough next week, then after that ITS will install the internet. The moving of furniture might be around the end of October. Classes might be open for faculty to start using in Spring. Livestock judging building - constructions are underway on the south farm by Hail State near the beef unit.
- **CALS enrollment** – We are up 4.57 % compared to last year. These are unofficial numbers, and the official won't happen until 1st November. We're at 2563 students this year versus 2451 last year. So we're up over a hundred students. 1st time in college students are down 1.53 %. The only college that was up in that aspect was Bagley College of Engineering. This might be the beginning of that enrollment cliff where we were talking about that's gonna affect 1st-time enrollment students, so we might be starting to see that. I think the university as a whole is down in that category as well. 1st time transfer students were up 14.77 % , 1st time graduate students up 9.6 .4 %, returning undergrad students up 5.7 %, returning grad students at 4.09 %. And then just proportions of our students as a whole in the state, we're at 54.3 % in-state students and the university as a whole is it's like 63% in-state where 41.5% are domestic and 4.2% international.
- **CALS Teaching Academy** – 2nd cohort going to start soon which is led by a faculty of the school of human sciences. So the current cohort has 11 faculty out of 7 departments. The deadline is Oct 11 to nominate the faculty by the respective department heads.

- **Career Expo** – CALS and CFR. There are around 39 companies that are attending that for our two colleges.
- **Roger Thurow** will speak in Bettersworth Auditorium in Lee Hall on Oct 4, 1-2 pm and then a book signing afterward. He is an expert in hunger, agriculture, population, and needs.

College of Forest Resources (CFR) & Forest and Wildlife Research Center (FWRC): Dr. WES BURGER (Assoc. Dean)

- **Enrollment** - a strong enrollment year. There are 651 students total in the college. That's the largest enrollment they ever had. They were down in 1st-time students but were way up like 27 % up in transfers so the total number of new students that they have at the undergrad level is almost exactly what it was last year. It's just redistributed between 1st-time freshmen and transferred students. Their graduate student numbers are at 168, which is exactly where they were last year, and so, continuing strong. Like CALS, one of their biggest gains was in returning undergraduates, and that's where they lost students during COVID-19. They were up in graduate students during COVID, but there was just, there was a cohort of students that did not come back. And this time their returning students are really strong. The overall growth is very similar to CALS; 4.6 or 4.7 %, something like that.
- **Thompson Hall** – have gotten the floor plans, site plan, and architectural renderings. Planning to do this as a mass timber project, one of the 1st large almost fully massed timber projects in the state. Dr. Bugar defined mass Timber as an engineered wood product that has two forms, glue land beams, their beams that are made up of laminated individual layers, and then CLT, which is cross-laminated timbers, which are big panels that could be under 40 ft long, 12 ft wide that are made up of laminated 2 x 6s and 2 x 8s and three layers. The building type is quick and there a sustainability benefits such as 30-40% lower carbon footprint.
- **Acquisitions-** The new school forest will be acquired; John Star Forests, 8400 acres south of the town of Starkville will be used as this teaching research platform. Students spent 9 weeks during their summer fieldwork learning how to estimate volume across them. Next is the coastal forest - a \$28 million acquisition that's being paid for entirely with federal funds, and then DEQ and MFC are gonna hand the property over to Mississippi State. It is a different ecosystem and different kinds of forest like long-leaf sites. IHL conditionally approved with some additional information being asked.
- **Career Fair** – in partnership with CALS. There was a good turnaround of the employers and students. Received positive feedback from the employers who were there.

College of Veterinary Medicine: Dr. Alicia Olivier on behalf of Dr. Frank

- **Accreditation:** It was an accreditation week for all the diagnostic laboratories throughout the state. So the accreditation site team is actually in Stoneville and they had their audit yesterday which is like once every five years. But because of COVID,

it's at their year six. The report will be back in a couple of weeks. There has been an expansion of the new cattle handling facility, so lots of groups of faculty have met with the architect to get design plans ready to go for that building for the cattle handling facility in the Center for World Veterinary Practice. Also, just wrapped up a task force looking at college bylaws.

- **Podcast:** A new podcast is up for CVM called VetMedCast. The hope is to engage pretty much everyone from veterinary students to interns and residents who would come for specialty training at the college and then the alumni. It might also help them with recruiting. This is posted once a week.
- **Positions update:** We have some new positions, so Dr. Brittany Baughman was appointed as The Diagnostic lab director in Starkville. Dr. Alejandro Banda was appointed as the executive lab director in Pearl Lab. They also have a new department head coming for Comparative Biosciences, Dr. Panagiotidis They also have a new associate director of clinical staff success in their animal hospital, Dr. Nancy Wilson. She served in an interim role before.
- **Community Committee:** A new initiative to promote staff and faculty to bring about awareness of all the good that's happening.
- **Award:** Awarded the first two students with the Dr. Matt Huddleston Royal Veterinary, scholarship which awards a student tuition and fees for their Vet school for going back into rural veterinary practice.
- **Enrollment and Events:** when we started our new class, 118 students, with 25 early entry students from our student population from 21 states. AVMA recently hosted its 3rd annual leadership and wellness conference, which brings in students from around the southeast. The veterinary business group is going to host a Gulf Coast regional summit on October 5th. Career Expo is coming Friday, October 4th. There will be 58 employers coming to the expo, and will have a reception the night before. They are hosting several fall events as part of a new initiative to engage early program students into feeling like part of the CVM community.

Holland Faculty Senate Updates: Dr. Alison Lee

- **PTIE (Promotion and Innovation of Entrepreneurship):** Ruben Merch from research spoke about this and this is something looking to standardize once after some validation. Various schools, departments of labor or defense, education, and energy are starting to talk about this and this is a push to recognize innovation and entrepreneurship as part of a faculty position in the promotion and tenure process. So this is something that they're looking to start standardizing in the P and T process.
- **Transportation:** Jeremiah Dumas spoke about parking lots and some of the areas where there are some new parking areas. They've redone some of the roads. There are plans eventually to turn the road out here in front of Noble into a

green street. They have added parallel parking a lot on all the new roads to serve as a buffer for the people who are biking so that's now a complete road, meaning it's accessible for cars, bicycles and pedestrians. They've also updated their wayfinding signage along the roads. There's gonna be more signage going up. They have dropped the amount of available permits. Level for purchase based on increased monitoring of lots and that's been redistributed so there are lots that are filling up, but he says there are still places to park and they're monitoring that, so there's still plenty of places to park, but they're trying to limit the amount of congestion that happens in the middle of campus. We are also going to be deploying an autonomous electric bus. We're the 1st SEC school to do that, and that's gonna be coming out very shortly.

- **Rebranding of DEI:** We will be defending ourselves from specific allegations of things like indoctrination of students, but it's very much a defensive strategy. We're not planning to be offensive about that in any way shape or form, but that is the situation and the strategy the university is taking with regards to those specific attacks that happened.
- **Sustainability:** Regarding the sustainability on campus, the solar farm is active. They're working on things like coffee composting, they have several student interns who are working on individual projects to increase things like glass recycling, and biodegradable confetti for graduations so that they can be thrown and then they don't have to pick it back up. These will be trending toward carbon neutral.

Extension: No Report.

Faculty Housing Appeals Committee. Dr. Michael Jaffe

- No requests

Old and New Business Dr. Michael Jaffe.

Motion to adjourn: Dr. Jaffe, 2nd Dr. Lee