

NAUFRP Meetings with CSREES -- NRI

27 May 2008

From NAUFRP: Keith Belli, Steve Bullard, Mike Kelly, Tim White

From CSREES: Mark Poth and NRI National Program Leaders (NPLs): Diana Jerkins (natural resources), Liang-Shiou Lin, Gail McLean (plant biology), Michael Bowers (ecology), S. Sureshwarou (social), Michael O'Neill (water), Ray Knighton (air)

- I. CSREES just finished RFAs for NRI for 2009
 - ✓ Changed name of some cluster titles to include “forestry”.
 - ✓ Some programs have also added “forests” in title.
 - ✓ They work on RFAs for at least a few years in advance.

- II. We suggested that:
 - ✓ NAUFRP M/S plan could be used to help plan RFAs for NRI. They were aware of the NAUFRP M/S Strategic Plan and believe it has received considerable attention within CSREES. They believe the document was used to formulate RFAs for 2009.
 - ✓ CSREES could solicit panelists/program reviewers by contacting NAUFRP email list or NAUFRP deans and directors.
 - ✓ Forest resources could be set up as its own panel (this was quickly dismissed).
 - ✓ The NRI system for reviewers could be inbred based on their system (they did not disagree, in fact one NPL mentioned he had a “short list” of reviewers, approximately 80 out of 50,000 on the list of reviewers).

- III. We made the point that the last 2 years CSREES has funded \$7-\$8 MM/year for forest related” research out of \$190 MM when Senate language says 10%. There was some discussion, but no definitive answer.

- IV. CSREES said that they have narrowed programs substantially to be able to show bang-for-buck to Congress. They also are going to fewer, larger (\$) programs to be more inclusive.

- V. We asked how CSREES can seek to ensure 10% of NRI goes to “forests” in a competitive program where presumably the best proposals get funded. They said that mainly what they do is make opportunities available through appropriate programs and through continuing communication. Nothing definitive.

- VI. They made it very clear that the NPLs write/draft the RFAs. They take into account stakeholder input (such as our meeting with them), but then the group of NPLs gets together to write the first draft. The process seems to be:
 - ✓ Each National Program leader solicits stakeholder input throughout the year;
 - ✓ Congress submits annual report on areas of interest if there are new monies;
 - ✓ Administration submits ideas in President’s Budget;
 - ✓ All NPLs meet and review/compare/draft RFAs in January each year;

- ✓ First draft of RFAs goes to CSREES leadership with list of stakeholders whose input was included;
- ✓ Revisions are made and RFAs are finalized.

VII. Based on the above information, it appears that late November each year is the best time for NAUFRP input and here are some ideas:

- ✓ At a minimum we need to send a letter(s) each year (and possibly coordinate with FRAC to have a consistent message);
- ✓ These letters need to be specific to a panel and can even give specific wording changes to incorporate into existing RFAs;
- ✓ Letters should be sent to appropriate National Program Leaders with copies to cluster leader and perhaps deputies; and
- ✓ We should follow up with a phone call and perhaps an organized visit each year with a few key messages.

VIII. In addition, we need to keep pushing faculty to:

- ✓ Participate on panels
- ✓ Submit proposals
- ✓ Go to the CSREES grantsmanship workshop

IX. Potential action items for NAUFRP (for discussion) with goal to make sure we make clear and effective stakeholder input:

- ✓ Orchestrate a coordinated effort each year to either update our M/S plan or at least ID major research priorities (this could mean working with our faculties and stakeholders and then collating/prioritizing);
- ✓ Boil information down to key points and associate these points with specific panels, programs and RFAs;
- ✓ Send NAUFRP priorities and key points to FRAC for their use/input;
- ✓ Send multiple letters in November to NPLs with short key messages related to that NPL's programs only and copy these to appropriate deputy;
- ✓ Follow-up with phone calls to NPLs;
- ✓ Send another set of letters (timed to precede choice of NRI panelists and reviewers) to NPLs encouraging them to select NAUFRP faculty from our listserve, offering the help of deans/directors and re-iterating our key messages; and
- ✓ Consider developing a standing list (updated each year) of faculty that are qualified and willing to serve on a panel. Rather than offer to help find panelists for the NPLs through our listserv (a process that could take a while for responses), we could simply supply them with a strong short list of "volunteers." That way we could manage the list -- keeping it up to date -- with the ability to track whether or not our scientists are being asked to serve.
- ✓ Follow-up each year with 1-2 team visits of 3-4 NAUFRP representatives with NPLs to reinforce (once in March during Executive Meeting and perhaps another one).

- ✓ Make it clear to our faculty that we value service on NRI (or NSF, or NIH, etc) review panels.