

SANREM CRSP Board of Directors Teleconference Minutes

Thursday, Feb. 14, 2008, 2-3 p.m. EST

Participants

Alton Thompson, Chair, NCA&T
David Acker, Iowa State
Jess Lowenberg-Deboer, Purdue Univ.
S.K. De Datta, Virginia Tech
Theo Dillaha, Virginia Tech
Keith Moore, Virginia Tech

Alice Pell, Cornell Univ.
Sharron Quisenberry, Virginia Tech
Harry Rea, USAID
Charles Reafsnyder, Indiana Univ.
Paul Vlek (SANREM EEP), Univ. of Bonn
Deanne Estrada (recorder), Virginia Tech

Board Chair Alton Thompson called the meeting to order at 2 p.m. He opened by thanking Theo Dillaha and the rest of the SANREM CRSP management entity (ME) for its excellent work in compiling and distributing the 2007 Annual Report, the final report of the external evaluation panel (EEP), and the latest quarterly newsletter. He also commended the ME on the program's new cross-cutting initiatives, including watershed modeling, gender, knowledge to action, biotechnology, and soil quality.

David Acker moved that the proposed agenda for the meeting be accepted. Jess Lowenberg-Deboer seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Agenda items

1. Chair Thompson welcomed new director Charles B. Reafsnyder of Indiana University to the board.
2. Thompson expressed appreciation on behalf of the board to departing member David Acker for his years of service to SANREM.
3. **EEP Report Discussion:** S.K. De Datta introduced Paul Vlek to the board as a soil scientist with global experience, a professor at the University of Bonn, and member of the SANREM EEP. Vlek gave a brief overview of the EEP's methods and findings. He explained that the EEP review began with desktop reviews of the five Long-term Research Award (LTRA) projects followed by EEP participation in the SANREM 2006 annual meeting in Cochabamba, Bolivia and LTRA project team interviews. The EEP then prepared an interim report which was sent to the LTRA principal investigators (PIs) for response.

The panel's final report concluded that U.S. universities have the expertise to contribute to sustainable agriculture and natural resource management in developing countries. To be most effective, research must be interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary. The EEP was very impressed with the SANREM PIs' responses, made in the projects' 2007 work plans, and complimented the PIs for the great strides made in meeting research objectives. Further, the panel recommended that donors like USAID keep in mind that doing sound research is as much a component of the SANREM program as having immediate impact. SANREM should not only have impact locally but also contribute to a knowledgebase that can help policymakers at all levels make sound decisions. The panel urged USAID to continue funding the program at a level that it can contribute to global management of natural resources.

Harry Rea said the panel's findings resonate with some at USAID, but policymakers must be convinced not to subject long-term research to short-term goals and strategies. Alice Pell and Sharron Quisenberry agreed that taking a long-term view is essential to sustainable natural resource management and the environment in the future.

Jess Lowenberg-Deboer asked the basis for the panel's recommendation that PIs maintain a closer relationship with their researchers. Vlek said that, in interviews with PIs, the panel found that not all were taking an active leadership roll. A PI's role is both to take a broad view and to direct the project, including aspects of the research that may be outside his or her field of expertise. Alice Pell said the example of the Bio-Complexity Program of the National Science Foundation could be helpful. Theo Dillaha said the EEP's report was a good wake-up call, and the ME will continue to pursue the issue. Presuming that SANREM is renewed for another five years, the ME will put together a team for "visioning," that is, using lessons learned to modify research in the next phase.

4. **2007 Annual Report Discussion:** The chair complimented the ME on the annual report and asked for board questions. Jess Lowenberg-Deboer asked for clarification on the training done, specifically regarding the 81 degree students and how they were funded. Theo Dillaha and Keith Moore explained that most have leveraged funding and that details can be found in Appendix A of the report.
5. **Administrative Management Review Update:** Dillaha briefly explained the agenda for SANREM's pending administrative management review (AMR), to begin Feb. 25. He pointed out that some material given to reviewers the previous week during the IPM CRSP's AMR will not be repeated, as it applies to both programs. Alton Thompson said he has already spoken by phone with Kathleen DeWalt, one of the reviewers, and she complimented the ME for its organization and professionalism. After visiting SANREM personnel Virginia Tech and North Carolina A&T, the AMR team will end its work with a visit to Indiana University and will write its report shortly afterward. Harry Rea said the team will file a draft report to USAID by April 1, will give a copy to the ME to verify facts, and will make its final report April 30. If SANREM is renewed, Harry Rea said he would hope that notification can be made by May or June.
6. **POP Manual Revisions:** Discussion and approval of POP Manual changes (proposed changes provided in advance for review). Alton briefly described the ME proposed changes in the POP Manual concerning the TC composition, travel reports, and changing from quarterly to semi-annual reporting. Quisenberry moved that the board accept:
 - The recommended changes to the TC section of the POP Manual
 - a change from quarterly to semiannual progress reports, and
 - revisions to the trip report template, as recommended by the EEP.Reafsnnyder seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.
7. **Board Representation at Annual Meeting:** The board briefly discussed representation at the 2008 SANREM Annual Meeting May 23-28 in the Philippines. Alton Thompson will represent the board at the SANREM meeting.

Alton Thompson adjourned the meeting at 3:05 p.m.