

SRJC Ag & Natural Resources Department  
Advisory Committee Meeting  
Monday, November 10th, 2025, 9am-10:35am  
In person at Shone Farm. Pavilion rm 2  
Minutes

In Attendance:

Committee Members Present: Jake Dunn, Melanie Parker, Lauren Cartwright, Andrew Smith, Evan Wiig, Bill Traverso.

Absent: Dayna Ghirardelli, Kerry McGrath, Brooke Pippi, Julie Robinson, Amelia Shapiro

Staff: Joel Grogan, Victor Tam, Connor Murphy, Eugenie Pacopac, Amy Merkel, Rachel Smith, Pam Wittenberg, Johnny Campbell, Merilark Padgett-Johnson.

1. Welcome: Joel Grogan
2. Approval of Minutes from May 7, 2025

A quorum was not established; therefore, minutes were not approved. The group proceeded with discussion items as an advisory session.

3. Department Update

a. Enrollment Numbers Across the Department

- i. Victor reported that 346 individual students attended classes at Shone Farm this Fall, representing a modest increase over the previous year. However, overall Agriculture and Natural Resources enrollments declined by approximately 9%. Shone Farm showed stronger enrollment, while district-wide trends were mixed. About 80% of SRJC students remain part-time. The group discussed ongoing challenges with scheduling and program persistence given limited staffing capacity.
- ii. Dual Enrollment / CCAP  

Analy High School and Cloverdale High School are the current CCAP partners for the 25-26 school year. A planned Floristry CCAP course at Santa Rosa High School was canceled due to low enrollment and possible communication gaps regarding pathway requirements. Joel will follow up with IERP to determine how CCAP student persistence can be tracked more effectively.
- iii. Committee members discussed the need for clearer alignment between discipline requirements and scheduling flexibility for high school partnerships.

c. Spring 2026 Schedule & Registration

- i. Priority registration for Spring is now open. Animal Science will continue with more in-person courses next year following student feedback, and several ANSCI offerings are planned for Fall 2026.

d. Faculty Staffing Requests (FSC) and Department Challenges

- i. Joel reviewed the current Faculty Staffing Committee process and shared his presentation slides. There were 26 staffing requests district-wide, with two submitted from Ag/NR — Natural Resource Management and Animal & Equine Science. He emphasized the department's difficulty maintaining accreditation-related requirements, such as evaluations, SLO assessments, and course revisions, with limited faculty. Over the past few years, four full-time positions have been lost, representing roughly 44% of departmental staffing. Recruitment remains challenging due to qualification requirements and limited applicant pools. District decisions on staffing requests are expected within two weeks.

e. Outreach and Recruitment Support

- i. Evan Wiig offered to assist with promoting open faculty positions externally and coordinating outreach once the postings go live. The group noted that strict minimum qualifications can deter experienced industry professionals from applying. There was consensus that advisory members should advocate for greater hiring flexibility and explore alternative recruitment pipelines.

f. Program and Curriculum Updates

- i. Joel discussed progress on the General Agriculture degree, which was delayed due to district software transitions; changes are now slated for Fall 2027. They also discussed unifying prefixes (e.g., HORT/VIT under AG) to simplify course navigation. The group acknowledged potential impacts on coordinator roles, and Joel noted that SRJC faculty and staff have previously shared some reservations about this idea. A suggestion was made to develop an 'Agriculture with concentration in...' model to provide more cohesive pathways. Laura Carter suggested exploring a Fermentation Science component.

g. Grants and Funding Initiatives

- i. Joel summarized recent and ongoing funding efforts, noting that since 2015, the Ag/NR department has secured approximately \$4.7 million in Strong Workforce grants. Victor highlighted the new Chancellor's Office

Forestry/Fire Expansion Grant (~\$300K) to support paid internships, and development of a formal steering committee for the now institutionalized wildfire resilience courses. Implementation will begin once funding is received. Additionally, the department will continue the Uber voucher pilot to improve student transportation access.

h. Labor Market and Employer Feedback

- i. Andrew Smith (County of Sonoma) discussed robust opportunities in regulatory areas such as Weights & Measures and Parks, noting upcoming inspector vacancies in mid-2026. Lauren Cartwright (UCCE) mentioned advisor positions requiring a master's degree and potential marketing roles opening soon. Evan Wiig shared that CAFF's job board remains active, though the farm labor market remains tight. Bill Traverso reported that the wine industry continues to struggle amid shifting consumer preferences and competition from alternative beverages.

4. Discussion

a. Faculty Staffing Requests and Motions

- i. Melanie Parker moved that the committee send a letter to the District requesting approval of two full-time faculty positions (Natural Resources and Animal/Equine Science). Seconded by Evan Wiig. Due to the lack of quorum, the motion could not be formally approved. The group discussed drafting individual or collective letters of support to the College President and Board to reinforce the importance of filling these positions.

b. Clarifications

- i. The Department Chair role and the total number of requested full-time faculty positions (two) were confirmed.

c. Next Steps

- i. Share the faculty staffing request presentation slides with advisory board members.
- ii. Follow up with IERP to explore tracking CCAP students and their persistence.
- iii. Continue working on the General Ag degree submission for Fall 2027 implementation.
- iv. Build partnerships with local organizations to secure funding for Wildfire Resilience Program internships beyond 2026.

5. Adjourn: 10:35am

Prepared by: Katie Kubota (Administrative Assistant III-STNC)

Date Prepared: November 10, 2025