

**College of Marin (COM)  
Environmental Landscaping Department Advisory Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting**  
Wednesday, February 15, 2017  
Room 101, Bldg. 9, Indian Valley Campus

**Present**

Brad Agerter, Culinary Garden Manager	Linda Novy, Landscaper
Fernando Agudelo-Silva, Professor, College of Marin	Janis Olson, Admin. Assist., College of Marin
Henry Buder, Landscaper	Ron Palmer, Dept. Head, College of Marin
Paul Da Silva, Professor, College of Marin	Elizabeth Pratt, Ed.D., Dean of Career and Technical Education, College of Marin
Lissette Flores, Intern Coordinator, College of Marin	Byron Ramey, Staff, College of Marin
Dennis Hansen, Certified Irrigation Designer	Heather Simon, Landscaping
Andrew Johnson, CLCA Board, Landscaper	Walter Smith, L.S. Irrigation
Glen Keator, Horticulturist & Landscaper	Steve Swain, Horticulturist
Ginny Kuhel, Landscaper	Paul Thunstrom, Landscaper
Elizabeth Linder, Program Manager, Golden Gate Park	Arron Wilder, Professor, College of Marin
Peter Martinelli, Farmer	Marc Woerlein, Workforce Program Specialist, COM

Dean Elizabeth Pratt, Ed.D. called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. Introductions were made and Peter Martinelli joined the meeting by speaker phone.

Dean Pratt discussed the importance of hearing “the voice” of the industry for programs in CTE. She emphasized that the purpose of the Advisory Committee is to ensure that the programs are relevant for students, employers and the community. She further noted that it was important to hear the Advisory Committee Members’ voices and that the faculty and staff primarily attend these meetings to listen.

Marc Woerlein, COM’s Workforce Program Specialist, gave an overview of the labor market data that had been gathered for this meeting.

Professor Paul DaSilva, COM faculty, asked about national parks jobs and how full-time opportunities develop through internships, and seasonal positions. Lisette Fores, COM’s Internship Coordinator, and Elizabeth Linder, from Golden Gate National Park, discussed connecting with internships for COM students.

Dean Pratt directed the conversation on opportunities with bond, Strong Workforce grant, and revitalization in the ELND program to completely re-imagine the curriculum, facilities, and connections to other academic programs including the Business Dept.

Professor Fernando Agudelo-Silva, COM faculty, described where the curriculum is at in the revitalization process and explains that this is a “wonderful time for the rebirth of the program”

and that having the industry partners present are vital because “we have to have a revitalized curriculum that is based on what the industry needs and wants.” Fernando explained that he would like to see the department rebranded as “Horticulture, Sustainable Landscaping, and Farming.”

Beth asked the committee to think about the most relevant industry certifications and the skills most needed for the employees they would like to hire. She said that COM was willing to create interdisciplinary programs including hospitality and expand to a “from farm to fork” program.

The committee described several desirable certifications including:

LIC - Landscape Industry Certification, administered by the National Association of Landscaping Professionals (NALP) and endorsed locally by the CLCA (California Landscaping Contractor Association) North. A barrier identified is 1000 hours of work experience for the certification and Dean Pratt described Work Experience course planning as a possible solution. The committee members advised that this certification signifies that an “employee is capable of a foreman’s position, and can follow the architect’s direction in a timely manner.” The landscaping members of the committee advised that the combination of coursework in practical skills and business management combined with work experience would result in a very high demand employee.

QWEL - Qualified Water-Efficient Landscaper, the committee noted that this certification could be obtained at the end of one class.

Mike Smith, from TORO Industries, noted that skills related to management of landscaping systems, people, and time is a huge area of need alongside understanding the math behind water systems. Andrew Johnson, from the CLCA Board and Johnsons Tree and Garden, affirmed that resource management (time, money, workers, supplies, sales, customer service, quality estimating skills) are invaluable to a business owner.

Linda Novy, formerly of gardener’s guild and with Linda Novy and Associates, advised that the programs should have relevant short-term certificates that build up toward an Associates Degree in either Landscaping or Organic Farming but emphasized that “they’re different” and an effort should be made to “split them apart.” She explained that having farming as a subset of ELND was too confusing for everyone.

Mike Smith further advised that after reading the course catalog he felt that ELND 180 represents a vital set of skills that should be emphasized in the program and possibly expanded to more than one class. Linda agreed with this.

Peter Martinelli advised that having a flexible curriculum which can deliver a hybrid agribusiness/organic concepts/marketing could be the most valuable result for an employer. Professor Arron Wilder, COM faculty, noted that a lot of the business skills being talked about in the meeting respective to landscaping are directly transferable to farming such as water management, business acumen and resource management. He explained that having employees to meet these needs frees up a farm proprietor to make more executive level decisions and focus less on daily operations.

The group broke for refreshments at this time.

After re-convening Beth encouraged the group to meet again in a few months and to also organize smaller groups focused on farming and landscaping. She solicited if any advisory members would

be interested in joining the pool of faculty in the department and several affirmed that they would be interested.

The discussion turned to the future of water management and irrigation and Dennis Hansen, an irrigation system designer, with Dennis Hansen, RLA, gave a landscape of the industry. He expressed that ELND 190 could be expanded when he read through the curriculum. Mike Smith added to the conversation that landscaping systems being implemented have a lot of computer programming to drive the water delivery - but many installers have no idea of the basic formula behind the equipment. He advised that a basic class could provide the background of soil, water, and landscaping materials and how they work together or against each other - that understanding this would allow a landscaper or farmer to apply simple solutions to an irrigation issue versus getting rid of the equipment because no one knew how to operate the equipment. Andrew Johnson noted that many industry veterans have never been allowed to work on irrigation controllers and just letting students experience and learn how these controllers worked would put them ahead of the market in skills.

Andrew Johnson asked if there would be a possibility for a one-month heavy equipment certification class on Saturdays to allow students the ability to gain experience and certify on equipment prior to encountering it in the workplace. Andrew also addressed how the college is working to serve the Hispanic population that LMI suggests comprise 57% of the workforce, Dean Pratt described ESL, Basic Skills, and contextualized learning efforts for the advisory committee at this time.

Heather Simon, from the Gardener's Guild, advised that she supports the idea of weekend and smaller certification programs which would empower students. She advised that the LIC certification immediately affords her employees a raise and often leads to a promotion. She noted that she would like to see growth in marketing and articulation/dual enrollment with high schools to let them know this program and community college can help them on their career path.

Andrew Johnson stated that the committee needs to think deeply about the branding for this program so that students leave COM with a certificate that really impresses employers. Lisette noted that students really need clear pathways and to see a direct tie in marketing and guidance materials to industry positions and attainment of third-party certifications. Arron noted that students identify with alumni who have gone on to achieve and that we need to highlight those stories.

Paul Thunstrom, from the Gardener's Guild, advised that they would be willing to partner for internship/work experience and to promote programs to their employees if classes could be offered around their normal work schedule of 6am-2pm weekdays.

The Committee also discussed the need for students to be taught leadership, and interview skills, the importance of math; teaching the students to have a tool belt of skills so that they could be promoted from within an organization. The need for more interdisciplinary and flexible programs and having stackable certificates.

Next steps-

The advisory committee members agreed that a follow-up in the spring via video conference or conference call would be a good idea. The idea of having smaller focused groups that coordinate curriculum for landscaping and farming programs mainly via e-mail was an attainable goal.

The faculty and staff profusely thanked the Advisory Committee for their input.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.