

**Student-Centered Sustainable Farm and Sustainable Food Systems Minor  
Meeting Notes from the Second Visioning Meeting for Penn State Faculty/Staff  
June 23, 2014, 3-5pm, 214 Business Building**

**Mission Statement**

The Sustainable Food Systems Minor and Student-Centered Farm at Penn State will:

- strategically link classroom education with experiential education and research
- provide learning opportunities in sustainable agriculture and food systems that foster leadership, teamwork, critical thinking and positive change among the Penn State and surrounding communities
- be an educational facility open to students and faculty from all programs

**Attendees**

25 faculty/staff

Departments and units represented include:

Plant Science, Animal Science, ESM, Plant Pathology, AESE, Entomology, ERM (College of Ag)

Landscape Architecture (College of Arts and Architecture)

Educational Theory, Curriculum and Instruction (College of Ed)

Rhetoric/English (College of Liberal Arts)

University Health Services

Sustainability Institute

**Meeting Summary**

Leslie Pillen, Sustainable Student Farm Design Coordinator, presented an overview of the student farm and Sustainable Food Systems minor vision and goals. Attendees then wrote their ideas in response to four big-picture questions, and small groups synthesized this input and reported back to the full group. The notes below are the ideas written by attendees, as categorized and summarized by the small groups.

After the presentations, attendees discussed whether the farm ought to focus on plants, or also include livestock, as well as whether the farm should include a range of management practices, such as organic, conventional, and others. Another subject that was discussed was what the purpose of the farm and minor would or should be: to give students skills to get a job, and/or to help them develop perspectives on food systems, agriculture and sustainability.

**1. What existing and new courses could be included in an interdisciplinary Sustainable Food Systems minor at Penn State?**

Group one organized the responses into six categories, including ethics and leadership; policy, politics and social sciences; integrated ag-related sciences; humanities, literature and culture; new courses; and education. They noted that we have existing courses that would fit in the minor, others that could fit if “tweaked”, and some new courses would need to be developed.

*Ethics and Leadership*

CIVCM 211/CAS 222, Foundations of Civic and Community Engagement

Leadership for Change

HDNRE 575, Ethical Issues in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources and the Environment

Challenges of Ag/Food Sustainability

SUST 200, Foundations of Leadership in Sustainability

*Policy, Politics, Social Sciences*

Economics of Sustainable Agriculture

New undergrad CED course on Community, Food and Agriculture

NUTR 430, Global Food Strategies (once taught by Dorothy Blair, now retired)

New courses on the Geography of Food and Agriculture Policy

Issues of GMOs in Ag

Community-Based Design/Planning and Community Engagement Seminar

*Integrated Ag-Related Sciences*

Soils for Health

SOILS 071, Environmental Sustainability

SOILS 102, Intro to Soils Lab

SOILS 401, Soil Physical Properties

SOILS 422, Natural Resources Conservation and Community Sustainability

AgEco 497, Integrated Pest Management

Vegetable Crops

ANSC 100 (web), Introduction to Animal Industries

ANSC 300-400 production courses

AG 150, Environment and Natural Resources First Year Seminar

ERM 499A/B, International Ecosystems: Costa Rica Environmental Study Tour/ Natural Resources and the Environment: New Zealand

*Humanities, Literature, Culture*

I want to do a Literature of Farming course in English

ENGL180, Literature and the Natural World (Bob Burkholders' course)

*New Courses: creative, experiential, integrated*

A "materials cycling" course incorporating concepts from "The Story of Stuff"

All the benefits of the farm: food, environment, social, skills, lifestyle

A "farming systems" capstone course that is site-based and experiential, on the student farm and also possibly at farms in the region

Urban ag applications and innovations

*Education*

A few of the existing AEE teacher education courses...would need to discuss this further

AEE/RPTM 430, Environmental Education Methods and Materials

New course: Curriculum and Instruction 295, focus on sustainability education; could add a

Sustainability Education emphasis and/or certificate

New 100-level seminar in curriculum and instruction

EDTHP 440, Introduction to Philosophy of Education

EDUC 100

## **2. What are some ways a student-centered sustainable farm might interface with your teaching, research or outreach?**

Group two organized the responses into five categories, including integration with existing courses, hands-on/practical experience (teaching and research), opportunities for teachers, UHS collaboration, and topics of interest to be possibly incorporated.

