

Agriculture Advisory Meeting Notes

Date: May 19, 2025
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: Marc DeBernardi, Dr. Christopher Greer, Guillermo Guerra, Miguel Guerra, Tom Gulliver, Emily Guzman, Jenna Huebner, Hailey Liles, Brian Ray, Nic Tasca, Stephen Waldron

Council Members Absent: Dr. Sean Abel, Dr. Rita Abi-Ghanem, Mitch Ardantz, Dylan Bognuda, Teri Bontrager, Jose Chang, Rosemary Cummings, Kevin Dwyer, Emma Chow, Tom Durant, Brenda Estrada, Eryn Gray, Hector Guerra, Danilu Jelderks, Ron Labastida, Larry Lahr, Jerry Mahoney, Yeni Martinez, Holly Nolan-Chavez, Christine Ready, Andrew Rice, David Rice, Dr. Shehbaz Singh, Luis Valdez, Dr. Terry Vassey, 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
Samia Karimi, Workforce Development Board
Daisy Paniagua-Uribe, Santa Barbara County Farmworker Resource Center
David Robertson, Veggie Rescue

Agenda No. 1 Recognition of Jim Glines

Discussion:

- Erin Krier opened the meeting by honoring the late Jim Glines for his long-time support of the agriculture advisory committee and the program.
- He is recognized, among countless other contributions to the community, for his early and passionate support of the AHC Agriculture program and for inspiring and raising funds for the establishment of the AHC Collegiate Rodeo Team.

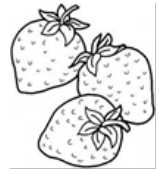
Action: n/a

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

Agenda No. 2 Student Update

Discussion:

- Three current ag program students (Ag Business, Plant Science, and Pest Control Adviser majors) attended and shared their experiences.
- Highlights included enjoyment of the Field Day and Earth Day events, hosted by the Young Farmers & Ranchers Club and the Eco Revive Club respectively.
- They noted the significant growth of the program, increased activities, and the positive impact of partnerships, notably with FFA.
- Alumni students also commented on the positive changes and expanding opportunities since their first experience with the program.



Action: n/a

Deadline: n/a

Responsibility: n/a

Agenda No. 3 2025 FFA Field Day Event Recap

- Discussion:**
- Erin presented a recap of the 4th annual AHC FFA Field Day, expressing gratitude to volunteers, students, and FFA teachers for their support.
 - The collaborative efforts included assistance with event logistics, technical preparation (like managing judging card machines), late-night trainings, and preparation of the contest materials.
 - Positive feedback was shared about the event's continuous improvements and smoother execution each year with input from students who participated while in high school and are now attending AHC.
 - Attending FFA advisors suggested considering the addition of more contests, they are particularly interested in Farm Power, Welding, Poultry, and speaking contests.

Action: 5th Annual FFA Field Day will be on February 14, 2026

Deadline: n/a

Responsibility: n/a

Agenda No. 4 High School Partnerships

- Discussion:**
- Erin announced an upcoming event hosted by Young Farmers & Ranchers to welcome incoming local high school students who have participated in FFA and are entering Hancock in the fall, regardless of major.
 - Event will be hosted at the AHC student farm and will include a farm tour, faculty introductions, student mentor connections, swag bags, and a taco meal catered by Andrea Calderon and family.
 - A QR code to RSVP was distributed via email and FFA teachers were encouraged to invite students to attend.

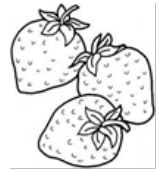
Action: Promote event among all area FFA students.

Deadline: As soon as possible

Responsibility: FFA Advisors from local high schools

Agenda No. 5 Community & Industry Partnerships

- Discussion:**
- Erin highlighted growing interest from community organizations to collaborate with the AHC Agriculture program.
 - Several partners were present to provide updates:
 - Daisy and Cesar from the Workforce Development Board shared information about the National Farmworker Jobs Program which is designed to help farmworker families access career resources, paid work opportunities, connections to job training and certificates in addition to supportive services such as transportation assistance, work attire, and general career services. Farmworkers and relatives of farmworker are eligible for program support.
 - David from Veggie Rescue presented his plan for college collaboration to focus on food recovery, redirecting surplus produce to nonprofits serving underserved communities. This partnership can provide AHC students with an opportunity to



learn about the food distribution side of agriculture and to participate in reduction of food waste.

