

## **ELND Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, November 13, 2018

5:00 p.m. – Indian Valley Campus – Building 28

Attendees included: Elizabeth Pratt, Johnny Campbell, Fernando Agudelo-Silva, Ron Palmer, Dennis Hansen, Heather Rahman, Paul da Silva, Henry Buder, Arron Wilder, Warren Weber, Robert Hornback, Larry Wei, Scott Sherman, John Wick, Heather Simon, Adam Clarke, Peter Martinelli, Tammi Johnson, Linda Novy, Tom Eller

Dean Beth Pratt, Ed. D. began the meeting by explaining context for the meeting and welcoming everyone. She asked for input from the attendees in order for College of Marin to keep our programs relevant for the students.

Fernando explained that the most important part of the evening was to obtain input. He gave an overview of where ELND is with the program. He presented a PowerPoint with ELND information and update, including certificates in place currently:

- An A.S. in Sustainable Horticulture and Landscaping
- Basic Sustainability Landscape Maintenance
- Basic Irrigation for Landscape & Garden Installation
- Landscape and Farm
- QWEL Certificate

He showed the metrics for the completions for degrees and certifications in the program. He showed what classes and pathways (degrees and certificates; skills and certificates of achievement) are available for students. He explained landscaping and farming has separated in the current programs. Fernando's explanation included the following:

- Landscaping concentration on construction
- Research on skills, job demands and needs in construction and landscaping jobs
- Clarity about what is organic and what is sustainable
- Distinguish aspects of sustainable farming with the landscaping
- Business courses to complement existing programs is a possibility
- A construction class in conjunction with Canal Alliance which has been progressing successful
- Short certificates plan and short classes for those who do not have the time for 17 weeks of curriculum and multiple semesters to complete
- Landscaping to envelope horticulture to the plan

A question was asked of Industry partners to let COM know what other classes might be needed and the following was offered:

- Business classes for farm and landscape
- Agribusiness
- Basic Organic Farm

Various comments and discussion among the attendees included:

Warren Weber asked if intro to botany classes were offered specifically addressing Industry needs. Fernando answered that botany is not a class offered at this time through our ELND existing program, but botany is taught through other science classes. We had a challenge to teach botany in landscaping class. Committee members mentioned many times that plant identification is important for landscaping curriculum. Workers are often responsible of ordering plants and need to avoid ordering the wrong items. Horticulture is tricky. This is where we enter an overlap realm between Horticulture and Landscaping. However, we have room to add some short classes to the programs.

According to the faculty, students expressed that they would like to learn more about plant care and maintenance. Fernando suggested to everyone to write their ideas down in the survey, so we can take them into consideration.

The committee discussed about new people coming into the industry. Students need an introduction course, but not deep, intellectual Botany studies. Botany shouldn't be offered into landscaping because it can very advance, but the introduction would be helpful with entering the job force. And, elements offered in an introductory course should be to identify plants and where to research plants. In farming classes, we provide living examples for the student to see.

It was pointed out that in horticulture the students are learning some of the full scientific names and the colloquial naming of plants. They need to learn to identify and know ground covers, shrubs, trees, plants, soils and mulching. Fernando suggested in with working with Aaron and Warren, we may need a class focusing on trees and bushes alone.

Fernando stated the curriculum isn't fully complete for the students, so that is why we called this meeting to discuss and suggest what the students need. We want to start out on something small that we can build on.

It was stated that curriculum should stay relevant on practical tasks a worker would need to do, as in researching, identifying and purchasing materials and plants. It would also be beneficial to students to learn where the plant comes from and the ideal climate for those plants.

Another comment was made that it's good to look at the CLT (Certified Landscaping Technician) certificate and make sure the curriculum aligns with preparation to pass the exam to move on to the CLT program.

Fernando asked, “What would be helpful if your employees came to take courses? What certificates can we offer best for the employee/student at College of Marin?” It was answered that small more palatable offerings would be better than the long full semesters for the working student. Also, members asked if more classes be offered in Spanish? It was pointed out that everyone was all discussing these issues in the English language.

Elizabeth Pratt explained the Education 2 Career is one good example of bridging the gap for students to learn basic construction skills in a short amount of time and in the evenings and weekends. Saturday classes and classes on weekdays between 4 – 7 p.m. seem ideal. Very short skill building workshops are feasible. Many workers’ days are driving long commutes to a job beginning at 5 a.m. and then they get off about 2:30 p.m. - 3 p.m. It would be great if they could prepare in a short amount of time to get ready to pass the certification tests.

The committee discussed about certification should not be a main focus, but skills should be. The national certification is a written exam at the 8th grade level, and many cannot pass the exam. If the students could take classes in welding, learn skills for using or repairing farming equipment, and gain irrigation skills, that would be highly helpful. A COM certificate would show a path of packaged skills. Working with the advisory group to put recognizable packages skill certificates offerings would be good to offer from related classes grouping in irrigation or hydraulics, fundamentals of business for farming, welding, machine repair or anything else needed. COM doesn’t offer hydraulics at this time, to get this going would be expensive.

Using Napa as an example, where Agri-business is offered, the class is offered from someone in the industry rather than business in general. For the landscaping, the Marin Conservation League has discussed often fire defense. We need what is practical and real knowledge for wildlife preservation and how to create defensive landscape perimeters around homes and businesses. This would be important. It would be good to have speakers come to share information with the students.

The committee contemplated if the COM certificate redundant. The certificate of achievement shows a pathway of gaining something, it shows a basic skill have been learned, also the state requires community college to offer them. But, employers are not necessarily looking for the certificate. However, we are able to track our students and report to show and verify they are going forward to increase their opportunities and wages.

It was suggested to consider adding an agri-business to apply for farming. In crop agriculture, particularly cash flow analysis is a very important topic to cover. Fire safety and edible landscaping should be covered. A whole class should cover fire safety. New regulations are coming out right now about this for Marin wise fire protection.

Other things offered to consider:

- Marketing produce, knowing who to sell to and how much (for farming classes)
- Maintenance of landscape (There is a gap in design.)

- Tree trimming and removal
- Shortage of instructors
- Cover alternative landscaping opportunities to explore when the season is low for farmers

A survey was conducted with the Advisory committee members and faculty. It included their suggestions and insight for program development and specific skills students need to gain.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.