

North Carolina Policy Collaboratory Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

May 9, 2017

UNC Service Center of Excellence Carrboro, NC

Advisory Board members in attendance were: Anita Brown-Graham, Greg Characklis, Reggie Holley, Jeff Hughes, Rick Luettich (via teleconference), and Brad Ives.

Guest presenters in attendance were: Larry Engel (UNC Department of Epidemiology) Uma Shankar (UNC Institute for the Environment)

Guests in attendance were: Jim Hawhee (DEQ), Jane Hortelano, (League of Women Voters).

Other UNC and Collaboratory staff in attendance were: Emily Harnish, Allison Reid, Jeff Warren, and Steve Wall.

Collaboratory Director Brad Ives began the meeting at 10:15 by noting that Chair Al Segars was unable to attend due to a family illness. Ives welcomed members and guests and with short introductions of all those in attendance.

Ives began the agenda with a reminder of the UNC Conflict of Interest Policy. The Board approved the minutes from the April 11, 2017 Advisory Board meeting.

Provost Meeting

Ives provided the Board a report on the meeting with Segars, Ives, and UNC Provost Jim Dean to discuss the role of the Board in reviewing and approving proposals under the RFP process. Ives read from an email by Segars summarizing his thoughts on the meeting. Segars wrote that several different review protocols were discussed, keeping in mind that the primary objective is to “fund the best research that addresses the most impactful issues within the context of North Carolina natural resources.” Ultimately, the Provost wants to provide a flexible and efficient process that doesn’t overburden the Board.

Segars proposed allowing Collaboratory staff and himself to review all proposals and then submit a subset to the Board for discussion. This model allows for the Board, through Segar’s participation, to be involved from the outset and to have final decision making authority over final funding decisions.

Ives noted that discussion with UNC Counsel’s office would allow that discussion of the Board to take place in closed session. Steve Wall added that the meeting would still require public notice and must begin and end in open session. Reggie Holley clarified that the Board could come out of closed session to announce the awards in the open session portion of the meeting.

The Board agreed to the approach outlined by Segars with the understanding that a meeting or teleconference would need to be scheduled this summer.

Director’s Report

Ives transitioned from this discussion to updating the Board on several items. He began by stating that the Collaboratory’s Request for Proposals has been made public and efforts are underway to share with faculty and graduate students across campus. Ives outlined his request to Jeff Warren to begin the development of business and fundraising plan.

Ives informed the Board of recent developments related to the UNC Nutrient Study. Professor Mike Piehler of the UNC Institute of Marine Sciences has stepped into the role as the technical lead and will be managing the study team. The study team recently met with Department of Environmental Quality staff to provide updates on the research and discuss future research needs. Collaboratory staff and study team members are promoting information about the study at various meetings and events.

Ives concluded his report by noting that Finance staff was working with project leads to address year end budget issues on Collaboratory projects.

Legislative Report

Jeff Warren began by announcing the Senate version of the state budget was likely to be released that day. Warren proceeded to begin listing studies relevant to the Collaboratory that may have been included in the budget. First, he stated that a water and wastewater information project was likely to be funded that would develop a predictive analysis tool. Warren suggested that the Collaboratory's ongoing mariculture study will receive some funding in the budget. A study may be directed to the Collaboratory to evaluate cataloguing environmental data and whether UNC could serve as a host for the data.

Warren said an earlier discussed study of hydrilla would not be in the budget. Holley asked for more details of that discussion. Ives responded of the potential for hydrilla, an invasive weed, to create significant problems for lakes in state parks and large financial costs to eradicate.

Warren concluded his summary of the pending Senate budget by stating that it was likely that language would be included to extend the timeframe for the Collaboratory's matching funds provision.

Warren also provided updates on pending legislation beyond the budget bill. He noted one of the energy bills introduced directs the Collaboratory to lead an energy storage study. The comprehensive environmental amendments bill would extend the UNC Nutrient Management Study by two years.

Warren updated the Board on the progress of the Collaboratory mariculture study. He stated a smaller group, including the Coastal Federation, shellfish growers, and the Division of Marine Fisheries are working to develop an Aquaculture Plan. Warren suggested that one of the key issues the plan would address includes user conflicts. Holley asked him to expand on that topic. Warren stated mariculture permits raise concerns about viewsheds, navigation, and other uses of the water that may be restricted when a mariculture operation begins.

Collaboratory Mission

Ives stated that as the year came to an end it was important to receive guidance from the Board about their vision for the Collaboratory. Ives suggested that the earlier data project Warren had referenced was a good example of where the Collaboratory could lead. This comment prompted further discussion on that project. Anita Brown-Graham emphasized the need to use platforms that ensure the data is accessible and searchable. Rick Luettich suggested RENCI has staff working on environmental data and could be a key partner going forward.

The group then transitioned back to the mission of the Collaboratory. Greg Characklis stressed the need for the Collaboratory to be an entity that gets out front on issues. Warren suggested the RFP process

may identify emerging issues where there is already expertise on a topic. Brown-Graham proposed the Collaboratory could amplify the areas of excellence that are already present on campus.

Project Updates

The Board heard project updates from two of its funded projects.

- Assessing Wildfire Impacts and Mitigation in North Carolina

Uma Shankar, a Research Associate with the UNC Institute for the Environment, outlined the work her team has undertaken over the last several months to model fuel loading and its correlation to wildfires. The research team developed software tools to calculate new scaling factors from historical values due to increasing temperatures and droughts. These factors were used to estimate leaf, litter and coarse woody debris in North Carolina and throughout the Southeast. These categories of fuels load were mapped. Shankar provided an update on plans to share the information with key stakeholders, including the U.S. Forest Service, the N.C. Forest Service, and other non-governmental organizations.

- Understanding and Mapping Community Impacts of Hurricane Matthew

Larry Engel, professor in the UNC Department of Epidemiology, presented an update of his project to the Board. Engel stated the goals of the project were to conduct a needs assessment with a focus on environmental hazards and create a web based resource for local health professionals. The project is targeting Robeson and Cumberland counties. The project will begin with interviews of key informants and then follow up with online surveys of community residents. The survey will try and determine health impacts from the hurricane. Engel concluded by saying that health impacts will be shared with local health department officials.

Ives adjourned the meeting at 12:05.