



Agriculture Advisory Meeting Notes

Date: April 12, 2020
Meeting Place: Remote via Zoom

Called to order: 6:00 -7:30 p.m. **Chair(s):** Erin Krier **Note Taker:** Erin Krier

Council Members Present:

Dr. Sean Abel, Dylan Bognuda, Teri Bontrager, Gregorio Casillas, Emma Chow, Rosemary Cummings, Marc DeBernardi, Kevin Dwyer, Cathy Fisher, Dr. Christopher Greer, Tom Gulliver, Miguel Guerra, Ron Labastida, Jerry Mahoney, Dr. Anjali Misra, Holly Nolan-Chavez, Mark Powell, Christine Ready, Montse Zarate

Council Members Absent:

Dr. Rita Abi-Ghanem, Mitch Ardantz, Tom Durant, Brenda Estrada, Jim Glines, Les Graulich, Eryn Gray, Guillermo Guerra, Dr. Jodi Jacques, Lacy Litten, Andrew Rice, David Rice, Claire Wineman, Danilu Ramirez

Guests Present: None

Welcome to our new advisory committee members – Dylan Bognuda - Bonipak and Kevin Dwyer - Cal Giant

Agenda No. 1 Student Update

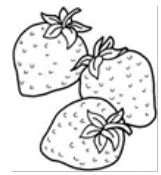
- Discussion:**
- Student representatives Montse Zarate and Gregorio Casillas gave updates on their fall and spring semester experiences.
 - They both acknowledged that remote instruction proved challenging and appreciated the in-person meeting opportunities provided in some of the agriculture courses and through the Young Farmers & Ranchers club.
 - Greg mentioned that the remote instruction forced him to stay on top of his work and he was able to successfully complete his courses this year.

Action: None

Deadline: n/a **Responsibility:** n/a

Agenda No. 2 Fall 2021 Plan

- Discussion:**
- Erin reported that the college has had a very student-centered mindset during Covid-19, recognizing that for our student population, learning through remote instruction has not proven very effective. The plan for Fall 2021 is grounded in the understanding that our students need to return to in-person instruction. The intention, knowing that things can change given Covid-19 restriction adjustments, is to offer most courses in person and the agriculture courses are scheduled to be completely in person.
 - The Field to Table Week of Welcome event, which is designed to welcome incoming students in agriculture, viticulture, enology, food science, nutrition, or culinary arts, is shifting back to an in-person modality for this fall. There will be remote options for those participants that are not comfortable attending in person.
 - Erin explained that an issue the agriculture program faces is the lack of dedicated lab and classroom space. All agriculture and viticulture classes therefore must share space with the very impacted classes under the Life & Physical Sciences department. This has caused some conflict when lab space is necessary for ag classes but is not available. Thanks to the advocacy of Dr. Sean Abel, there is some hope that the building space currently occupied by the STEM and MESA centers in Building W will be allocated to the agriculture/viticulture programs and vet tech program respectively once those programs move to their new building space. The hope is to have the ability to offer agriculture lectures and labs in this new space by Fall 2021.



Action: None

Deadline: n/a

Responsibility:

n/a

Agenda No. 3 Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training

- Discussion:**
- Erin informed the committee about the upcoming Produce Safety Alliance grower training that she will co-host with Cal Poly in person on the AHC campus on Friday, June 4.
 - This training is free for USDA-designated small and very small growers who now are required to comply with all FSMA regulations for covered produce.
 - Erin is waiting for the official flyer from Cal Poly and will email it to the committee for members to share with growers who still need this PSA grower training. Erin asked the committee to help spread the word and refer interested registrants to her.
 - The committee members acknowledged the need for this training and offered support to promote the event.