### *Existing Courses*

Direct experience with praxis, complementing theory in 440

Service learning and field components of education (teacher-education) courses, e.g. praxis and utilizing field sites in interdisciplinary/educative ways

The initiative should integrate with current College of Ag activities and not be separate from them  
SUST 200 has regularly hosted sustainable farming specialists in classes—this would be a great field work (no pun intended) opportunity

### *Hands-on/Practical Experience (Teaching and Research)*

HDNRE 597, Worldview and Sustainability—might use farm resources, information for student projects

Interface with teaching by holding labs at the farm site (measure selected physical properties of selected sites)

Source of problems and samples for students to work on in class discussions

Hands-on experience for courses without an actual lab portion built in

Outreach—State College/Centre County elementary and high school students

Students in my soil ecology course could conduct small research projects on the farm

Promotion of the farm and what it has to offer through the students I teach and advise

Teaching laboratory for production

CED senior capstone project possibilities—community-based research versions of this capstone

A student-centered farm would allow our environmentally-focused interdepartmental students the opportunity to collaborate with other departments/colleges in a hands-on project

Work closely with Poultry Extension Program to learn about variety of production systems' practices

My research on the impacts of human activity to the ecological function of wetlands and streams could incorporate monitoring of the site and the adjustment of practices

I am interested in how such an initiative impacts student learning—with the arena of community service, self-efficacy, advocacy, etc.

### *Opportunities for Teachers*

Allow certain teacher candidates the opportunity to gain hands-on technical skills

Opportunities for our teacher candidates to develop/implement/test out lessons

### *UHS Collaboration*

HealthWorks BBH class does outreach and health promotion; student farm could be one avenue to help students have greater access to fresh foods

HealthWorks students could learn about how to develop and implement new initiatives with different aspects of the student farm

We could incorporate information about the farm into our Healthy Penn State initiatives in UHS and Green Team

Promote health in HPW—sustainability, eating fresh and local produce

Students from our HealthWorks peer education program might be able to partner with the farm on outreach events

*Topics of Interest to Incorporate*

Ecoliteracy  
Philosophy of nature  
Environmental philosophy  
Philosophy of sustainability  
Cooking  
Agriculture and democracy  
Sustainable publics

I would be interested in issues of hunger and food systems, also equity issues with respect to community food security in terms of research

Explore/discuss technical/science-based issues and soft skills development issues

Students could learn soil and plant sustainability to take to their peers and educate them

**3. What are important features and facilities that would best support your use of the student farm?**

Group three organized the responses into four primary categories, including features, capabilities (what it does), organization and location.

*Features*

Demonstration sites  
Visitor's access facility  
Access to equipment—tractors, implements, sand filters, etc.  
Accessible soil pit  
Organized storage  
Access to irrigation

*Capabilities (what it does)*

Sustainable agriculture practices  
Training for students prior to use/working at site  
Guided farm activities for students  
Food for mind, body, spirit reunited  
Indoor classroom  
The widest possible diversity of courses and research associated with it—e.g., art history, engineering, religious studies, nursing, etc.  
Experimental student plots  
IPM sites  
Varied methods for comparison (field preparation, irrigation, fertilization)  
Tables and shelter (e.g. outdoor seminar space)  
Outdoor classroom  
Outdoor kitchen  
Multidisciplinary student and faculty involvement, grad and undergrad  
Agronomic crops plus horticultural crops  
Organized planting area  
Guided tours  
Performance space  
Student-run farm market that would sell produce on campus like the Cellar Market used to do

### *Organization*

A farm manager to manage fields and classes

A farm manager is essential for the success of the farm

A farm manager I could contact to arrange for visits and to notify when I need samples for a course

Strong education

Strong organization of parts to allow for students to enter in

### *Location*

Readily available transportation

Proximity to campus

Proximity—close by, including roof-top gardens

Easily accessible, not only accessible during certain hours or days

Close proximity to campus

I would think there would need to be at least one headhouse/utility building for tool storage/potting/mixing, etc.

## **4. What resources currently exist within or beyond Penn State that could help support the development and maintenance of the farm and minor?**

Composting program here at PSU could help and the recycled items from other PSU departments could be used

Research institutes can help to see potential linkages

Sustainability Institute, Sustainability Leadership minor

Variety of programs/classes/expertise (ag-related and not)

Rock Ethics Institute

Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SAWG)

Many existing research, teaching and outreach activities currently with the College could be brought to bear on this initiative

Hotel and Restaurant Management

Café Laura program

Local foods

Equipment and supplies could possibly be donated from local businesses or farms as people have items they no longer use

Integrative Design processes started in architecture and green building, can be used to develop a powerful and creative vision that speaks to many

CLA, Center for Democratic Deliberation and/or Democracy Institute

Shaver's Creek

Community Garden plots

Master Gardener program

Farm Operations

Dining Services

PSU already has more animal facilities with diverse opportunities, maybe can tie to current opportunities versus develop another level and facility

Faculty and courses like EDTHP 440 that are inter-disciplinary (Sust Lead minor)

Students in the Landscape Architecture program would/might be able to help with the visioning process

Lara Nagle is a grad student hoping to do her thesis on the student farm

Alumni interested in food systems, ag innovation and sustainability for developing an endowment

Collaboration with College of Ag departments such as soils, agronomy, etc.

Lots of enthusiasm

Several grade schools in town have gardens and could be possible opportunities for student outreach

Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA)

Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO)

Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association (PVGA)

Internships at local farms

Conservation organizations: Clearwater, SCWA

Notes prepared by Leslie Pillen, Sustainable Student Farm Design Coordinator, 6.26.14

