

National Sea Grant Advisory Board Virtual Meeting  
June 23, 2020  
Draft Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 23, 2020

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC – 3:00pm – 5:00pm

**3:00pm – 3:05pm - Welcome, Roll Call, Agenda, Spring 2020 Meeting Notes Approval – (Susan Holmes – Acting Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the Board, National Sea Grant Office (NSGO), Brian Helmuth, National Sea Grant Advisory Board Chair)**

Ms. Holmes (Acting Designated Federal Officer (DFO)) read an official federal statement explaining her role to the group, took the roll call and welcomed everyone to the meeting. She stated that the next meeting of the Advisory Board will be this Fall and it will be virtual.

**Roll Call**

Members of the National Sea Grant Advisory Board (Board):

Dale Baker, Peter Betzer, Paulinus Chigbu, Carole Engle, Rosanne Fortner, Gordon Grau, Judith Gray, Brian Helmuth, Letise LaFeir, Amber Mace, Jim Murray, Kris Norosz, Deborah Stirling  
Jonathan Pennock – (*ex officio*) Director of the National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP), Fredrika Moser – (*ex officio*), President, Sea Grant Association (SGA) and Director, Maryland Sea Grant  
Elizabeth Rohring – Designated Federal Officer (DFO), National Sea Grant Office (NSGO), Susan Holmes (alternate DFO), Donna Brown – Executive Assistant, NSGO, Alicia Cheripka, NSGO

Susan Holmes turned the meeting over to Dr. Helmuth who called the meeting to order. He reviewed the agenda and asked for a motion to approve it.

**Motion to approve the June 23, 2020 agenda:**

**Peter Betzer**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Amber Mace**

**Vote: All in Favor**

Dr. Helmuth asked for a motion to approve the March 2020 meeting minutes.

*March 2020 Meeting Minutes*

**Motion to approve the minutes from the March 9-10, 2020 Board meeting:**

**Jim Murray**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Kris Norosz**

**Vote: All in Favor**

### **3:05 – 3:15pm – NSGO Updates – (Dr. Jonathan Pennock, NSGCP Director)**

#### *Administrative Updates*

Dr. Pennock thanked Dr. Helmuth and noted that he would be giving a very short update (maybe 5-6 minutes) about how things have changed since our meeting in March. He stated that on Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup> we started maximum telework and then went to mandatory telework and have been for the last 3-4 months. He mentioned that video chat is for whatever reason extremely exhausting so wanted to compliment his staff for being so amazing as we've had to adjust to this "new normal" and they've done a tremendous job within these last couple of months. There were two competitions that were delayed and funding will come later this year. *Liaison Competition* had to be pushed back weeks to months to help our programs who were struggling with getting their actions through. *Covid-19 rapid response activity* – had a budget of \$50,000-75,000 but our budget is only spending half of that. The demand was much higher and we identified \$1 million in the aquaculture food area and looked at that as an opportunity for programs to submit \$1 million proposals. The two competitions mentioned got pushed back because of Rapid Response. Direct marketing as the aquaculture market collapsed has found issues associated with that and with health safety, so we took it to various committees and directors and they were/are very supportive.

#### *Grants*

Covid-19 - All 34 programs are responding to that and we tried to get flexibility because of the pandemic and they've submitted some great proposals so the \$3.4 million went to that. \$5m to advance aquaculture efforts and provide opportunities for these programs to submit before the end of year (3<sup>rd</sup> of July is due date) and 4-5 of those programs have decided to submit. We got direction from the Hill to try and move money towards base which is a minimum of \$2 million - found money in budget \$3.4 million to allow programs to make decisions regarding personnel - so proposals are coming in. Filling some positions that were lost and for research that were left wide open, and with the pandemic they've done a great job with those proposals. Moved forward with implementation – Letter of Intent – going well and a lot of other pass-through activities with various partners – \$80 million in federal appropriations this year. Extension liaisons are the letters of intent and as you can see there's been a lot of activity in the Grants world but I think we'll be ok. There will be a few pass-through actions, but late submissions from GMD. I'd like to thank the Advisory Board that have been working on the two issues being brought up today, the IRP's full committee will meet again to go over those challenges, but there's a likelihood they'll be pushed back again.

