



Agriculture Advisory Meeting Notes **Date:** May 11, 2026
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: Natalie Baldwin, Jose Chang, Emma Chow, Marc DeBernardi, Kevin Dwyer, Brenda Estrada, Dr. Christopher Greer, Guillermo Guerra, Miguel Guerra, Emily Guzman, Hailey Liles, Brian Ray, Christine Ready, Nic Tasca, Luis Valdez

Council Members Absent: Dr. Sean Abel, Dr. Rita Abi-Ghanem, Teri Bontrager, Rosemary Cummings, Tyler Dickinson, Tom Gulliver, Hector Guerra, Jenna Huebner, Danilu Jelderks, Ron Labastida, Larry Lahr, Jerry Mahoney, Yeni Martinez, Holly Nolan-Chavez, Nadia Pasco, Andrew Rice, David Roberts, Dr. Shehbaz Singh, Dr. Terry Vassey, Jill Vink, Stephen Waldron, Claire Wineman, Montse Zarate

Guests Present: Christine Reed

Agenda No. 1 Student Update

- Discussion:**
- Erin Krier opened the meeting by sharing recent stories about the Young Farmers & Ranchers Club spring dance and her Introduction to Animal Science class project raising broiler chickens and processing them for students to share with their families and classmates
 - Student Representative Emily Guzman summarized her spring semester activities and some of the events the Young Farmers and Ranchers Club has engaged in during the semester, including a successful AHC FFA Field Day
 - Student Representative Hailey Liles reported about the Young Farmers and Ranchers Club hosting Earth Day activities and the club’s legislative trip to Sacramento

Action: None

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

Agenda No. 2 High School Partnerships

- Discussion:**
- Erin reported on the successes and challenges of the AHC FFA Field Day held on February 14, 2026 and thanked the many committee volunteers and high school partners who assisted with judging activities associated with the contests: B.I.G., Nursery Landscape, Soil and Land Evaluation, Vegetable Crop Judging, and Veterinary Science. Erin shared that the 2027 AHC FFA Field Day is scheduled for Saturday, February 13.

Action: None

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


Agenda No. 3 Community and Industry Partnerships

- Discussion:**
- Erin shared a summary of a collaborative produce safety workshop she hosted at the AHC student farm with the support of Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District and Community Environmental Council. The workshop for local farmers included several presentations on produce safety regulations and a mock inspection exercise led by a local CDFA produce safety inspector that highlighted several areas for improvement in food safety practices and compliance.
 - Erin described a recent meeting she had with a Solvang property owner who requested creating a partnership to engage AHC agriculture students with the development of a small, diversified farm on the property. Erin plans to integrate this project into her Introduction to Agribusiness class curriculum where students can use the opportunity to assess markets, demand, and budgeting as they make recommendations to the property owner for farm development. She also will incorporate the project into her Introduction to Plant Science class where students can use soil and climate data to help assess the most appropriate crops for the property. Students will gain practical experience through the course integration and then there will be the possibility of offering paid internships to students who wish to participate in the implementation of the plans created within the agribusiness and plant science courses.

Action: None

Deadline: n/a

Responsibility: n/a

Agenda No. 4 Grant Proposal Updates

- Discussion:**
- Erin described two recently submitted proposals to Senator Schiff and Senator Padilla for FY27 appropriations funding for facilities improvements. The projects include the development of a greenhouse and laboratory space, which may receive college approval to be placed in the area of campus opened up by the demolition of the old M-300 building.
 - Several of the committee FFA advisors referenced Merced Junior College's successful multi-year facilities projects and wondered what type of grants funded facility expansions that AHC could use as a potential model for future ag facilities needs. Christine Reed was able to contact a colleague who confirmed that the funding for the substantial ag facilities additions and improvements at Merced Junior College came from their internal district allocations.

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. 5 Program and Course Updates**

- Erin requested committee help to promote summer classes as enrollment is currently low for the two course offerings: Qualified Applicator Training and Ag Production Enterprise. The Qualified Applicator class prepares students for state certification and is taught by a PCA who is also starting up a drone application business. The Ag Production series offers hands-on experience at the student farm and will be taught by Steve Gambriel from the SMJUHSD CTE Farm.
- Erin explained that she was approached by a working group centered at the University of Wisconsin – Madison with an opportunity to freely access an entire course they are creating using Canvas modules for an organic inspector training program. Erin solicited feedback regarding the value of such a program and if it should fall under credit or non-credit and if it should be offered asynchronously online or have a partial or fully in-person component. The committee expressed uncertainty about the long-term sustainability of the program due to limited industry demand for organic inspectors in the local region. Jose Chang is not sure how great the demand would be for such a program as positions as organic inspectors are extremely limited. The committee also discussed the benefits and challenges of online versus in-person delivery, mentioning that online delivery could reach a broader demographic but may present challenges for field workers who need hands-on training, if the target audience for the curriculum is the non-credit population seeking to upskill in agricultural training.

