

## NERA Business Meeting Minutes

June 07, 2023

The Graduate Hotel, Annapolis, MD

*In attendance:* Puneet Srivastava (Chair), Wendie Cohick (Officer-at-large), Matt Wilson (Past Chair), Anton Bekkerman (Vice Chair), Margaret Smith, Olga Padilla-Zakour, Blair Siegfried, Lisa Townson, Rubella Goswami, Rubie Mize, Rick Rhodes, David Leibovitz

### Welcome and Meeting Administration

- Puneet called the meeting to order, and the group went through a series of introductions.
- **The agenda was modified to accommodate an open discussion at the beginning of the meeting. The modified agenda was approved by acclamation.**
- **The NERA meeting minutes of March 15-16, 2023, were approved by acclamation.**

### Multistate Activities Committee Report and Recommendations (Matt Wilson, MAC Chair)

- The report and recommendations document is [posted on the NERA website](#).
- Budget request recommendation for NE59: *FFY2024 Support for the Northeastern Regional Center for Rural Development (NERCRD)*
  - The NERCRD is located at Penn State University under the direction of Stephan Goetz.
  - This is an off-the-top funding request historically determined to be the best mechanism for funding regional germplasm centers and rural development centers.
  - NERA would like to shift the NERCRD funding mechanism away from off-the-top support via the NE59 administrative project, and into a new, separate 5-year multistate activity.
  - **MAC recommends the approval of FFY2024 Off-the-top funding for NERCRD at \$40,788. MAC also recommends that the NERA OED explores other mechanisms available to fund NERCRD (e.g., multistate research project to route off-the-top funds). The motion was approved by acclamation.**
- Request to approve Peer-reviewed Multistate Activities: The MAC recommends to NERA the approval of the multistate activities below for a project cycle of 10/1/2023 – 9/30/2028
  - NE\_TEMP2333: *Biological Improvement of Chestnut through Technologies that Address Management of the Species and its Pathogens and Pests, 10/2023 – 09/2028* [Renewal of NE1833, AA: Brad Hillman – Rutgers]
  - NE\_TEMP2334: *Genetic Bases for Resistance and Immunity to Avian Diseases, 10/2023 – 09/2028* [Renewal of NE1834, AA: Bob Taylor – West Virginia]
  - NE\_TEMP2335: *Resource Optimization in Controlled Environment Agriculture, 10/2023 – 09/2028* [Renewal of NE1835, AA: Puneet Srivastava - Maryland]
  - NE\_TEMP2336: *Improving Quality and Reducing Losses in Specialty Fruit and Vegetable Crops through Storage Technologies, 10/2023 – 09/2028* [Renewal of NE1836, AA: Chris Watkins – Cornell]
  - **MAC recommends approval of the four multistate activities listed above. The full slate of activities was approved by the NERA Directors unanimously. The MAC Chair will follow up with the Administrative Advisers and technical teams, and the NERA OED will approve all these projects in NIMSS.**

- Recommendation to approve proposal and off-the-top budget request for NE\_TEMP9: *Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources, 10/2023 – 09/2028* [Renewal of NE9, AA: Olga Padilla-Zakour]
  - **MAC recommends approval of the NE\_TEMP9 proposal and budget request at \$294,751 annually through FY2027/28. The recommendation was approved by the NERA Directors unanimously. The MAC Chair will follow up with the Administrative Adviser and technical team, and the NERA OED will approve this project in NIMSS. NERA will communicate with NIFA annually about the NE9 off-the-top funding request.**
- Administrative Adviser recommendation for NE1832: *Biological Control of Arthropod Pests and Weeds* (Jason White)
  - **NERA approved the nomination of Jason White to serve as NE1832 Administrative Adviser by acclamation.**
- MAC Informational Items
  - Nomination for the 2023 Experiment Station Section Award for Excellence in Multistate Research: NE2140 (*Sustainable Management of Nematodes in Plant and Soil Health Systems*, AA Anton Bekkerman)
  - NECC29: *Northeastern Corn Improvement Conference* (ending 9/30/23) is developing a draft proposal.
  - NE1944: *Management of the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug* ends on 9/30/23 and will not renew.
  - NEERA1603: *Northeast Pasture Consortium* expired in 2021 and will not renew.

Station Research Profile: Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station (MAES) and RECs (Puneet Srivastava, Maryland)

- Puneet gave a presentation about all the facilities where Maryland AES is conducting research across the state. A slide deck of this presentation is [posted on the NERA website](#).

The Look and Feel of agInnovation (Erica Mirich, PIVOT Creative and Consulting)

- Erica's slide deck is [posted on the NERA website](#).
- Erica gave a presentation on the re-brand of Experiment Station Section/ESCOPE to agInnovation. Together, NERA Directors were provided with a recap of the creative process for developing the agInnovation brand, and Erica walked through the new [agInnovation.info](#) website.
- agInnovation's website will feature stories from LGUs across the system on its news page.
- NERA Directors were encouraged by the agInnovation brand and discussed how a regional identity could fit into the agInnovation brand.
- **NERA Directors introduced a motion to charge the Office of the Executive Director with exploring a name change and re-brand from NERA to agInnovation Northeast. The motion was approved unanimously.**

CARET Session (with Caron Gala-CARET Exec Dir, Beatrix Fields-DC, Kristen Hughes Evans-MD, Bob Frazee-MD, Bill Cutts-NJ)

- Caron Gala presented a slide deck which is [posted on the NERA website](#).
- Conversation during the CARET session stemmed from the question "What can CARET and agInnovation do for each other?"

- CARET is focused on its strategic plan and wants to be better lobbyists. Major elements of the plan are coalition building, communication, training, and accountability. Northeast CARET is working on regional-specific details and goals for the strategic plan, and ideas for each state on how to implement the plan. The goal is to ensure there is more funding to do what institutions want to do. A specific focus area in 2023 is the Research Facilities Act for NIFA.
- CARET needs to engage legislators, using stories and impact statements, to communicate the coolest things happening in congressional districts anchored by Land-grant institutions.
- It will take consistent dialogue with the NERA Directors to equip CARET delegates with meaningful information to convey.
- NERA Directors are encouraged to visit [Land-grant.org](https://land-grant.org) for budget and advocacy materials, farm bill materials, CARET Strategic Plan, CARET Progress document, CARET Delegate Handbook.
- Summer and fall are the recommended times to bring CARET delegates and legislators on to campus for engagement. Work through your college's Government Affairs representative to arrange these visits.
- We should think about sharing more aspirational, forward-looking stories right alongside our impacts. (Example: "This is where we want to be, this is what we need resources for.") There could be a statement about "where we want to be" included on impact statements, so that both impact and aspiration are articulated side-by-side.
- CARET Delegates would like to have a continuing dialogue with Experiment Station Directors – share information in a conversational way, don't just push content. A regular line of communication would allow CARET Delegates and Directors help each other throughout the year.

#### Meeting Follow-Up

- The agenda was modified throughout this meeting to accommodate schedules and emerging discussion.
- NERA OED will arrange a follow-up summer business meeting on Zoom to discuss items that could not be covered in Annapolis.

*The meeting adjourned at 12:25 pm Eastern Time.*