



Agriculture Advisory Meeting Notes

Date: December 2, 2024
Meeting Place: B-102 with Zoom Option

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

Council Members Present: Jose Chang, Marc DeBernardi, Teri Bontrager, Rosemary Cummings, Dr. Christopher Greer, Guillermo Guerra, Miguel Guerra, Larry Lahr, Yeni Martinez, Shehbaz Singh, Nic Tasca, Stephen Waldron, Luis Valdez, Dr. Terry Vassey

Council Members Absent: Dr. Sean Abel, Dr. Rita Abi-Ghanem, Mitch Ardantz, Dylan Bognuda, Kevin Dwyer, Emma Chow, Tom Durant, Brenda Estrada, Jim Glines, Eryn Gray, Hector Guerra, Tom Gulliver, Ron Labastida, Lacy Litten, Jerry Mahoney, Holly Nolan-Chavez, Christine Ready, Andrew Rice, David Rice, Danilu Jelderks, Jill Vink, Claire Wineman, Montse Zarate

Guests Present: Natalie Baldwin, Pioneer Valley High School FFA
 Tyler Dickinson, Pioneer Valley High School FFA
 César Guerrero, Santa Barbara County Farmworker Resource Center
 Lydia Chan-Natthey, Vista Consulting (Agricultural Workforce Development Program)
 Samia Karimi, Workforce Development Board
 Brian Ray, Community Bank of Santa Maria

Agenda No. 1 Student Update

- Discussion:**
- In the absence of current students to provide an update, Erin shared some recent student projects:
 - A recent event, the "Small Farmer, Rancher, and Fisherfolk Forum," was hosted at Allan Hancock College by EconAlliance and the Santa Barbara County Food Action Network. The keynote address was delivered by USDA Under Secretary for Marketing & Regulatory Programs Jennifer Lester Moffitt.
 - A video featuring Yeni Martinez, AHC PCA Preparation Program alum and current AHC Ag Advisory Committee member, was published for viewing by the National Science Foundation (NSF) ATE Impacts videos program.
 - The Introduction to Agribusiness class runs a farm stand with students self-selecting roles such as producers, salespeople, marketing team, or harvest crew. This semester a chicken project was added where students built a portable pasture pen for chickens to help manage weeds and fertilize the soil in the fruit orchard at the AHC student farm. The chicken group named them "Hancock Hens" and the project is contributing very popular eggs to the farm stand sales.

Action: Follow up with the advisory committee to share the link to the NSF ATE video that would not play during the meeting.

Deadline: Within 1-2 weeks **Responsibility:** Erin Krier

**Agenda No. 2 High School Partnerships**

- Discussion:**
- Erin mentioned the upcoming AHC FFA Field Day event on February 15, 2025, which will require a lot of assistance in judging and scorekeeping. Erin has created a sign-up document for any volunteers from the committee who might be available to help on the day of the event.
 - Erin explained that she is attempting to use the Judging Card system to improve scoring efficiency and is working to get trained on it or possibly find alternative ways to manage the registration and scorekeeping process if Judging Card training proves too time-consuming or challenging at this time. The machine is available from Cal Poly but she has been told that training can be complicated.
 - Erin did, however, implement the Judging Card program for registration so that she can use the program for scorekeeping should a solution to the training issues be resolved.
 - Tyler Dickinson sent a message to a former AHC Ag student Baileigh Ruiz, who is currently an FFA teacher and has worked running the Judging Card machine at the Cal Poly FFA State Finals to see if she would be willing and able to assist with training and scoring for this event.
- Action:** (1) Follow-up with FFA teachers regarding the use of and training for Judging Card. (2) Share the form link for volunteer sign-ups to assist with the Field Day event.
- Deadline:** Within 1-2 weeks **Responsibility:** (1) Tyler Dickinson and Erin Krier (2) Erin Krier

