The Penn State Program in Sustainable Food and Agriculture Systems

A Penn State student-centered Sustainable Food Systems minor and Student Farm are now under development through funding from the Sustainability Institute. This new initiative will serve as a nexus for engaged, integrated and experiential learning about sustainability challenges and solutions. An integrative planning process during 2014 and 2015 will engage the university and surrounding community to create a shared vision and design for this new farm and minor. Farm production is projected to begin in the spring of 2016.

Mission: The Sustainable Food Systems minor and Student-Centered Farm at Penn State will strategically link classroom education with experiential education and research to provide transformative learning opportunities in sustainable agriculture and food systems that foster community, leadership, teamwork, critical thinking and positive change among the Penn State and surrounding communities. It will be an educational, research and outreach program open to interested students, faculty and staff from all programs.

The Student Farm Site
- Opportunities for experiential education, student and faculty research and outreach
- Students directly engage with sustainability questions through farming and food systems
- Within walking distance from campus (targeting Arboretum land)
- Integrated farm management by a paid farm manager/educator
- Likely begin with selling food to PSU Dining Commons
- Diverse production: start with vegetables/fruit and add biofuels, grain, poultry, livestock
- Phased site development

The Sustainable Food Systems Minor
- Interdisciplinary and systems-focused
- Experience, theory and skills education
- Set of core courses with ability for students to focus other courses within area of interest
- Prepare students for careers in production, supply chain management, public health, food and agriculture policy-making, international food system development, research
- Foster development of a personal food ethic and understanding of sustainability themes in life and career decisions

Planning Timeline Summary
Summer 2014: Build student and faculty interest; identify and develop student, staff and faculty leadership for planning activities
Fall 2014: Gather data through iterative planning sessions with stakeholders; begin developing a phased program proposal (site design, farm business plan and farm/minor integration plan)
Spring 2015: Continue more detailed plan development; initiate capital campaign
Summer 2015: Continue capital campaign and initiate physical site development
Fall 2015: Continue capital and site development, and detailed production and marketing plans
Spring 2016: Finalize farm production plans and supply purchases; begin production

Project Principle Investigators
Dave Mortensen (Weed Ecology), Heather Karsten (Crop Production/Ecology), Clare Hinrichs (Rural Sociology), Dave Cranage (Hospitality Management)
Activities Update
Student visioning session, May 2014: 15 students from 10 majors
Faculty and staff visioning sessions, 2 in June 2014
Tour to Dickinson College Farm, July 2014: 28 students, faculty, staff and administrators
Presented and tabled at HUB involvement fair, student clubs and classes
Student info night, September 2014: 27 students from 15 majors
Formed a steering committee with representation from OPP, Housing and Food Services, faculty and students
Visioning Potluck, September 2014: 40 attendees representing students, staff, faculty and community members

Upcoming Activities
Series of large group visioning and planning workshops will occur throughout fall semester
Seeking individuals to serve on sub-committees (curriculum, business and operations, site analysis and design, outreach and communications)

For more information or to find out how you can be involved in the project, contact:
Leslie Pillen, Sustainable Student Farm Design Coordinator, lrp143@psu.edu | 814.863.5116
www.sites.psu.edu/studentfarm

Students in Soil Ecology 412W analyzing soil properties of the proposed student farm site at the Arboretum