

**Iowa Nutrient Research Center (INRC) Advisory Council Meeting**  
October 31 2018,  
Hansen Ag Student Learning Center, 2516 Mortensen Road, Ames, Iowa

9:00 a.m. Joe Colletti called the meeting to order, welcomed and thanked participants.

### **Introductions**

- Joe Colletti, CALS Interim Endowed Dean, ISU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
  - Hongwei Xin, INRC Interim Director, CALS Assistant Dean for Research, Egg Industry Center Director, Distinguished Professor, Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering, Iowa State University
  - Matt Helmers, INRC Director, Professor Agricultural & Biosystems Engineering, Dean Professorship, Associate Chair for Research & Extension, Iowa State University
  - Kapil Arora, ANR Extension Agricultural Engineer, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach
  - Julie Kenney, Iowa Deputy Secretary of Agriculture
  - Susan Kozak, IDALS, Acting Director Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality
  - Chris Jones, Research Scientist and Engineer, IIHR-Hydroscience and Engineering, University of Iowa
  - Adam Schnieders, Iowa Department of Natural Resources Water Quality Coordinator representing Bruce Trautman, Iowa DNR Acting Director
  - Keith Summerville, Drake University deputy provost, associate dean College of Arts and Sciences, Professor of Environmental Science
  - Malcolm Robertson, INRC Program Coordinator, Iowa State University
  - Ann Y. Robinson, Communications Specialist, INRC & CALS Communication Service
- Not present: Maureen Clayton, University of Northern Iowa

### **Review & Approval of 2017 Minutes**

Summerville moved to approve the minutes and Susan Kozak seconded the motion. The August 2017 minutes were approved by the Council. The minutes are on the Center website, at:

<https://www.cals.iastate.edu/files/misc/183759/inrc2017minutesandrfp.pdf>

### **Review of 2017-2018 Center**

Hongwei Xin reported on activity in four main areas:

1. Legislative Outreach – Xin reported that INRC tried a new format for outreach to legislators than at past legislative breakfasts. With assistance from ISU Governmental Affairs, INRC arranged three presentations to legislative committees to provide information about INRC with several researchers and University of Iowa colleagues to talk about collaboration. Helmers agreed it worked well and said that he hopes to continue this approach. INRC will also plan to be part of ISU day at Capitol and consider other opportunities.
2. Collaborator Roundtable. Xin said this year, INRC explored ways to improve opportunity for stakeholders to provide input. INRC held a stakeholder roundtable in February before issuing the RFP and used feedback to inform funding priorities. About 32 attended -- included PFI and other producers and there was great interaction. (The meeting packet included a list of participants and their ranked feedback. Top choices included cover crops, systems approach, soil health, runoff.) This year will continue to consider input in the next RFP. Think it will be good to continue the stakeholder roundtable at least every other year and reach out to additional groups, including producers, with the goal to become even more inclusive and transparent.

Helmers noted that in the INRC preliminary planning document for 2018-19, have added some of these stakeholder groups. Have a goal for director and associate director this year to try to meet with many of those groups face-to-face to talk about the center and gather input. If we've missed groups, please let us know.

3. Research – Xin reported working with research PI's to encourage more timely reporting on funded projects.

4. Celebrated 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Iowa Nutrient Research Strategy – Xin worked with IDALS, including Deputy Secretary Kenney to plan the event, May 29, 2018, to highlighted progress over the last five years. INRC thought the event, which included the Governor, IDNR and quite a few stakeholders, was successful. Deputy Kenney agreed.

### **Staffing Update**

Xin reported that he is very pleased that Matt Helmers agreed to take on role as INRC Director.

Matt Helmers said he appreciates the opportunities of this new role and added further updates:

- Half-time communication specialist, Ann Robinson came on board in late August. Position was a strong recommendation from the Advisory Council.

- Currently have search in process of search for a dedicated (half time) accountant.

- Plan to hire an associate director to help with day-to-day activities and work with Extension on programming and outreach to producers. This will be a professional staff position that is not tenure-eligible.

