

## Dairy Innovation Hub Advisory Council

January 16, 2024

Meeting minutes

Notes by Maria Woldt

Participants virtually: Heather White, Maria Woldt, 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), Scott Rankin (UW-Madison), Tim Fiocchi (WFBF), Troy Runge (UW-Madison), Glenda Gillaspay (UW-Madison)

Proxy Participants: Sylvia Kehoe (UW-River Falls) for Holly Dolliver

Absent: Chuck Nicholson (UW-Madison), John Umhoefer (WCMA), Shelly Mayer (PDPW), Chad Zuleger (DBA), Holly Dolliver (UW-River Falls), Elisabeth Berndt

Meeting held via Zoom for all participants

Dave Daniels called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**Approval of Minutes (11.14.23 meeting): A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by Scott Rankin, Mitch Breunig seconded. All were in favor. The minutes were approved.**

Dave Daniels provided the meeting overview and welcomed everyone.

**Council term renewals:** Three terms were up for renewal as discussed at the November meeting. Aric Dieter, Sec. Randy Romanski, and Scott Rankin. All candidates requested to serve a third and final term on the council. **Mitch Breunig moved to approve the three nominations for the open spots on the council. Tera Montgomery seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion passed.**

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

**Industry/association representatives:** Dave Daniels (WFBF) shared that the WFBF is working on a health plan that would help members who do not qualify for income-based programs through the health insurance marketplace. A legislation change is needed to allow for Farm Bureau to sell this product to farmers. There are other states who offer this product. WFBF is also working nationally on the farm bill. Ag Day at the Capitol is coming up on Jan 31.

Jim Fiocchi (WFBF) added more detail to Dave's comments about the proposed health plan

Mitch Breunig (PDPW) reported that Dairy Managers Institute is going on right now, and the next big event is the Carbon Conference on Jan. 30. Planning is also underway for the 2024 PDPW Business Conference.

Mitch Breunig offered a farmer perspective. The fall harvest went well; yields are better than average on the corn side despite the drought this year. Dairy selling beef crosses is having positive impacts on the industry. However, milk prices are down and will be down in 2024.

Aric Dieter (ALCIVIA/DBA) shared updates on pricing and talked about a new facility in Hagar City where a rail loading grain terminal will be built. The facility will bring grain terminal assets to producers in west central Wisconsin and southeast Minnesota. In addition to the grain facility, ALCIVIA has plans to build a loading terminal for liquid fertilizer, a dry fertilizer transload, rail liquid propane unload, and storage at this site. It will be finished in March of 2025.

Randy Romanski (DATCP) provided an update about the Wisconsin Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program. The purpose of the RFSI Program is to expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally- and regionally produced food products, including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other value-added food products. Funding for the program is provided through USDA. A total of \$27 million will be awarded through a competitive grant process.

**University reps:** Scott Rankin (UW-Madison) shared that he has been involved with several ice cream short courses over the January term. These courses bring industry people, on-farm producers, and fellow researchers together to learn about ice cream. Grace Lewis from UW-River Falls brought a group of students down to make batches of Lactose-free ice cream for a CERANR funded project that she has going with Rankin and Nicholson.

Tera Montgomery (UW-Platteville) shared that she recently returned from the Purina course that includes students from Madison, River Falls, and Platteville. The course includes classroom, lab, on-farm, and conference components with a capstone at the Purina research farm in St. Louis. Weather complicated the trip, but overall, it was a positive experience.

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.

Sylvia Kehoe (UW-River Falls) commented that there are currently three DIH searches in progress. First an assistant professor in Ag Econ, and then two research support staff personnel to assist on farm and in the labs with Hub researchers.

**Campus updates and Hub highlights:** Campus leaders were asked to highlight a project from their campus that is ready for implementation by end-users, and then to offer campus updates

**Platteville (BILSA Interim Dean, Chuck Steiner):** Chuck presented on the DAIRI project funded at UW-Platteville that is a data science project that brings multiple data sources from farmers into a single dashboard to help farmers make better, more informed decisions. The PI is Austin Polebitski and Andy Bohnhoff, a veterinarian and nutrition consultant is helping to test the

program. Mitch Breunig has used the dashboard and talked about his experience. Chuck shared that Dr. Tammy Evetovich will have her investiture with the BOR in April. The search for a provost is posted with plans to fill spring 2024. There are searches for the HR director and executive director of the foundation. The search for a permanent BILSA dean should be filled next academic year.

