

SFI Meeting Minutes 12/11/14

Presentations from Student Groups (Final Meeting of the semester)

Announcements:

- We'll be organizing quickly next semester (early) to get plants started for the fundraiser plant sale. Leslie took down emails and will keep interested parties up-to-date about discussion about that.

Presentations:

Brianna's independent study (benchmarking other student farms) –

- 87 farms in the U.S.
- Community gardens, research farms
- 28 at land grant institutions
- Requested information about operating budgets, where money is coming from
- Product outlets (CSA shares, farmer's markets, sales to dining halls)
- What percentage is from total product?
- Labor (number of people working there does not necessarily correlate to the success of the operation); reliance on full-time staff and paid interns was more effective as a labor form.
- Pretty good response overall from surveys.

Future interviews in the spring? Which schools could be interviewed further? Brianna still needs to look into the survey answers more; she was surprised by the average budget. Sometimes the budget doesn't reflect all costs, such as labor.

Ag Business 302 – Marketing Plan for Course

- Production concept: interdisciplinary sustainable foods, non-traditional setting, etc.
- Farm location described (2 acres at first, then expanding)
- Redifer Commons sells produce; long-term storage of garlic, potatoes, root crops, etc.
- General ag students work on the farm; general public interested in supporting the farm; majority of students with lack of interest or knowledge (three segments to market to)
- PR positive: general trend and desire for fresh-local produce
- Marketing costs: fliers, marketing on radio, etc. Pricing of produce (interviewed contacts at the dining commons, not willing to give a price cut just because it's the campus farm);
- Field trips, elementary schools visiting, volunteer labor force from community members; recruiting tool for PSU in general
- Threats: large-scale vendors (competition) offer better price points; big concern is the legal side transporting produce from the farm to the dining commons. Complete light handling of the

produce on the farm site prior to shipment; labeling is maybe an issue. Concern about contamination with transport.

- CONDUCTED A CAMPUS WIDE SURVEY: Student segment versus dining hall segment: 84% of students wanted local food choices, to enhance their experience. 63% wanted to learn more.
 - Dining commons has to worry about cooking space and storage facilities; better forms of packaged produce (pre-cut, washed, etc.) would be very useful. 72% of surveyed students did not think the dining commons sourced their food locally, though they wanted it to. Students rated the freshness of the dining commons – 62% rated food 5 out of 10 in terms of freshness.
 - Crop selection for the dining commons: carrots, basil, thyme, tomatoes, salad greens (all of these at a higher expense to purchase from elsewhere than to get delivered “in house”)
 - Benefits: minor, a mix of departments involved, research stage for farm planning, opportunities for students to get paid to be involved. Younger students could join the farm site to get a tour, learn about the process, shadow older students, etc.
 - Pricing strategy: stay competitive with conventional wholesale pricing; will cut costs if produced in-house.
 - Promotion: t-shirts, fliers, signs, tours for incoming students, Ag-Day booth to get students informed, PSU radio, PSU symbol to label food in the dining halls that came from the student farm (a green paw print);
 - Distance between farm and the distribution site (Redifer) is relatively short, definitely a benefit for the student farm compared with other food distributors.
 - Dining commons agreed to purchase whatever is produced, and source elsewhere for the rest needed.
 - Summer need is still significant, with camps and summer sessions, so it’s still definitely worth it to grow on the farm in the summer.
 - The dining commons is not allowed to disclose money amounts for how much they can spend on certain quantities of food.
 - Wiggle room with other crops – what would the dining commons be willing to pay? Herbs are priced at too low a price that just selling to the dining commons from the farm, in year 5 of the plan, would be \$6000/acre; Not enough to make a serious dent; this is why other student farms don’t rely solely on sale to the dining commons as a means to support the farm.
 - Three cost options:
 1. Dining commons still pay market price for the produce but supports the farm through other funds.
 2. CSA
 3. Sell produce at retail price.
- Or some combination of the above.

CED Presentation, Senior Capstone: Evaluating student interest about having a student farm on campus:

- Evaluated not only the type of things students were interested in, but how students would want to be directly involved.
- Final survey, after edits and contacts were determined, was 30 questions. Collaborated with a list of clubs and organizations and with faculty contacts to figure out who to distribute the survey to.
- Not sure if the survey got sent in some cases; 528 responses, 327 completions.
- Split into two different categories; academic standing (grad or undergrad); Skiplogic program used.
- Undergrads: 35% from ag; ~25% from Health and Human development; 14% from engineering; A&A was next highest.
- Top 15 majors: Plant science highest in response; engineering
- Strong interest in production and purchasing; working on the farm during existing semesters (spring/fall/summer/maymester); want to become an educated food consumer, advocate for local foods, farmer/gardener for personal use;
- Large write-in for bicycle use (was omitted in the original survey)
- Most students live within a 5-mile radius of campus.
- Age range of survey participants, because it included grad students, went up to 49%;
- Commentary (voluntary) on organic quality of foods, distance to farm, and most common: importance in having the farm as a community and opportunity for education and research.
- Received a list of top colleges (responses) that would be great targets for marketing for the farm.
- If they could have changed any questions: range of prices willing to pay – could have been more specific about which foods are referred to.

SFI is getting all of the data files (Qualtrix to SPSS) from the survey, for future manipulation. And also the summarized presentation to put on the website.

Leslie's Overall Cumulative Report:

- Survey can be used for advertising, because it approached many people who haven't heard of it.
- Lots of existing courses to feed from
- Site survey, site work; lots of help for next steps next semester!
- Marketing, survey research will also really inform our work next semester. What will b
- Mark Van Horn (director of UC Davis student farm) will be visiting – he doesn't know it yet –
- SAWG – Steel-Ag Working Group (Charlie) will help to fund this.
- Lara to consolidate community meeting minutes from October meetings;
- Next semester: meet every other week? Use extra time to meet with supervisors and faculty? Start to delegate tasks to classes, because we got awesome results from the two courses who just presented to us?

- How to put together the proposal? Piecemeal by individuals but have group-feedback?
i.e. how are internships structured elsewhere, and how should we structure them here?
mandatory with a class, a limit? etc. So do research, write up a 1-3 page proposal, and present it
in meetings to get feedback. Leslie would like it done by next February.