

Minutes of Meeting
College of Micronesia Board of Regents
September 5, 2007
Mangilao, Guam

The COM Board of Regents meeting was held at the former College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Building, University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam starting on Sept. 5, 2007.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Regent Masa-Aki Emesiochl called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.

2. Remarks

Chair welcomed Regent Wildred Kendall and also COM-FSM Regent Graceful Enlet, who served as proxy for Regent Yatilman. Chairman also welcomed the two partner college presidents: President Patrick Tellei of PCC; President Spensin James of COM-FSM. He said he hope that in the future, the CMI President will be able to attend the Board meeting also. He also welcomed the staff representing the various partner colleges. Chairman said we have some important issues to cover but hopefully, we'll be able to complete our meeting by the end of the day. He said there is a USDA meeting being held here in Guam and COM Executive Director and other Micronesia land-grant officials will meet with USDA officials regarding matters of specific interest to COM. He then asked the other Regents to give their remarks.

Regent Kendall said he was glad to be back in full health after going thru his medical procedures and his recuperation. He reported that the USS Peleliu, the namesake of one of the Palau's islands, stopped in Majuro during which time, about 1800 military personnel were involved in many community activities: construction, renovation, clean up, health care, etc. He said the RMI people and the government were pleased to have them do these on the islands. On a different matter, he reported that the election for RMI Parliament (Nitijela) will be held in November. He said he was glad to see everybody at this meeting.

Proxy Regent Enlet said he was glad to attend this meeting as a proxy for Regent Yatilman who couldn't be here because he had to attend a leadership meeting in Chuuk. He said he was looking forward to the meeting.

Chairman asked the two college presidents to make their remarks. President James thanked the Chairman and reported that for Fall Semester at COM-FSM, the student enrollment was about 2,300 students, slightly lower than prior year. He said last week he sign a drawdown request for the \$25,000 FSM Treaty contribution to the COM Board. He also reported that he recently signed an MOU with the Pohnpei State Government regarding the construction and operation of the Small Business Development Center which will be built right on the Pohnpei campus ground. He said the second and third floor will be used for SBDC while the first floor will be partitioned and remodeled for the Pohnpei-based AES research laboratory.

President Tellei thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to join the meeting. He said PCC's enrollment for this Fall Semester is about 600. He also reported that about 100 are FSM students and some Marshallese. He said PCC was able to attract 4 of 5 valedictorians from the high schools in Palau. He also reported that the accreditation commission has accepted our "mid-term report". He also reported that the senior accreditation commission has approved the SDSU graduate program as offered with PCC as well as the Bachelor's degree program. He concluded his report by saying that the popular Hollywood show "The Survivor" will return to Palau for another filming of their shows.

3. Roll Call

The three Regents representing their respective Treaty-signatory nations were present: Regent Masa-Aki Emesiochl (ROP); Regent Wilfred Kendall (RMI); and Proxy Regent Graceful Enlet (FSM).

(Also in attendance were: Diane Myazoe, Dean, CRE CMI; Thomas Taro, Interim VP, CRE PCC; Jim Currie, VP, CRE, COM-FSM; Patrick Tellei, President, PCC; Spensin James, President, COM-FSM; Singeru Singeo, Executive Director/Interim Director, AES/CES, COM.)

4. Approval of Minutes

It was moved (WK) and seconded (GE) that the Minutes of BOR Meeting (June 5-6, 2007) be adopted. Motion carried.

5. Report by Board Officers

None

6. Communications

Executive Director Singeo reported that he had met with USDA's Ellen Danus during the workshop that was going on in Guam this week. Ms. Danus informed Singeo that all the necessary documentations and justification for the waiver requests were received timely; and have been reviewed; and there is no reason the waiver request for COM should not be approved. But an official letter to this effect would still need to be prepared and sent to COM later.

Executive Director Singeo also reported that Ms. Danus has indicated also during the meeting that the guidelines for using fy07 Hatch funds for new construction is simply to use the Hatch project approval forms thru CRIS (Current Research Information System). Ms. Danus also explained that the fy07 Hatch funds did not have to be obligated by the end of fy07 but should be expended by Sept. 30, 2008. Singeo also reported that additional meetings with Ms. Danus and the other USDA staff is being scheduled for tomorrow at the same meeting site (Westin Resort).

7. Report by Chief Executives

a. COM Executive Director (ED) Singeo requested the Board to allow him to give his oral report later saying that he had already submitted his written report a copy of which could be found in the Regents' folders. He said his report focused on the agenda items including the following: update on fy07 funding and budget issues (status of waiver request, projects, fund balances, and others). He said other issues to be presented during this meeting include: status of the fy08 budget development; issues with the researchers salaries, approval of 1st quarter continuing authorization, update on the endowment fund; update on the fy06 audit; approval of directives that were already presented at the last Board meeting and others. The Board agreed to allow Executive Director Singeo to present his reports later on when the relevant agenda items were discussed.

