

Sustainable Food Systems Program Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
October 3, 2014

In attendance: Dave Cranage, Dave Mortensen, Elsa Sanchez, Derek Kalp, Heather Karsten, Kristen Devlin, Mark Theiss, Mitch Hunter, Shari Edelson, Susannah Barsom, Leslie Pillen, Barbara Sherlock

- I. Introductions: Each committee member shared their affiliation, reasons for enthusiasm, and what they bring to the table.
- II. Opening Remarks
 - A. Heather Karsten shared key findings from her 2007 national survey of student farms, including diversity of crops grown, educational benefits, challenges, and strategies to address these challenges.
 1. "Fields of Learning" was identified as a book that gets into these issues very deeply.
 2. Brianna Yablonski (a student) is working on compiling a current inventory of student-centered farms. Leslie will share this with the group via box.psu.edu when it's ready.
 - B. David Cranage shared background about a student-farming effort he undertook with funding from PSIEE in connection with the Hotel, Restaurant, and Institution Management program in which he sought to build knowledge about agriculture and food systems among students pursuing food-service and hospitality careers. This farm was located at Rock Springs, and ceased operations after three years when funding ran out.
 - C. Leslie provided some information about other student-farming initiatives and debriefed on work to date:
 1. listserv developed w/160 students and 135 faculty/staff
 2. presentations with leadership (AgSci, HHD so far; next is A&A and LibArts), along with many student-led presentations at clubs, etc.
 3. Two student meetings, two fac/staff meetings, and one collective meeting during which visioning took place
 4. Website up and running, gaining traffic
 5. About 20 students are meeting weekly, formalizing committees
 6. Great diversity among those who have identified themselves as wanting to be involved.
 7. Meeting minutes are online: <http://sites.psu.edu/studentfarm/>
 - D. Visioning activity among committee members -- see notes that Barbara Sherlock took
- III. Big Picture Planning
 - A. Review of Planning-Process Principles

1. Stakeholder pentad identified: community, co-creators, environment/earth, investors, client/consumer (could be undergrad or grad students, community members, beginning farmers, etc.)
2. Discussion about transparency:
 - a) Meeting notes will be posted online
 - b) Recognizing value in involving community, the group agreed that this committee's meetings should be open to non-committee members
3. Recommendation (SE) to include language that explicitly incorporates pragmatism as one of the planning principles: something more concrete about the importance of planning something that is feasible/operational and that will be followed through on.
4. Discussion about when we stop visioning as an explicit process and begin diving into work, how do we welcome new people to the initiative who may want to help shape big picture/visioning:
 - a) One solution could be a "Where We Are" document and ask newcomers to review the document. This would also be useful for internal communication. A "Where We Are" section of the website that provides a 1-2 page synopsis that is updated monthly and that links to various meeting minutes was suggested (DM).
 - b) While core principles/values will be adhered to, direction may shift based on where funding interests lie.
 - c) Regular ongoing visioning sessions may be useful.
5. Discussion about level of student involvement:
 - a) HK's research indicates that student-managed and student-run farms are struggling. A model in which students are co-leaders and play major roles but where staff and faculty provide continuity and management and integration with curriculum is more successful. **Student Centered** is the language that best describes this. A funded, paid manager is very important.
 - b) The Penn State Community Garden is an interesting model to look to, where faculty adviser plays limited role: students make major decisions and faculty advisor ensures guidelines are followed, etc.
 - c) A designated team of students from which at least one student will attend these steering committee meetings should be established. The students who meet weekly on Thursdays would be good core group to start with. The student who attends will report back to the student group, although more than one student is certainly welcome to attend.

B. Planning Timeline discussion is tabled for after subcommittee meetings, so that timelines developed by subcommittees can inform the broader timeline.

IV. Subcommittee discussion --

- A. Subcommittees are open to faculty, staff, students, and outside community members. Many faculty/staff attended visioning meetings but aren't committed as subcommittee members yet.
- B. This group (the steering committee) is where we tie everything back together, moving at a good pace, thinking institutionally, etc.
- C. There will be ongoing sources of data to contribute to plans of subcommittees
- D. Student co-chairs for each committee
- E. Students have already been meeting in committees and they report back to their core group on progress, problems, and plans
- F. Subcommittees of this steering committee will need to meet with at least some members of the corresponding student-led subcommittees to merge work; not all students will be able to meet, so aim to include as many as possible
- G. Subcommittees should familiarize themselves with the minutes from the various visioning meetings:
 1. [Potluck notes 9/11/2014](#)
 2. [Notes from student visioning meeting - 9/4/14](#)
 3. [Notes from FacultyStaff Mtng 6.4.14](#)
 4. [Notes from FacultyStaff Mtng 6/23/14](#)
 5. [Notes from Student visioning meeting 5/7/14](#)

----- description of each of the subcommittees -----

- H. Business and Operations - how does farm operate, what are resources it needs (supplies, labor, what will be grown)
 1. Suggestion to include staff from one or more of the farms at Rock Springs
 2. Faculty who understand supply chain and entrepreneurship should be engaged
- I. Site Analysis and Design -- Considering site, physical supporting features, zoning, renderings, etc.; will work closely with Business & Operations
- J. Curriculum -- What is philosophy of minor, core competencies, how it interrelates with existing minors, broader curriculum questions such as incorporation of food studies-focused classes within Gen Ed requirements
- K. Outreach and Communications -- Support team for other committees, promoting events, engaging broader community, keeping web/blog/Facebook up-to-date

Next Steps:

- There are still some very big unanswered questions for some people on the steering committee, as some of us are new to the initiative. (For example, concerns raised about site selection.) Newer members still have concerns to share, questions, etc.

- Therefore, the group will meet one more time prior to meeting with subcommittees (although co-chairs are encouraged to get their subcommittee meetings scheduled in the interim).
- A product of this next meeting may be the first draft of the “Where Are We” document discussed earlier
- Student co-chairs should be present for this next meeting.
- Leslie will send out a Doodle Poll to arrange this next meeting.