

## Meeting Minutes

### AG & Natural Resources Advisory Committee Meeting

Date: April 9, 2026 10:00-11:51am

Location: Shone Farm CEA110 (Richard Thomas Classroom) + Zoom

#### Attendance:

#### Committee Members:

- Amber Bowen (absent)
- Lauren Cartwright (present)
- Jake Dunn (absent)
  - Kim Arntz (Proxy for Jake)
- Dayna Ghirardelli (absent)
- Kerry McGrath (present)
- Melanie Parker (absent)
  - Brook Edwards (Proxy for Melanie)
- Brooke Pippi (Present)
- Julie Robinson (absent)
- Amelia Shapiro (Present)
- Andrew Smith (Present)
- Bill Traverso (Present)
- Evan Wigg (Present)

#### SRJC Representatives Present:

- Connor Murphy
- Victor Tam
- Rachel Smith
- Merilark Padgett
- Pam Wittenberg
- Joel Grogan
- Doshia Dodd
- Brianna Nethery
- Mackenzie Galindo

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#### 1. Call to Order & Quorum

- Meeting called to order by **Joel Grogan**.
  - Quorum confirmed via attendance and proxies.
    - Quorum necessary for **Strong Workforce Grant compliance**
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## 2. Welcome & Opening Remarks

- Welcome to Shone Farm:
    - **Wildfire Resilient Landscaping Demonstration Garden** (student-designed, installed, maintained).
  - Informal introductions and brief discussion before formal agenda.
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## 3. Approval of Previous Minutes

- Minutes from **November meeting** approved.
    - Motion: Passed
    - Second: Passed
    - No discussion
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## 4. Department Updates

### 4.1 Natural Resources Faculty Hiring

- New **Natural Resources faculty position secured** (highly competitive process).
- Interviews scheduled for **early May**.
- Advisory committee support was critical in securing the position.

### 4.2 Leadership Transition

- Joel Grogan's 3 year Chair term is up at the end of the semester
  - Sabbatical focus: **fire-resilient landscape design principles**.
  - **George Sellu** to serve as incoming Chair.
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## 5. Enrollment Update

### 5.1 Key Metrics

- Enrollment **down 52 students** vs. Spring 2025.
- Shone serves **~300 students/semester**.
- Vet Tech largest discipline
- Majority of students are **part-time (~80%)**.

### 5.2 Trends

- Overall decline continues but is **slowing**.
- Growth areas:

- Natural Resources
- Horticulture
- Declines in:
  - General Agriculture (fewer course offerings)
  - Viticulture/Wine Studies (industry downturn)
  - Some Animal Science (faculty shortages)

### 5.3 Contributing Factors

- Reduced course offerings due to staffing
  - Low enrollment leading to canceled sections
  - Industry-specific downturns (wine sector)
  - Regional demographic shifts (declining population, aging population)
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## 6. Budget & Scheduling Constraints

- SRJC must reduce **\$10M from \$150M budget**.
  - Impacts:
    - Potential reduction in course offerings
    - Focus on eliminating low-enrollment classes
  - Strategy:
    - Balance **enrollment growth with cost efficiency**
    - Use historical enrollment data to guide scheduling decisions
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## 7. Curriculum & Program Development

### 7.1 General Agriculture Certificate (Proposed)

- Approx. **18 units total**:
  - 9 units core (intro courses)
  - 9 units electives
- Key features:
  - Flexible, “mix-and-match” structure
  - Designed for **part-time and non-traditional students**
  - **Fully online pathway possible**
  - Supports **dual enrollment (CCAP)**
  - New name idea: “Ag Fundamentals”

### 7.2 Plant Science Certificate (Proposed/Updated)

- Stackable credential building on General Ag.
- Structured categories:

- Science Foundation (soil, plant science)
- Principles (horticulture, sustainable ag)
- Practices (propagation, crop planning)
- Technical Skills (irrigation, mechanics) “Specialized skills”
- Electives
- Allows **specialization within plant sciences**

