

## **Sustainable Agriculture (SAG) Undergraduate Program Implementation Plan 2014 Annual Report**

**Prepared by Mark Williams, Director of Undergraduate Studies, 10/05/2014**

*Note: Only accepted recommendations are listed here.*

**Recommendation 1: Complement the Steering Committee with an Advisory Council comprised of a diverse mix of internal and external stakeholders which might include alumni, community based organizations, representatives of farm groups, etc. Such a Committee could provide for continuous improvement in program and curriculum.**

**Assessment method:** Identification of appropriate community members and organization of a meeting to develop recommendations for programmatic development.

**Results:** The SAG program has been undergoing a substantial change over the last 1.5 years. This change has been faculty driven and has delayed the need for organizing an advisory committee.

**Analysis of results and reflection:** Based on student input and faculty observation, the SAG steering committee has been revamping the curriculum to create two distinct coursework tracts: Community Food Systems and Farming Systems. This approach will aid in recruiting and better position our graduates to gain successful employment. This effort has been ongoing and is nearing completion.

**Ongoing improvement actions:** Once the two tracts have been finalized, SAG will develop an advisory committee to critique the portfolio of classes and modifications will be made, if necessary.

**Recommendation 2: Additional faculty resources are needed for the program to continue to grow, particularly in animal and agronomic (row crop) agriculture. Consideration as noted above should be given to new faculty position announcements that include collaboration with programs such as SAG. Attracting additional faculty in the College and University would help overcome a perception that some may have suggesting that the SAG program is really a Horticultural Science program.**

**Assessment method:** Assessment of the composition of the steering committee and core group of faculty members involved with the SAG program.

**Results:** There has been a need to diversify the composition of the steering committee, as well as faculty involvement in the program. Adding new courses

through the curriculum revision process is increasing faculty interaction with SAG students.

**Analysis of results and reflection:** Faculty members from programs such as Ag Biotech, Animal Science, Plant and Soil Science, Community Leadership Development, and Dietetics have been added to the steering committee. Discussions with faculty across the college have been productive and have increased faculty involvement in the program. Adding new classes to our curriculum is increasing awareness of our program and faculty participation across campus.

**Ongoing improvement actions:** The SAG program will continue to reach out to faculty across our college and university to create an inclusive environment, where faculty from diverse interests can be involved in the program.

**Recommendation 3: The Steering (advisory committee, perhaps) along with the College and appropriate departmental administrators should address the quality/quantity tradeoffs and impacts of increasing student enrollment including resource needs for:**

**Curriculum management – the curriculum includes significant experiential learning components. Expansion may decrease the quality of the instruction and the ability to carry out such activities.**

**Advising**

**Resources (faculty and staff)**

**Line item operating budget**

**Assessment method:** Tracking of student enrollment and the impact of enrollment on faculty time and resources.

**Results:** Over the last 1.5 years student numbers in the program declined due to a large graduating class and slowed enrollment. This prompted a complete programmatic revision and new recruiting campaign.

**Analysis of results and reflection:** At least two additional faculty members have been involved in student advising, based on appropriateness of student interest. A new committee was formed to develop a new website and recruiting strategy.

**Ongoing improvement actions:** The college's Dean of Academic Programs provided funding to create a new and updated website, which will serve as the primary recruiting tool for our program. Once developed, this website and materials associated with it (posters, flyers, etc.) will be distributed across our state and to appropriate places around the country. Once student numbers increase to 50-60 students, we will approach the administration for financial support.

#### **Recommendation 4: Strengthen formal development efforts.**

**Assessment method:** Evaluation of the need to proceed to formalize the program based on student enrollment and job placement.

**Results:** Student enrollment has declined over the last 1.5 years.

**Analysis of results and reflection:** Declining student enrollment resulted in a self-evaluation by the steering committee that led to a revamping of the program (see recommendation 1 above).

**Ongoing improvement actions:** Once the program is revised and student numbers increase to 50-60, we will move forward with formal development efforts.

#### **Recommendation 5: Develop an Organic Farm Unit incubator.**

**Assessment method.** Evaluate incubator programs around the country and assess the potential for such a program in KY by working with local farmers.

**Results:** It may be possible to develop an incubator through local farms or on a UK research farm.

**Analysis of results and reflection:** There are several incubators being developed around the country. Our research has concluded that it may expedite the process for us if we develop an incubator on one or more of our research farms.

**Ongoing improvement actions:** The SAG program is investigating creating a beginning farmer training program that includes an incubator opportunity for graduates from the program.

#### **Recommendation 6: Develop a certificate program in Organic Farming.**

**Assessment method.** Evaluate how other programs are developing certificates to provide hands on training around the country.

**Results:** The current trend in best practices for training aspiring farmers is to create a beginning farmer training program. We have determined that we can develop a beginning farmer training program at the Horticulture Research Farm.

**Analysis of results and reflection:** This program will be done instead of a certificate and will be offered as an extension program for non-UK students.

**Ongoing improvement actions:** The SAG program will be researching the techniques and methods used in the training programs around the country and developing our own program to train commercial-scale farmers over this winter. This will be an extension of our existing apprenticeship program and will be offered for 8 months per year, starting in spring of 2015.

**Recommendation 7: Develop partnerships and alliances with private farm owners to develop whole farm plans to help create jobs for graduates and to serve as outreach models for other producers to consider.**

**Assessment method:** Track and evaluate the number of students working in the farming sector during and after their undergraduate careers.

**Results:** The number of students working with farmers in our community is increasing, as well as the number of students developing their own farming systems.

**Analysis of results and reflection:** Our students are being sought after by farmers to work on their farms. This will increase as we develop more experiential training opportunities (see recommendation #6) for our students. We are placing more students in jobs and the number of students developing their own farms is increasing.

**Ongoing improvement actions:** SAG will further develop a beginning farmer training program to increase student success in securing jobs on existing farms or in developing a farm.