Dr. Helmuth stated that he was amazed at what the network is dealing with now and how we're managing all of this and hopefully they'll be some lessons learned when we come out of it.

Dr. Pennock stated that there has been a lot of time saved with not having to go out of the country for meetings, etc. and that maybe this will become best management practices. What's been a real challenge is those working on research but the extension of what we do is working with constituents doing research, and they've responded tremendously. So I think we'll have to get used to working in a different world. I think there's a bit of struggle in dealing with the SRT cycle, etc. The one thing for us that is frustrating is the assumption that no one is working now, but everyone is working very hard to

achieve our mission -- universities as well as other places. There's going to be significant challenges to our programs regarding child care, etc. so we'll have to learn flexibility in getting the work done and that's sustainable for staff.

Dr. Helmuth stated that the other things going on are Black Live Matters and I'm sure everyone is thinking about it, but I'd like to spend some time with networks, etc. in speaking about it even more, but there was unfortunately not enough time to talk about it today.

Dr. Mace stated that we may be able to squeeze some time in around the biennial report discussion.

Dr. Helmuth stated that was a good idea.

Dr. LeFeir expressed appreciation for Dr. Pennock sending out a report to the broader network because she realized it can't be and isn't easy.

Dr. Pennock stated that sometimes we feel we've failed in this space, but it's not that we have to re-invent the wheel of what we've been doing, but we have to look at ourselves and realize we have not gotten it all done.

### **3:15 – 3:30pm – Public Comment Period – (Susan Holmes (DFO))**

Ms. Holmes stated that there were no public comments from the Federal Register Notice.

### **3:30 – 4:15pm – Evaluation Committee Reports – (James Murray – Chair, Evaluation Committee, Board Member)**

Greetings from Florida! Two reports produced by the Evaluation Committee – We need to vote on those reports today. I will go over the Committees Charge, materials and processes we use. Three task - 34 site visits/34 participated in, and had to figure out whether or not each program was held to the same standards.

#### *IRP*

This was underway by Nancy Targett but was postponed to Spring because of Covid-19. We're focusing on today as to whether or not Site visits were equitable? 14 Site Visit Reports – lead reviewer and second reviewer. Idea is to ask questions and hopefully have a vote and put these reports to bed. Site Visit Reports – access to director's response, Susan put together scoring data, and conducted a survey, we thought it was imperative to evaluate this process, external members and key players were involved in this process. Results of 34 visits – a lot of findings and recommendations, a lot of information provided to directors and programs to make this process better. Healthy Echo Coastal Systems – scored a bit lower but it's a more long-term process for echo systems were as Fisheries we're discussing more business. (Please review graph slide). Overall observations were in general that the process is working very well and matured to a level that's respected in the SG community, there were few negative comments, reports were consistent in general and numerical scores were well defended. Scoring data was good and programs are performing at a high level. Two programs were not performing well and

we'll discuss that later. Every 4 years we take a critical look at programs, were they have a chance to display their achievements, etc. so this is more than a merit exercise but more to showcase SG.

### *Recommendations*

Two items needed to be addressed – fair and equity and performance and management criteria. Evaluation committee were only asked to change one rating in environmental and literacy and it may have been insufficient training of the evaluation board, and we've taken that into consideration. Clear bias of areas that may have affected to score. Two programs did not meet criteria: Program 1 had provided to the national office how they were dealing with recommendations from site team and we thought they were eligible for increases. Program 2 – thought they were ineligible for merit increases and asked Dr. Pennock to make a recommendation of the site visit report.

### *Vote of the Site Visit Report:*

**Judy Gray moved that we accept the report as being reported**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Letise LeFeir**

**Vote: All in Favor as presented**

Dr. Pennock thanked Jim for leading this process because it was a tremendous amount of work to be able to present this, very important effort and was very pleased with the report.

Mr. Murray continued the conversation regarding the process of not doing due diligence and wanted to see if they could make recommendations in order to tweak and make the evaluation system even better. Overall conclusion is that it's working very well and it's like 33 responses in the survey sent out and most responses were how to make it a better system. In some cases there were contradictory reviews saying – visits too long or short and they didn't necessarily address that in the report. Had some training considerations that pier report was not addressed. Also need advanced report on rating systems, so felt it important to standardize that language so there's no misinterpretation of what that language means. And during the site visit when having discussions about ratings need to remind teams of those definitions and scoring decisions. Try to get the expertise of the team matched with the program or priorities of the program.

