

Dairy Innovation Hub Advisory Council

November 14, 2023

Meeting minutes

Notes by Elisabeth Berndt

Participants In-Person: Heather White, Maria Woldt, Elisabeth Berndt, Tera Montgomery (UW-Platteville), Dave Daniels (WFBF), Steve Kelm (UW-River Falls), Randy Romanski (DATCAP), Aric Dieter (ALCIVIA/DBA), Mitch Breunig (PDPW), Chuck Steiner (UW-Platteville), Mike Orth (UW-River Falls), John Haag (PDPW)

Participants Virtually: John Umhoefer (WCMA), Shelly Mayer (PDPW), Chad Zuleger (DBA), Tim Fiocchi (WFBF), Holly Dolliver (UW-River Falls)

Proxy Participants: Troy Runge (UW-Madison) for Glenda Gillaspay (UW-Madison)

Absent: Scott Rankin (UW-Madison), Chuck Nicholson (UW-Madison)

In person meeting at Platteville Room, Markee Pioneer Student Center, UW-Platteville and Zoom meeting.

Dave Daniels called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes (8.14.23 meeting): A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by Troy Runge, Randy Romanski seconded. All were in favor. The minutes were approved.

Dave Daniels provided the meeting overview and welcomed everyone.

Council member updates: Each council member provided a working update from their areas/departments since the Aug. 14th meeting.

Industry/association representatives: Dave Daniels (WFBF) shared that the WFBF annual meeting is Dec. 1-4 at the Kalahari in Wisconsin Dells. The farm bill looks promising but may change after the first quarter. AFBF is leading USDA milk markets; members testified to enhance the system from the processor side. Class III & IV milk producers are pushing farm bill to the federal government level. Producers are doing well on corn production, but dairy is struggling.

Jim Fiocchi (WFBF) commented that WFBF is working with partners to move the FMO bill forward.

Shelly Mayer (PDPW) reported that the focus of their programing currently is on the Dairy Managers Institute that focuses on the development of mid to high level managers. The 2023 Dairy Insights Summit scheduled for Nov. 28 in Madison will feature global processing and sustainability. Financial literacy for dairy farms is advancing and the 2024 PDPW Business Conference planning is underway.

Mitch Breunig offered a farmer perspective. The fall harvest is going well; yields are better than average on the corn side despite the drought this year. Markets are trending well; dairy selling beef crosses is having positive impacts on the industry.

John Haag also shared that yields are phenomenal this year even with limited rain due to the genetics that have been developed within the past couple of years.

Aric Dieter (ALCIVIA/DBA) shared that an overabundance of grain is going up in elevators, which is beneficial to the co-ops, but has created hardships for producers. Protein remains at good value, of which producers are taking advantage. The next 12-18 months look promising as the calendar year finishes with the size and scale of agriculture retailers growing.

Chad Zuleger (DBA) is keeping an eye on carbon calculator proposals, a tool that hopes to help farmers monetize conservation practices. State legislature activity focuses on milk truck weight limit increase. Modernization policies to save ag plants and farmers' participation in sustainable practices should pass soon. FSIC is waiting for dollars to be appropriated for continued program funding. The Dairy Strong Conference in January has been moved to Green Bay; the keynote speaker will be Cal Ripken Jr.

Randy Romanski (DATCP) provided a hopeful update regarding the productivity of the 2023 farm bill. Attendance at WDE was favorable, especially participation from youth and young farmers; the Dairy Symposium that featured DBIA projects at WDE went well. The IDF World Dairy Summit, held in Chicago, provided great connections. A recent trade mission in Kenya was effective. Wisconsin was 1 of 3 states invited to share successes on topics including seed genetics, artificial insemination, and diverse approaches in agriculture. DIH was addressed as an identified strength.

John Umhoefer (WCMA) reported that fall is a busy time for cheese production and sales. The prices flattened on cheese and butter will drop due to the seasonal demands. WCMA is providing testimony for the federal milk marketing order hearings (FMMO). Treating wastewater as a "fertilizer" versus "industrial sludge" continues to be a challenge with the DNR. The haul limits from farm to plant are high; WCMA is trying to streamline runs for whey which will be presented this fall with an assembly vote. Exports continue to move the needle.

University reps: Tera Montgomery (UW-Platteville) shared that the campus-wide restructuring and rebudgeting have been consuming much of upper admin time and attention. Despite the financial deficits, enrollment numbers are up for dairy science, ag business, and soil & crop science majors. Faculty continue to be successful in research areas. Pioneer Farm has attracted many visitors of all knowledge types.