CMI CRE Dean/Associate Director Diane Myazoe-deBrum thanked the Chairman and said she would like to summarize her written report which she had already submitted to the Regents earlier.

She said CMI President Wilson Hess couldn't come to this meeting because he is working on CMI's mid-term accreditation report. She said President is very much familiar with the land-grant programs and do provide his supports and encouragement to the land-grant staff.

She said she would summarize some of the activity reports. Extension activities are ongoing, however, the extension agents cannot go to the outer islands due to problems with the Marshall Islands Airlines (AMI). She reported that a local Agriculture Extension agent has been hired.

She reported that the researchers are working on their proposals to be submitted to USDA in compliance with the new BOR workload guidelines. She said two Hatch projects have already been submitted on-line and will be reviewed and submitted to USDA by Executive Director Singeo. Another two projects are currently under review by scientists with appropriate expertise.

She reported that CMI still has not filled the vacant researcher position after our advertisement resulted in only two interested applicants. So they are still reviewing these applications and will decide how to proceed.

PCC CRE Vice President/Associate Director Thomas Taro reported that he too had already submitted his written report to the Board so he requested to highlight some of the important developments in his report.

He said that in response to the new workload research guidelines, there are 6 new projects that are being circulated for reviews including a tiger prawn project that will be submitted to CTSA. He also reported that PCC is working with the ROP's Marine Resources staff on the spawning and raising of the popular and expensive fish "grouper". Currently, there are about 800 fingerlings which are now about 22 days old. If these fingerlings do survive the hatchery production to marketable size, that will be a notable achievement.

With regards to the rabbitfish, he said now we can do spawn and raise about 250,000 fingerlings in about 30 days time frame, which has become routine.

He also discussed about the litter-free piggery project at the R&D Station. He said we've established 3 rabbitfish farms with interested Palauans who expect to harvest their fish in about 6 months time. He also reported that the RI program has move to the R&D station and will be focusing on programs such as piggery, poultry production and other areas of interest.

President Tellei says OEK has provided some money to support the rabbitfish project. He said we can be involved with the economic development activities with these kinds of projects. He said we as institutions should go out there and help the people; and not expect to sit back in our campus and expect them to come.

COM-FSM CRE VP/Associate Director Jim Currie said that he already submitted a written report to the Board so he requested to only summarize his report.

He said he has been talking with the various FSM state officials about the possibility of moving the State extension programs to under COM-FSM. Although there is a lot of interest in doing this, there is not enough funds to carry it out so it continues to wait.

Regarding the vacant positions, he said it's taking a long time for the vacancy announcement to move along at COM-FSM. Position vacancies exist in Kosrae; some positions in Chuuk are vacant; and some people are leaving. The Chuuk researcher position is still waiting.

He said his office is busy with Jackson Phillip involved with programs on water quality. He said he's asking the State to provide funding so that more students can be involved with the program.

He said there is interest in genetically-modified taro to be researched in the FSM but this will depend on the FSM government regulations on the genetic modification.

Executive Director Singeo said this kind of science is way beyond our capacity due to lack of proper facility, safe-guard mechanism, lack of expensive and complex equipment, lack of expertise, etc. It is better that we spend our time focusing on the many research subject matters that we can handle; and not waste time on these kinds of subjects that could be best handled by the large land-grant universities.

VP Currie said some of the researchers have concerns about the 3-4 required projects and whether some of the more complicated USDA-approved projects could be considered as equivalent of two or more projects. Executive Director Singeo replied that this issue has also been raised by others and a plan will be presented to the Board during this meeting regarding workload equivalents. A research project that deals with different species of plants or animal and also different subject matters all in one project will be evaluated and may be considered as equivalent to two or more projects.

VP Currie asked about whether the EFNEP's workload includes both the youth and the adult clients in the count. Executive Director Singeo said this was related to the Board directive requiring at least 200 clients for EFNEP Agents per year. He said that seemed to be the understanding during that discussion as the Board did not specifically separate the youth clients from the adult clients. VP Currie said he would talk to Ansina (Ansina Kony is Assistant Campus Director for Chuuk Campus) about it but did not think the number of clients required is a problem.

8. AGENDA ITEMS

A. Update of FY07 Funding and Budget issues

Executive Director Singeo reported that as of Sept. 2, we still have not received any official notice from USDA as to whether or not, our request for waiver from federal matching requirements with respect to fy07 funding has been approved. He said he called USDA last week and was told that a high-level USDA official, Ellen Danus, would be going to the Guam meeting this coming week. Most likely she will be able to let us know by that time the official USDA response regarding our request.

For Smith-Lever funds, we reported local matching funds of \$283,528, so we are requesting that \$159,998 be provided to us to use although we could not find local matching funds for them.