### *Seafood and Aquaculture*

Fisheries and Aquaculture represented as part of those teams. Most of the briefing books were quite long, so training on briefing books will be good in those cases. Felt it important for program or directors to say this is what we want to achieve, etc. and have it wrapped up in the end. Some of the readout did not give the rating scores and others did. Some comment from Directors is that they got really nice comments and some did not. So it needs to be more standardized in the beginning. In terms of coming to conclusions on the ratings – it may have to be a two-step process. Program review loosened a bit, visiting a lab or nearby field site would add to the review and make it not so laborious between team members. Site visits run from 8-5pm with a post reception. Three days for writing reports and forming presentations were a bit too condensed. Loose statements – would be easy for director to refute reports in order to make it easier to be challenged. Materials of Pier report is a flaw that needs to be re-designed. Critical data is buried at the end of the report so it needs to be upfront in the report and the

briefing book would be more convenient if page numbers were entered as to get to more quickly and useful for the teams. Legacy work is an issue – did research 5 years ago and led to policy change so it's got to be a way to catch it, so the systems needs to be designed in a way to place those achievements during the review in order to catch that. Question of what to do with guidelines for competitive research in programs? What if you're at 35% or 40%, what does that mean, so it needs to be clarified with maybe a sub-committee under the advisory board to fix this problem. Scoring of reviewers – All agreed that the senior university administrators would be really helpful in boosting the final readouts to the presidents, etc. Expand the pool of people that might be interested. Realistic target setting – In the future unless there's good reason for this then it should be looked at as a negative. So we're suggesting that instead of doing 10 you get a 1 that it's not to be looked at as a negative. Having a director on a site visit far exceeds the cost, heard from colleges and Fred and some directors had a problem because it raised conflict of interest for that. We can involve them in the ratings but they should not have a vote. I give Gordon Grau credit for coming up with the language, every program thinks they're doing great and they're not, so if they have to communicate to their boss that they got a 3 (more like a C) then they don't want to communicate it. So we need to clearly articulate that to the teams by saying the programs focus areas demonstrated a high level of excellence and sends a better message to the universities. So in conclusion we thought our review was very thorough, we put a lot of work in this and was beneficial to SG and beyond. Mr. Murray turned the meeting back over to Dr. Helmuth.

Dr. Helmuth thanked the committee for all their work and asked if there were any questions. Mr. Betzer stated that Fredrika Moser was very helpful and careful, but she never voted so having a director at these reviews is very positive. University leadership spent every hour with the review teams and they paid very close attention to review teams and how seriously they took the comments.

Dr. Pennock thanked Jim Murray and stated that not all the programs responded to the evaluation committee's request but talking about things within the SGA will have a positive outcome. What he's hearing is great but what he doesn't want to do is get a sub-committee to help in this process if the process is already in a good space. Nothing has changed about what they've presented to the programs so we would have to collectively skim through that in order to bring them up to speed as a solution or maybe look to see what we can do better.

Kris Norosz stated that this is the first time she went on a site review and appreciates all the work with making these recommendations and feels there was a lot of good information.

Dr. Helmuth asked for a motion to approve the report:

**Amber Mace**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Kris Norosz**

**Vote: All in Favor**

#### **4:15 – 5:00pm – Biennial Report Update – (Judy Gray – Board Biennial Report Committee Chair)**

This is probably the third or fourth time you've seen this report so I won't go into too many of the same details. I have a not so up-to-date list of page numbers but wanted to go through quickly the map of the