- Samia presented information about another workforce program designed to emphasize the value of broadening students' understanding of career paths in agriculture through site visits and exposure to real-world applications of classroom learning. This program includes coaching in job readiness, public speaking, interviewing, and communication skills. Erin suggested that industry partners provide her with examples of interview questions that she might be able to use in her AG 100 mock interview activity to better prepare students for agriculture industry internship and job interviews.
- Erin then provided summaries of additional partnerships with the California Ag Council, SEEAG, and City Farm SLO. Tyler Dickinson summarized the STEM in Ag Mixer that the California Ag Council and SEEAG will host at the Mark Richardson CTE Center – AHC Ag will be one of the event participants. SEEAG also continues to use the AHC Student Farm as the Farm Lab for their elementary school farm education program.

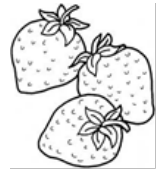
Action: AHC Agriculture Program to continue with these valuable partnerships

Deadline: n/a

Responsibility: Erin Krier

Agenda No. 6 Grant Proposal Updates

- Discussion:**
- Erin shared with the committee that the NSF ATE IMAGINE: Innovative Mechanized Agriculture Growing Inclusive Networks Education NSF grant resubmission was once again denied funding. She recalled how many various applications over the years the AHC Ag Program has submitted and/or partnered with other institutions to submit grant proposals to fund the development of a mechanized ag/ag technology/ag mechanics program and although the industry need is great, none of the projects have ever been funded. The most recent NSF proposal was a partnership with AHC's Electronics Technology program. Erin requested input from committee members about the importance of continuing to seek funding to develop this type of program, asking if it is needed in the industry or if our energy would be best spent on other projects.
 - Natalie Baldwin suggested leaning on the expertise of Hartnell College professor Richard Chapman, who has developed an admirable program to prepare students for these sectors within the industry. She thought that perhaps including him in some capacity in the next proposal might make it a stronger project.
 - Dr. Greer noted that in the Hartnell College region of the state there are more ag tech incubator projects establishing themselves, which might be driving more of the funding to those districts.
 - Tyler Dickinson suggested bringing in local industry partners such as TRIC Robotics to solicit partnerships and guidance for a new grant proposal and including their input in the grant proposal itself.
 - Stephen Waldron confirmed that this area needs to move in the direction toward mechanization and preparing students to fill the skilled positions required.
 - Tom Gulliver added that the use of advanced machine equipment in the value-added produce processing sector of the industry will continue to expand and grow, meaning that there will be increasing needs for programs that develop those skills in the incoming workforce. He also cautioned about the purchase of equipment considering that the rapid advancements in technology will quickly make existing equipment obsolete.



Action: Continue to pursue funding to develop an Ag Tech/Mechanized Ag program, bringing in strong industry partners and successful community college programs to collaborate on a proposal.

Deadline: n/a **Responsibility:** Erin Krier

Agenda No. 7 Program and Course Updates

Discussion:

- Erin shared that the college has an Extended Campus initiative for education at locations beyond the main Santa Maria campus.
 - The Agriculture Program continues at the Lompoc Federal Prison, with 11 graduates over four years and five most recently completing the program. Enrollment and certificates are ongoing, with plans to continue in the fall.
 - The college is in discussions to launch agriculture classes in Guadalupe, focusing first on ag business courses that are accessible and do not require specialized labs. The intent is to serve regions with limited campus access due to transportation and scheduling barriers.
- Erin requested committee help to promote two summer classes—Qualified Applicator Training and Ag Production Enterprise. The Qualified Applicator class prepares students for state certification and the Ag Production series offers hands-on experience at the student farm.
- Erin reported that the Introduction to Plant Science is in high demand for the fall semester, with the current section at capacity and a nearly full waiting list for additional spots. The major challenge is securing sufficient instructional space for growing class sizes.
- The agriculture program is seeking industry partners to share internships, job shadowing, and career opportunities. There is a particular need for direct communication with business contacts outside traditional HR channels to better connect students with meaningful work experiences. Industry partners are asked to please provide Erin with advice on ways to connect with these opportunities for students and/or graduates within their companies. Natalie suggested reaching out to Vanessa at Driscoll's who is actively seeking partnerships to provide these opportunities to students.

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

Deadline: Within 1 week **Responsibility:** Erin Krier

Agenda No. 8 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. A newly refurbished space is now in use, which includes a small classroom (28 seats) currently used primarily by Vet Tech. The new classroom is too small for some of the larger-enrolled agriculture courses.
- The adjacent lab has been approved for new furniture, lab counters, and storage. This lab is intended for plant science, plant propagation, and microscope-based activities in addition to use by the Vet Tech program. It is not suitable for soils or chemical labs due to lack of specialized equipment. A recent issue has been identified in that there are no electrical outlets at lab tables for microscopes; Erin will work with facilities to develop a solution.

Action: None

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



Discussion:

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| Action: | Share link to rodeo fundraiser website | Responsibility: | Erin Krier |
| Deadline: | As soon as possible | | |

Discussion:

- 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 the 2nd Monday of December, December 8 at 6:00 pm