### 7.3 Curriculum Approval

- Advisory committee voted to support both certificates.
    - Motion by Bill, second by Andrew
      - Passed unanimously
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## 8. Marketing & Outreach Discussion

### 8.1 Current Challenges

- Limited centralized marketing support
- Outreach responsibilities unclear or under-resourced
  - Responsibility of Program Coordinators, but they also lack time
- Heavy reliance on faculty networks

### 8.2 Improvements & Strategies

- New **course flyers (digital + print)** by discipline
- Existing and proposed **marketing videos**
- Increased collaboration with:
  - UC Cooperative Extension
  - County Ag Department
  - CATA (Ag Teachers Association)

### 8.3 Recommendations

- Expand **social media presence** (Instagram, TikTok)
- Promote **single-class enrollment**, not just degrees
- Highlight **ease of application process**
- New Concept: “**Come for a class, stay for a certificate**”
- Improve communication to:
  - High school counselors
  - Teachers
  - Non-traditional learners

### 8.4 Successful Outreach Examples

- Ag Ambassadors program

- Farm tours for high schools
  - Golden State Field Day
  - Regional and statewide ag teacher engagement
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## **9. Industry & Workforce Insights**

### **9.1 Education Sector (Kim)**

- Enrollment decline and administrative turnover noted.
- Continued need for outreach and program awareness.

### **9.2 Wine Industry (Bill)**

- Significant downturn:
  - Declining consumption (especially younger demographics)
  - Vineyard removals
  - Financial strain on small producers
- Larger, established wineries remain stable.

### **9.3 Agriculture Sector (Evan)**

- Key challenges:
  - Immigration enforcement concerns (labor shortages)
  - Rising labor costs
  - Elimination of federal programs (e.g., Local Food Purchasing Program, Farm-to-School)
- Positive trends:
  - Growth in **direct-to-consumer sales**
  - Increase in farm stands
  - New processing opportunities (e.g., apple processing facility)

### **9.4 Horticulture & Landscaping (Amelia)**

- Market shift:
  - Decline in small projects
  - Continued demand from high-end clients

### **9.5 Government & Policy (Andrew)**

- County efforts:
  - Agricultural viability workshop (Board of Supervisors)
  - Focus areas:
    - Food security
    - Agritourism
    - Land use and zoning

- Diversification strategies

### 9.6 USDA / NRCS (Brooke)

- Continued **strong funding support**:
  - ~\$20M+ invested in recent years
  - Record funding levels (~\$8M in 2024)
- Challenges:
  - Staffing shortages
  - Expanded service areas

### 9.7 UC Cooperative Extension (Lauren & Kerry)

- Flat funding environment
  - Continued support for producers
  - Recruitment ongoing for key positions
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## 10. Key Discussion Themes

- Need to better serve:
    - **Non-traditional students** (working professionals, farmers)
    - Students seeking **single classes or short-term training**
  - Perception barriers:
    - College seen as long-term commitment vs. flexible learning option
  - Opportunity:
    - Expand **dual enrollment (CCAP) pathways**
    - Increase awareness of career education flexibility
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## 11. Announcements

- **Plant Sale**: May 2–3 at Shone Farm
  - Marketing materials and flyers to be distributed
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## 12. Next Steps / Action Items

- **George & Joel**
  - Submit General Ag and Plant Science Certificates for approval (May deadline, Fall 2027 target)
  - Revive Ag Mechanics courses and explore certificate pathway
  - Update CCAP-eligible course list (including Intro to Careers)
  - Follow up with Sonoma State on wine program collaboration
- **Department (Doshia)**

- Distribute digital flyers and marketing videos
  - **Advisory Committee Members**
    - Promote programs through networks (UCCE, County, CATA, listservs)
  - **Andrew Smith**
    - Encourage participation in Board of Supervisors Ag Workshop
  - **Brooke Pippi (NRCS)**
    - Share internship and program opportunities with schools
  - **Lauren Cartwright**
    - Share SB895 (SC895) information
  - **Connor**
    - Send planting-related email update
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### **13. Adjournment: 11:51am**

- Meeting concluded following industry updates and discussion.