### **Budget Update**

Xin reviewed award summary in packet for 2014 through 2020 (projects currently funded). Have committed total of \$8,722,657 for project research. Institutions share: University of Iowa (37%), University of Northern Iowa (6%) and Iowa State University (57%). According to legislation, lead PI has to be from one of these institutions, but many projects have other partners. The percentages for the main institutions varies with funding.

### **2018 RFP Process & Review**

Xin indicated that last year's roundtable helped guide RFP priorities. Did not have researchers with pending projects involved in the review process.

### **2018 Funded Projects**

Xin: There are many good projects we are pleased to be able to support for 2018-19, which in many cases leverage a lot of additional funding. Had a total of \$3.7 million requested -- a number of good proposals that could not be funded. 16 new projects funded -- all currently underway. The list is on the [INRC website](#).

### **IIHR Update**

Chris Jones reviewed INRC-related work by IIHR Hydroscience & Engineering/Iowa Geological Survey/University of Iowa College of Engineering. The [Iowa Water Quality Information System \(IWQIS\)](#) website links to 75-80 continuous, real-time monitoring, some operated by/with leadership from USGS and ARS. Some sensors are on bigger rivers: most of those actually USGS sites. IIHR doesn't measure flow: Discharge measurements available on WQIS are calibrated data from USGS.

INRC support continues to be the foundation for the monitoring, and the program has also leveraged significant support from many partners including Coe College, Grinnell College, The Nature Conservancy, ARS, HUD, conservation districts and Agri Drain (at saturated buffer in Adair County, the only one currently on private land). Sensors are usually on public rights of way. Generally, the system has been well-received. Will provide data – or deploy sensors, as requested. Have a number of sensors at IDALS WQI projects (seven currently).

When asked about QA-QC procedures and longevity of sensors, Jones reported that IIHR uses processes based on USGS procedures. Samples are collected regularly to compare with sensor results. If the data is off, the sensor is recalibrated, and any data that seems suspect is deleted. The sensors tend to be very accurate. Also

have algorithms built into system, based on data, that can tell when to “hide” a sensor from online viewing if there appear to be problems. The data is initially published as provisional and at the end of the water year, the data is “autopsied” and if need be, corrected, before being officially approved. Sensors usually last for at least five years (they represent a fair amount on maintenance).

### **Center Director Update**

Matt Helmers reviewed a preliminary FY19 INRC Planning Document, which included highlights of types of projects funded and objectives for the next year. Under Networking Plan, note that we’ve added a number of stakeholders, with a plan to meet face-to-face to meet with as many as possible to allow for feedback. He plans to take an INRC group to U of I for collaboration early next year, to meet with IIHR and see their lab.

Under the communications plan, the goal is to raise visibility of Center research, articulate outcomes and show progress. There will be a redesign of website, to include more content and to make more visually appealing and user-friendly. INRC also plans to use clearly related content generated by other entities.

Tentatively do not plan to have collaborator’s roundtable this year. Focus this year will be on a researcher’s roundtable and face-to-face meetings with stakeholders.

### **Council Discussion**

Council members expressed positive views about INRC activity and progress with staffing and communications. INRC was encouraged to highlight in communications what has been discovered in last five years and how projects relate to economics. Important to show impacts for public. Members said it was good to see mix of stories planned, including articles highlighting connection to UI and UNI projects. Encouraged INRC goals to include providing leadership in conservation and production nationally, as well as in Iowa.

INRC was urged to build on interactions with legislators and assessment of impact to better inform public discourse. A concern was expressed that INRC needs to be able to help the INRS demonstrate more outcomes in water quality. Suggestions included giving a higher priority to allowing proposals to be submitted by a producer and putting a stronger focus on obstacles to adoption and dissemination to producers.

Interim Dean Colletti reminded the group that CALS may be able to fund promising projects that didn’t get INRC funding. Extension can help connect to private lands and producers.

### **Future meetings**

Group agreed that once/year in-person meeting is good, about same time of year as in the past (August). Also liked the idea of adding virtual meeting/teleconference once/year, about 6 months from in-person meeting. Suggested including Advisory Council members with legislative meetings. Group concurred.

### **Public Comments**

No members of the public were in attendance.

Keith Summerville moved to adjourn the meeting. Deputy Secretary Julie Kenney moved to second the motion, and all members voted to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.