Steve Kelm (UW-River Falls) reported that open positions from the recent employee turnover in CAFES are filling at a methodical and strategic pace; a farm manager has been hired. Despite the recent turnover, cows are still producing an average of 92 lbs./day and doing remarkably well. Nine students are enrolled in the FISC program that started on Oct. 25. The class is a mix of nontraditional students with a range of on-farm experience. The department continues to create space for DIH faculty; the Ag Science building is being renovated.

Holly Dolliver (UW-River Falls) commented that two professors working in the stewarding land and water priority area are working hard on DIH projects, including N phosphorus and emerging harms in waste streams.

Campus updates and Hub highlights: Campus leaders focused on general campus updates, student enrollment and engagement for fall, Hub updates.

Platteville (BILSA Interim Dean, Chuck Steiner): Chuck shared that he and his team are excited to host the advisory council and Dairy Summit at UW-Platteville. Dr. Tammy Evetovich has begun her permanent role as chancellor; campus is hosting the BOR in April. The search for a provost is posted with plans to fill spring 2024. The search for a permanent BILSA dean should be filled next academic year. Dr. Tera Montgomery continues to lead the School of Agriculture as director ensuring that the Hub's presence and outreach efforts remain connected and relevant.

UW-Platteville is facing a \$10 million structural deficit that affects many positions. The Dairy Innovation Hub remains a bright spot. Campus leaders are working on a strategic plan for 2025 to 2031 with the focus on enrollment and budget; campus-wide surveys recently finished circulation.

UW-Platteville recently partnered with the Platteville chamber of commerce to promote agriculture in the community on Pioneer Farm in which DIH faculty showcased their research to approximately 400 to 600 people.

Hub activity at UW-Platteville includes four rounds of DI3 faculty fellows, four rounds of supplies/equipment, two rounds of collaboratively mentored graduate students, and three hired faculty. Natalie Jozik, dairy research technician, is a recent Hub funded hire.

River Falls (CAFES Dean, Mike Orth): Mike began his role as dean on June 1st and shared his background. Upgrades to the science & technology building and teaching and lab spaces are among the projects that are currently underway. Budget struggles affect the university.

University enrollment is slightly down but the number of first year students is slightly up and trending in the right direction. Enrollment for the college is slightly down compared to last year. Campus continues to work through mental health issues that have recently affected the student body.

Specific Hub activity at UW-River Falls includes four rounds of faculty fellowships, four rounds of supplies/equipment, and two rounds of collaboratively mentored graduate students. People in the dairy industry and community have been supportive of the grand opening of the Dairy Pilot Plant project. CAFES hired Reuben Nelson, an artisan cheesemaker, to manage the project.

Six faculty have been hired with plans to rehire a dairy economics faculty. Dr. Grace Lewis' lab won a national new product competition sponsored by Dairy Management Inc. They have filed for a provisional patent and are exploring potential product development.

Madison (CALs Associate Dean for Research Troy Runge on behalf of CALs Dean Glenda Gillaspay): Troy reported that student enrollment in CALs strives to grow. Securing housing in

Madison remains an issue for many students. More students are enrolled compared to previous years as shared resources become available. CALS hopes to increase incoming student interest in ag majors prior to reaching upper classman status. The college is focused on strategic hiring plans, engaging with partners, and improving physical and digital infrastructure.

Collaborative research across CALS is leading to great research, and the influx of new faculty is increasing the ability to leverage additional agricultural/life science grants.

Hub activity at UW-Madison includes two rounds of postdoctoral research fellowships, four rounds of short-term, high-impact research grants, three rounds of capacity-building equipment, two rounds of graduate student assistantships, and two rounds of faculty hiring that resulted in eight new positions with a third round in progress hoping to hire three more faculty.

Administrative update and discussion: *How to best serve the outreach mission of the Hub and engage in stakeholder meetings:* Heather shared an administrative update with metrics from the FY23 DIH annual report. DIH continues to fund early-stage work that leverages federal dollars. Funding high impact research and quantifying outreach efforts based upon current research is a Hub focus.

There have been more than 200 projects funded across three campuses and four priority areas since 2020. A total of seventeen faculty searches have attracted top talent in Wisconsin. In fiscal year 2023, the amount of leveraged grant funds was \$6.7 million. There have been 217 journal articles, abstracts, or posters published, 528 student and trainees engaged in Hub research and infrastructure, and 259 research presentations were given to live audiences.