Agenda No. 3 Grant Proposal Updates

- Discussion:**
- Erin shared updates about two recent grant projects:
 - NSF ATE IMAGINE: Innovative Mechanized Agriculture Growing Inclusive Networks Education NSF grant resubmission – following denial of the first application with many positive remarks and helpful recommendations from the reviewers, Erin explained that a grant proposal was resubmitted for consideration. The new proposal includes collaboration with professors from the Electronics Technology and Mathematics departments to create specialized classes for mechanized ag and calculus with applications for preparing students for the use and repair of advanced technologies in mechanized agriculture.
 - Zero Textbook Cost Grant: Erin announced the award of a \$600,000 grant to transition the all AHC agriculture program courses to zero textbook cost by using free online resources. This will help eliminate textbook expenses for students across all agriculture and general education classes, though textbooks will still be available for purchase. Faculty will be paid to develop these resources. Some advisory committee members had questions about the implementation and access to online and written resources and the sustainability of updating online resources once grant funding is exhausted. Dr. Greer cautioned about using care with printing and/or sharing copyrighted material.
- Action:** None
- Deadline:** n/a **Responsibility:** n/a

Agenda No. 4 Program and Course Updates



- Discussion:**
- Erin shared updates about the two NSF grant projects for which the college had been seeking funding:
 - NSF ATE IMAGINE: Innovative Mechanized Agriculture Growing Inclusive Networks Education – this grant was to support the creation of a mechanized/automated ag program, revitalization of the existing Mechanized Ag course to become an Ag Mechanics course that would be offered to students, collaborating with the AHC Electronics Technology and AHC Machining & Manufacturing programs to add classes to a new certificate that already exist in those programs, to create a “calculus for ag applications” class, and to enhance internships and work-based learning. The grant was denied approval but the reviewer comments were very positive regarding the concept, need, and approach. There were minor issues the reviewers suggested AHC change and we were encouraged to resubmit the proposal for the next round of funding.
 - NSF ATE National Ag Center: The AHC ag program was asked to partner with Parkland College in Champaign, Illinois on an NSF ATE National Ag Tech Center grant proposal. This was designed to support community college agriculture faculty in developing additional NSF ATE programs in agriculture technology. This grant was denied approval, but the many community colleges across the country who were partners in the proposal continue to meet monthly to share curriculum ideas for ag tech and to consider resubmitting for the next round of funding.
 - Additional grant partnerships are currently in discussion with the Workforce Development Center, California Farmworker Foundation, and Western Growers Association all centered around upskilling existing farm laborers to both improve their socioeconomic status and to help fill gaps in workforce training and availability for industry. Marina Washburn provided a summary of the work she is involved in partnering with AHC agriculture to develop academic and CTE pathways tailored to meet the needs of the farmworker community.

Action: None

Deadline: n/a

Responsibility: n/a

Agenda No. 5 Program and Course Updates

- Discussion:**
- Erin mentioned that the spring enrollment is strong, particularly in animal science, but there is still room in courses like fertilizers and integrated pest management. She emphasized the importance of promoting two summer courses, including the Qualified Applicator Training class that is critical for Pest Control Adviser preparation and the newly offered Agriculture Production Enterprise, Summer. Erin explained the need for summer student workers to help with projects, particularly for the farm stand production, which faces challenges with summer labor support. These student workers can earn credits for their work, and the summer course could also count toward Pest Control Adviser exam requirements.
 - Lydia Chan-Natney suggested that Erin explore the possibility of hosting paid internships for students through the Agricultural Workforce Development Program in partnership with a foundation, which could provide financial support for student work through the grant funds – this model is already implemented at another community college and works well to meet the needs of student farm internships.
 - Erin reminds the committee that the PCA Preparation program has faced the challenge of low enrollment in specialized classes like plant pathology, economic entomology, and weed



science, which are crucial for Pest Control Advisor (PCA) certification but are not transferable to universities. To solve this, Erin has consolidated these classes into a new "Crop Protection" course tailored to PCA exam requirements. This course includes both lecture and lab components and is more focused on helping students pass the PCA exam, with added content on nematodes. A local licensed PCA is prepared to teach the new course once it is approved.

- Erin also mentions the need for internships for students looking to gain work experience in agricultural fields, particularly for those pursuing PCA certification, which requires two years of work experience. Lydia suggested that the grant funds she manages can help fund internships for this program as well.
- Erin shared information about the CTE Career Academy program that was introduced last year, which offers discipline-specific work followed by career preparation sessions. This program will be held again this year with expanded fields including Culinary Arts, Early Childhood Studies, and Auto Body. Erin mentioned that Lydia's help has been instrumental in placing students in internships, though finding placements for students interested in animal science has been challenging. Erin asks for industry connections, especially for those in animal science, as there is a lack of internship opportunities in this field locally.

