

**State Extension Advancement Council**  
**Fall 2020 Virtual Meeting via Zoom - Thursday, November 19, 2020 - 9:00 AM–11 AM**

**Member attendees:** Kermia Adams, Mack Beaty, Ray Boland, John Broadway, Ashley Burns, Bill Camp, Jesse Cannon, Breck Carmichael, Jason Creamer, Benson Driggers, Jason Eargle, Les Echols, Craig Harris, Betty Heath-Camp, Henry Houser, Kyle Kelly, Tripp Kemp, Johnnie Luehrs, Roberta McKee, Darnell McPherson, Daryl Milligan, Bynum Poe, Shannon Riley, Jimmy Sanders, Stephen Slice, Cathy Smith, Thompson Smith, Raleigh Ward

**Staff Attendees:** George Askew, Tom Dobbins, Edoe Agbodjan, Brian Callahan, Alma Harris, Kathy Coleman, Deborah Hardison, Boyd Owens, Steve Cole, Gerry Dukes, Michael Wright, David DeWitt, Renee Watson

**Guests in Attendance:** Lamin Drammeh, Nathan Smith, Adam Kantrovich, Kimberly Baker, Demier Richardson-Sanders, Marie Bolt, Blake Lanford, Deon Legette, Pam Ardern

**Agenda**

**9:00 AM Invocation/Welcome/Introduction of New Members – Mr. Jesse Cannon, SEAC Chairman**

Mr. Jesse Cannon welcomed all in attendance explaining our spring meeting was cancelled due to COVID and ultimately the decision was made to have a remote call. Jesse thanked Extension personnel for putting the meeting together. Dr. Coleman monitored the Zoom chat for any questions. Jesse announced new members referencing biographies emailed: Shannon Riley, Dr. William Camp, Jason Creamer, Dr. Betty Heath-Camp, Kyle Kelly, Bynum Pope, Lee Haddon. He explained the format for the meeting-normally we meet in committees in the afternoon portion of the agenda but that was cut out due to Zoom call. Committee assignments should have been received and Alma will set up committee meetings at another time. Mr. Cannon introduced each speaker prior to their presentations.

**9:15 AM Clemson University Update – Dr. Tom Dobbins, Cooperative Extension Director**

Dr. Dobbins thanked everyone attending the meeting and thanked Dr. George Askew, Vice President PSA, for taking time to attend the meeting and offered him time to say a few words.

Dr. Askew commended the council as a premier group for giving fantastic ideas, feedback, and criticism and is the reason for our successful programs and all that we do. Dr. Askew continued input from the council is part of the planning process and influences greatly how we go to the legislature for program funding. He thanked the extension personnel for doing a fantastic job being adaptive over the last few months to keep programming going and keeping our constituents satisfied as best we can and stated any insight the council can give would be appreciated.

Dr. Dobbins reported on program updates and organizational changes in Clemson Extension: Dr. Brian Callahan will head up our online initiatives, CU Online, and will elevate his role to a different level in the organization working with our IT folks; Dr. Susan Guynn is working on assessments to make a big impact to the general assembly. Dr. Dobbins stated, as we go forward, we need more support from our general assembly, from our counties and from the federal government, and we are making an impact. We must properly measure objectives with objectives that are measurable. We have gone through a strategic planning process and our 4-H group is going through a strategic planning process now. With our district directors and program team directors, we are putting together an evaluation system that will focus on measurable objectives and measurable outcomes. According to our HR, this will be an example for Clemson University to follow. It has been a year-long process with the Extension Leadership Team behind me. Dr. Dobbins continued with program and organizational updates: Blake Lanford and Deon Legette are heading up our Field Operations as well as continuing with current duties; Dr. Dobbins stated he is excited about the changes made to strengthen our organization even though under budgetary constraints. During COVID, we have had a strategic plan to get our counties back in operating status, and a lot of people need to know the Extension Service never stopped servicing the people of South Carolina; the Midlands 4-H group started online for each club and has reached 47 states in over seven or eight countries and have gotten memberships in all of those; HGIC has had more hits outside of SC than inside SC and are working around the clock to answer all the phone calls that keep coming in; our Agronomy team continues to serve the farmers across SC; COVID has given us time to train our five new Agriculture Water agents in each district. Their job is to educate the general public as well as work with farmers about agriculture water use. Dr. Matt Smith and Derrick Phinney head up the training and have done a superb job providing excellent training over the last six months; Dr. Kimberly Baker and her Food Systems and Safety team has done a phenomenal job during the