Heather overviewed current DIH outreach strategies to reach the mass audiences. These activities include poster sessions at high-trafficked events that show a breadth of DIH research, capitol displays/presentations during legislative sessions, on-site/farm/field research presentations, oral research presentations by PIs and trainees, research tents/booths at popular industry events, and speaking engagements by DIH faculty director/program manager at industry events.

DIH is looking to fund research that will reach the end user. Many Hub funded PIs and researchers are already choosing audiences that fit their project mission and support their research. In addition to PI involvement, DIH is seeking to share research directly in a more impactful way.

DIH staff can recommend feature speakers and can provide printed posters to engage more sponsor and stakeholder support. Due to limited DIH staff, PIs continue to be encouraged to initiate presentation and seek other outreach activities to present their work. Outreach is a natural outcome for the Hub even though it is not directly part of the original spending plan.

DIH opened the forum to discuss suggestions to enhance DIH outreach efforts moving forward.

Discussion: The following ideas were suggested. More emphasis on Hub research during days in which farmers visit the state capitol building might maximize farmer participation. Partnering with stakeholder groups is vital to DIH outside trade groups and the DIH advisory council. Encouraging farmers to go to the capitol is vital to advocate for DIH continued funding.

DIH could recommend relevant posters for display (with researcher on-site to share his/her work or display only) at WCMA's April event.

Farm Tech Days may be an opportunity to reach a more direct farmer audience; dedicating a space (research tent) to showcase research would be valuable.

DIH could partner with watershed groups that are focused on DIH priorities. Randy Romanski will provide a list of conservation efforts to the council that would be applicable.

Hub funded research could be acknowledged at the Tri-State Dairy Nutrition Conference and Four-State Dairy Nutrition & Management Conference to reach dairy nutritionists and veterinarians. The PDPW Business Conference could present opportunities to interview researchers.

From a university perspective, more student involvement could be considered from all three participating campuses. Opportunities could be made at the Leading Dairy Producers Conference, during Dairy Challenge, and other agricultural leading conferences across the state. Additionally, connecting with alumni ag influencers (social media) to develop DIH awareness.

Formal requests for proposals could incorporate outreach requirements. In order to reach more end users, outcomes of investment need to be clearer. PIs could apply for additional funding (~\$5K) for travel, publishing fees, ect. to “present or send” research on behalf of DIH.

DIH research could be featured/presented at quarterly at DATCP Agricultural Producer Security Council meetings. Powerful story elements could highlight important DIH research.

Nominations for Advisory Council: Dave Daniels and Maria Woldt previewed which council member seats are up for nomination.

The following members are eligible for a third term: Randy Romanski (DATCP), Aric Dieter (DBA), Scott Rankin (UW-Madison). Holly Dolliver (UW-River Falls) is in a partial term role due to a recent UW-River Falls retirement.

Council members up for nomination/re-election should let Maria know whether they would like to stay or nominate an individual from their organization. Decisions for the seats up for nomination will be voted upon in Jan. 2024.

Outreach updates and upcoming events: Maria Woldt provided an overview of the following outreach opportunities, meetings, and events.

Annual report: The final electronic version is posted to the [DIH website](#) with a new interface featuring linked tiles to stories within the report. Material from the report will be used throughout the year. Comments received have been positive with appreciation of the story-telling elements of the content.

Printed copies are ready to take home; a shorter executive summary and a public handout are also available for distribution and leave behinds. The full report was sent to campus leaders and JFC. Some media releases have been published with short online videos.

Maria is collecting samples from other organizations (does not need to be related to the dairy industry) for the next annual report. She is seeking new, creative ideas while finding a natural balance of old and new.

Nov. 14 – Reception and tours – Platteville: Networking reception and tours of Russell Hall, Sesquicentennial Hall, and Pioneer farm from 4 to 6 p.m.

Nov. 15 – Dairy Summit – Platteville: In-person and fully virtual event in Ullsvik Hall featuring thirty research posters, panels, and research talks. Posters and content will be posted online for post-event viewing.

Jan. 31, 2024 – Capitol poster session – Madison: DIH is partnering with WFBF. More information to come.

May 15, 2024 – Dairy Symposium – Madison: In-person only in Memorial Union at UW-Madison; on-demand recordings will be available following the event. This event is designed for a more academic audience and will feature advanced state research.

Motion to adjourn the meeting: A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mitch Breunig. Aric Dieter seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 2:23 p.m.

Future meetings: The next meeting is Tues., Jan. 16 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (Zoom only). The following meeting dates are tentative for Wed., April 24 (in-person in Madison at WFBF), Mon., Aug 13 (in person, location TBD) and Tues., Nov. 19 (in-person at UW-Madison).