

Transforming the NCSU Agricultural Institute: System Analysis and Programmatic Change for a Land Grant University's Two-Year Institution

Issue: The Agricultural Institute (AGI) is a two year, associate of applied sciences degree program in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at North Carolina State University. The program was established 50 years ago by the North Carolina General Assembly. The mission of the program was to train young men for agricultural work. The location of the program was strategic, placing it at one of the state's land grant institution thus taking advantage of the faculty expertise, new technologies and laboratory farms/facilities for "hands on" training. Since the program's inception, its mission has broadened "to prepare young men and women for technical careers in agriculture, agribusiness and the green industry through nine different degree programs." Nearly 5000 alumni earned degrees from AGI. It is an institution broadly supported by the state's agriculture and agricultural related industries.

Enrollment increases at the majority of 4 year and 2 year institutions in the University of North Carolina System schools are straining the system budget and available resources. Even though Community College Weekly ranked AGI as a #1 associate degree granting institution, the program has been subjected to scrutiny by those internal and external to the university. A systems analysis is needed to assess its current programs, policies, accreditation standards, student success, faculty, facilities, resources, collaborations and future direction if the program is to be sustained.

What has been done: A faculty retreat, facilitated by a Professional Organization Development (POD) leader, assisted the faculty in identifying a vision, mission, goals and strategies. The staff continues to revise its work as various dynamics influence the program direction. Enrollment trends and program data were reviewed in order to make enrollment projections. Student focus groups provided insight about program satisfaction. They were generally satisfied but revealed the need for new initiatives. Outdated marketing materials were revised and recruitment strategies implemented to address short term enrollment goals.

The curriculum, admission requirements, graduation requirements, course articulation, transfer policies and communications were examined with respect to accreditation standards. Numerous administrative and faculty meetings were held to discuss the proposed program revisions, including discussions to establish collaborations with two additional colleges on the campus.

After a stakeholder analysis, an AGI advisory board was established to provide advice regarding program direction. External funding organizations were sought out to provide additional funding for student programs lost to budget cuts. The alumni committee was re-constructed. On the national level, directors of similar land grant programs were sought out and invited to meet.

Impacts: The Agricultural Institute has experienced a programmatic transformation. All the impacts are not yet realized. Enrollment increases were realized for the next academic year. The nine degree programs have been revised to include a general education core with transferable courses to baccalaureate level programs. A more challenging curriculum may impact the traditional AGI student or result in attracting a different target population. Additional articulation agreements are drafted and will be implemented with the new curriculum. The advisory board provided direction from an industry/alumni perspective. Both advisory and alumni boards developed by-laws and operating procedures. The program directors from other land grant 2-year institutions met and re-organized the national technical agriculture association that will meet during the spring APLU meeting. Additional funding is being sought through an AGI @ 50 Year Anniversary Enhancement for students. Agricultural Heritage Legacy Scholars program was funded to provide scholarship support to students who upon graduation will return to their local communities to work in agriculture/agricultural related careers

Additional study is needed to analyze post secondary agriculture programs and the relationship of the associate degree programs to the Land Grant System. Determine the emerging programs and how well these programs prepare students for food systems careers and/or further education in related four year and graduate agricultural programs.

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