

## NCSS University Cooperator's Report

July 15, 2010

1. Timelines for securing summer internships need to be moved up –
  - a. Announcements for summer positions need to be distributed to universities by December 1
  - b. Offers to students made by March 1**
  - c. Advertise across state lines (i.e. Texas has multiple positions available, advertise in surrounding states)
2. Amount of money allocated to special NRCS research projects is insufficient to cover basic research project costs (student assistantship, associated fringe benefits, supplies, travel, etc.)
  - a. \$50K per year is needed for a good MS level project
  - b. University matching funds are difficult since other federal funds (CIG) cannot be used to match NRCS funds – any way around this?
  - c. Goal of 1-2 NRCS supported graduate student projects per state
    - i. Provides continuity of funding for university cooperators
    - ii. Provides steady stream of newly trained students available for NRCS employment upon graduation
3. NRCS needs to compile a singular, focused, specific research needs list
  - a. Seems to be confusion on specifics of what is wanted (i.e. testing of interpretations was mentioned, but what interpretations? Where do they need to be tested? At what scale? We need details....)

- b. Clarity on regional versus national objectives in research
  - c. Notification of research needs well in advance of next funding cycle, so we have time to develop a good project
  - d. More transparency on where funding is coming from (regionally, nationally)
    - i. Do we need to send the same proposal to state soil scientist, Lincoln, and Washington DC for consideration?
    - ii. Could old SSURGO money be redirected to strengthen research?
  - e. Recognition that academia is often on the leading edge of new technology development and testing – let us know what you need, so we can work with you to develop it
4. Training of undergraduates
- a. Support is needed to prepare future NRCS staffers
  - b. Might come in the form of travel funds to attend national SSSA meeting, salary for training as a student technician in university lab, or small undergraduate research study
5. Better dialog is needed between university cooperators and NRCS (Strengthen the “C” in NCSS)
- a. Need clearer structure for who is doing what and where it is being done
  - b. In many cases, academic publications are available, but NRCS needs to be able to find it
    - i. Data mining or database of research may provide framework for addressing this need