Horticulture Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday May 5, 2022, 12:00-3:00pm

Building 80, Room 2301O

Attendees: Brian Scott, Jennifer Hinostroza, Mike Wagner, Bill Millward, Gretchen Heimlich-Villalta, Alicia Baugh, Irma Arvizu, Brian Lake, Danny Hughes, John Vitullo, David Oborn, Monika Chavez, Oscar Arias, Gary Hunter, Paul Cushing, Duncan McKee, Liz Mendoza, Arnita Champion

1. Welcome (Brian)
2. Introduction of staff and advisory committee members
3. Mt. Sac status update - John Vitullo
   * “Mt. SAC is Back” – Enrollment is about 20% lower than before the pandemic, but we’re trying to get students back on campus.
   * We’ve had a lot of construction going on during the pandemic and now.
   * Starting in summer, the vaccine mandate for classes has expired. Neither vaccines nor weekly testing will be required starting with Summer. Testing and masks will still be provided, but not required.
4. Updates of program status
   * Current classes – Our current classes are about 60% in person and 40% online – some classes are hybrid. We’ve been doing more sections of AGOR 1 and AGAG 1 online.
   * Enrollment is better this semester than last semester. We had a lot of attrition last fall.
5. Industry updates and job opportunities – Advisory Committee Members
   * The Huntington has hired many Mt. SAC horticulture students – their minimum pay rate was raised to $17. For their recent position, 3-4 of their 6 interviewees were Mt. SAC students.
   * There will be a landscape inspector position opening at City of Riverside.
   * Disney spend a year trying to hire an arborist, because there is so much demand for arborists in the industry. They have gardener positions available and 6 arborist positions open.
   * UCR is hiring a full time IPM person for their new greenhouse.
   * Cal State system may be adding supervisors, which would be new positions. Brian Lake reported that the candidates in the pools are not as experienced now, and they aren’t getting as many good candidates.
   * City of LA has a program called targeted local hire, which opens up entry level positions for gardeners and tree surgeon assistants, but they have no experience, so it hurts the quality of the hires.
   * Waypoint Analytical is hiring an assistant for Plant Pathology under Paul Santos.
   * USC is hiring for part time.
   * Davey and Great Scott are both hiring for arborists and workers interested in working with trees.
   * Mike Wagner reported that Amazon opened new facilities in Riverside and they’ve been recruiting gardeners specifically, offering them air conditioning and higher pay. This is taking away from the available contractors.
   * Wages are a problem, because minimum wage has gone up so much, but budgets have not increased, particularly for landscape maintenance. People don’t see the value of landscapes or the value of people with landscape experience.
     1. There was discussion of how to represent our programs better, because everything we teach is sustainability, but we are not recognized as teaching sustainability. The concern is that if we use a buzz word like sustainable, will we always be changing titles and descriptions to keep up with the newest buzzword – sustainable, regenerative, etc…
        1. Brian Scott asked for a subcommittee to be formed to work on this.
           1. We would like to consider a name change and/or rebranding before the next advisory committee meeting.
           2. We also need to revisit social media for advertising and visibility.
     2. The younger workers see their value as higher than an entry level job.
6. Career Night
   * Brian Scott shared the program with the committee. We are back in person this year.
   * Thanks to all who put this together!
7. Status Reports
   * Horticulture Unit (Irma Arvizu)
     1. Unit upgrades and modifications, plant sales, future plans
        1. The hort unit currently only has 3 fully trained student assistants.
        2. We have 14 new recruits that have little experience or knowledge, and we are in the process of training them.
        3. Some of our normal plant sales have been cancelled, (Arboretum, Farm Day, Farmer’s Market) so we need another outlet to sell the plants. – Possibly additional on campus sales like the Mother’s Day sale.
        4. Irma shared the teamwork with the Horticulture Club on the Spring Garden show and some marketing for the hort unit.
     2. Irma Arvizu provided a written report.
8. Student and Department Success– Chaz/Jennifer
   * Turf Teams- Student Challenge 2022 update
     1. Two teams went. One team took 3rd place. The amount of meeting time was increased via Zoom. The 4 students in the 3rd place team have already gone twice before. There was also a team of new students who have not competed before. This team was composed of students who were taking classes online, and they didn’t have the experience needed for the hands on components of the
   * South Coast Plaza Spring Garden Show
     1. Jennifer presented about the Horticulture Club’s display at the Spring Garden show. They were the only student team to participate, and in spite of challenging turnover in the team leading the project, they were able to pull it together.
   * Scholarships
     1. Departmental Scholarships – We have about $40,000 of scholarships this year.
        1. Faculty review the applications. The ceremony is June 4.
        2. Los Angeles Garden Club
        3. Orange County Farm Bureau - $20,000
        4. Visosky Family Scholarship
        5. O.F. Wolfinbarger - $10,000
        6. Chris Romo Scholarship (Former student)- Memorial for his son- $1000
9. Perkins (VTEA)– Jennifer
   * Jennifer reported on this year’s purchases, including a new marketing campaign, conference funding, student mentor program, student lab assistants, and equipment.
10. Curriculum Updates and Review – Brian
    * Drones In Agriculture – being submitted by the May deadline.
      1. The committee approved the curriculum.
    * Changes to IPM and Plant Science AST due to Biology renumbering
      1. The committee approved the changes.
    * Cannabis Certificates and Degree curriculum need your approval (see handout)
      1. The committee approved the curriculum
11. Dean of Natural Sciences Matt Judd will be retiring in June, so they are hiring for a new Dean for our Division.
12. Closing Comments
    * Chaz Perea needs managers from the landscape industry to reach out to for his PhD project. He may be reaching out to some committee members to participate.
    * Dodger Stadium has attained botanical garden status – Chaz Perea and his team implemented this. The tours have been ongoing, but are growing in popularity.
13. Next meeting – Thursday December 1, 2022 @ 10am-noon