

Sustainable Agriculture (SAG) Undergraduate Program Implementation Plan 2018 Annual Report

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10/08/2018**

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 stakeholders and community members to serve on the Advisory Council, and organization of a biannual meeting to gain feedback on existing curricular activities and recommendations for programmatic development.

Results: The SAG program underwent substantial change since our last programmatic review, based on student and faculty feedback and student job placement. This change has resulted in several substantial programmatic developments, including a curriculum revision formalizing Specialty Support “emphasis areas” - Farming Systems and Community Food Systems”, major course changes in three of our four SAG core courses, and submission of the major as a “new,” stand-alone undergraduate degree program. We previously reported that substantive program changes necessitated delaying the formation of a formal Advisory Council. As we reported in 2017, we have continued to rely on community partners and alumni knowledge of the program for *ad hoc* feedback through these large programmatic developments.

Analysis of results and reflection:

The original intention of this recommendation was to provide opportunity for external stakeholder input to the program to help shape program improvements as well as strengthen community connections for the program. Since our previous program review, we have actively chosen not to actualize this recommendation as written so as to “get our house in order” with regards to curriculum revisions, major SAG core course revisions, and efforts to formalize the degree program. These have been ongoing, evolving efforts over the last three (+) years, and have resulted in substantive developments indicative of maturation of the program. Stakeholders, including alumni, graduating students, and members of our agricultural community have been consulted with on an *ad hoc* basis since our previous review, but the SAG Curriculum Steering Committee has not viewed it as prudent to formalize an external advisory board at this time, pending these developments. As the program is slated for periodic review in 2018, this recommendation will likely be reviewed and considered.

Ongoing improvement actions:

Although we have decided to somewhat limit formal external stakeholder feedback via the Advisory Council, we have continued to expand our Curriculum Steering Council, which functions as the Faculty of Record for the program. We have continued to recruit new hires on CAFE in the social sciences (CLD) and natural sciences (PSS and ENT). These faculty increase both increase the teaching capacity in the program, but also offer greater diversity of thoughts in our Steering Committee meetings.

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: We have assessed the composition of the SAG steering committee and core group of faculty members involved with the SAG program, to identify opportunities to incorporate a broader composition of faculty training and departmental representation.

Results: As the program has been undergoing program formalization and course revision processes, we have actively worked to expand departmental representation on our Steering Committee. During this review period, it is of note that in addition to the CLD and ENT additions to our Steering Committee, we have been partnering with DHN to support the newly approved Food Systems and Hunger Studies certificate program, which requires the SAG Introductory course (SAG 101, now approved as SAG 210). We have also worked with the Agricultural Education program on mapping double-major options, and have seen ongoing increases in Ag Ed students in SAG core and affiliated courses. As such, we have actively sought to change the composition of our Steering Committee membership both shift the optics of the program, as well as to incorporate faculty members we are actively working with on new curricular partnerships.

Analysis of results and reflection: Faculty members from programs such as Ag Biotech, Plant and Soil Science, Community Leadership Development, and Dietetics have been added to the steering committee. Discussions with faculty around the university have made it apparent that there are several new related programs and classes that will help augment the choices for our students, and increase recognition of our program 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. In addition to leveraging curriculum partnerships with DHN and CLD (Ag Ed program), recent changes in the Animal Sciences curriculum have removed some pre-requisite barriers for SAG majors to minor in Animal Sciences. These are examples of how we are continuing to work with allied programs to not only expand program representation at the faculty level, but broaden our students' course of studies through double majors, certificates, and minors across the social and natural sciences. Although the primary motivation is to facilitate faculty relationships and curriculum depth for our students in these areas, they also serve to broaden the perception of the SAG program as beyond a Horticulture or Organic major.

Recommendation 3: The Steering Committee (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. Evaluation of recruitment resources and identification of priority needs to increase student enrollment while minimizing impact on faculty instructional and advising time and resources.

Results: Over the last 4 years student enrollment in the program declined, due to a large “bump” in students we experienced ~5 years ago. We have stabilized our numbers of majors since that time. However, with an understanding that we are essentially at a fairly stable number that is lower than our capacity, our website was re-vamped a few years ago and we created some branded items (shirts, bags, hats), and leverage the support we receive for recruitment and initial advising. However, a recent staff departure in 2018, lack of a program operating budget, and delaying re-vamping materials due to program revisions, our staffing and other budgetary resources have essentially stagnated.