Action: Distribute flyer to small and very small growers to promote PSA grower training

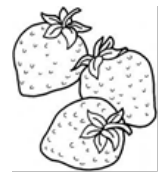
Deadline: Asap

Responsibility:

Erin Krier and committee members

Agenda No. 4 New Programs Under Consideration

- Discussion:**
- Erin shared details about several new projects either under development or consideration within the AHC agriculture program:
 - This is the final year of the 3-year National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education grant, which funded the significant expansion of the AHC agriculture program. However, Erin received a no-cost grant extension for an additional year to complete the project objectives.
 - Erin explained that she has submitted a proposal for supplemental funding from the NSF during the no-cost grant extension year in order to implement some projects that will improve the full utilization of the student farm for learning opportunities. This includes the development of an Agriculture Enterprise course which would give students the chance to earn credit while maintaining the fruit and vegetable crops in the on-campus student farm. This would also include installation of a wash station to improve produce safety sanitation practices. There were several members of the committee who voiced their support for enterprise projects and referred to their own valuable experiences in college that provided them contextualized learning opportunities through such courses: Dylan Bognuda mentioned his work in Cal Poly's BRAE program where his enterprise class worked to design a harvest machine for the flower industry; Kevin Dwyer echoed support based on his work with the Cal Poly Strawberry Center; Jerry Mahoney reflected on his valuable experience as the farm manager for Cal Poly's organic farm where he oversaw a weekly required meeting for the organic farm enterprise project and students were also expected to put in independent work hours each week; Rosemary Cummings agreed that an ag enterprise project would be a valuable addition to the AHC ag curriculum; Tom Gulliver has seen the value of hands-on applications of classroom learning to really teach students what agriculture work is all about.
 - Erin is also working in collaboration with AHC's Industrial Technology program to develop a Mechanized Agriculture program with various pathways. She continues to work on the completion of the Precision Agriculture pathway as well. Erin sought input from the committee regarding the best way to address the variety of mechanized/automated/technological needs of the industry. She shared some options for the proposed curriculum, which would start with an introductory-level certificate with courses that would introduce students to foundational knowledge and then



students would choose from among more specialized pathways based on their interests – which could be from diesel/ag mechanics to computer/automated technology to precision agriculture. Chris Greer shared that it is difficult to separate these pathways – particularly precision ag and mechanized ag – because there is precision technology that is applied to machine/equipment technology. He mentioned that the knowledge needed by the incoming workforce must have an integration of these multiple disciplines for operating, maintaining, repairing precision ag equipment which is grounded in computer technologies.

- There is also a pending NSF grant proposal for developing an Agriculture Biotechnology program. Anjali Mira shared the vision and proposed curriculum outline and requested advisory committee feedback. Anjali also pointed out the broad application of such technology in its ability to demonstrate good lab practices, genetics which are used in all facets of the industry including food safety and plant pathology. Chris Greer mentioned the use of biotechnology in the industry, particularly the importance in its use for plant improvement.

- Erin described a future project she hopes to undertake to create a pathway for farmer training. AHC at one time had a partnership with the Cal Poly FEED (Farmer Experiential Education and Development) program which offered academic and hands-on training to prepare students who wish to operate their own small farm. Unfortunately, that program was dissolved and there is an absence of local farmer training. With the need for an increase in small, local farms to meet food system challenges and to address the growing consumer demand for such produce, there is a challenge in training new farmers. Oftentimes it requires a family connection to get into production agriculture but there is a trend in the next generation of family farm children not wishing to take over the farm and at the same time, there are many barriers to entry into the industry. Erin has been in discussion with the Center for Land-based Learning’s California Farm Academy Beginning Farmer Training Program to consider a partnership to create a satellite program based at AHC, whereby local farm partnerships could establish incubator farms. There is a lot of support for such a program and partnership from both SLO City Farm in San Luis Obispo and Blue Sky Center in Cuyama. The program would also include a component of small farmer grower mentorships and could be modeled after the successful ALBA (Agriculture and Land-based Training Association) program. There are potential funding opportunities to pursue to fund the development of such a program from USDA NIFA (National Institute of Food & Agriculture) Beginning Farmer & Rancher Development Program. Jerry Mahoney indicated support as Erin mentioned he could be an excellent small farm mentor.

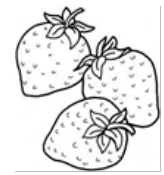
Action: Follow up will occur with specific committee members based on their area of expertise as curriculum details need to be addressed.

