

FSLI Residential Session #3, June 17-21, 2024

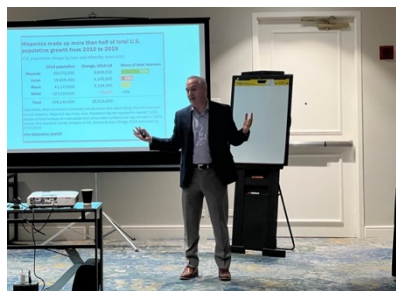
The third residential session of the Food Systems Leadership Institute (FSLI) occurred June 17-21, 2024, at the Cliffs in Pismo Beach, CA. Our partnering institution, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, hosted the week. The week’s programming was designed to expand the three key objectives of FSLI: enhance personal leadership skills, build skills for organizational change, and broaden food systems perspectives. While all three objectives were addressed, this residential session emphasized the Food Systems.

Food Systems



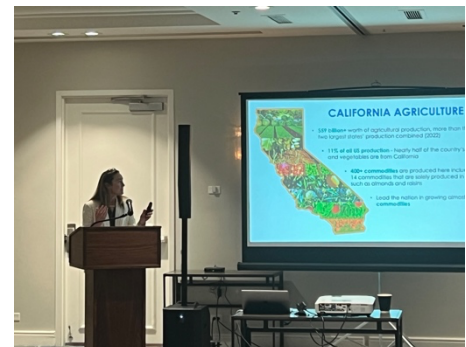
Jeff Armstrong, President of Cal Poly and Chair-Elect of the FSLI Commission; Russ Kabaker, Assistant Dean of Advancement and External Relations for the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences at Cal Poly; and Bill Hendricks, Interim Dean for the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences at Cal Poly spoke to Fellows about California Agriculture as well as Cal Poly and the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences. The group

shared that California has the 5th largest GDP in the world and has 23.8 million acres of land devoted to agriculture. The trio also shared that there are more than 4,100 students across 15 majors in the college, an 18:1 student-to-faculty ratio, and over 52 student clubs.



Dennis Albani, Vice President of California Advocates, spoke with Fellows about California’s complex agriculture policy landscape. He shared food and agriculture trends in packaging, standards of identity and terms, labor, natural resources, and animal welfare.

Christine Birdsong, Undersecretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, shared information about California’s Global Food and Agriculture Economy. Undersecretary Birdsong shared that California is nearly the sole exporter of many commodities, including almonds, table grapes, and tomatoes for processing. It was also shared that 85% of the farmers in California farm 500 acres or less of land and that California has 4% of the US farms but 5% of food and fiber production.

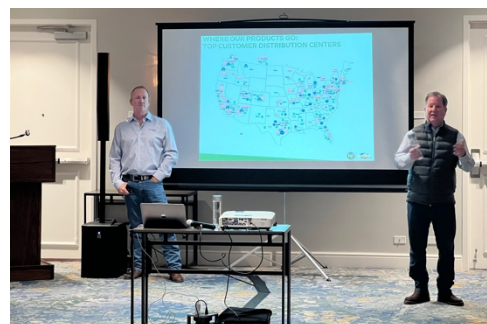


Walt Duflock, Senior Vice President of Innovation, Western Growers Association, highlighted the Agriculture Innovation in California. Walt shared about California’s specialty crop labor challenges and the expected results. In addition, automation, along with emerging areas of success, were shared.



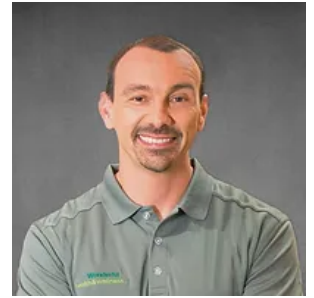
Soren Bjorn, CEO of Driscoll’s, shared information about the company with the group. He walked through the company's 100 years of innovation, including issues faced and decisions made. He also talked about packaging and the drivers of berry category growth, including year-round availability, consumer trends, the berry patch, and delight and flavor.

Jeff Huckaby, President and CEO, and Eric Proffitt, Executive Vice President of Grimmway Farms, gave the Grimmway story of how it started and what it’s doing now. Grimmway is the largest producer of carrots in the industry. Fellows heard about crop rotation, growing regions, and expanding partnerships. Challenges from technology and labor were discussed.