For Hatch funds, we reported \$153,700 local matching funds, so we're requesting matching waiver for the amount of \$496,187. The amount is larger because of that extra one-time Hatch allocation that the USDA provided to all the land-grant institutions in fy07.

Second, in addition to these issues relative to the revenue picture, the expenditure side of the equation has some issues that continue to be problematic. CMI's vacant position for the third researcher remains vacant for the whole fiscal year after the position was authorized.

Kosrae's Extension Agent position has also remained vacant for a couple of years.

Chuuk's new Research position which the Board rushed to authorize and provide funding for immediate recruitment is still not advertised yet.

The lack of actions on these positions will mean additional amount of unused funds will be reported at the end of the year. It's not clear why these positions could not be filled—why proactive and aggressive recruitment could not be made, especially the positions at CMI and in Kosrae. The Board needs to be aware of this problem as we look for other ways to spend down the funds that have been allocated in the budget.

Lastly, he said as we move toward the construction of the Chuuk facility, the COM Board should receive assurance from COM-FSM Board that if, after the construction of the facility, the land issue makes the laboratory inaccessible, the COM-FSM Board should be responsible to reimburse the federal funds that is being provided for this facility. This is a concern and should be taken into consideration before the actual construction is started.

Other issues regarding the fy07 funding will be reported during the meeting.

B. Update of FY08 Budget development and issues

Executive Director Singeo explained that one major problem as we were preparing to come to the Board meeting is that the fy08 Consolidated Budget could not be finalized and presented to the Board for reasons to be explained and discussed below. In short, as we tried to put the fy08 budgets together, it became clear that the salary schedules and guidelines for the researchers at the three partner colleges were so divergent that it has become difficult to ignore the issue any longer, given that the COM Board provides about the same amount of allocation to each of the three partner colleges for researchers. In the case of one of the partner colleges, the researchers' salaries are linked to the teaching faculty's salary and thus could go as high as over \$50,000. The second partner college had adopted a policy of using the old COM researcher salary of \$30,000 per year without any provision for step increases, even for a researcher who has been employed for about 10 years. The third partner college is finally coming out of the salary freeze as mandated by the local government so the step increases that are being

contemplated are in the range of \$32,000 to \$33,000 for some of the researchers who have been employed for nearly 10 years, if not more.

Executive Director Singeo reported, in comparison, that Northern Marianas College pays its researchers a range from entry salary of \$33,000 to maximum salary of \$51,000 with grade increase of 5% per annum. For American Samoa Community College, entry salary for off-island researchers is \$35,000; there is no maximum; and the bonus for signing up again after two years include: \$1000 plus free round-trip ticket including family; and discount for on-campus housing.

After additional discussion on this matter, the Board agreed to amend the COM's Researcher Salary Schedule from a fixed \$30,000 to a range of \$30,000 to \$36,000. The Board agreed to make this one of the directives of this meeting.

The Board also agreed to additional items in connection with the revised Researcher Salary Schedule: it applies to the PhD or other doctorates; the step increases would be based on "satisfactory" evaluation as may be determined by the respective colleges; the 3-4 USDA-approved projects and publications should be made part of the requirement for step increases; the workload equivalent guidelines will be developed; and that any increase in salary beyond \$36,000 will be borne by the employer college; that this policy will be applicable only to the college that may choose to accept or adopt it.

C. Approval of 1st Quarter FY08 Budget—Continuing Authorization

Executive Director Singeo explained that because there is no fy08 budget for BOR to approve, it was requested that an interim operation budget for fy08's first quarter be approved by the Board. This would give us authorization to operate until the Board approves the regular fy08 budget, hopefully, at the next meeting.

After further discussion, the Board agreed to approve an interim operation budget, based on fy07 funding level, starting on Oct. 1, 2007 to Dec. 31, 2007; or until the Board approves the fy08 budget. The Board also noted that one quarter's share of the \$11,111 Hatch funds per researcher may be provided so that it could be used by the researchers to continue their USDA-approved projects during this period of time.

The Board agreed to make this decision one of the directives of this meeting. Motion approved.

D. Hatch funding as earmarked for USDA-approved research projects

Executive Director explained that recently, USDA is asking us to comply in reporting the Hatch funds as used to support USDA-approved projects. While we do consider all the Hatch funds as allocated to each partner college as in support of the USDA-approved projects, it would be much better to have specific allocation for this purpose. In doing so, the researchers will know how much they can spend for their projects; and how much Hatch funding the administration will spend for the USDA-approved projects.

The Board agreed to this recommendation and approved a motion to make these decisions part of the directives of this meeting.

E. Update on fy06 Audit

Executive Director Singeo said that COM Business Manager/Fiscal Officer Vera Cruz will not be able to attend the Board meeting as a result of his quadruple by-pass heart surgery a couple of weeks ago. But he reported that the fy06 Audit was completed before Vera Cruz went to his medical leave. The draft audit is currently with the Guam office of Deloitte and Touche for their final review or comments.