

Allan Hancock College
Agriculture Advisory Committee
Meeting Notes, 13 May 2019
6:00 - 7:30 pm

Attending:

Teri Bontrager, Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau
Cathy Fisher, Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner
Marc DeBernardi, Santa Maria High School FFA
Christopher Greer, UC Cooperative Extension
Tom Gulliver, Farm Credit West
Erin Krier, Coordinator, Ag Program, Allan Hancock College
Richard Mahon, Dean, Academic Affairs, Allan Hancock College
Jerry Mahoney, Blosser Urban Garden
Ron Labastida, Babe Farms
Rosemary Cummings, Nipomo High School FFA

Members of the committee introduced themselves.

Ag Program Coordinator Erin Krier led the committee through the agenda with updates of accomplishments made in the program since the December meeting.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

- I. Erin announced that the 5 new courses which were created per the advice of the CAPCA board members for the future development of the Pest Control Adviser preparation certificates, have been officially launched and are in the process of college review. Those courses are: Agricultural Plant Pathology, Economic Entomology, Weed Science, and Qualified Applicator Training.
- II. Additionally, Erin announced that the 2 stackable certificates which combined will provide students with the 42 specific units required by the DPR to qualify to take the PCA exam, have been launched and are also in the process of college review. The first certificate is called Crop Protection and requires Integrated Pest Management, Plant Science, Biology, Ag Plant Pathology, Economic Entomology and Weed Science for completion. The second certificate is called Pest Control Adviser Preparation and will require Chemistry,

- Soils & Plant Nutrition, Sustainable Agriculture, Qualified Applicator Training and two courses to be chosen from: Viticulture, Fruit Science, Environmental Horticulture and Plant Propagation.
- III. Erin also informed the committee that the next step in curriculum development will be the creation of an A.S. degree in Crop Protection, which will require similar coursework to the certificates.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

- I. Erin announced that there are several grant opportunities for which the agriculture program is applying. The first is a USDA HSI (Hispanic Serving Institution) grant that is titled "Strengthening Agriculture Education", where AHC is partnering with Cal Poly and Cuesta College. The activities of this grant include: increasing the participation of AHC ag students in the Cal Poly Summer Undergraduate Research Program; creating formal pathways and documents for students to follow for every ag program Cal Poly offers; increase articulation of AHC ag classes to Cal Poly; create paid externships for AHC part-time ag faculty to get current, relevant, industry experience; and create an AHC Agriculture Advocate program where students will be paid to do community outreach to increase communication and leadership responsibilities.
- II. Erin described the second grant proposal, a CTEA grant that she worked on in collaboration with the AHC Culinary Arts & Management and Food Science & Nutrition programs. This would provide funding to develop a "Farm to Table" integration between AHC agriculture, culinary and food science where there would be an increase in production from the student "farm" in order to supply the culinary program with food for their classes and catering activities and also to supply food for the Food Share program where food is given away on campus.
- III. The third grant opportunity that Erin explained is a collaboration that Cal Poly initiated with AHC and Cuesta agriculture programs. The goals of this grant are to: improve transfer by clarifying Cal Poly requirements and offering AHC students additional support in the courses they tend to struggle passing which are needed at Cal Poly, namely chemistry and math; increase course articulation; create one-day summer workshops at Cal Poly for AHC students or recent high school graduates who plan to attend AHC; and create a new summer research program at Cal Poly specifically for community college ag students.
- IV. The final grant that Erin described is a USDA Food Safety Outreach grant that is a collaboration with Cal Poly's food safety, ag communication and ag business professors called "Supporting underserved California leafy-green producers' FSMA compliance, through interdisciplinary food safety, communication and marketing training". Should we be awarded, this funding would send Cal Poly's food safety professor and Erin to the "train the trainer" Produce Safety Alliance training. We would then offer the grower training to certain Allan Hancock College and Cal Poly agriculture students and would hire them as student workers to help us with the project. Then we would

reach out to Santa Maria Valley leafy green growers who meet one or more of the USDA's qualifications for being "underrepresented" - this could be small farmers (those grossing less than \$250,000/year), socially disadvantaged farmers (those who are considered minorities, especially growers of Hispanic, African-American or Asian decent), veteran farmers, and beginning farmers (those who have not operated a farm for more than 10 consecutive years). The project directors along with our student workers would do on-farm visits and help these growers craft produce safety management plans. We would also host two grower produce safety training sessions for growers, free of charge, on the Hancock campus. Erin is looking for support from advisory members via letters of support or letters of commitment.

STUDENT "FARM" UPDATES

- I. Thanks to guidance from Les Graulich at Plantel Nurseries, a fantastic crew was hired and completed the repairs on the greenhouse. Work continues on getting it fully functional by bringing electricity to the structure. A solar contractor is working with Erin to determine if solar is a viable option.

