FARE UW-Madison campus listening session, 11-27-12
Summary of discussion by Eric Sandgren

Present: 5 panel members and 9 members of the UW-Madison community.

Introduction: Dr. Streiffer gave an introduction, which included a history of the genesis of FARE and a description of past speakers.

Several issues were of particular concern to the audience, and were discussed in detail.

1. Should we deal with/respond at all to the animal research abolitionists? Some of the audience felt that it only gave them a legitimacy that they could not get on their own.
2. Who is/should be the audience for FARE?
3. Scientists will enjoy talking to a reasonable audience, but a few saw FARE as a forum for activists to grandstand. Scientists may not be interested in speaking in this context. It feels less satisfying if the audience is polarized.
4. FARE needs to build trust within the scientific community that this can be an effective use of their time.
5. Should we avoid subjects clouded in contemporary controversy?

The audience made several suggestions regarding future directions for FARE (there was not unanimous agreement on the desirability of each suggestion).

1. We must better describe our audience. Who attends? What can we use as a metric? Perhaps we should consider pre- and post-session questionnaires.
2. At the end of sessions, request written questions rather than having microphones.
3. What is desirable is the presentation of research, its relevance, and its importance to a lay audience.
4. A better way to cover all facets of animal use (objectives of the science and the ethics) is to combine an investigator with an ethicist. In general, researchers are uncomfortable addressing the detailed ethics.
5. If ethicists present, they should articulate clearly their ethical basis for making a “decision” about whether any particular line of investigation is acceptable.
6. If we have a panel discussion addressing “a day in the life” of research animals, we should try to get a panel in the “middle”.
7. Some audience members liked the panel approach, especially with a clinician involved. Lectures tend to limit dialog.
8. One member suggested that we miss an opportunity if we do not have a public discussion of the nursery rearing protocol.
9. Some members of the audience would like to see a FARE session devoted to existing sources of public information about animal research, like publications, protocols, IACUC meetings.
10. We should try to get across to the FARE audience that we have compassion for our animal subjects. Don’t ignore the emotional response.
11. Consider rethinking the name. Perhaps take out “ethics”.