Deadline: Ongoing **Responsibility:** Erin Krier

Agenda No. 5 Student Clubs

Discussion:

- The AHC Rodeo Team has had a successful year as collegiate rodeos were able to resume in the spring. We partnered with Elks Unocal Event Center for practices and meetings and were fortunate to have calves donated by the Branquinho family for roping practices. The first collegiate rodeo sponsored by NIRA since last year’s shutdown was held in Coarsegold with subsequent contents coming later in April and in May. An in-person fundraiser dinner and auction is being planned for August 7, 2021 at the Santa Maria Elks Lodge.
- The Young Farmers & Ranchers club has been very active and has been able to host in-person meetings outdoors at the student farm. The Sacramento legislative trip that was anticipated for spring 2021 was postponed due to continued pandemic restrictions. The club participated in a successful community service project following a guest speaker presentation from Santa Ynez



Valley People Helping People (SYVPHP). Club members compiled items provided with YF&R-designated funds through Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau which were donated to SYVPHP for distribution to the homeless population in the Santa Ynez Valley. Upcoming outdoor visits to local farms are being planned for the remainder of the semester’s club meetings. A trap shoot fundraiser for support of the 2022 Sacramento trip is in the planning stages.

Action: None

Deadline: n/a

Responsibility: n/a

Agenda No. 6 High School Partnerships

Discussion:

- Robust partnerships with area high schools continue to assist in engaging high school students with the AHC agriculture program:
- A CTE Ag Showcase event was hosted in March by AHC Agriculture and the Career Center, with major support from Holly Nolan-Chavez and Dr. Erin Gorter. This was a virtual event to connect high school students to local industry and successful AHC graduates via roundtable presentations. It was well attended and gave high school students a chance to hear from Dylan Bognuda - Bonipak Production Engineer, Kristina Denne – Bonipak Director of Food Safety, Stephanie Metzinger – Western Growers Communication Manager, and Melani Teixeira – PVHS Career Center Director. Former stand-out students from the AHC agriculture program also gave inspiring presentations. Several high school FFA teachers offered their students activity points for attendance, which incentivized participation and helped to expose more students to the opportunities available in agriculture.
- AHC is hosting the FFA State Finals contest for Soil and Land Evaluation on May 7. This is the first step toward AHC hosting an annual FFA field day, as has been recommended by the advisory committee for connecting high school agriculture students with the AHC ag program via participation in contests on the AHC campus.
- Fruitful discussions have been taking place with Dr. Paul Robinson and the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District CTE Center. Proposed collaborations for the AHC AG 155 (Introduction to Mechanized Agriculture) course to be taught on high school campuses for AHC students and for a possible diesel mechanics course in the future at the CTE Center are currently being evaluated for feasibility.
- Additional concurrent enrollment agreements continue to help fuel AHC ag program enrollment.

Action: None

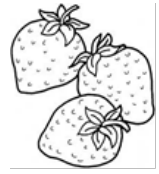
Deadline: n/a

Responsibility: n/a

Agenda No. 7 Additional Input, Feedback, Suggestions from Committee

Discussion:

- Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner Cathy Fisher shared emerging trends that she sees are important to address in future curricula. There is an expanding microbrew industry as the demographics of the alcohol-consumer population change. With the popularity of things like the Keto diet, a new generation of drinkers are seeking alternatives to wine. New alcoholic spirits and brews will become an increasingly popular product. She mentioned that UC Davis has a 15-week Master Brewers Certificate Program that is well-attended and brings the university revenue. She also referred to lessons that have emerged from the pandemic – such as the necessity for small farmers to quickly rebrand and shift to selling their produce via boxed delivery service. They were forced to rely on creation of an online ordering system as farmer’s markets saw a 75% loss in revenues. Agribusiness students should be tasked with identifying some possible solutions to these issues – what models could growers consider to respond to overnight market changes?
- Bonipak Production Engineer Dylan Bognuda noted the lack of trained operators for the more sophisticated machines that are utilized in the modern ag industry. He would like to collaborate



with AHC to guide training protocols and curricula that can provide students with needed skills and knowledge.

- CSA Grower/Owner of Blosser Urban Garden Jerry Mahoney informed the committee that small growers have an easier time breaking into the industry via a small-scale CSA model and direct to consumer sales via farmer's markets.

Action:

Evaluate the possibility of addressing the emerging microbrew sector via credit or non-credit courses. Add module content to Introduction to Agribusiness course regarding rapid responses to unexpected market changes. Continue with development of new Mechanized Ag courses and pathways.

Deadline:

ongoing

Responsibility: Erin Krier

Reports:

Important Dates and Follow-up

- Next advisory committee meeting for Fall semester will be Monday, December 6, 2021 at 6:00 pm