Bill Newlands, President and CEO of Constellation Brands, shared leadership characteristics from his perspective. These include accepting responsibility, being involved in constant learning, motivating people to take action, adapting to change, showing empathy, and leading by example. Bill shared how he has experienced building and managing culture in changing times. Fellows were reminded that if you are afraid to try, you will never have a chance to win.

Andy Anzaldo, Chief Operating Officer of Corporate Social Responsibility at The Wonderful Company, was a first-time speaker at this session. He brought a unique perspective and shared about the Wonderful Company and their view on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Andy shared about the work done in Lost Hills, including community centers, educational classes, affordable housing, health options, and more! The Wonderful Education program provides career pathways for its students, and over 180 graduates from this program have returned to the company as full-time employees.



Terrance Harris, Vice President, Strategic Enrollment Management, Cal Poly discussed Cal Poly's strategies for recruiting today's students. He discussed enrollment trends and outcomes, the cost of college, competition factors, and the ways and challenges of reaching students. Terrance reminded Fellows that how leaders communicate matters.

After the Monday sessions, the Fellows boarded a bus to tour Cal Poly's campus. After the tour, the group was treated to a beautiful dinner with Cal Poly Administrators at their Justin and J. Lohr Center for Wine and Viticulture.



On Wednesday, the Fellows were taken on a tour of the Salinas Valley area. They visited King City Nursery to see the transplant operation that happens at this facility. The next stop took the Fellows to visit Rio Farms to see their leafy greens operation and learn about food safety in the field. Next on the tour was the Taylor Farms Salad Facility. Here Fellows heard about and saw in action their processing and shipping facility. At Tanimura & Antle, participants learned about the innovative ways they were reducing labor costs, including agriculture technology. The last stop of the day was the Robert Hall Vineyards and Winery. Fellows toured the fields and winery and learned about regenerative agriculture.



Thursday evening, Fellows had the opportunity to experience the San Luis Obispo's farmer's market. The market spans five city blocks and is one of California's largest Farmers' Markets. Over 100 vendors from all over the Central Coast and the San Joaquin Valley come weekly to sell their fresh California seasonal produce, meals, baked goods, and more to market-goers.

Personal Leadership



Cynthia Jackson-Elmoore, Cal Poly's Provost and Executive Vice President, spoke with the group about Leadership in Higher Education. She challenged Fellows to think about how we fortify those we work with, not how we can fortify ourselves and to define what type of leader you are and show up as your authentic self. Cynthia emphasized the importance of understanding who you are, what you want for your organization, and how you strengthen those around you.

During the California session, the Fellows received feedback on the Change Style Indicator as part of their leadership experience. This instrument describes three approaches to change: conservers, pragmatists, and originators. Claudia Fernandez, FSLI Leadership Core Director, discussed understanding, appreciating, and communicating with individuals with these styles.

In addition, Claudia facilitated a session on symbols as powerful leadership tools. The Fellows then shared their symbols of leadership. This event provided insight into the character and values of each FSLI participant and was a meaningful closing exercise.

Organizational Change

The FSLI Fellows got first-hand experience dealing with organizational change through a Paper Planes Incorporated simulation facilitated by Claudia Fernandez, FSLI Leadership Core Director. In this simulation, the Fellows were put into a “siloeed” and functionally based organization charged with making a paper airplane with several quality-based specifications.

Through several “product runs,” the group tried to produce a product while dealing with continually changing (and escalating) customer demands. After each run, Claudia Fernandez, FSLI Leadership Core Director, Sam Pardue, FSLI Director, and John Dole. Incoming FSLI Director, led a discussion of insights gained from the experience and how these lessons may apply to the Fellow’s organizations. The Fellows discussed how to make a quality “product,” with their products being students, grants and contracts, faculty, teams, publications, and public service. Dealing with change and being responsive to environmental demands was a particularly salient topic.



Second Year Experience

The schedule for the Fellow’s second-year experience will start in late September. Most importantly, they will be planning and carrying out their projects. The calendar will include peer coaching calls to discuss their projects and webinar sessions on various topics ranging from perfect persuasion to poverty and the landscape on college campuses to enacting policy change. Book discussions will be held on the books “Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter” and “How Will You Measure Your Life?”