

Sustainable Food Systems Initiative Steering Committee Meeting Notes
November 7, 2014

Present: Dave Mortensen, Derek Kalp, Mark Theiss, Jim Richard, Shari Edelson, Kristen Devlin, Mitch Hunter, Heather Karsten, Sue Barsom (note-taker), Leslie Pillen, Barbara Sherlock (OPIA)

Preamble:

This is a critical meeting – opportunity to take stock of intentions, direction
Agree on where we are, what we need to do, what will be issues

Scope, Program and Process Decisions

1. Items that are decided (NB: this is up for discussion anyway)
2. Items that we have strong leanings on , but are not decided
3. Items that are open to decision and/or require more information

Overview (see PPT)

8 categories to discuss:

Focus, Land, Site Features, Labor, Markets, Funding/budget/institutional home, Curriculum, Planning resources

Look for two things: is the order right? are there gaps?

Site Analysis and Infrastructure Costs

At PSU there are so many requirements when adding infrastructure, and so many layers, \$500K not going to go very far

Business plan will show some of this process

Here are the pros/cons – here is why we want to select Overlook

Here is basic program for the site

Get cost estimates for infrastructure from OPP

Can recover some costs by saying there is possibility of sharing with other partners (Arboretum)

What about annual operating costs of curriculum/minor? Can that be shared by departments/colleges hosting minor?

What is the sequence we need to go through to make sure we dot i's and cross t's

We do need to understand process of how to settle on a site; it would be constructive to continue site discussion; it helps to know we need a business plan, and the elements of the plan that are tied to the site are ones we really need to work w/OPP on

First let's look at site and site characteristics; the figure out how we're going to attempt business plan

Have we agreed on any of the criteria? Proximity for example. What is our minimum requirement for each category? Not worth it if more than 20 minute walk, if far away: continuing cost in time of student, faculty, carbon impact, etc.

How were other sites considered? Is there going to be an analysis of infrastructure present and possible: water, electricity, access, etc. (could it be off grid?)

Can we do the same kind of site plan for each site considered and make these comparisons

Can't say it's Site A or nothing; talk more with ag staff because they have stuff and they know how to get stuff done (imagine a manager who has some room in a building and underused land....etc.)

Let's talk about the sites that HAVE been considered.

Have there been those conversations with farm services?

Yes.....but they have different goals/responsibilities—agronomic responsibilities

Must quantify the value of each item you're assessing

What is minimum size if selling to dining commons? And how many students do we want to involve?
Evaluate where to start based on proximity to facilities? Do fields have to be contiguous?
It would be ok with arboretum to have separate field areas. Could maybe locate classroom at base of hollow (old fire training site) and walk up hill to fields.
Discussion proceeding on various options in Arboretum

Lack of proximity will drive down possibility of endowments if nobody sees it

Nine-acre site: proximity is great, but only maybe 3 acres available, trade-offs (soil, expansion, etc.)

Does it have to be PSU-owned property?

Should consider crop-rotation; should have agronomic crop land in addition to fruit/vegetable; this is important to PSU and to the educational mission

Need more than 5 acres for that: more like 30 or more

So what we're saying is we need to add more sites, find out what plans are for them, assess them, include non PSU properties; and come back with progress report at December meeting

BREAK

Update on big picture and how we're going to move forward—lots has happened; a lot of the challenge is helping people understand this is not zero-sum game

Rob Pangborn and Jackie Edmondson

Intercollege program is complex – they're supportive, Jackie will help develop minor
Steve Maruszewsky – also supportive...might help with infrastructure in some way...

Funding and Institutional Home

Dave: we need to get Deans on board

Pangborn's support will help here

Rick Roush said CAS not able to fund something new (\$10m deficit)

Go to central admin for this, if three deans are supportive

Is Eberly in? Seems logical

Find supportive faculty who can lobby their own deans

This has happened in CAS and HHD -- we can do more to expand this effort

Other units may help – e.g. UM farm staff person funded by dining services

What benchmarking have we done?

Leslie attending conference

Survey of other student farms nationally

Focus groups/town hall

Working on funding possibilities

We're about to do some surveying of students

MBA Apex project – write business plan for this by end of Spring Semester

Rough business plan – January – start asking for money then? Can we ask for land on seat of the pants business or do we need to wait until end of spring semester when MBA plan comes in?

If housed in a college, loses support from other colleges

Are we asking deans for startup funds?

Have you talked with provost about matching funds?

How much CAN we ask for?

External – donors – they usually want to see something

Start with internal money and then donors will come to help

Time Line:

(Site Scenarios)

Preliminary Program leading to

Site Data/Analysis

Physical elements needed on the site (the Program)

Business plan

Raise funds for Concept plan

Concept plan – preliminary drawings/feasibility study

Fund the landscape architect

(Curriculum – who is using the space may inform who funds this)

Business plan has to be concise, to-the-point

Use this as an opportunity to engage the Provost's office – ask to see sample of what works as a business plan

December meeting:

Progress report on site analysis

Concept piece is farther away

Class working on marketing plan for produce sales to dining commons