programs. Brian Helmuth wrote a beautiful letter, executive summary and the response to the 2018 report – 5 recommendations – SG model – meat of report focus areas and names of those who contributed. 5 pages of focus areas – sustainable fisheries and aquaculture contained a lot information. SG by the numbers on one side and Covid-19 response on the other. The time they were making the decision was when George Floyd had not been murdered, and there is so much that SG has done since Covid-19 that they wanted to put it in the report. Featured Issues – Organizational Excellence – Throughout the document you'll see actual science, visioning, integrity, etc. and you'll see were SG served the whole communities so that people will understand who we are. Blue Report and Blue Nation – SG fellowships in 2018 and Red Snapper, we focused on blue economy and blue ready nations. This year we have three recommendations we're making to the SG program – network visioning, build awareness in emergency preparedness (Covid-19), evaluation process – want SG to adjust these programs to take advantage of follow through. When reading the report you felt uplifted at the end of the report of what we do at the local level and the international level so that the local people can feel connected to it. Roseanne and I powered through the recommendations section under emerging opportunities to make sure that the education is an equal leg and not the last leg of the program. Emerging opportunities sections -- hopefully they did a good job. Unanticipated challenges – give the community what they need when things come down the pipeline. She appreciated everyone's efforts and would like to address what Dr. Pennock said about incorporating the black lives matter and DEI concept and the whole idea of what we've already done. So if anyone would like to go through it with her to make recommendations, etc. regarding DEI she would welcome it. Dream team compositions – Gordon Grau created the most eloquent language, Roseanne and Letise each wrote an emerging opportunity section, Ladon and \_\_\_\_\_, FSA section were like miracle workers, Jim Hurley and Robert Twilley for blue economy. Susan and Alison for economic evaluation even though it got buried she hopes you know it is a pillar of how we do our jobs. And thanks to Elizabeth Rohring who's been by her side every step of the way.

Kris Norosz mentioned that she feels we need to have an accurate map of the science community in regards to Alaska and the great work they're doing so we need better accuracy in depicting the map.

Ms. Gray stated that this is one of those weird consequences and an accurate map is the least you can ask for and accurately deserves as for the representation of the program. Dr. Helmuth asked if Alaska and Guam can be in the same places for accurate representation? Ms. Gray likes the idea of better interpretation of the program and agrees wholeheartedly. Dr. Mace stated that this was drafted before what's been happening in our society, so ending racism is essential and there's room to beef up the DEI section of the report and reflected in the executive summary. Dr. Helmuth stated he's happy to work on this section of the report. Ms. Gray stated that maybe they'll include it in the recommendations because these last few weeks has been a water shed moment, the DEI community has proposed justice, equality, diversity and inclusion to be called JEDI, so whatever we include will be the latest and greatest. So if we want to add a recommendation she will. Jim Murray recommended that this would send a very important message and should be added. Page 15 stated that the IRP report will not be done until next summary so she may want to change that to look like we do not have a report quite yet. Ms. Gray stated that she will make those changes. Paulinus Chigbu stated that in order for the SG programs to be consistent by calling them state names SG or SG programs are not accurate because some areas group it as one and he's not a university of ONE. Dr. Pennock stated that the DEI recommendation is appropriate, so those crafting that language should remember WHAT SG is. We have people and

communities to serve but we still have one mission, so the recommendations and comments should make that connection in what we're trying to do or where we haven't done enough. Ms. Gray said that she will negotiate with SG as to what we want to do and will never put us in a place of not being able to fill that role. We will do it in a way that acknowledges how people are feeling, etc. Dr. Pennock stated the phase we are going through is the acknowledgement and self-evaluation. This document is going to come out at a time that this country should be moving into an implementation stage as to what we are doing today and making a difference, so that recommendation will be different and stronger. Because this document is going to be in the future he wants to make sure that the information pertains to what's going to happen in the near future and not just today. Dr. Helmuth stated that they aren't suggesting a specific recommendation but to get us in a space that will get us to the right spot. Ms. Gray said they have 18 pages of things that people have done, so she thinks we have lots of input from the group to hand this report on. She feels that this year is different even though they have more work to do. But thinks it's fundamentally important to see how DEI/JEDI is mentioned throughout the report and ask that the NSGAB and directors approve the report. Elizabeth Rohring stated that we can make a motion to approve this report with an addition of the DEI/JEDI suggestions added to it. We are not allowed to do email votes because these are all public meetings, etc. Peter Betzer made the suggestion that we also include the Knauss fellows who are now a big part of this society as well. Dr. Helmuth made a motion to approve the current text of the Biennial Report as written with the addition of DEI/JEDI along with the additions to the Chair letter.

Motion to approve the Biennial Report

**Jim Murray**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Deb Stirling**

**Vote: All in Favor**

Meeting adjourned at 5:00pm