Action: Share spring/summer course flyer with committee for distribution to networks.

Deadline: Within 1-2 weeks

Responsibility: Erin Krier

Agenda No. 6 Facilities Update

Discussion:

- Erin provided an update on the transformation of the old STEM center (W-22/24) into a new shared space for Agriculture, Viticulture, and Veterinary Technology. The room will be split into a classroom with seating for 28 students and a lab area that will be developed for use by the Vet Tech and Agriculture programs. Much work has been completed by the facilities team, with significant support and advocacy from program Dean Dr. Sean Abel and the classroom is expected to be ready in the spring, while the lab area may take another year before it is available for use.

Action: None

Deadline: n/a

Responsibility: n/a

Agenda No. 7 Student Clubs

Discussion:

- Erin gave an update on the Young Farmers and Ranchers Club:
 - Club members participated in the Small Farmer, Rancher, and Fisherfolk Forum and the Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau's Celebrate Harvest event, showcasing their activities at booths and engaging with community/industry partners.
 - Guest speakers at fall meetings included Agricultural Commissioner Jose Chang and diversified livestock producer Tom Thompson.
 - The club's spring break trip to Sacramento last year, with funding support from AgWest Farm Credit allowed students the opportunity to attend the California Farm Bureau Legislative Conference and met with legislators, an experience that was particularly impactful for the students.
 - The spring break trip to Sacramento will be repeated, and students can expect to engage in policy and advocacy work.
- Erin provided an update on the AHC Rodeo Team and Club:
 - The team started slowly in 2018-2019 but has grown to now employ a dedicated coach, Tyree Cochrane, who has a strong background in collegiate rodeo.



- A successful fundraiser in August has provided funds to cover the program costs and to assist team members with travel expenses.
- The AHC Rodeo program, with support from the Boosters, is set to host its first collegiate rodeo event at the Elks Rodeo Grounds in Santa Maria on March 29th-30th, 2024. This is part of the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association's (NIRA) requirement for schools to take turns hosting such events. The event was planned for the previous year but had to be canceled due to rain and shifted to piggyback on West Hills Coalinga's rodeo where AHC served as an event host. This year, the event will feature a band on March 29th. Erin pointed out the link and QR code that leads to the website for more information on the event and for the purchase of tickets. Erin points out that the team's involvement in these types of events fosters a sense of community and excitement around rodeo culture.
- Erin explained that the team has faced difficulties with some students' academic performance affecting their eligibility to compete. The team provides support and serves as an incentive to help students improve their grades and qualify for competitions.

Action: Share link to college rodeo ticket sales website **Responsibility:** Erin Krier

Deadline: Within 1-2 weeks

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

- Discussion:**
- Larry Lahr expressed approval of and support for the direction and expansion of the AHC Agriculture program, as it is valuable to the Santa Maria Valley and surrounding communities.
 - Stephen Waldron inquired about the potential new opportunity involving a greenhouse and plant propagation facility in Lompoc, which has been offered by Steve Jordan, a plant breeder. This facility, if accepted, would provide new resources for agriculture classes, especially in plant propagation and for a possible new curriculum that could include a horticulture program. There was a discussion about logistics of such an undertaking, including the accessibility of the Lompoc facility for students, with ideas for transportation and how to integrate the program. Erin mentioned the possibility of using automation technology for greenhouse operations, such as electronic irrigation.
 - Tyler Dickinson mentioned the great success and community-building of the Small Farmer, Rancher, and Fisherfolk Forum and Erin highlighted the importance of hosting such events on campus, as they bring visibility to the agricultural program and allow the community to see its relevance.

Action: Follow up will occur with specific committee members as needed.

Deadline: ongoing **Responsibility:** Erin Krier

Reports: Important Dates and Follow-up

- Next advisory committee meeting for spring semester will be moved to the 2nd Monday of May, May 12 at 6:00 pm (to avoid any conflicts with the usual 1st Monday of May as it is Cinco de Mayo)