

"Northeast Iowa Community College provides in-demand education and training focused on improving lives, driving business success and advancing community vitality." NICC Mission Statement

**Northeast Iowa Community College
Advisory Meeting Minutes
Agriculture Business
March 24, 2021, 4:00 p.m.**

**This meeting was recorded for internal purposes.*

- I. Call to Order
 - a. Voting Members Present: John Finley-Iowa Corn Growers, Jake Rechkemmer-Innovative Ag, Bob Sobolik-Five Star Cooperative, Ken Ulwelling-A&K Feed and Grain
 - b. Non-Voting Members Present: Bruce Bearinger-Dean of Agriculture, Animal Science, and Transportation, Kristi Creek-NICC Administrative Assistant, Sherry Massman-NICC Academic Advisor, Tad Mueller-NICC Agriculture Instructor, Melissa O'Rourke-Iowa State Extension, Jessica Reis-NICC Cresco Center Director
 - c. Members Absent: Jerome Fulsaa-J&J Farms, Matt Gaul, Randee Hemesath, Alex McCabe-CUSB Bank, Melissa Hageman-South Winneshiek High School, Jeff Henry-NICC Science Instructor,
- II. Welcome and Introduction of Members and Guests: Tad called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.
- III. Advisory Committee Review: Tad gave a brief overview of the role of the committee.
- IV. Approval of Minutes: Tad reviewed the September 23rd meeting minutes. There were no comments on the minutes and they were declared approved as read.
- V. Old Business
 - a. COVID-19 Update: Tad gave an update on NICC's COVID mitigation efforts. NICC continued with a hybrid model and limited classes on campus for the spring semester. Tad has two face-to-face courses this semester, and has the option for students to Zoom into the class if they cannot be on campus, and has had good attendance. This was also beneficial for days affected by weather conditions. The College plans to return to full in person classes for the fall 2021 semester.
 - b. Grants Update: Tad updated the group on the SARE and NRCS grants. With the NRCS grant, there will be a field day in June, and the plan is to have a face-to-face, on campus event. Bruce updated the group on the Conservation Innovation Grant through C2A3, which looks at two major factors, partnering with the Foundation on their Net Zero initiative, and manure management, water quality, and soil health.
- VI. Program Assessment and Statistical Data
 - a. Program Dashboards: NA
 - b. Current Enrollment Data: There are currently 51 students in the Agriculture Business program either as their primary or secondary major. There are a total of 96 students enrolled in agriculture and animal science programs this term, which is down around 50 students from the previous spring terms. Bruce explained several initiatives that he is exploring to help increase enrollment throughout all programs within the department.
 - c. Annual Key Program Indicator Report: Tad reviewed the report, which outlines key data points of the program such as employment outlook, enrollment trends, graduation rates,

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survey responses, and advisory meeting attendance. Total program enrollment was the only area recognized as needing improvement.

- d. Board/Certification Pass Rates: There are no required certifications in the program, however there are courses within the program that prepare students for their custom applicator certification, drone operator's license, and the certified crop advisor certification.

VII. Employer Updates

- a. Kent: A&K is looking for an applicator. Kent stated there are plenty of opportunities for students within the industry.
- b. John: Farmers have seen good and bad out of COVID, but overall attitudes have remained positive. There have been a lot of conversations over carbon practices. A few of the major Iowa commodity organizations have been focusing on the Iowa BioFuels standard set forth by the governor. The idea is to increase the use of ethanol in fuels.
- c. Melissa: Melissa shared that there are opportunities out there for students, but the need to not only have the technical skills, but it is necessary that they have strong soft skills as well.
- d. Jessica: Jessica reiterated that soft skills are important for students to have especially so they can properly address some controversial topics within the industry. She expressed that the need for certificates to train students in additional skills would be a great opportunity.
- e. Bob: Bob agreed that some major topics in the industry are soil health, microbiology of soils, and carbon credits. Precision technology is another big area in the industry. Five Star has been looking for agronomy administration people that have basic knowledge of the industry.
- f. Jake: Jake shared that at Innovative Ag they use a predictive index that determines personality and key traits to find people who have the key skills that will help them be successful, and then training them in the areas of the agriculture industry that they need to know.

VIII. Sector and Regional Planning Board Reports: NA

IX. New Business

- a. Curriculum
 - i. Education Plan: Tad gave an overview of the current education plan.
 - ii. Curriculum Map: NA
 - iii. Guided Pathways: Bruce shared that the College is working on a new pathway to boost entry-level positions in the agronomy area. The College will start by piloting a career certificate program in the Oelwein Community School district.
- b. Course Guide Review: Tad reviewed the course guides. There were no comments made about the courses.
 - i. GIS:111 - Introduction to Geographical Information Systems
 - ii. AGA:154 - Fundamentals of Soil Science
- c. Policies and Procedure Changes: The College did review the UAV Policy to ensure that it is up-to-date, and within the Agriculture department, high school instructors are no longer

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required to have their master's degree to teach concurrent courses, however it is recommended.

- d. Technology and Equipment: There are no major equipment plans for next year. Tad did put in a request for iPads for the classroom. Since Tad is retiring in 2022, he does not want to purchase a lot.
- e. Student/Industry Engagement (Internships, Job shadows, etc.): Students will be going out on their internships in a few weeks. There was discussion around students learning skills in alternative interview situations, such as Zoom and phone interviews and the importance of flexibility in those situations.
- f. Other (Accreditation, etc.)
 - i. Advisory Committee Survey: Kristi emailed the survey to everyone, and will mail a hard copy if members prefer to fill it out that way. Any feedback the Committee can provide is greatly appreciated.

X. College Updates

- a. A Dean of Advanced Manufacturing, Industrial Technology, and Computer Science, Mark Gerein, was hired in November. Mark and Bruce's positions used to be combined in one district-wide position, and due to the high workload, that position was moved to two.
- b. NICC had a visit from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), NICC's accrediting body, in October. Next year the Department of Education will visit the college for a review.
- c. Graduation will take place face-to-face at Upper Iowa University in May with COVID precautions in place.
- d. The College is exploring some new program opportunities, which include a 2+2 Conservation Agronomist program with Upper Iowa University (UIU), as well as an Agriculture Education program with UIU, and a reinstatement of the AS Pre-Vet degree. There was interest from the advisory committee to have credit and non-credit certificates available for those already working in the industry trying to pick up an additional knowledge base.

XI. Good of the Order: Sherry shared Last Dollar Scholarship stats for the College which was available starting in the 2019-2020 school year. This is a scholarship available only to Iowa residents. This year there are 65% percent of eligible students who are receiving these funds for the 2020-2021 school year.

XII. Next Meeting Date: September 2021

XIII. Adjournment: Tad adjourned the meeting at 5:51 p.m.