NEW PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

- I. Erin described a new event that is being launched this fall for incoming agriculture students. It is modeled after the AHC STEM Center Week of Discovery where new students spend a few days on campus the week before fall classes start getting to know faculty, learn about the campus and programs, hear from current students, and culminate with an industry tour field trip day. This new event will be a collaboration between agriculture, viticulture, food science & nutrition, and culinary arts. Any new students who designated one of these areas as their major will be invited to a 3-day "Field to Table Week of Welcome".

PROMOTION

- I. Erin described the multiple promotional articles that have helped boost exposure for the ag program. These articles have appeared in the Santa Maria Times, The Sun, California Farm Bureau Federation social media, CDFA blog, and Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau publications. Additionally, the college paid for a billboard on the northbound 101 that showcases the ag program with a "careers start here" headline.

PARTNERSHIPS

- I. Erin listed the 10 newly approved concurrent enrollment courses with Righetti and Pioneer Valley high schools. These courses include animal science, horticulture, fruit science, ag sales and communication, ag economics, and mechanized ag. She also pointed out the mechanized ag concurrent enrollment course with Santa Maria High School and explained that SMHS is currently working to develop additional concurrent courses.
- II. Erin explained that the AHC vineyard/orchard/garden (collectively considered the student "farm") will be a host site for the first Santa Barbara County Farm Day, promoted by the non-profit SeeAg.

- III. Erin also explained the extensive accomplishments of the Young Farmers and Ranchers club and the remarkable experiences they had during their 3-day legislative trip to Sacramento where they toured Blue Diamond Almond, met with the entire CFBF Government Affairs Team, met with Secretary of Agriculture Karen Ross, met with several legislators at the state capitol, and spent the day at Ag Day at the Capitol.
- IV. Erin announced the newly established AHC Rodeo Team, where students are able to compete in collegiate rodeo events all over the region as members of the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association. She also informed everyone of the dinner/auction fundraiser on August 24 and the “charter member” jacket fundraiser opportunity.

NEEDS

- I. Erin informed the committee about needs she has for the success of the agriculture program. Specifically, Erin would like to increase both paid and unpaid internship opportunities and agreements with agriculture businesses for the Hancock agriculture students to make industry connections and receive the valuable insight only learned through work experience. She would also like to know of any entry level paid positions or unpaid job shadowing opportunities.
- II. Erin also asked for committee member support for the USDA Food Safety Outreach grant in the way of underserved farmer connections and letters of support/commitment.
- III. Erin informed the committee that she will be seeking industry guest speakers for the Field to Table Week of Welcome.

COMMITTEE SUGGESTIONS, IDEAS, RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. Erin asked the committee members to openly comment on any industry needs or suggestions for the direction of the program.
- II. The responses were as follows:
 - a. Cathy Fisher, Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner, recommended that AHC consider exploring a relationship with CSU Channel Islands because of their strong biology program. She agreed that the food safety issue is significant and it is essential that students have this type of training. She also suggested that Erin attend the Agriculture Advisory Committee meeting (the first Thursday of the month) to discuss student job opportunities and to connect with potential growers for the food safety outreach grant. Cathy also said that for the planned food safety outreach program, the CDFA compliance inspector, Steve Patton, would be good to reach out to and learn from regarding FSMA regulations and audits.
 - b. Ron Labastida, Babe Farms, also is a Food Safety supervisor and re-iterated the great need for more food safety certifications in the local farming businesses. Ron explained that even with his extensive training and un-

derstanding of food safety, a recent 7-hour-long food safety audit was grueling and very difficult. He also explained that as an organic certifier, he visits a lot of small farms (which haven't yet been subject to FSMA audits, but will be starting in 2020) and although these farms pass his organic audit, he can see that these growers are woefully unprepared for a food safety audit and would fail a FSMA inspection. He used this experience to emphasize how important the food safety outreach program is to the industry and for students. Ron also mentioned that the Leafy Green Marketing Agreement (LGMA) board introduced new, more stringent water standards and this will cause additional difficulty for growers to be in compliance.

- c. Jerry Mahoney, small farmer/owner of Blosser Urban Garden CSA, said that he would love to have student help – some tasks would be unpaid for the purpose of getting experience and learning but some could also be paid. He is enthusiastic and supportive about the food safety outreach proposal and said that small farmers, such as himself, could benefit from a mock food safety audit to help the grower prepare for the real thing. He said he, and other small growers, would also appreciate help creating their food safety management plan.
- d. Rosemary Cummings, Nipomo FFA, encouraged increasing student involvement in the Cooperative Work Experience program so that students can earn college credit while learning the valuable lessons best taught from industry experience.