

California State University, Stanislaus

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT ANNUAL UPDATE

PROGRAM NAME: Agricultural Studies

COLLEGE YEAR:2009-2010

PLAN OVERVIEW:

MISSION

The Mission of the Agricultural Studies Program is to provide students with an understanding of basic economic principles governing the production and distribution of agricultural resources; agricultural and environmental resource management; pre- and post- production business and marketing practices; physical, chemical, and biological principles of agroecosystems; global perspectives on food issues; restorative and sustainable agricultural practices; spatial and quantitative techniques; the social context of agricultural production; and public policy, regulatory, and land use issues.

In pursuing this mission, the program encourages students to critically assess agricultural issues and trends; provides students with opportunities to systematically develop the communicative, analytical, quantitative, and critical thinking skills exposes students to diverse teaching and learning strategies in a number of academic disciplines; and delivers a high quality academic program that prepares students for emerging professional opportunities.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

The Bachelor of Arts in Agricultural Studies is a multidisciplinary program that blends the contribution of a number of academic departments through upper division core courses and four concentrations: Agricultural Biology, Agricultural Business/Economics, and Permaculture. The program encourages students to explore diverse approaches to agricultural production, distribution, and management in evolving economic and environmental settings. Experiential learning and applied research opportunities are offered through concentrations. The major fosters sustainable relationships with area community colleges through the implementation of a "2+2" program design. Individuals who have an A.S. degree or equivalent in lower-division course work in Agriculture, Agriculture Science, Agricultural Economics and closely related fields, and who complete the designated lower-division prerequisite courses, may participate in the program.

PROGRAM GOALS

- Enable California State University, Stanislaus to pursue a program that is consistent with its liberal arts mission;
- Foster the development of sustainable relationships with area community colleges through the implementation of a "2+2" program design;
- Increase student access to an academic program in the area in which they reside;
- Strengthen ties between the University and the region's agricultural and educational communities;
- Provide academic departments at California State University, Stanislaus with the opportunity and incentives to collaborate through the delivery of a multidisciplinary major;
- Strengthen ties between the University and the other CSU agriculture campuses capitalizing on the diversity and depth of those programs through collaborative efforts and course offerings; and
- Offer an academic program not replicated elsewhere that meets educational needs of geographically bound students in the northern San Joaquin Valley and Central Sierra Foothills.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS/ OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Explain basic economic principles with respect to the production and distribution of agricultural resources;
- Explain the principles of agricultural and environmental resource management;
- Describe agricultural business and marketing practices;
- Explain the physical, chemical, and biological principles of agroecosystems;
- Summarize global perspectives on food issues;
- Provide examples of restorative and sustainable agricultural practices;
- Describe spatial and other quantitative techniques;
- Explain the social context of agricultural production;
- Understand public policy, regulatory, and land use issues;
- Critically assess agricultural issues and trends;
- Systematically develop communicative, analytical, quantitative, and critical thinking skills;
- Be exposed to diverse teaching and learning strategies in a number of academic disciplines;
- Gain applied experience through internships and service learning;
- Experience a high quality academic program that prepares them for changing and emerging professional opportunities in the region; and
- Be involved in an educational experience that helps prepare them for graduate studies and teaching.

DATA COLLECTION

Direct

- Completion of a Professional Portfolio that documents competencies and completion of Program goals and Objectives.
- Utilize the English Department's Writing Proficiency Rubric to assess students' written communication skills in Ag Studies courses.
- Follow up survey to identify program success and applicability to the students' chosen career path.

Indirect

- Informal assessment being done through the Industry Advisory Board, Industry Partners and Internship Supervisors, as well as, ongoing communication with community college agriculture faculty and staff.
- Informal discussions within the Agricultural Studies council designed to improve curriculum and instruction as well as student advising and service.
- Formal discussions with multidisciplinary faculty to consider concentration evolution and potential impacts on program and faculty needs.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Direct and Indirect Information will be used to affect changes to the Agricultural Studies Program and Curriculum to increase student success and to adjust and meet program goals and student learning outcomes.

This will be accomplished by:

- Feedback from industry, community college instructors, and students directly to the Chair through personal conversations has resulted in the development of new curriculum and changes to the existing curriculum.
- Informing participating faculty from various departments in the multidisciplinary Agricultural Studies Program through the Ag Studies Council and Department Chairs.
- Utilizing feedback from industry advisory committees, community college faculty, multidisciplinary faculty, consider combining the Ag Biology and Permaculture Concentrations into one Sustainable Agriculture Concentration with options to serve both areas of interest. This is a result of investigating numbers enrolled in these two concentrations and evolving the program to encompass identified emphases in sustainability.

