

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

December 27, 2018

To: Chairs of Academic Units Involved in Plant Science Research

From: Stephen Hsu, Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies

Re: Changes in Plant Science Greenhouse Management and Oversight

(Direct questions to co-Chairs: Erik Runkle; [runkleer@msu.edu](mailto:runkleer@msu.edu), and Tom Sharkey; [tsharkey@msu.edu](mailto:tsharkey@msu.edu).)

Michigan State University is internationally recognized for research excellence in the plant sciences. Our future success is dependent on maintaining, increasing, and expanding the overall quality and functionality of our research greenhouses. In May of 2018, the College of Agricultural and Natural Resources (CANR), College of Natural Sciences (CNS) and MSU AgBioResearch (MABR) charged an ad hoc committee to review MSU's greenhouse facilities and provide recommendations to improve the utility and efficiency of use of greenhouse space, including space management. The goal of this review was to determine how to better meet needs of the growing MSU plant science research community. Because of this process, I am announcing significant changes in MSU greenhouse management/oversight and that greenhouse space allocations will no longer be administered at the departmental/unit level. Details of such changes, and the role of individuals involved, are summarized below and are effective January 1, 2019, unless specified otherwise.



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**Greenhouse faculty user's committee:** This committee, consisting of one faculty member from each of the seven primary academic units engaged in plant science research, will take an active role in greenhouse management and decision-making. Committee members are [Erik Runkle (HRT; Co-Chair); Tom Sharkey (BMB/PRL; Co-Chair); Brad Day (PSM), Dave Lowry (PLB); Dave Smitley (ENT) and Mike Walters (FOR)].

The primary responsibilities of the user's committee will be:

1. Communicating with greenhouse users and gathering feedback about issues related to greenhouse use (protocols, policies and procedures, operations).
2. Providing input on policy development and modifications, space utilization improvements, operations and management.
3. Greenhouse space assignments (effective FY 2020).
4. Development of a greenhouse user-fee structure and policy (to be implemented in FY 2020). Committee members will be appointed for a 3-year term. Administrative oversight of the faculty user's committee will be provided by designates from Office of the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies (OVPRGS), CNS, CANR and MABR hereafter referred to as Greenhouse Executive Committee.

Duties of the Greenhouse user's committee co-chairs will include:

1. Oversight of the Greenhouse Manager, including frequent meetings and annual performance reviews.
2. Provide leadership to faculty user's committee in incorporating feedback/suggestions from units on greenhouse operations
3. Communication with administration (greenhouse executive committee) and the

greenhouse manager on issues of importance related to greenhouse operations, budgeting, and capital expenditures.

4. Developing policies based on input from the greenhouse user's committee, greenhouse manager, and Administration, including greenhouse user's fees.
5. Accessing budgeting information to advise Administration and the Manager on budget priorities.
6. Making recommendations to Administration on capital improvements. Co-Chairs will be appointed for a minimum of a 2-year term.

**Greenhouse manager:** With the recent announcement that Dave Freville is stepping down as manager, a search for a new greenhouse manager is being implemented. Given rapid growth and expansion of the plant science research community, it is envisioned that the greenhouse manager will have previous research experience in greenhouses. The greenhouse manager should possess an advanced degree in horticulture, or similar field, with knowledge of greenhouse production practices, plant growth and regulation, and implementation of controlled-environment technologies for plant production.

Underlying goals for the greenhouse manager will be:

1. Ensuring the greenhouse facility is serving the research needs of users, especially appropriate growing conditions.
2. Efficient day-to-day operation of greenhouses.
3. Effective communication with greenhouse users, staff, and faculty user's committee including Co-Chairs.

Specific responsibilities will include:

1. Oversight of fiscal and structural operation of the facility, including safety and compliance issues.
2. Consulting with the greenhouse user's committee on strategic planning and policy development related to research, resource, and technology management and implementation.
3. Supervision of greenhouse staff, including performance reviews.
4. Advising faculty and staff of best practices for plant culture in greenhouses.
5. Timely interaction with user's committee co-chairs to discuss issues related to faculty adherence to established operational protocols and appropriate courses of action.

Additional details, including policies for space assignments and user fees will be communicated by the greenhouse user's committee as developed. Feel free to contact your departmental representatives with input. We appreciate your assistance and support of implementation of the described changes designed to ensure continued growth and excellence of plant science research at MSU.