Analysis of results and reflection: Funds were acquired from the college to help hire a website developer, and the re-vamped website went “live” in Summer 2016. With the support of a part-time recruiter (25% SAG), we printed some t-shirts and tote bags to increase program visibility. The program support staff had a majority appointment as the recruiter for the Individualized Program in Modern Agronomic Crop Production, but has also incorporated some SAG slides into her power point recruitment presentation, with the strategy of driving interested students to our new website. However, we never fully realized the potential of

this staff position, nor did the SAG program leadership team feel that we received 25% of the efforts of this position, as her recruiting activities were directed toward efforts that were not noted for being high-yielding activities for potential SAG recruits (e.g. recruitment nights in high schools, FFA activities, etc.). Although we are grateful for the support, assistance in first contact advising, and program engagement with the CAFE Office of Student Success, during this review period we have seen a decline in supporting staff resources and SAG program faculty, who are already stretched thin, are the primary contacts for all advising, social media, recruitment, and other professional academic staff functions. As such, we look forward to our 2018 programmatic review as a systematic evaluation of program resource needs.

Ongoing improvement actions: The DUS and Steering Committee will continue to work with CAFE Office of Student Success staff on recruiting and advising events, and maintain social media and outreach materials functions as best we are able without staff support. We are not in a position to actively improve upon these efforts at this moment.

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: In 2017-2018, with the support of CAFE administration, the SAG Steering Committee elected to move forward with formalizing the program as a Bachelor's of Science in Sustainable Agriculture and Community Food Systems. This would create a stand-alone major independent of the Individualized Degree Program in Agriculture that the major has existed under since its inception.

Analysis of results and reflection: Since our previous programmatic review, there has been much discussion of a minimum number of SAG majors needed to allow the program to proceed toward formalization as a stand-alone major. However, in 2016-2017, it became clear that we were losing opportunities for exposure and leveraging recruitment opportunities if we remained under Individualized program status. Specifically, we lack exposure opportunities at the University-level when combined with other Individualized degree programs in CAFE. Further, there are significant opportunities to recruit out-of-state students via the Academic Common Market that are only available to us as a formal, stand-alone major. As such, with the support of the CAFE administration, we decided that to strengthen program development efforts, we needed to formalize the degree program. This is coincident with an upcoming periodic review, where we hope to systematically evaluate program development.

Ongoing improvement actions: With the curriculum formalization, and subsequent branding and exposure, we hope to increase our total student

numbers to 50-60. It is our intention that program changes, leadership team expansion, and increased exposure will foster in a new period of enhanced enrollment growth and recruitment resource development.

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: We have spent substantial time traveling to and studying existing incubator programs around the country.

Analysis of results and reflection: Although it may be possible to develop an incubator program in the future, it has become clear that the focus of developments in this area would be better spent building a beginning farmer training program to generate students that could take advantage of the incubator. We have been applying for funding to create a beginning farmer training program, and have secured some initial funds to begin training farmers specifically in growing and marketing for a Community Supported Agriculture model (grant-funded work with Dr. Tim Woods and Dr. Mark Williams). We are also pursuing donors to help fund the training program and subsequent incubator efforts. Several SAG faculty are planning on a USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grant proposal for the FY 2019 funding cycle.

Ongoing improvement actions: The SAG program is attempting to create a beginning farmer training program. Once funding is obtained to develop this program, we will determine how an incubator could augment this effort.

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: Our assessment of other programs and our success with our apprenticeship (SAG 397 Apprenticeship in Sustainable Agriculture) has made it clear that we have many of the pieces already in place to develop a nationally recognized beginning farmer training program.

Analysis of results and reflection: Once funding is secured, we will develop a beginning farmer training program that will serve as an organic farming certificate. This year-long program will be available to UK students and the general public as a professional certificate program.

Ongoing improvement actions: We have been applying for grants and seeking donor funding to support the development of a beginning farmer training

program. Funding will primarily be used to hire an on-farm education director for the program. Once developed, it is anticipated that the program will be funded through student fees. We will continue to pursue funding from as many appropriate sources as possible over the next period to make this program a reality, including the possibility of USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program funds. We plan to work with the CAFE Office of Student Success to develop admission and administration guidelines for this professional certificate for non-degree seeking students, similar to professional farming certificates developed by our peer institutions.

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: Our students are gaining employment in a wide range of jobs and we are developing strategies to track these jobs.

Analysis of results and reflection: We are placing more students in a range of jobs related to sustainable agriculture and the number of students developing their own farms is increasing.

Ongoing improvement actions: We continue to partner with community organizations and farms in the central Bluegrass as part of SAG 397 and EXP 399 course credit. We are considering systematizing our alumni tracking process in the years to come, to strengthen our longitudinal data on our graduates. We are in the process of collating these data for our upcoming 2018 program assessment.