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.

Hub activity at UW-Platteville includes installing a greenfeed system and feeding gates. There are five canulated cows, with plans for seven additional. There is a call for faculty fellowships, there will be a call for equipment and there is an open call for collaboratively mentored graduate students at UW-Madison.

**River Falls (CAFES Dean, Mike Orth):** Mike presented on one of Sylvia Kehoe's calf disbudding projects funded by the Hub. The research was presented at ADSA last June in the student poster competition. In this trial, multiple brands of caustic paste were used at different volumes. No significant difference was found between brands. Further, there was no significant difference in horn growth with differing volumes of paste. This suggests that farmers can use either brand they prefer and that they should use the smallest amount of paste as recommended because it effectively prevents horn growth – and leaves a smaller wound on the calf's head. This research was conducted on a private farm and has already influenced those farmers to use less paste. There were students on the project as well. One is a current grad student at UW-Madison.

Upgrades to the science & technology building and teaching and lab spaces are among the projects that are currently underway. Budget struggles affect the university.

Specific Hub activity at UW-River Falls includes open calls for fellowships, equipment and collaboratively mentored graduate students with UW-Madison. 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.

**Madison (CALs Dean Glenda Gillaspay):** Troy Runge spoke about two Hub-funded projects at UW-Madison. First, a project with Brad Bolling in Food Science where he built an experimental consulting service to offer industry and fellow researchers High-Resolution Metabolomic Analysis of Dairy Products. This allows companies to understand key differences in products – and allows researchers to discover new biomarkers for cow health. It's also a way to verify the identity of products and verify claims. They are accepting clients now.

The next project discussed by Troy was Laura Ward Good's SnapMap app that is a companion tool for SnapPLUS focused on manure maps. This app shows farmers, manure haulers and consultants where manure can and cannot be applied for maximum nutrient benefit and water quality. The app can be used on mobile devices.

Troy reported that there is an open call for graduate students and that there has been several faculty interviews for two open positions funded by the Hub.

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. There are many opportunities on campus around sustainability.

Wisys was awarded a 1M planning grant to work on a 160M grant about sustainable agriculture that all UW-System campuses are involved with.

**Administrative update and discussion: *An update to the Advisory Council meeting schedule and format:*** Heather shared an administrative update by explaining the current involvement level of the advisory council. Quarterly meetings, feedback on proposals and faculty hiring, kept informed during stages of rapid growth. Needs are evolving. The Hub was tasked at the November meeting with promoting research to a broader stakeholder audience.

Heather, together with Dave Daniels, proposed reducing the frequency of meetings to twice per year – Winter and summer – with a focus on meaningful engagement. Tours, invited talks, meeting students etc. Concerns about meeting fatigue and limited meeting attendance were discussed. Heather also stated that she would like to meet with more stakeholder boards to help carry the DIH message forward in a more strategic way. Bringing a researcher along to a meeting like this would be beneficial too.

**Discussion:** Sec. Randy Romanski shared comments about the value of the meetings, he gets the chance to engage with stakeholders.

Overall, the council thinks that meetings are important

Dave Daniels proposed a model where:

- Invite a broader stakeholder group to join lunch and afternoon tours in August
- Redirect time toward attending stakeholder meetings or events
- Maintain Summit as a 1-day commitment for AC to avoid choosing which day to attend
- Virtual check-in meeting in Jan/Feb
- On-farm/on-location meeting in August

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

Data from the Dairy Summit was presented for the Council to review highlighting attendance numbers, online engagement and usage, favorite sessions, etc.

**Jan. 31, 2024 – Capitol poster session – Madison:** DIH is partnering with WFBF. All are welcome

**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. An RFP to apply to speak is open.

Special guests: The council welcomed three guest speakers, all new faculty who began their roles in 2023 with the Hub:

- Lautaro Rostoll Cangiano, UW–Madison, studies dairy cattle immunology
- Maria Jose Fuenzalida, UW–River Falls, studies dairy management and health
- Michaela Hoffelmeyer, UW–Madison, studies public engagement with agriculture, labor and worker safety.

Each researcher spoke for 10 minutes about their research program, background, current projects, future projects, and who is the end-user of their research.

**Motion to adjourn the meeting: A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Scott Rankin. Randy Romanski seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 12:20 p.m.**

**Future meetings:** The next meeting is Tues. Aug 13 in-person at the Marshfield Ag Research Station