

The Wide, Wide World of I/UCRC Operations

Part 1: the roles

Introducing

Lisa Schabenberger
Operations Coordinator
Center for Advanced Forestry Systems



I/UCRC Annual Director's Meeting
January 12, 2012

Introducing:



- Lisa Schabenberger,
Operations Coordinator, CAFS
- North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC
- Admin. Title: Program Coordinator; non-tenure; EPA staff
- With NCSU for 8 yrs. and CAFS for about 5 yrs.
- My I/UCRC Operations responsibilities are part-time (~50%)
 - Also part-time as Departmental Program Coordinator for the Dept. of Forestry & Environmental Resources, NCSU.
 - I’m paid from a combo of Department and NSF I/UCRC funds.
- How did I come to this job? My Dept. Head (boss) is the CAFS Director – during the planning stage, he asked, and I said, “Sure, sounds interesting!” I have an MS in Forestry and my dept. position is similar to CAFS’ operation needs.

About Our I/UCRC:



- Center for Advanced Forestry Systems, CAFS
- Established in 2007 with 4 sites, have grown since then to 9 sites with the 10th applying now
- Lead Site: North Carolina State University; Dr. Barry Goldfarb, CAFS Director; Dr. Lee Allen, Deputy Director
- Other Sites: Oregon State University, Purdue University, University of Florida, University of Georgia, University of Idaho, University of Maine, University of Washington, Virginia Tech
- ~100 IAB Member Orgs., ~60% are small companies

More About Our I/UCRC:

- The mission of CAFS is to optimize genetic and cultural systems to produce high-quality raw forest materials for new and existing products by conducting collaborative research that transcends species, regions, and disciplinary boundaries.
- We added a Deputy Director in 2010, a retired prof. from NCSU (also former Site Director), who facilitates collaborative research between sites by working closely with Site faculty and closely following supplementals.
- We have additional Operations support from Liz Jackson at Purdue, who primarily works with me to plan and conduct the IAB meetings.

My responsibilities:

- Internal and External Communications
 - Website creation and maintenance
 - Fact-sheet updates
 - Membership database maintenance
 - Email correspondence with IAB member and CAFS researchers, including meeting invitations, project executive summaries, project proposal votes, and funding distribution results
 - Moodle site creation and maintenance – this is an online course mgt. system that I've started using to improve communications and data transfer with faculty & students prior to IAB meetings.
 - Provide data as needed to Director, Deputy Director & Evaluator
- Coordinate reporting of Partner Site Information Sheets

My responsibilities:

- Planning and conducting IAB Meetings

due to the nature of forestry research (trees grow slowly), and because sites hold Coop meetings throughout the year, our IAB Meetings are held annually. Meeting locations rotate among sites, East to West coasts, so we investigate, negotiate with, and secure new venues each year.

- Host Site arranges a 1-day field tour. Liz and I make all hotel, meeting room, and social event arrangements.
 - Manage meeting budget and contracts.
 - Facilitate communication between Director, Deputy Director, Site Directors and Operations to determine the best format for each meeting based on number and nature of project proposals.
 - Work with meeting registrar who is Dept. Continuing Ed group.
 - Collect all presentation/poster materials from researchers; create online and hardcopy meeting notebook.
- Facilitate mid-year CAFS Scientists Workshops, primarily organized by Deputy Director.

What works well for me?

- Open & relaxed communications with Director & Deputy Dir.
- Totally in sync with Operations colleague at Purdue – honest communication by phone & email, and coordination of efforts
- Using our department's Continuing Education group, FEOP, to do online meeting registration. Extension groups like this are experts at event registration. Since they are in the same college, makes accounting easier and I can walk down the hall to discuss any issues with registration.
- Cautiously optimistic about use of Moodle for Internal Communications. Better for transfer of electronic files.
- Close relationships between Site Directors & IAB members. Coop structure has built strong ties. (*double-edged sword*)

Not so well?

- ...Close relationships between Site Directors and IAB members. All of our IAB members value the collaborative research that the I/UCRC makes possible, but many rely on direct communication with their Site rather than from CAFS headquarters. This get better the longer the Site is in CAFS.
- At our university, research contracts and subcontracts are run by a separate office within the college. Creates a black-box situation for me – I know things are going in there and they are coming out, but I'm less effective at providing information to Directors or Evaluator during the process.

Not so well?

- NSF I/UCRC asks Site Directors to complete various reports during the year and headquarter operations is not copied on the requests. Often, a request from me, with only slightly different data requests or slightly different timing, results in confusion and frustration. They think I already know the information. Operations looks disorganized, at best.
- = Need: NSF I/UCRC and Center Headquarters should better coordinate data requests and communicate results to one another. I could better manage my scheduling of requests and reduce duplication if we shared information better. Need better transparency of communication to Sites.

Thanks! Any Questions?