- Using the Graduate follow-up survey to affect change to program makeup, curriculum and advising.
- Using the Graduate follow-up to explore additions or deletions to course makeup of various Ag Studies Concentrations.
- Using the Professional Portfolio to assess the exit level proficiency of communication and technical skills and make adjustments accordingly to course content and course options for program improvement.
- Using the Writing Proficiency Rubric, make changes to curriculum approaches to emphasize written communication skills.
- Utilize feedback from community college agriculture partners to improve articulation and seamless transitions, as well as the best recruitment strategies.
- Utilize feedback from industry advisory committees, CSUS Ag Studies Partners, and Internship Supervisors to improve service to industry and provide well-prepared graduates for entry level and advancement in agriculture careers.

WHEN DID THE FACULTY MEET TO DISCUSS THE FINDINGS? WHAT WAS THE PROCESS? HOW DID FACULTY USE THE DATA COLLECTED?

Even though we are a multi-disciplinary program, this process falls to the Chair of Agricultural Studies. Because of the turmoil on campus and the difficulty of scheduling meetings, a formal meeting of Multi-disciplinary faculty did not occur. However, informal meetings were conducted during the year as well as feedback on the development of RPT Elaborations for Agricultural Studies occurred. Those draft Elaborations are attached. The program continually receives feedback through a variety of venues described in the Data Collection section of this report. The data was used in a variety of ways to direct consideration in program and curricular changes as described in the Implementation Plan section of this report.

WHAT CHANGES FOR IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING WERE MADE AS A RESULT OF THE FINDINGS? IF NO CHANGES WERE NECESSARY, WHAT WAS CONFIRMED?

Changes designed to improve student learning occur within the framework of the Program Assessment process of the individual departments. Changes then occur individually by class by faculty member. The Program Assessment Reports are not shared with the Agricultural Studies Faculty. However, multi-disciplinary faculty are involved in Agriculture Program design and modification. Discussion currently continues concerning the concept of molding the Permaculture and Agriculture Biology Concentrations into a single Sustainable Agriculture Concentration with an option in Agriculture Biology that includes the existing curriculum. This discussion has involved members from the primary departments involved in these Agricultural Studies Concentrations, Peggy Hauselt from Geography and Stuart Wooley from Biology. A new course in Sustainable Agriculture has been approved and will be offered in the fall 2010 semester.

IF CHANGES FOR IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING WERE RECOMMENDED, WHAT RESOURCES WIL BE NEEDED TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT THOSE CHANGES? WHAT CHALLENGES, IF ANY, WILL IMPACT THE PROGRAM'S ABILITY TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT THOSE CHANGES?

At this point, we are unsure of the resource needs to affect this program modification. Certainly as the Sustainable Agriculture Concentration is fleshed out and faculty needs identified, a further discussion of how to best serve students in this modified concentration will occur between faculty and the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and faculty/Dean of the College of Natural Sciences. It is the feeling at this time that the resource needs will involve additional adjunct or tenure track faculty based on student enrollment.

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CURRICULUM MATRIX TEMPLATE

Objectives with high relevance (H), moderate relevance (M), and low relevance (L) to listed courses. Assessment methods are indicated for high relevance	Course number AGST 3000	Course number GEOG 4750/4752	Course number BIOL 4200	Course number GEOG 4070	Course number ECON 4640	Course number ECON 4560	Course number PSCI 4326	Course number Concentration Courses
Explain basic economic principles with respect to the production and distribution of agricultural resources					H	H		Ag Business/Economics H
Explain the principles of agricultural and environmental resource management	M		H	M		H		Ag Business/Economics M
Describe agricultural business and marketing practices	L				H			Ag Business/Economics H
Explain the physical, chemical, and biological principles of agroecosystems	M		M					Ag Biology H
Summarize global perspectives on food issues	H			M				Permaculture H
Provide examples of restorative and sustainable agricultural practices	H			H				Permaculture H
Learning Objective Describe spatial and other		H						All Concentrations

quantitative techniques								M
Learning Objective Explain the social context of agricultural production	H			M				
Learning Objective Understand public policy, regulatory, and land use issues							H	
Learning Objective Critically assess agricultural issues and trends	H							
Learning Objective Systematically develop communicative, analytical, quantitative, and critical thinking skills	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
Learning Objective Be exposed to diverse teaching and learning strategies in a number of academic disciplines	→							
Learning Objective Gain applied experience through internships and service learning								
Learning Objective Experience a high quality academic program that prepares them for changing and emerging professional opportunities in the region	→							
Learning Objective Be involved in an educational experience that helps prepare them for graduate studies and teaching								

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Faculty discussion currently underway is an evolving process of program change that will require some curriculum modification and development. Of special emphasis is the concept of molding the Permaculture and Agriculture Biology Concentrations into a single Sustainable Agriculture Concentration with an option in Agriculture Biology that includes the existing curriculum. This discussion has involved members from the primary departments involved in these Agricultural Studies Concentrations, Peggy Hauselt from Geography and Stuart Wooley from Biology. A new course in Sustainable Agriculture has been approved and will be offered by Dr. Hauselt in Fall 2010.

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