**Higher Education Challenge Grant Project**

**‘Enhancing Educational Outcomes for Plant Genetic Resources Conservation and Use’**

**Meeting Notes May 2, 2023, 10 am MDT**

Present: Pat Byrne, CSU Soil and Crop Sciences

Jill Zarestky, CSU School of Education

Gina Cerimele, CSU Soil and Crop Sciences

Kat Chen, CSU/NLGRP

Deana Namuth-Covert, CSU College of Agricultural Sciences

Forrest Douglass, USDA-ARS, Ames

Gary Kinard, USDA-ARS, Beltsville

1. Pat: Several relevant meetings were held in April:

* NGRAC (National Genetic Resources Advisory Council) met in Fort Collins April 11-12. Pat Gayle, and Geoff presented different aspects of the HEC project. Committee members were complimentary about project achievements. They expressed concern about ensuring adequate student numbers to maintain the online courses and about securing continued funding for the project. They suggested better search options on GRIN-U, and encouraged more success stories to demonstrate the effectiveness of NPGS germplasm.
* Project Directors Meeting for NIFA Education Programs, April 19-21. Pat represented our project at this virtual meeting. One theme was the importance of demonstrating impacts, not just a list of accomplishments, of NIFA-funded education projects.
* HEC Advisory Council Meeting, April 25. The project extension till 5/31/24 was announced and all the advisors in attendance agreed to serve another year. Gayle reported accomplishments of the last 6 months (see PDF). The advisors recommended that we increase outreach and encourage participation in the online courses from the National Plant Germplasm System, other genebanks, and universities. A lengthy discussion of impact included suggestions to develop a communication strategy with specific target audiences, construct a ‘Logic Model’, and work with Dr. Fan-Li Chou at the American Seed Trade Association about use of NPGS germplasm by the private sector. See attached file for full minutes.

1. Assibi/Stephen: Updates from Iowa State Univ. Stephen is in the final stages of data analysis and thesis writing. Assibi has a couple of sections to complete on the Bambara groundnut chapter for the Understudied Indigenous Crops ebook.
2. Forrest: Updates from PI Station, Ames. Forrest is now employed full-time by USDA till late July. He has a long list of videos to complete, including parsley, spinach, Candy Gardner interview, NCRPIS tour, germination testing, entomology, cucurbit regeneration, and possibly the NAPB meeting in collaboration with Kevin Falk (Corteva). Parsley video is available at <https://youtu.be/oXDGO0bj42o>
3. Fall 2023 Online courses. We all need to promote the courses as best we can. Gary said he and Gayle would promote the courses at the upcoming PGOC meeting of NPGS staff. Having the course modules available on-demand might be useful for training purposes, but would lose interaction among students. Kierra reported that 2 potential students had contacted her and that registration would go live sometime in May. Luigi Guarino of the Crop Trust says he may have some funding available for scholarships for developing country genebank staff.
4. Jill: Evaluation survey of CSU Online courses has 6 respondents so far, hoping for more. The survey of GRIN-U users has been tweaked and is awaiting IRB approval before distributing. Both the course and GRIN-U surveys ask if respondents agree to be contacted for more in-depth evaluation. Kat suggested contacting users of the cryopreservation ebook about its impact on their work; Jill will contact Gayle about this. Jill has hired a grad student part time to help with evaluations this summer.
5. Deana: The Crop Wild Relatives ebook has been packaged as a badge program and is now live. Deana will ask Gayle whether there would be interest in cryopreservation as a badge program. CAS website will soon have an upskilling page. Ebook viewer numbers can now be seen without counting instructors/authors.
6. Gary: The GRIN-U quarterly update newsletter went out April 7, followed by a bump in viewership. Currently 4500 unique users since launch. Following up on NGRAC comments on GRIN-U searchability, Kat will contact Laura about potential tweaks, e.g., presenting search results as a grid 3 or 4 wide rather than a single column.
7. Pat: Spur activities: The last of 3 presentations to high school students at CSU’s Spur campus happened April 27. Work continues on developing a high school curriculum for Fall ’23. Field plots will be planted in May-June.
8. Kat: Several success stories (blueberry, hops, hazelnut, wheat) have been drafted and are out for review. Ebook chapters on cryotherapy and cryopreservation of pollen and banana shoot tips are in the works.

**Next meeting:** Tuesday, June 6, 2023, 10 am-11:30 am MST