Discussion:

- Erin shared the student demand for some variation of an Animal Science degree from the many students exposed to agriculture via their high school FFA livestock projects. She explained that the demand for animal science-trained employees in this region is low and the number of students who follow through with the intensely rigorous pre-vet curriculum is also small. She shared the Transfer Model Curriculum (TMC) for an Associate Degree for Transfer (AST) in Animal Science, which would require the creation of a new animal production course. This type of course would prove very challenging given the lack of facilities for housing animals on campus and Erin is concerned that there would not be sufficient enrollment to justify the time and effort required for developing such a course. The committee echoed Erin's concerns about implementing an animal science program, including limited job opportunities in the local area for animal production careers, high costs associated with maintaining animal facilities and herds/flocks, and the fact that the regional agricultural industry is much more focused on crop production than animal production. Christine Reed suggested an alternative, which the committee agreed was a much more suitable option than a TMC degree: leverage existing courses that are required for transfer to universities into an animal science major and develop an in-house Animal Science associate's degree. This would not require expensive animal facilities and would better serve students planning to transfer to universities in an animal science major. Emma Chow shared that from her work at the NRCS, she sees a need for certified rangeland managers to assist cattlemen with grazing plans and rangeland management. She noted that livestock natural resource advisors must be certified range managers within 3 years of hiring, creating an ongoing demand for this certification in the region

Action:

- (1) Share summer course flyer with committee for distribution to networks.
- (2) Erin was encouraged to follow-up with committee member Ron Labastida, who is a local organic inspector/certifier, to seek his feedback on the need/viability of the organic training course.



- (3) Erin will determine the courses required for transfer into an animal science major at the primary partner universities and work to create an A.S. in Animal Science that only includes those courses necessary that are already established and offered courses at AHC.
- (4) Dr. Greer and Emma Chow will provide Erin with information on rangeland management certifications.

Deadline: Share flyer within 1 week; additional follow-up with Ron within one month; and animal science degree launch by the end of fall 2026

Responsibility: Erin Krier

Agenda No. 6 Student Clubs

- YF&R Club President Hailey Liles and Vice President (President Elect) Emily Guzman gave an update on the Young Farmers and Ranchers (YF&R) Club:
 - The club has hosted several notable events:
 - FFA Field Day: Successfully hosted the annual FFA Field Day event and plans are already underway for the 2027 event
 - Earth Week Activities: Hosted a tabling event where several student clubs and local ecology-minded organizations shared information and engaged in activities
 - Legislative Trip: Students traveled to Sacramento for a legislative advocacy trip sponsored by Ag West Farm Credit. During the visit, they met with Senate Pro Tem Monique Limon, CDFA Deputy Secretary Arima Kozima, California Farm Bureau executives and staff, to discuss agricultural policy. The trip also included industry tours of a commercial turkey farm turned squab farm and a sturgeon/caviar farm.
- Erin provided an update on the AHC Rodeo Team and Club:
 - The successful second annual AHC Rodeo, hosted at the Elks Event Center, and renamed to honor the late Jim Glines, was held on March 28 and 29.
 - AHC Rodeo Team members were the buckle winners in the Breakaway Roping and Team Roping events.

Discussion:

Action: None **Responsibility:** n/a

Deadline: n/a

Agenda No. 7 AHC Agriculture Program Review

- Erin explained the process of annual program review, emphasizing that it serves as both an evaluation and planning tool to ensure the agriculture curriculum remains aligned with industry expectations and student needs. The committee was asked for any feedback in addition to curriculum suggestions already discussed, regarding how the agriculture courses, programs, internships, and facilities support transfer readiness and workforce preparation.
- Discussion:**



- Committee members noted the need for improved student pathways from high school to the AHC Agriculture program and recommended outreach and advising through the existing AG 100 Introduction to Agriculture Studies and Careers class. The conversation tied program review outcomes to facility development, including greenhouse and lab improvements, to enhance hands-on learning. The committee expressed concerns over challenges in helping students move from high school agricultural programs into college-level coursework. Christine Reed recommended developing communication tools, such as an introductory email for new agriculture majors and inclusion of AG 100 materials in counseling packets, to improve registration guidance and course selection. Outreach to high school counselors with agriculture-specific program information was also strongly encouraged by the FFA advisors present.

Action: Incorporate committee feedback, recommendations, concerns, and possible solutions in the 2025-2026 Agriculture Program Review document.

Deadline: End of spring 2026 semester

Responsibility: Erin Krier

Agenda No. 8 Additional Input, Feedback, Suggestions from Committee

Discussion: • All input, feedback, and suggestions were included in the previously documented agenda items.

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 14 at 6:00 pm