pandemic working with all our school lunch programs, going overnight preparing meals to ensure safety criteria was met; Dr. Matt Burns and the Livestock and Forage team have done an outstanding job putting their programs online. Dr. Dobbins stated because of the virtual format, participation has increased in a lot of areas, people have been able to attend or go back and listen to the recordings. We are planning to do a mixed bag of information with what we have learned through COVID. We will continue to do one on one and face to face but we will not forget what we have learned providing online programming. This is where Dr. Callahan comes in helping us make sure we meet all standards required. The Horticulture team has been inundated with new processes and we are excited about the Hampton County project which will be very good economically for the horticulture people; in Forestry, Derek Phinney and his team are working hard and trying to purchase a portable sawmill to go around to small landowners to show them how they can harvest their products together and turn it into a profit center for them; our Agribusiness team has been doing a phenomenal job making sure our farms are getting the latest information. Dr. Adam Kantrovich led a tax school this year with record numbers attending. Our Rural Health program continues to grow with Dr. Michelle Parisi doing a great job tying Rural Health in with our Expanding Food and Nutrition Program. Even though our offices are closed to the public, our Extension Service people are not, and they have been working hard getting programs that are relevant and keeping our Extension System going. This advisory group is probably one of the premier advisory groups in the country and I continue to get questions about this group because we are not only servicing Clemson, but we are servicing South Carolina State as well. This is a unique joint advisory program servicing both land grant universities. We have many joint programs, but I would like to highlight one that Dr. Della Baker, Dr. Julie Northcutt from Clemson, and Boyd Owens from SC State have been working on and that is our racial understanding programs. They have been recognized all over the country through the programs they have put forth on racial understanding. It is an outstanding program and shows working jointly we are a lot better off than not working together. Dr. Dobbins emphasized the importance of this advisory committee and this committee is what we listen to. After this meeting, Dr. Askew, Dr. Belli and Dr. Dobbins will meet with the Advisory Council Leadership Committee which helps us greatly, not only in presenting our legislative outlook, but in presenting our programmatic outlook as well. Dr. Dobbins expressed his appreciation for the committee taking time out of their busy schedules to help make our Extension Services of both institutions a better place.

**9:30 AM SC State University Updates – Dr. Edoe Agbodjan, Associate Extension Administrator 1890 Program  
Dr. Lamin Drammeh, Strategic Initiatives, Evaluation & Engagement Director**

Dr. Agbodjan thanked the committee for their time and doing a fantastic job. He proceeded with the SC State program updates and announcements: SCSU operates out of eight regions: Upstate, Piedmont, Capital, Midland, Pee Dee, Coastal, Low Country and Santee Wateree. The newest region being the Capital Region with main headquarters in Cayce. In Cayce, SCSU Extension will have a new building with a research lab and conference center and will be the biggest building we own; we are hiring to increase staff in our offices to provide adequate and efficient services to our stakeholders; the 4-H program has been assigned to Demier Richardson-Sanders and she will be coming up in the program with updates; we hired an Agricultural Program Leader to see all agricultural programs are offered in all regions; we added a new program “Education Innovation Support”. This new program will target our stakeholders and youth and offer career readiness and college prep; we will be hiring three or four positions for our biggest scholarship program which is Agriculture Innovation Scholarship; the Family Nutrition and Health Program is anticipating a split assignment for the program leader role position. We are targeting the Family Consumer Sciences Program to be a split assignment to cover all the Family Nutritional Program because COVID has brought up issues which need to be covered; we added two family life extension agents to make sure we address health issues we are having in the targeted regions; we hired two regional directors and are in the process of hiring five extension agents to make sure our regions have Extension agents in agriculture because that will be our bread and butter; we anticipate an increase in the number of 4-H agents because we want to have a contribution to the youth in our rural areas; for the committed Education Community Development Program, we plan to address the needs for the program in the next fiscal year 2122. Dr. Agbodjan continued with new programming ideas and results: Because COVID has given us a lot of challenges, we had to go back to the drawing board and figure out how we address our customer’s needs in other ways. So collectively the agents and administration came together and came away with the Home Series. We found most of our stakeholders are technologically challenged but also noticed the majority of them have a cell phone which gave the agents the idea to use the platform most of them have access to which is YouTube. The Home Series are short videos where we address a wide variety of subjects/topics like hand washing, mental health, cancer prevention. In total we have produced 17 videos and have at least 6000 views so far reaching people we did not expect to reach but because of the cell phone they were able to view the short lesson videos. Dr. Agbodjan continued with updates on the staff and working schedules: Staff are working on a reduced rotational basis, A and B rotation, five days a week and are anticipating fully opening offices on January 21 but are figuring

out exactly how to be open and be safe. So far as programming, we will have three delivery methods: virtual, hybrid and traditional face to face. We are working with Clemson on grants and continue to collaborate all the time. We are happy for the project in Hampton County and receiving a lot of calls from the Huntington Project to find out exactly what our role will be. Dr. Agbodjan introduced Dr. Drammeh for his presentation.

Dr. Lamin Drammeh thanked Dr. Askew and Dr. Dobbins for their continued collaboration and partnership. He proceeded to review SCSU legislative package with the following details: The ask of \$1.75M would bolster SCSU PSA implementation planning by hiring 15 new additional staff in the areas of Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resources and Education, Education Innovation and Support which is a new area and also focus on hemp industry, particularly Industrial Hemp. So far as Industrial Hemp, we are looking to see how we can partner with Clemson in whichever way possible. In the area of Small Business Recovery Assistant program, we asked \$350,00 towards training after COVID pandemic is over and to address challenges in the area of retail, restaurants, and service industry. Priority two would be \$250,000 for small farm sustainability and capacity. With no priority, \$200,000 for immunity boost for nutrition education and awareness after COVID is very, very important. On the Federal level, we have indicated a need for 10 FDA positions from USDA that will allow us to start new program initiatives. Dr. Drammeh they have not met with the Ways and Means Committee yet because it was postponed.

**9:45 AM**      **Legislative Update – Mr. Michael Wright, Governmental Affairs** (presentation attached)  
**Dr. Kathy Coleman, Sandhill Research & Education Center Director**

Michael Wright started the segment with thanks to the committee and appreciation of our partnership with SCSU and their partnership over at the General Assembly and beyond. Mr. Wright commented this committee is going to be so vital in the next year. It has been vital in years past but going forward is going to be critical. The powerpoint began with a review of External Affairs-which supports the University with corporate partnerships and Governmental Affairs-with focus on federal relations, state relations and advocacy. As a public land grant university, approximately 11% of Clemson's E&G revenue and 53% of Clemson's PSA revenue is funded by the state, subject to SC General Assembly's annual budget approval.

Dr. Kathy Coleman added those percentages really highlight how important our advocacy efforts are with this group and how important it is our constituents understand what we do and how important it is for us to receiving funding from the state to carry out our mission.

Mr. Wright continued with a budget update: We continue to operate under a continuing resolution until the General Assembly returns in 2021. On the 2021 state budget outlook, the Board of Economic Advisors just met two weeks ago, and the budget is still in a stable position. Mr. Wright said he thought there was a \$2B surplus however, that had gone down. The Board will meet again in February and will make another revenue forecast. We will see how the economy is moving and how the growth is and that will depend on how we end up.

Dr. Coleman commented we are probably in better shape as a state since we did have a surplus. Dr. Dobbins keeps up nationally on the extension side with his colleagues. Our hope is that we do not see any budget reductions.

Dr. Dobbins added most of the surrounding states in the southern region have already implemented budget cuts, so I think the lessons learned from 2008 has really helped us. Sometimes we want our state legislators to spend all the money but this time having a big surplus going into COVID really helped us. I wanted to emphasize this is going to be the most critical budget year we have had since 2008. If we can just hold where we are, even on the federal side, I think we will be doing a great job so that is why this group is even more important today than it was several years ago. I am very cautiously optimistic about the future as we move forward, but we are preparing to tighten our belts a lot in Clemson to offset some of the budget woes.

Mr. Wright reviewed new House and Senate members coming in. This is going to be very important to Advocacy and what that change looks like in the Senate for new members on Senate Finance Committee. We will have a new chairman of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources committee so we will definitely share that information with you as we go forward. Mr. Wright reviewed the 2021 State Budget Priorities on his powerpoint. He let the Council know that Beth Bell sends out emails during session with weekly updates on Monday or Tuesday, a week before the session begins. She will have the latest updates on any legislation, the budget, any hot items and what is very important is the "calls to action" or anything like that we need to know.

Dr. Coleman added it is a team effort. Legislators hearing back from home from their constituents about the important work we do is extremely important. The more education we can get out there about what we are doing for South Carolina the better because the more information they have to make decisions the better. Shannon can speak to this as well. The legislature can make good decisions for the state of South Carolina, so it is important for them to have that information.

If legislators are asking questions of you, please contact Michael, Beth or me. Just let us know if you are hearing something or if they have questions about what we are doing in Extension. We are happy to answer those questions. Do not hesitate to contact us-communication is key.

**10:15 AM**      **CU Program Team Update:**  
**Dr. Nathan Smith-Agribusiness Program Director: Farm Programs** (presentation attached)  
**Dr. Adam Kantrovich: Farm Stress Management** (presentation attached)

**10:30 AM**      **CU Program Team Update:**  
**Dr. Kimberly Baker-Food Systems and Safety Program Director** (presentation attached)

**10:45 AM**      **SCSU Program Team Update:**  
**Mrs. Demier Richardson-Sanders-4-H Youth Development Program Leader** (presentation attached)

**11:00 AM**      **Closing – Mr. Jesse Cannon**

Mr. Cannon thanked everyone for participating and is looking forward to serving together once things get back to normal. Alma will arrange committees to meet.

***The charge for the committees is related to COVID:***

Strategic Partnerships and Advocacy-is there anything we should be doing differently during this pandemic when everything is not normal?

Programmatic-are there new ideas for improving program delivery as the pandemic continues?

***Mr. Cannon gave an additional charge to both committees:*** Looking beyond the pandemic, are there things we have learned during the pandemic that we want to keep when circumstances are more normal again?

Meeting adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted:

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***Quote by Lawrence Hughes, SEAC, Spring 2019:*** “Advocacy and advocating is really first and foremost, as an advocate, understanding what the needs and wants are of the person or parties to whom you are speaking. It is not just pushing a point of view but is understanding it in the context of how that position you are advocating meets the needs and wants of those you are trying to persuade.”